Theorizing Rituals

Issues, Topics, Approaches, Concepts

Edited by

**Jens Kreinath, Jan Snoek,
and Michael Stausberg**

BRILL

Theorizing Rituals: Issues, Topics, Approaches, Concepts

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PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The present volume has emerged from the work of a research-group sponsored by the German Research Foundation (Deutsche Forschungs-gemeinschaft) within its Emmy Noether-programme from 2000 to 2003/4. The group (which I had the pleasure to direct) was based at the University of Heidelberg in Germany. It was devoted to the study of Zoroastrian rituals (see the volume *Zoroastrian Rituals in Context*, published as volume 102 of this series in 2004) and ritual theory, ideally combining both concerns in its workings. As I felt that ritual theory had been unduly neglected within the emergent and booming field of Ritual Studies, I had the ambition to address ritual theory in the most general sense, and I was happy when Jan Snoek accepted my invitation to become part of the project in his capacity as an expert on theoretical problems in the study of rituals.

Jointly, we decided to begin our work by setting up an annotated bibliography of ritual theory, building on the editorial format that Jan had successfully established in two prior annotated bibliographies, one on canonization and de-canonization (published in volume 82 of this series in 1998) and one on religious polemics (published in a volume edited by T.L. Hettema and A. van der Kooij in 2005). In order to give further momentum to this endeavour, we were happy to win Jens Kreinath over for the project in the summer of 2001. The annotated bibliography will shortly be published as volume II of the present work.

In the winter-term 2002/2003 I found myself teaching a lecture-series on ritual theory at the University of Bern in Switzerland. For preparing these lectures I used and "tested" a first draft of the bibliography. In spring 2002, when planning this lecture series, in a conversation with Jens the idea was born to set up a volume on ritual theory that was to unite our bibliography and invited chapters on what we perceived to be key-subjects of recent theorizing about rituals. Jointly, we developed a draft table of contents, and in the summer of 2002 we approached the authors whom we had in mind. Much to our joy most of the colleagues accepted our invitation, and soon the first chapters started to drop in. Other chapters, unfortunately, took considerably more time to be completed.

Main editorial responsibility was assigned to one section of the book each (Jan Snoek: part two; Michael Stausberg: part three; Jens Kreinath: part four). In very intense and extremely joyful weekly, fortnightly, or monthly meetings we would extensively discuss all the papers (including our own), and send a number of comments and suggestions to the authors.

In the meanwhile, one of the most brilliant students we had ever had, Florian Jeserich, had joined the team as our student-assistant. During our discussions, Florian came up with many valuable comments on the papers, and he took extra care to see whether the submitted texts would appeal to a student readership. Moreover, Florian was instrumental to preparing the indices to the present volume.

Marcus Brainard took care of the language-editing of those contributions that were submitted by non-native speakers. Marcus also translated the chapter by Burkhard Gladigow from the original German. His tireless efforts helped much to safeguard the linguistic quality of the papers (and he would get a somewhat American pitch to the volume).

Jan Snoek and several of the authors belong to the collaborative research centre on "ritual dynamics" (Sonderforschungsbereich 619: "Ritualdynamik") at the University of Heidelberg (since 2002). The research centre showed an intense interest in our volume, and we were able to arrange two joined symposia in February and October 2003 in which a number of chapters were publicly discussed. Apart from us and members from the research centre, we were happy to share our views with some 'reviewers' from abroad: Don Handelman (Jerusalem), Lammert Leertouwer (Leiden), and Donald Wiebe (Toronto) were part of the first symposium, while Ingvild Gilhus (Bergen) and Michael Houseman (Paris) joined us for the second occasion. The discussions were taped, and the authors were provided written summaries of the discussions and copies of the recordings (if they wished). Some other authors were present at the discussions.

The considerable delay in publication of this volume is mainly a result of the fact that all of us at different times had to assign priority to other projects. Personally, I cannot help but perceiving this delay as a defeat in my capacity as director of the group, especially when keeping in mind that some authors dutifully sent us first drafts of their chapters as early as in the winter of 2002/3. All I can do is to apologize to everyone who had wished and done his/her share

for the volume to appear much earlier, and to thank the authors for their patience.

It is also my pleasure to thank several friends and colleagues for their support throughout the project: Gregor Ahn, the director of the "Institut für Religionswissenschaft" at the University of Heidelberg; Dorothea Lüddeckens (now Zürich) for her help in the initial stages of the project; all the participants and discussants at our two review-symposia; and Axel Michaels, the head of the "Sonderforschungsbereich Ritualdynamik" at the University of Heidelberg, for the pleasant collaboration.

More than anybody else, however, I wish to thank Florian, Jan, and Jens for the tremendous input, fresh ideas, enthusiasm, and the fun you brought into the project!!! The book has truly become a common project, with all the shared joy and frustrations that such affairs entail.

Bergen (Norway), August 2005/March 2006   Michael Stausberg

RITUAL STUDIES, RITUAL THEORY,
THEORIZING RITUALS—
AN INTRODUCTORY ESSAY*

By the Editors

It is unclear when rituals first originated. Some assume that ritual, like dance, music, symbolism, and language, arose in the course of the evolution of primates into man,[1] or even prior to it.[2] Thus rituals may also have facilitated, or even stimulated, processes of adaptation. Be that as it may, biologists and behavioral scientists argue that there are rituals among animals, and this has important implications for our understanding of rituals.[3]

Unlike animal rituals, however, sometime in the course of the evolution of (human) ritual, and in specific cultural settings, rituals have partly become the business of experts (priests). These ritual specialists, it can safely be assumed, often not only developed a ritual competence in the sense of performative skills but also began to study the rituals of their own tradition. Hence, one may assume that within this process of specialization, social differentiation, and professionalization,[4] indigenous forms of the study of rituals evolved. In contrast to the modern, mainly Western academic study of rituals, these indigenous forms of ritual studies can be referred to as 'ritualistics'.[5]

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* A first draft of this introduction was written by Michael Stausberg. It was then jointly revised and elaborated upon by the editors of this volume. We wish to thank Ingvild S. Gilhus (Bergen) and Donald Wiebe (Toronto) for helpful comments on a previous draft.

[1] See also Bellah 2003. (Here, as throughout the volume, works listed in the annotated bibliography are referred to by author and year only. Those items not listed in the bibliography will be provided with full references in the notes.)

[2] Staal 1989, 111 states: "Ritual, after all, is much older than language." See also Burkert 1972.

[3] See Baudy in this volume.

[4] See Gladigow 2004.

[5] See Stausberg 2003.

Ritual Studies

However, when we speak of ritual studies as an academic discipline, we are referring to the study by scholars of rituals from not only their own culture. Philippe Buc starts his overview of the history of this development, which seems to be specific to Western societies, in the sixteenth century.[6] But it is only in recent decades that ritual studies has become a recognized branch of the academy. The publication of the *Journal of Ritual Studies* (1987–) is a clear sign that it has come of age.[7]

Incidentally, the emergence of ritual studies occurred in a period when many established rites and ceremonies were questioned in Western societies, and when new rituals started to blossom. In a number of ways, which need not concern us here, ritual studies reflects these processes of cultural change.[8] As things stand now, apart from the rituals practiced by adherents in established religious communities, many new forms of ritual practice, such as rituals at the occasion of a divorce or the end of a career, are developing that have turned ritual into a diversified industry in its own right, comprising ritual designers, bookstores, books, the internet, seminars, etc. While rituals have thus become a fashionable topic, ritual studies has in turn become a highly successful academic enterprise. At least in Germany, the study of rituals and belated cultural domains, such as performance and theatricality, have in recent years been among the heavyweights of national research funding in the humanities[9]—a fact that is gratefully acknowledged by the present writers.[10]

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[6] Buc 2001.

[7] In the "Editorial", with which it opened, Ronald Grimes wrote: "As far as I know, no one was using the phrase 'ritual studies' before 1977, so it is remarkable to witness the inaugural issue of a journal of ritual studies only ten years later. Although a small group of us began using the term at American Academy of Religion meetings, today it has wide currency in a large number of disciplines" (p. 1). See also Grimes 1982 and his bibliography, *Research in Ritual Studies* (Grimes 1985). In terms of the establishment of a new field of research, see also his article on ritual studies in the *Encyclopedia of Religion* from 1987.

[8] See, e.g., Grimes 1990; Bell 1997.

[9] Over the last five years, the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (German Research Council) funded two large-scale research programs on rituals: *Kulturen des Performativen* (Sonderforschungsbereich 447 [http://www.sfb-performativ.de] since 1999) and *Ritualdynamik* (Sonderforschungsbereich 619 [http://www.ritualdynamik.uni-hd.de] since 2002). Some contributors to the current volume are members of the former (Christoph Wulf) or the latter (Dietrich Harth, Axel Michaels, William S. Sax, and Jan A.M. Snoek).

[10] The editors themselves were members of a junior research group, *Ritualistik*

The rise of rituals in the cultural and academic domains—the lat-
ter, after all, being part of the former—indicates a fundamental
change in the general perception of rituals. Once smiled at, despised,
and regarded as forms of pathological behavior or pre-modern men-
talities, rituals are nowadays generally held to be *the* master-keys to
understanding cultures, including our own. Rituals are thought to
act as powerful mechanisms for constructions of the self and the
other, of personal and collective identities. And notwithstanding the
existence of political rituals testifying to the contrary (such as polit-
ical witch-hunt rituals or fascist spectacles), rituals are generally held
to have benign effects.[11] If we compare this current situation with
the older paradigms that dominated the study of rituals, we see that
this change went hand in hand with a fundamental shift in theo-
retical concerns. Yet despite important examples to the contrary, also
in many recent ritual studies[12] the underlying theoretical problems
remain implicit. While theory is generally held to be a branch of
ritual studies,[13] it seems to us that in practice ritual studies largely
neglect matters of theory. It is one of the ambitions of this volume
to put theory more prominently on the agenda.

To some extent, the general neglect of theory in ritual studies may
be inherent in the 'object' under scrutiny. For aren't rituals, one is
tempted to argue, first of all 'action', alien to the reign of 'words'
dominating theory? Aren't rituals, after all, a form of 'practice'? And
isn't 'practice' traditionally held to be just the opposite of 'theory'?

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und Religionsgeschichte [www.zegk.uni-heidelberg.de/religionswissenschaft/DFG1.htm],
funded from 2000 to 2004 also by the German Research Council. See also the
preface to this volume.

[11] For a critical view of this paradigm see Bell 1992; Bell 1997.

[12] We would like to see (and will use) the expression 'ritual studies' as referring
to an explicitly etic approach (as opposed to the 'study of rituals', which may include
emic approaches as well), yet we are aware that this position is not shared by every-
one. (For an analysis of the emergence of the 'ritual studies' approach in the USA,
see, e.g., the article by Platvoet in this volume.)

[13] Interestingly, in his "Editorial" to the first issue of the *Journal of Ritual Studies*
Grimes mentions "purely theoretical treatments" as the very first kind of articles
suitable for the new periodical: "Articles may be of various kinds—purely theoret-
ical treatments, comparative ones, minutely focused descriptions and so on. They
may employ quantitative and explanatory models, on the one hand, or hermeneu-
tical and historical ones, on the other. In addition, they may be based on either
texts or performances. The full range of ritual, extending from high differentiated
rites to undifferentiated ritualization processes and quasi-ritualistic elements in human
and animal interaction, is open for consideration, as are secular and religious rites"
(p. 1).

While these assumptions might mirror the way in which these words are widely used in common parlance, this line of thinking has been challenged ever since Pierre Bourdieu published his *Esquisse d'une théorie de la pratique (Outlines of a Theory of Practice)* in 1972. Hence, it was no accident that Bourdieu's book stimulated one of the most prominent contributions to ritual theory, the work of Catherine Bell.[14]

Ritual Theory

Just as one may see indigenous (emic) debates and discussions about ritual(s) as a form of ritual studies, indigenous ritualists have also developed (emic) theories about rituals over many centuries. But hardly anyone of them, predating the last decades of the nineteenth century, is still thought of today whenever we refer to the domain of ritual studies in an academic context. From the late nineteenth century on, however, for such nascent sciences as anthropology, sociology, psychology, and the history of religions, ritual was of paramount importance. The scholarly concept of religion, for instance, came into being roughly simultaneously with the modern term 'ritual'.[15] On the other hand, the inherently religious character of rituals can no longer be taken for granted,[16] and this posits a challenge for theorizing both religion and ritual. The influential Cambridge School regarded rituals as the inseparable twin of myth.[17] Early sociology of religion emphasized the crucial role rituals play in the maintenance of societal coherence,[18] and the contemporary debate still takes its bearings (implicitly or explicitly) by this intellectual legacy.[19] So does psychoanalysis with its observation of structural similarities between neurotic and ritual behavior.[20] Just as these disciplines rest

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[14] See Bell 1992.

[15] See Bremmer 1998.

[16] See, among others, Moore and Myerhoff 1977; Rappaport 1979; Staal 1979; Staal 1989; Goethals 1997; Rappaport 1999; Wulf et al. (eds) 2001.

[17] See Ackerman 1975; Ackerman 1991; Segal 1996; Segal 1997; Segal 1998.

[18] See, e.g., Emile Durkheim, *Les formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse* (Paris, 1912).

[19] See, among others, Douglas 1966; Cohen 1969; Turner 1969; Rappaport 1979; Pertierra 1987; Lang 1988; Soeffner 1988; Blaisel 1993; Platvoet 1995; Wulf et al. (eds) 2001; Bellah 2003.

[20] See, e.g., Sigmund Freud, "Zwangshandlungen und Religionsübungen", *Zeitschrift für Religionspsychologie* 1 (1908), 4–12.

on a long history of debate and discussion, the topics to which they have linked ritual—religion, myth, society, and the psyche—have been widely discussed, and the essays of Part II of this volume attempt to review these debates and to outline some further perspectives.[21]

While being largely neglected in ritual studies, as the notes to the foregoing paragraph should have indicated, ritual theory—that is, theories about rituals[22]—is by no means a blank slate. On the contrary, much has happened in the (theoretical) study of ritual in recent decades.[23] Indeed, much more has happened than may emerge from what is apparent in many publications on rituals—witness the extensive annotated bibliography in the second volume. This bibliography aims to survey what we regard as major contributions to ritual theory published since 1966, a year that the editors, for different reasons (discussed in the introduction to the bibliography), have come to consider a watershed in the scholarly study of ritual. Along with the abstracts of the articles and books listed in the bibliography, an attempt is made to highlight the main empirical materials discussed by the authors, and their major references to other authors. In that way, the bibliography briefly indicates the type of rituals informing theoretical discussions (as their 'key examples' or 'paradigms'), and it provides some elements for the genealogy or intellectual background of the single theoretical positions, including those presented in this book.[24] As the bibliography tries to make a much larger corpus of theoretical reflections on ritual accessible than is presented in the articles in this volume, it is more than a mere appendix.

A theoretical discussion of ritual(s) can hardly avoid the tedious question of the definition of ritual. Even if some scholars, partly for

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[21] See the essays by Segal, Rao, Boudewijnse, and Platvoet.

[22] What I. Pyysiäinen, *How Religion Works. Towards a New Cognitive Science of Religion* (Cognition and Culture Book Series; Leiden, 2003), viii, says about religion may mutatis mutandis hold true for ritual as well: "Such broadly delineated classes of phenomena as 'religion' cannot be features to be explained, and therefore we cannot have a theory *of* religion, although we can have theories *about* religion" (referring to Endel Tulving and theories concerning memory).

[23] As Humphrey and Laidlaw (1994, 64) have put it: "a luxuriant jungle of theories about ritual has grown up".

[24] Note that the bibliography also provides abstracts of the contributions to this volume. Note also the keywords that were used to index the topics, approaches, and concepts addressed in the respective articles and monographs.

good reasons, try not to propose definitions,[25] which they regard as incompatible with a productive approach to theorizing, in most cases a certain notion, if not an outright definition, of ritual lurks in the background, and most theories can subsequently be stated or packed in the form of a definition of their object.[26] Thus, a reflection on definition seems a somewhat old-fashioned though still valid starting point for the theoretical endeavor in Part I. A discussion of the problem of defining and definition also yields some important insights into different versions of theory and different ways of constructing theories[27] that occasionally have undesired effects on the progress of the debate.[28]

Like most definitions, any theoretical focus on rituals simultaneously raises at least two questions: What do rituals share with other features of cultural organization, and what is specific to ritual(s)?[29] Therefore, the relation of ritual to other forms of social action stands at the beginning of the theoretical inquiry.[30] On the other hand, the universal validity of the category 'ritual' is open to doubt, and the search for conceptual alternatives to 'ritual'—such as the notions of 'public events' or 'cultural performances'—is not only challenging but also necessary for theorizing rituals. While we should not simply take the general theoretical category of 'ritual'—or 'RITUAL', as Handelman puts it[31]—for granted in epistemological terms, an inquiry into possible emic equivalents for 'ritual' in some other than

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[25] See, e.g., Goody 1977.

[26] For an overview, see also Platvoet 1995.

[27] Different definitions often reflect different theories about rituals, whereas theorizing includes posing such principle questions as: "Should we provide a definition at all?" and "Should we opt for a monothetic or a polythetic definition of 'ritual(s)'?".

[28] See the essay by Snoek in this volume.

[29] Humphrey and Laidlaw 1994, 64–87, raise the important question "What Theory Do We Need?" They argue: "Much is known, from anthropological and other studies, about various kinds of ritual and the roles they can play in social and political processes, but the question of what ritual itself is—what is distinctive about ritual action—has hardly ever been posed in a helpful way" (64). They complain that anthropologists' "theories so seldom have anything to say about what it is that *makes* these events ritual" (71). According to Humphrey and Laidlaw, these are the questions to be asked: "What happens when you perform an act *as* a ritual? What is it about ritual acts that makes them ritual?" (72). These questions, however, are much less innocent than they seem, because they already presuppose a certain understanding of what 'ritual' really is.

[30] See the essay by Harth in this volume.

[31] See Handelman's essay "Conceptual alternatives to 'ritual'" in this volume.

Latin and modern Western European languages serves as a reminder of non-theoretical alternatives to structuring the semantic universe.[32]

An important insight from the formative period of ritual theory pertains to ritual's specific form, or structure.[33] At the same time, 'process' has become a key-term in ritual theory.[34] While recent theorizing attaches greater importance to ludic elements in rituals[35] and stresses the emergent qualities of rituals,[36] the structural approach remains valid enough to require careful review.[37] Against common sense assumptions, an emphasis on (syntactical) structure has even led one theorist to question the inherently meaningful quality of rituals.[38] As in the case of form, once again the ensuing scholarly debate[39] made it clear that one should not take anything for granted when it comes to ritual—and this seems to be a reasonable starting point for any attempt at theorizing rituals.

According to a standard epistemological model, a theory is an abstract and coherent set of statements that are based on empirical

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[32] See the essay by Stausberg et al. in this volume.

[33] See, among others, A. van Gennep, *Les rites de passage* (Paris, 1909). More recent literature on this issue includes Douglas 1966; V.W. Turner 1967; V.W. Turner 1969; Grainger 1974; Leach 1976; Rappaport 1979; Tambiah 1981; P. Smith 1982; Kapferer 1983; Snoek 1987; Handelman 1990; Kelly and Kaplan 1990; Lawson 1990; Lévi-Strauss 1990; Bloch 1992; Rappaport 1999; Dahm 2003; Gladigow 2004.

[34] See, among others, Van Gennep, *Les rites de passage.* More recent literature on this issue includes V.W. Turner 1967; V.W. Turner 1969; Munn 1973; Ortner 1975; Lawson 1976; Babcock 1978; Ortner 1978; Honko 1979; Kapferer 1979; Handelman and Kapferer 1980; Handelman 1981; Schechner 1981; Grimes 1982; Schechner 1982; Kapferer 1983; V.W. Turner 1985a; Snoek 1987; V.W. Turner 1988; Kelly and Kaplan 1990; Wiedenmann 1991; Anttonen 1992; Drexler 1993; Lindgren 1997. Drewal 1992, 10; Schieffelin 1996, 59; Hoëm 1998, 22; and Brown 2003, 10; claim that the older literature concentrated on structure, whereas only the newer stresses process. However, the literature referred to here seems to suggest otherwise.

[35] See, among others, Csikszentmihalyi 1971; Schechner 1973; V.W. Turner 1974c; Schechner and Schuman (eds) 1976; Handelmam 1977; Babcock 1978; Riner 1978; Handelman 1979; Blanchard 1980; Fox 1980; Handelman 1980; Lewis 1980; V.W. Turner 1982a; MacAloon 1984; Schechner 1988b; Handelman 1990; Myerhoff 1990; Keesing 1991; Merkur 1991; Drewal 1992; Dupré 1992; Schechner 1993; Emigh 1996; Gebauer and Wulf 1998; Goethals 1997; Köpping 1997; Köpping (ed.) 1997; Köpping 1998; Schechner 2002.

[36] See, among others, Bauman 1975; Hymes 1975; Kapferer 1979; Handelman 1981; Blasi 1985; Schieffelin 1985; Wiedenmann 1991; Houseman 1993; Schieffelin 1996; Köpping and Rao (eds) 2000; Brown 2003; Gladigow 2004; Handelman 2004.

[37] See the essay by T. Turner in this volume.

[38] Staal 1979; Staal 1989; Staal 1991.

[39] In this volume, Michaels reviews this debate.

observation, hypotheses, and laws. It is empirically testable and explanatory and allows one to make predictions. When applying this, or similar, epistemological standard(s), there are not many theories of ritual around.[40] This is not accidental, because those theories of ritual that live up to such expectations—such as cognitive theories[41]— share most of their premises with the epistemological model of 'theory' sketched above. However, there are a good number of other theoretical approaches emerging from a broad range of academic disciplines, discursive settings, rhetorical devices, logical set-ups, and methodological premises. They have different agendas, address different problems, and are inspired by different sorts of rituals as their primary empirical points of reference.[42] Some of the approaches assembled in Part III of this volume are grounded in full-fledged macro-theoretical enterprises, such as the cognitive sciences, biology (ethology),[43] and semiotics,[44] while others take their point of departure from more loosely organized fields of research, such as theories of action[45] and praxis,[46] performance,[47] gender studies,[48] and virtuality.[49] Further approaches apply specific theories, such as philosophical aesthetics,[50] Luhmann's (system) theory of communication,[51] and Bateson's theory of relational form,[52] to the study of ritual.

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[40] Gerholm 1988, 197, provides a "list of desiderata" of "what one would expect from a 'theory' of, or 'perspective' on, or 'approach' to ritual". For the full list, see the abstract of Gerholm's essay in the annotated bibliography. Despite the essay's 'post-modern'-sounding title, Gerholm's list of desiderata is clearly a legacy of the vision of the all-encompassing 'grand theory' (key-words are 'causal origin', 'effects', etc.). The classical design of his approach also clearly emerges from his "Nine Theses on Ritual" (198–202).

[41] See the essay by Lawson in this volume.

[42] E.g., whereas V.W. Turner takes the Ndembu rituals as the main ethnographic material for his theory of ritual liminality as opposed to social structure (V.W. Turner 1969), F. Staal is primarily concerned with the old Vedic rituals Agnicayana, which serves as the main source material for "the construction of a ritual paradigm" (Staal 1979, 2).

[43] See the essay by Baudy in this volume.

[44] See the essay by Kreinath in this volume.

[45] See the essay by Laidlaw and Humphrey in this volume.

[46] See the essay by Wulf in this volume.

[47] See the essay by Grimes in this volume.

[48] See the essay by Morris in this volume.

[49] See the essay by Kapferer in this volume.

[50] See the essay by Williams and Boyd in this volume.

[51] See the essay by Thomas in this volume.

[52] See the essay by Houseman in this volume.

   Depending on the levels of abstraction, one can distinguish between three types of theoretical approaches to ritual: 1. Approaches that apply particular theoretical frameworks (aesthetics, cognition, communication, ethology, and semiotics); 2. approaches that address particular fields of scholarly discourse (action, gender, performance, and praxis); or 3. approaches that consider ritual in its own terms as 'a structured whole' (relationality and virtuality). Moreover, these types of theoretical approaches offer a wide range of methodological options: they vary in their degree of rigidity, plasticity, and complexity; they also exemplify different versions of theory or modes of theorizing.

From Ritual Theory to Theorizing Rituals

However, this volume intends to be more than a mere collection of essays presenting a panorama of available approaches to ritual theory.[53] The guiding intention here is to introduce a perspective that we refer to as 'theorizing rituals'. Here this term is not used in the established sense of 'forming theories' but instead refers to a wider scope of activities, indeed implying a multifarious agenda.

   To begin with, theorizing rituals, as we use the expression, is not at all about presenting just another theory of ritual(s), or another set of ritual theories. On the contrary, the project of 'theorizing rituals' shares the general insight that the age of 'grand theories'—thus, theories that seek to explain everything—is over. As we understand theorizing, any one theory will hardly suffice to account for the complexity of the phenomena. In modern scholarly practice of the study of ritual, one will therefore probably always need to refer to more than one theory.

   Today theoreticians of ritual(s) instead generate—to put it more modestly—theoretical *approaches*, which only try to explain a certain

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[53] In this volume, the approaches are ordered alphabetically (from action to semiotics). Apart from the fact that the first essay of that section provides an introduction to a wider spectrum of theoretical approaches, this arrangement is but one indicator for the editors' choice not to impose our perspective by assigning priority to any one approach, commenting on them, or by putting them in a systematic order. The selection of approaches and the authors writing the papers, however, is in itself clearly a deliberate choice. Actually, we had thought of including additional approaches, but we never aspired to completeness. Indeed, we were always very much aware of the impossibility of presenting a complete collection.

aspect of the material concerned. *Theories* may be distinguished from *theoretical approaches* in the following terms:

> Whereas *theories* can be regarded as explicitly formulated sets of propositions and hypotheses that are applicable to a wide range of empirical data, *theoretical approaches*, by contrast, are concerned with a particular field of research; for this purpose, they operationalize relevant theories as their general frame of reference for their argument while addressing specific theoretical issues related to the respective empirical data. Only those approaches to the study of a particular field of research, which rely primarily on theories as their argumentative frame, can strictly be regarded as *theoretical* approaches.[54]

Obviously not just one such theoretical approach is needed, but quite a number, so that together they shed as much light as possible on the subject studied—in our case: rituals. Yet it is unlikely that it would be possible to generate a complete set, such that no additional approach could be thought of. There will always remain gaps between the theoretical approaches available. Comparing them reveals desiderata that every approach leaves open. In that way, new theoretical issues or perspectives may emerge. On the other hand, theorizing about the multiplicity of theoretical approaches sheds light on their relative advantages and disadvantages. They may overlap and/or rival one another. This activity generates such questions as: which approach is better, elucidates more, or even is valid to begin with? In summary: theorizing requires the refinement of single theories, as well as their mutual critique and competition. It works in, with, and between theories. It reaches beyond particular theories and takes a meta-theoretical perspective, putting the various approaches into context.

But there is more to it. Whereas the aim of ritual theory is to articulate a particular set of hypotheses and to draw conceptual boundaries as precisely as possible, the project of theorizing rituals is an open project. It has an emergent quality. Theorizing rituals is a reflective and reflexive[55] process. It is reflective in that it reflects upon its own procedures, trying to improve and adjust them when necessary. However, it is reflexive in that it does not claim to have

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[54] Kreinath 2004b, 103–104.
[55] See the essay by Stausberg in this volume.

a neutral, 'objective' stance, but rather points to, and perhaps even questions, its own position within scholarly discourse as such. Theorizing (rituals) is not easily satisfied by, and not even primarily interested in, 'answers' to such obvious questions as what ritual 'is', or what rituals are all 'about', how they 'work', 'function', etc. By taking stock of the answers, theorizing rituals does not take the questions for granted. It scrutinizes the mechanics by which questions are posited and answers are provided. Hence, it has the potential to look at the mechanisms of how scholarly discourse works. It is as radical as it is critical. It problematizes and contextualizes. It takes multiple perspectives into account. It is a multi-voiced discursive practice. And hence it offers more than just one more theory of ritual(s). Indeed, it is not satisfied with theories, and it may also lead to rejecting claims of theory, of repositioning theory. It may play the game of theory, but it may also question its very rules. While theory aims to construct a consistent and limited set of principles, theorizing may, for theoretical reasons, opt for the open-endedness and incompleteness of the theoretical endeavor. In a way, it is the 'betwixt-and-between' of theory. Theorizing, it may be said, is an attempt to connect theory to other forms of scholarly practice. It is not located before 'the real things' happen (such as in fieldwork), nor does it occur afterwards, nor is it 'the real thing' itself.[56] It is a reflexive attitude, a commitment to theory as a discursive adventure.

One more way in which the concern of theorizing goes beyond the realm of theory is by entering theoretically dense fields of scholarly discourse that do not necessarily result in theoretical approaches. These fields are indicated by a number of paradigmatic concepts, some of which are discussed in Part IV of this book. Most of these concepts do not derive from the available market of theoretical production so much as they mark the middle ground between scholarly discourse and some apparent features of rituals, such as their having

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[56] V.W. Turner, e.g., describes the usefulness of theories in pragmatic terms: "Although we take theories into the field with us, these become relevant only if and when they illuminate social reality. Moreover, we tend to find very frequently that it is not a theorist's whole system which so illuminates, but his scattered ideas, his flashes of insight taken out of systematic context and applied to scattered data. Such ideas have a virtue of their own and may generate new hypotheses. They even show how scattered facts may be systematically connected!" (Turner 1974a, 23).

to do with embodiment,[57] emotions,[58] language,[59] media,[60] transmission,[61] and also their being complex,[62] dynamic,[63] (presumably) efficacious,[64] and framed[65] affairs. In that way, they 'exemplify' the scholarly discourse about what is generally perceived as 'ritual(s)'. While this link to the 'bare' features of ritual is also obvious for some, if not most, of the theoretical approaches—there is a general consensus that rituals have to do with action, aesthetics, behavior, performance, practice, social relations, etc.—the concepts are not linked to well-established theoretical, methodological, and academic programs. They are not framed as 'theories'. While they are certainly theory-laden and of theoretical relevance, these concepts cannot easily be subsumed under the roof of any single theory. They cut across the borders of the theoretical approaches and have a diverse range of theoretical affiliations. But apart from being of 'exemplary' significance for the discourse about 'ritual', and in thereby 'exemplifying' scholarly discourse about 'ritual', they are 'paradigmatic' in the sense that they may powerfully model our understanding of 'ritual'. Some of the terms we have (subjectively, but also, in our opinion, strategically) selected for this section, however, are (as yet) not generally accepted 'paradigms' of ritual theory, while others have only recently turned into key-terms for the study of ritual in a similar vein as 'liminality'[66] or 'flow'[67] did some decades ago.

Agency,[68] to take but one example of such a powerful key-concept—and it happens to stand first in the respective part of the volume—is an important term for different theories of action,[69] society,[70] and

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[57] See the essay by Bell in this volume.
[58] See the essay by Lüddekens in this volume.
[59] See the essay by Severi in this volume.
[60] See the essay by Hughes-Freeland in this volume.
[61] See the essay by Whitehouse in this volume.
[62] See the essay by Gladigow in this volume.
[63] See the essay by Kapferer in this volume.
[64] See the essay by Podemann Sørensen in this volume.
[65] See the essay by Handelman in this volume.
[66] See, e.g., Turner 1967; Turner 1969; Crocker 1973; Turner 1974c; Turner 1977; Pentikäinen 1979; Turner 1984. See also Grimes 1987; Handelman 1993.
[67] See, e.g., Csikszentmihalyi 1971; Turner 1974c; Turner 1977; Schechner 1981; Turner 1982a; Turner 1984; Turner 1985a. See also Grimes 1987.
[68] See the essay by Sax in this volume. See also Ahearn 2001.
[69] See, e.g., Geertz 1966; Goffman 1974; Drewal 1992; Willems 1997; Hoëm 1998.
[70] See, e.g., Bourdieu 1975; Kapferer 1983; Kelly and Kaplan 1990; Drewal 1992; Collins 1998; Crapanzano 2000.

cognition.[71] In this volume, however, agency is considered not as a clear-cut *term* within a well-defined frame of a theory but as a theoretical *concept* allowing for, and implying, a specific style of conceptualizing ritual(s) by providing a focus. A theoretical concept theoretically conceptualizes ritual(s), and theorizing concepts re-conceptualizes discourse. This, however, is more than a merely terminological exercise, which would be concerned only with the 'technical' use of terms. By putting rituals in a theoretical focus, concepts as well as approaches may 'uncover' something about rituals and, in a reflexive turn, about our interest in them. Putting the very concepts into focus, then, may 'reveal' something about the objects, the subjects, and the parameters of discourse. Concepts also problematize such seemingly obvious things as the participation in rituals, their framing, embodiment, and efficacy.

Many of the concepts and approaches discussed here refer implicitly or explicitly to—and in that way bridge—the observer and the observed. Performance, gender, rhetoric, and reflexivity, for instance, are crucial elements of ritual theory and ritual practice alike. The list of concepts and approaches could well be extended beyond those discussed in this book.[72] That would be one of the further avenues of the ongoing scholarly project of theorizing rituals. The essays assembled in this volume (and the annotated bibliography) are not intended as the final word on rituals. The assembly of these essays here allows the contours of a common field of research to emerge. Yet this field is far from being homogenous and consistent. Consistency is an important aim of theory, but theorizing must find a different way of coping with heterogeneity and with the complexity and emergent quality of scholarly discourse.

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[71] See, among others, Lawson and McCauley 1990; Lawson 1993; Andresen 2001; Barrett and Lawson 2001; McCauley and Lawson 2002.

[72] One could, e.g., think of discourse theory, phenomenology, or cybernetics as further approaches, and of causality, identity, power, or rhythm as further concepts. The borders between the approaches and concepts as presented in this volume are in some cases fluid. As already indicated, the essays of Part III are diverse and can be differentiated because of their different levels of abstraction. The same hold true for the essays of Part IV. In this regard, some of the essays would fit just as easily in either section. However, we decided on the current order because, for us, the contributions in each section accord in large part with the characteristics outlined above.

PART ONE

METHODOLOGICAL AND METATHEORETICAL ISSUES

DEFINING 'RITUALS'

Jan A.M. Snoek

Defining the term 'rituals' is a notoriously problematic task. The number of definitions proposed is endless, and no one seems to like the definitions proposed by anyone else. Much of the problem is caused by a structural misconception of what the task is, based on a generally naive conception of what a definition should be. To be specific, it seems that almost everyone who has proposed a definition of 'ritual' assumes that it has to be of the classical form: 'Something is a ritual if and only if it has all of the characteristics A, B, and C', where the number of characteristics, as well as which ones are chosen, is variable from one definition to another. However, analysis of an arbitrary selection of the available definitions soon reveals that a characteristic regarded as obligatory by one scholar is rejected by another, usually because the material with which the first one is familiar happens to be homogeneous with respect to this particular characteristic, whereas the material with which the second scholar works shows one or more examples that lack it. In fact, looking at the wide range of phenomena, that scholars have become inclined to call 'rituals' over the last few decades, it seems highly unlikely to me that—with perhaps one or two exceptions—there is any characteristic that really occurs in all of them. And those that do are surely not specific to 'rituals' alone. This phenomenon sometimes leads scholars to the decision either not to define 'ritual' explicitly (forgetting that they do have some idea of what a 'ritual' is anyway), or to argue against the use of the term altogether.[1] Neither attitude will help us any further, however. Yet some more advanced knowledge of modern classification theory may.

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[1] See, e.g., Goody 1977.

Fuzzy Sets and Polythetic Classes

The collection of all 'rituals' is a class of phenomena. But there are not only the traditional, Aristotelian, classes, which are based on only discrete characteristics, such as the presence of feathers, or having eight legs. There are also so-called 'fuzzy sets' and 'polythetic classes'.

> A FUZZY SET is a class of objects with a continuum of grades of membership. Such a set is characterized by a membership (characteristic) function which assigns to each object a grade of membership ranging between zero and one.[2]

FUZZY SETS usually arise because one or more of the characteristics involved are continuous. "For example, the class of *green objects* is a fuzzy set. So are the classes of objects characterized by such commonly used adjectives as large, small, substantial, significant, important, serious, simple, accurate, approximate, etc."[3]

A second kind of fuzzy sets are the **polythetic classes**.[4] These also have a fuzzy border, though not because they would be based on a continuous characteristic, but because they are based on characteristics that may or may not be present. **Polythetic classes** are opposed to monothetic classes. A class is monothetic if and only if (A) each member of the class has all the characteristics defining the class as a whole, and (B) each of those characteristics is possessed by all of those members. A class is **polythetic** if and only if (A) each member of the class has a large but unspecified number of a set of characteristics occurring in the class as a whole, (B) each of those characteristics is possessed by a large number of those mem-

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[2] L.A. Zadeh, "Fuzzy Sets", *Information and Control* 8 (1965), 338–353, here 338 (my emphasis). Hereinafter, both the expression 'FUZZY SET' and actual fuzzy characteristics will be written in small capitals. On fuzzy sets see also Snoek 1987, 28.

[3] R.E. Bellman and L.A. Zadeh, "Decision-making in a Fuzzy Environment", *Management Science* 17 (1970), B141–B164, here B141. Emphasis in the original.

[4] Zadeh's definition of fuzzy sets includes polythetic classes. For example, in a polythetic class, based on a defining set of, say, 20 characteristics, members with only 10 of those would get a membership grade of 0.50, while members with 15 of the defining characteristics would get a membership grade of 0.75. But usually the term 'fuzzy set' is restricted to classes, based on continuous characteristics alone. I will conform to that habit since the methods for constructing fuzzy sets and polythetic classes (and classical Aristotelian classes) are very different. On polythetic classes see Snoek 1987, 29–31. Hereinafter, both the expression '**polythetic class**' and actual polythetic characteristics will be written in boldface.

bers, and (if fully **polythetic**) (C) no one of those characteristics is possessed by every member of the class.

In this context, not only classes but also characteristics are regarded as either monothetic or **polythetic**. A monothetic (set of) characteristic(s) is present in all the members of a class. If the class is monothetic, this set defines the class in that combination. These characteristics may occur separately also in surrounding classes but if the class is monothetic, then not in that particular combination.[5] **Polythetic** characteristics, on the other hand, are not present in all members of a **polythetic** class, but each occurs in a majority of them.[6] If the class is fully polythetic, the set of these characteristics defines the class. These characteristics may occur separately also in surrounding classes but if the class is fully polythetic, then not in that particular combination.[7] In formal terms: in a **polythetic class**, the presence of a polythetic characteristic[8] is less than (or equal to) one for the class as a whole—but either one (present) or zero (absent) for each member of the class—whereas in a FUZZY SET, the value of the membership-function based on a fuzzy characteristic[9] is less than (or equal to) one for each member of the class.

There are two cases in which the use of FUZZY SETS and/or **polythetic classes** has advantages. Firstly, it may be fully arbitrary, if not entirely impossible, to draw a border around a particular class, even if it would be theoretically desirable. Secondly, there may be theoretical reasons for regarding the FUZZY SET or **polythetic class** as the true class in which one is interested—for example, if one would like to study not the core of such a class of phenomena but rather precisely the more exotic forms composing its periphery, or the overlapping of two classes (e.g. rituals and plays). However, there

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[5] *Webster's New Twentieth Century Dictionary*, e.g., defines a coin as (1) a piece of metal (2) with a distinctive stamp and (3) of a fixed value and (4) weight, (5) issued by a government and (6) used as money. According to this definition, coins form a monothetic class, defined by a set of six monothetic characteristics. Obviously, none of these characteristics is restricted to coins. But all of them together do define coins.

[6] For example, according to Kertzer (1988, 9), "Ritual action . . . is often enacted at certain places and times that are themselves endowed with special symbolic meaning". As the word 'often' shows, this characteristic is polythetic. Were the word 'often' not present, the claim would have been that this characteristic is monothetic.

[7] Compare R. Geesink, *Scala Millettiearum* (Leiden 1984), 3.

[8] For rituals, e.g., **often taking place at specific places and/or times**.

[9] For rituals, e.g., TO SOME DEGREE FORMALIZED.

are also disadvantages to the use of (FUZZY SETS and) **polythetic classes**. For example, if a phenomenon is identified as a member of a monothetic class, then it is certain that all characteristics not used in the identification process but part of the definition of the class are also possessed by that item. For a **polythetic class** this does not hold. Also, members of a **polythetic class** do not in all cases possess any specific features that could justify the formulation of general propositions about them.[10]

Definitions from the Literature

As noted above, actual definitions of 'ritual' found in the scholarly literature are usually formulated as monothetic, non-fuzzy, traditional Aristotelian classes. But do the characteristics used in such definitions really warrant such formulations? They do not. Four classical examples of definitions of 'ritual' will suffice to make this clear:

> By "ritual" I mean PRESCRIBED FORMAL behaviour **for occasions not given over to technical routine, having reference to belief in mystical beings and powers**.[11]

> Ritual is a culturally constructed system of **SYMBOLIC COMMUNICATION**. It is constituted of PATTERNED and ORDERED sequences of **words** and acts, **often expressed in multiple media**, WHOSE CONTENT AND ARRANGEMENT ARE CHARACTERIZED IN VARYING DEGREE BY FORMALITY (CONVENTIONALITY), **STEREOTYPE (RIGIDITY)**, CONDENSATION (FUSION), AND **REDUNDANCY (REPETITION)**. Ritual in its constitutive features is performative . . .[12]

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[10] Rodney Needham, in section IV of his well-known article, "Polythetic Classification: Convergence and Consequences" (*Man* 10 (1975), 349–369, esp. 357 ff.), strongly argued against the usefulness of polythetic definitions of terms in social anthropology, as opposed to the natural sciences (in fact, biology). I do not agree with his presentation of the facts. On the one hand, his assumption that biological data would always be hard evidence is naive. On the other, it does not bring us one step further to dispense deliberately with polythetic definitions for the humanities and instead contrive a monothetically defined, formal theoretical terminology for application "to classes of social facts that are extensively polythetic" (366). Ten years later, commenting on "Wittgenstein and Ritual", Needham adopted a much more positive view of the usefulness of polythetic classification for the definition of 'ritual' (Needham 1985; see the abstract of this article in the bibliography). Ronald Grimes, too, advocates a "family characteristics" approach (1990, 13–15). Although he does not mention it, this is in fact Wittgenstein's terminology for what are now generally called 'polythetic characteristics'.

[11] V.W. Turner 1967, 19.

[12] Tambiah 1979, 119.

> [I define] ritual as **SYMBOLIC** behavior that is socially **STANDARDIZED and repetitive**. . . .RITUAL ACTION HAS A FORMAL QUALITY TO IT. IT FOLLOWS HIGHLY STRUCTURED, **STANDARDIZED** SEQUENCES and **is often enacted at certain places and times** THAT ARE THEMSELVES ENDOWED WITH SPECIAL SYMBOLIC MEANING. Ritual action is **REPETITIVE** and, therefore, **OFTEN REDUNDANT**, but THESE VERY FACTORS SERVE AS IMPORTANT MEANS OF CHANNELING EMOTION, GUIDING COGNITION, and **organizing social groups**.[13]

> [Rappaport takes] the term 'ritual' to denote the performance of MORE OR LESS **INVARIANT** SEQUENCES OF FORMAL ACTS AND UTTERANCES NOT ENTIRELY ENCODED BY THE PERFORMERS.[14]

I have indicated here which characteristics I regard[15] as **polythetic**, FUZZY, or **BOTH**, and, as can be seen at once, these are by far the majority. The four definitions given here are by no means exceptions in this respect. Sometimes, though certainly not always, the authors themselves already indicate the polythetic or fuzzy nature of the characteristics they use—for example, by the use of such words as 'often' for **polythetic**, or 'in varying degree', 'more or less', or 'highly' for FUZZY characteristics. This indicates the solution to the problem, namely to accept explicitly that (almost all) the characteristics of the class of phenomena usually called 'rituals' in fact *are* either **polythetic** or FUZZY or even **BOTH**. Once this is accepted, the task is no longer to search for the *few essential* characteristics of 'rituals', which unambiguously distinguish between them and everything else, but rather to sum up *as large as possible* a collection of characteristics which are typical for *most* rituals, or at least for those being considered in a particular project.[16] Before demonstrating how this could look, however, it is first necessary to decide which concept should be indicated with the term to be defined.

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[13] Kertzer 1988, 9.
[14] Rappaport 1999, 24.
[15] Which characteristic one regards as polythetic or fuzzy depends on which phenomena one is or is not willing to exclude from, or include in, the class of rituals. Thus, this choice is, at least partly, unavoidably a subjective one.
[16] On different projects requiring different definitions, see M. Introvigne: "Religion as Claim: Social and Legal Controversies", J.G. Platvoet and A.L. Molendijk (eds), *The Pragmatics of Defining Religion. Contexts, Concepts and Contests* (Numen Book Series 84; Leiden, Boston, Köln, 1999), 41–72.

Concepts and Terms

Each definition does two things: on the one hand, it describes a concept, and, on the other, it gives that concept a name, which is to say, it links it to a particular term. Let us ponder a bit the question of why one should choose particular terms for particular concepts. The main rule here is to avoid as much as possible the use of one term for more than one concept, and the use of more than one term for the same concept. The reason is simply to avoid ambiguity and to use the available terms economically.

The concepts referred to by the term 'ritual' and such related terms as 'ceremony' and 'rite' have changed over time; for example: 'ceremony' from ritual behavior to secular ritual behavior and back again; 'ritual' from prescript to ceremony; 'rite' from a building block of a ceremony to ceremony itself, etc.[17] Over time, more and more terms came to be used for more than one concept, whereas more and more concepts came to be indicated by more than one term.[18] The result is that today in this field, any scholar may use about any term he or she likes for any concept. That does not contribute to the transfer of information. One of the first scholars who tried to argue against this abuse of language and for an economical and unambiguous use of terms was Melford Spiro. In 1971 he pleaded for the use of three terms for three concepts only, which he gave as follows:

> [T]he rite   is the minimal significant unit of ritual behavior. . . .
> A ceremony   is the smallest configuration of rites constituting a meaningful ritual whole, and
> ceremonial   is the total configuration of ceremonies performed during any ritual occasion.[19]

Note that these are only relative definitions, indicating the mutual distinctions between the related concepts concerned, not absolute ones that specify what each term in itself refers to. In 1987 I extended this list of terms and concepts as follows:

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[17] On this development see Asad 1988; Boudewijnse 1995; Bremmer 1998; Stausberg 2002.
[18] See the article by Platvoet in this volume for an analysis of this phenomenon.
[19] M.E. Spiro, *Buddhism and Society. A Great Tradition and its Burmese Vicissitudes* (London 1971), 199. My modification of the lay-out.

ritual:	the prescription/script (written or not)
rite:	the smallest building-block of a ceremony (e.g. exchanging rings at a wedding)
ceremony:	a group of rites (e.g. a church wedding)
ceremonial:	a group of ceremonies (e.g. all of the wedding, including reception and dinner)
Rite:	the total cult of a tradition (e.g. the Russian Orthodox Rite)
ritual:	a 'role' or 'part' played in a ceremonial (e.g. bride or priest)[20]

Because, in my opinion, six concepts are needed to describe rituals, while (in English) only five terms are available,[21] I choose to use the term 'ritual' for two concepts. Since these two are very different, it will hardly ever be unclear which one is meant, since that will emerge from the context. Note also that I propose to use the terms 'ritual' and 'ceremony' for the script and the action, respectively. So I would prefer to avoid the use of the word 'ritual' in the way it is most commonly used today.[22] Also, I would strongly plead against using the word 'rite' as a synonym of 'ceremony'. Since there is no other word which indicates a building block of a ceremony, that habit makes it strangely necessary to speak of the rites constituting a rite!

A second issue which has to be dealt with here is that of the extension of what we have included under the term 'rituals' since the 1970s. This process of extending the scope of this term has led some scholars to the conviction that it has become so all-embracing that it no longer makes any sense to use it at all: because it simply includes anything and everything. Therefore, they plead to make a

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[20] Snoek 1987, 58–60. It is interesting to see that *The Random House College Dictionary*, used by Grimes (Grimes 2000), seems to use these terms more or less as I defined them, but that Grimes, not making these distinctions, regards the dictionary's definitions as being marred by a "frustrating circularity" (260).

[21] Not in all languages is it necessary to use one term twice. For example, Dutch makes the distinction between *rituaal* (the script) and *ritueel* (the action, ceremony), the latter of which could be used for the last concept in my list.

[22] This is not an arbitrary choice; it is the consequence of the methodological guideline formulated above regarding the preference for a one-to-one relationship between terms and concepts. Since the term 'ceremony' was never used to refer to any other concept than what I propose here, it would be unacceptable to propose to use it differently. The term 'ritual', however, was surely used not only as a synonym of 'ceremony' but also to refer to other concepts and thus may be proposed to be restricted to one or more of those. I do not have the illusion that the scholarly world will be eager to follow this proposal, but from a methodological point of view it remains preferable.

distinction between what we used to call 'rituals' in the first half of the twentieth century (and 'ceremony' in the nineteenth), on the one hand, and those phenomena we have come to include under the term in the last few decades, on the other. As Catherine Bell says:

> The comparison of ritual to all sorts of dramatic spectacles or structured improvisation effectively demonstrates shared features and similar processes. At the same time, such comparisons often . . . fail to account for the way in which most cultures see important distinctions between ritual and other types of activities.[23]

And Ronald Grimes expresses the same uneasiness with the current situation, reminding us that "[g]enerally, priests think they are engaged in ritual; generally, physicians deny that they are".[24] He then proposes to call the traditional ceremonies 'rites' and the other ones 'ritualizations' (*idem*). Obviously, I do not appreciate that choice of terms, the first one for the reason explained above, and the second one because the term used here to refer to a product, instinctively rather refers to the process of creating such a product. So I see Grimes' proposal as introducing only further confusion. Nevertheless, I agree that we should keep in mind the desirability to have two terms which distinguish between the two sets of phenomena.

How to Create a Definition of 'Rituals'

In this section, the intention is *not* to propose a generally applicable definition of the term 'ritual(s)' but to show how one could proceed if one wanted to construct a definition of this term for the purpose of a specific project (which, in my opinion, is very wise to do).

The first step is to make a collection of characteristics that may be used. These can usually be found in the existing literature.[25] In the case of 'ritual(s)', one might think of the following.

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[23] Bell 1997, 76.

[24] R.L. Grimes, *Deeply into the Bone; Re-Inventing Rites of Passage* (Life Passages 1; Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, 2000), 26.

[25] A list of definitions of 'ritual' from which such characteristics can be drawn, is given in Platvoet 1995, 42–45. This list gives definitions, e.g., by A. van Gennep, É. Durkheim, R. Firth, E. Leach, S.F. Nadel, J. Goody, C. Geertz, V.W. Turner, J.W. Fernandez, R. Bocock, R. Delattre, S.J. Tambiah, J. van Baal, W.E.A. van Beek, R.L. Grimes, J.G. Platvoet, Th.P. van Baaren, B. Kapferer, J.S. La Fontaine,

Rituals are:

* culturally constructed; traditionally sanctioned
* behavior; praxis; performance; bodily actions and/or **speech acts**
* having its performers as its own audience[26]
* marked off from the routine of everyday life; framed; **liminal; anti-structure**
* **taking place at specific places and/or times**
* **collective; public**
* **multi-medial**
* **creating/organizing society/social groups**
* **creating change/transition**
* **purposeful (for the participants)**
* **repeated**
* STANDARDIZED; REHEARSED
* RELIGIOUS; SACRED; TRANSCENDENT
* RIGID; STEREOTYPED; STABLE
* REDUNDANT; REPETITIVE
* SYMBOLIC; MEANINGFUL (FOR THE PARTICIPANTS)
* COMMUNICATIVE
* NOT INSTRUMENTAL
* PRESCRIBED; HAVING A SCRIPT
* FORMAL(IZED); CONVENTIONAL
* STYLIZED
* STRUCTURED; PATTERNED; ORDERED; SEQUENCED; RULE-GOVERNED
* CHANNELING EMOTION
* GUIDING COGNITION.

While this list does not pretend completeness, it does give a fare share of the characteristics usually found in definitions of 'ritual(s)'. As can be seen from my use of bold and italics, only four of the characteristics are classical Aristotelian ones, whereas most of them are (at least in my opinion) either **polythetic** or FUZZY or BOTH.

F. Staal, E.M. Zuesse, D.I. Kertzer and D. Parkin. Lists of characteristics of rituals are also given in, e.g., Bird 1980, 387–393; Kertzer 1988, 9–12; Grimes 1990 (in the section entitled "Qualities of Ritual"), 13–15; McLeod 1990, 92–94; and M. Housemann, "Was ist ein Ritual?", J.-H. Martin et al. (eds), *Altäre. Kunst zum Niederknien* (Düsseldorf, 2001), 48–51.

[26] Which should not be taken to exclude the possibility that the audience is larger than the group of performers.

However, a definition based on the four Aristotelian characteristics alone will not do, because the collection of all 'culturally constructed, traditionally sanctioned, framed performances, having its performers as its own audience' would not distinguish what we normally regard as 'ritual' from much of what we would rather regard as 'play'. So at least some of the other characteristics are also necessary. Therefore, the class of rituals must be defined as a polythetic—though, because it has also four monothetic characteristics, not a fully polythetic—class.

The second step in the process would be to decide on the purpose for which we want to construct our definition, since the use of a term is influenced by the aim and context of the text in which it is used.[27] In this example, I choose as my aim to give a definition of 'ritual(s)' that is useful for comparing certain forms of cultural behavior and for stimulating theorizing about them. The context I choose will be restricted to the Western academic enterprise as practiced in the humanities and social sciences. Once more, I wish to point out that when I proceed here now to construct an example of a definition of 'ritual(s)', that definition is not the aim of this article; it also is by far not the only possible or useful definition of that term. It serves only to illustrate the process I wish to advocate for constructing such definitions. The same holds for the names I will propose to give to the concepts defined: these are not the only possible ones, they just serve as an example for what one could choose (though, obviously, I choose those which I personally prefer).

When, in the past, I constructed a definition of the term 'religions',[28] it turned out to be most practical first to define the adjective ('religious'), and only then the substantive ('religions'), since the scope of the adjective is wider than that of the substantive (for example: Freemasonry defines itself as religious, though not as a religion). Expecting that to be the case here again (namely, that we may

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[27] For example, for a program for a section "Studies of Religions" in a university, one would typically want a broad scope for the term 'religions', whereas if one has to plead in court against a request of a 'sect' (which has been convicted more than once for illegal behavior) for legal recognition as a religion, one might want to use the same term with a narrower scope. See Introvigne, "Religion as claim".

[28] J.A.M. Snoek, "Defining 'Religions' as the Domain of Study of the Empirical Sciences of Religions", J.G. Platvoet and A.L. Molendijk (eds), *The Pragmatics of Defining Religion. Contexts, Concepts and Contests* (Numen Book Series 84; Leiden, Boston, Köln, 1999), 313–333.

encounter ritual behavior also outside rituals), I will now first define the adjective ('ritual' in 'ritual behavior'), and only then the substantive ('rituals'). So ritual behavior could be defined as follows:

> *Ritual behavior* is a particular mode of behavior, distinguished from common behavior. Its performers are (at least part of) its own audience. In general, all human actions can be part of ritual behavior, including speech acts. However, in each particular case the **large majority** of these will be traditionally sanctioned as proper ritual actions. **Most** ritual behavior takes place at specific places and/or at specific times. **Most** ritual behavior is MORE formally stylized, structured, and standardized than **most** common behavior. **Most** ritual behavior is BASED ON a script. **Most** ritual behavior is TO SOME EXTENT purposeful and symbolically meaningful for its participants. **At least those** playing an ACTIVE part consider themselves to be participating in non-common behavior.

In this definition, I have indicated again the terms—included intentionally—which qualify a certain characteristic as being either **polythetic** and/or FUZZY. As a result, all of the now following definitions, which are directly or indirectly based on this definition of ritual behavior, inherit this polythetic and fuzzy nature.

Having defined ritual behavior, it is now possible to define behavior that is similar, but yet not quite identical to it, as follows:

> Common behavior, which shows similarities with ritual behavior, may be referred to as *ritual-like behavior*.

Surely, it is often fruitful to study such behavior as if it were ritual behavior; but under the aforementioned definition of ritual behavior, it would not *be* that.

Starting from this definition of ritual behavior, the next step is to define some substantives:

> A *rite* is the performance of an indivisible unit of ritual behavior.

> A *ceremony* (or ritual) is a sequence of one or more rites, together framed by transitions from common to ritual, and from ritual to common behavior. These transitions are clearly recognizable for the participants; they may range from instantaneous to longer, more-or-less standardized processes.

The key words here are 'performance' and 'framing', respectively. The fact that both of these are introduced in this context without any qualification, which would indicate that they are seen as polythetic or fuzzy, means that if either one of these is lacking, these definitions would not allow the behavior concerned to be called a

'ceremony' (or 'ritual'). It would be 'ritual-like behavior' at best. If the definition just formulated is accepted as applying to the term 'ceremony' rather than 'ritual', then it is possible to define 'ritual' unambiguously again, namely:

> A *ritual* is a prescription (written or otherwise) for a particular ceremony.

But if we instead follow the current habit of using 'ritual' as a synonym of 'ceremony',[29] we would have to call this, for example, a *script for a ritual* (the qualification being necessary to distinguish it from, say, a *script for a play*). So, again, my aim here is not to propose any particular definitions so much as to point out how such definitions can be constructed in such a way as to create useful terms for scholarly language.

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[29] There are some exceptions to this rule. For example, according to Turner, "Ceremony *indicates*, ritual *transforms*" (V.W. Turner 1982a, 80). But that hardly helps to solve the current general terminological confusion.

RITUAL AND OTHER FORMS OF SOCIAL ACTION

Dietrich Harth

Preliminary Remarks

Ever since Émile Durkheim's studies of *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (1912), cultic practices, that is, ritual practices, have been the objects of concept formation not only in the study of religion but in the social sciences as well. It is worth noting that Durkheim preferred to talk of the "religious life" rather than religion and that he selected as his paradigm a culture far removed from and quite alien to Western civilization, namely the world of the Australian aborigines (as described by ethnographic literature). Religious life encompasses far more than the body of beliefs and interpretation of a specific doctrine of salvation. It is, in Durkheim's words, the source of all "major social institutions" and a means to implement social cohesion.[1]

There is no doubt that much has changed in the world since Durkheim's time and thus in the sciences of society, man, and culture. Nonetheless, this has in no way made Durkheim's insights—which are part and parcel of any history of the scientific reconstruction of ritual—irrelevant. Taking up these insights in the self-critical reflection of contemporary scientific discourse can certainly guard research against one-sided culturalist ascriptions or positivist traps. For the thesis that *ritual* is responsible for the constitution of specific forms of social solidarity[2] is certainly a product of the modern conceptual world. Moreover, it is a thesis that can be empirically

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[1] É. Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (1912) (New York, 1965), 466.

[2] In *Action Theory and the Human Condition* (New York, London, 1978), 213, T. Parsons describes ritual, in a passage on Durkheim, as a device for producing social solidarity.

corroborated in terms of the symbolic politics of those wielders of power who compete for influence over the hearts and minds of our contemporaries. For a long time now salvational doctrines have no longer been restricted to churches and denominations; they are also found in the programs and activities of political religions (in Eric Voegelin's sense),[3] in *civil religion*, and in the promises of happiness of those sectarian cultural revolutions which, in the name of a rather narrow-minded idea of purity, misuse cultural differences as a political weapon. In all the cases cited, ritual options boom, since they are very well suited for couching claims to power within society in terms of the medium of symbolic action. For this allows the translation of the imagination-based contents of these secular religions into something visible, while actually hiding these contents. It does not make any difference here whether these secular religions adopt old ritual traditions, combine them in a new way, or simply quote them for propaganda purposes. For in this context 'ritual' means getting beyond mere conventions—in the sense of institutional continuity—in order to invent a program of symbolic action that aims at reproducibility, which gives the performer the satisfaction of renewing the meaning (*Sinn*) of his or her collectively shared world in the performance he or she enacts.

In the investigation of contemporary uses of language, however, it is almost impossible to detect a binding, usage-regulating correlation between the term 'ritual' and the forms of religious and pseudo-religious practice. This holds for all European languages that have borrowed *ritus* from the Latin and adapted it to their own morphologies. For this reason I shall use here and in the following the adjectival form as a noun 'the ritual' (*das Rituelle*)[4] in order to designate a distinctive, though not yet defined property of forms of action that is found in both well-formed ritual practice and in the open modus of ritualized social action. Whether this refers only to something formal in character, as dictionary entries imply, or, posed more generally, to the question of what the ritual (*das Rituelle*) is cannot be stated at this point. The aim of the following essay is, first of all, to learn something about the semantic range of the current

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[3] E. Voegelin, *Die politischen Religionen* (1938) (München, 1993).
[4] Translator's note: This distinction is not readily available in English, since the adjectival and substantive forms are both 'ritual'.

scientific concepts of ritual—through a critical reading of specific examples from academic language games, particularly those of the social and cultural sciences (which today are practically indistinguishable)—in order to be able to draw theoretically useful conclusions. It is necessary to bear in mind, however, that there is no such thing as the *one and only* socio-cultural world, and thus there is nothing exclusively unequivocal in the concrete use of the terms. On the contrary, there are as many worlds as there are meaning-constituting and internally meaningful theoretical languages. And even this claim holds only in relation to those terms of reference created by the organization of science within one's own culture.

If one considers ritual action as a variant of social action, and this is in fact one of the premises of the arguments articulated here, then one cannot avoid deploying some of the basic conceptual building blocks of sociological action theories.

The Ambiguity of Social Action

It is practically impossible to distinguish the ritual (*das Rituelle*) from social action.[5] For if one follows Max Weber, social action is nothing but a "meaningful (*sinnhafte*) orientation of one's own action to that of the action of an other".[6] Social action, if it is to be distinct from mere behavior, is always constituted in terms of norms and meaning that, according to our definition, also hold for ritual praxis.[7] But this is exactly what is disputed by anthropologists. According to one widely discussed thesis, rituals are "pure activities" without meaning, purpose, or usefulness, or, at the very least, lacking in intentional meaning.[8] It seems to me that a basic ambiguity in the concept of action per se is responsible for this contradiction.

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[5] For Edmund Leach, the ritual (*das Rituelle*) is a property of social action per se since it encompasses the communicative and expressive functions of 'behavior'; cf. Leach 1968, 520–526.

[6] M. Weber, *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* (Tübingen, 5th ed., 1972), 11.

[7] The constitutive interrelation between the norm-, meaning-, and rule-bound character of social action forms the foundation of an essay in basic theory by U. Oevermann, "Regelgeleitetes Handeln, Normativität und Lebenspraxis. Zur Konstitutionstheorie der Sozialwissenschaften", in J. Link, T. Loer, and H. Neuendorff (eds), *'Normalität' im Diskursnetz soziologischer Begriffe* (Heidelberg, 2003), 183–217.

[8] Staal 1979.—Some theories deny that ritual action has any intentional meaning

If one stays clear of all solipsistic conceptions, then every action makes use of impersonal forms—that is, conventional or traditional patterns of action—but in the performance of the act itself is at the same time a factor of invention and change. In the radical version advanced by the philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre: "Every action is a creative project".[9] This is a reversal of the teleological view in which action is interpreted, to the extent that it is not anomic, as the unquestioned fulfillment of a pregiven plan, a preconceived intention, a carefully considered project, a set rule. For this reason the postulated orientation towards meaning (*Sinnorientierung*) should not be understood as if the actor were always the master of his or her actions. Rather, he or she is *carried along* by the action, which develops its own inner dynamics, an experience whose uncanny sides have aroused fascination in literature from Sophocles' *Oedipus* to the heroes of Kafka's novels. It may also be an experience to which that paradox of intentionless intentionality applies which Humphrey and Laidlaw seek to place at the foundation of ritual action.[10] However, there is nothing in this heteronomous definition of action that would distinguish the ritual (*das Rituelle*) from the social as such. It points instead to something very general, a dimension that is not at the actor's disposal, one that may explain why, in the midst of the performance of any given action, the actor's own workings can never be entirely transparent to him- or herself and why actors are never capable of naming all the normative and meaning-constituting factors that condition their actions. In sociology this thesis has gained recognition above all in the work of Pierre Bourdieu, who nevertheless would not like to deny that even seemingly random action possesses an immanent rationality.[11] The impression that *something*

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whatsoever. Careful discussion of this standpoint can be found in Humphrey and Laidlaw 1994, 93, where the following definition is given: "Intentional meaning is not what someone intended to do before doing it, but what they understood themselves to be doing as they did it, their reflexive understanding of their conduct which is constitutive of the action as action."

[9] J.-P. Sartre, *Cahiers pour une morale* (Paris, 1983), 524. Cf. also H. Joas, *Die Kreativität des Handelns* (Frankfurt a. M., 1996).

[10] Humphrey and Laidlaw 1994, 99: "In ritual you both are and are not the author of your acts."

[11] P. Bourdieu, *Le sens pratique* (Paris, 1980), 85: "Il y a une *économie des pratiques*, c'est-à-dire une raison immanente aux pratiques, qui ne trouve son 'origine' ni dans les 'decisions' de la raison comme calcul conscient ni dans les déterminations de mécanismes extérieurs et supérieurs aux agents."

happens to you while you act, is thus comparable to the utterance of a statement whose beginning was consciously chosen by the speaker but whose meaningful organization and semantic-pragmatic aim can first be established or assessed on a metacommunicative level after completion of the performance. Herein lies a basic indeterminacy of practice for the actors, an indeterminacy that was already reflected in the oldest theories of action. On the one hand, this indeterminacy grants action a potential scope and leeway; on the other, it encumbers it with incalculable risks. At the same time, the process of action cannot be undone after the fact; its consequences are irreversible.

This aporia, whose traditional lines of development in theory are reconstructed by Hannah Arendt in the fifth chapter of her great work *The Human Condition* (1958), marks the threshold that anyone who chooses to participate in the social world must cross. Decisive here is the insight into the constitutive conditions of action, an insight closely connected to this aporia. For it is not only that each individual's capacity for action is formed in the framework of social processes (socialization). The ability to anticipate the expectations of others in order to minimize not only the risks of indeterminacy but also the heteronomy of the action situation is the result of concerted social efforts. To put it in positive terms: this anticipatory competence that allows one to maximize the chances of autonomous decisions in action is also the result of concerted interactive efforts within society.

An Aside on Ethical Questions

The question now arises as to whether it is the recognition of the implied heteronomous sides of social action that first requires the solidarity with the other that is associated with the predicate of ethically 'good' action. This predicate refers, of course, to a normative framework that signals that 'good' action is not something that can be taken for granted. This brings us face to face with the ambivalence of the norm of solidarity, which the formality of the ritual (*das Rituelle*) can in no way change. For—contrary to what Durkheim apparently still imagined—the ritual (*das Rituelle*) is in no way a reliable guarantee for a solidarity that in a moral sense is something positive. One need call to mind only the readiness, ritually induced under conditions of tyranny, to sacrifice individual freedom to the

idol of collective will—or, put in another way, to practice a solidarity of blind allegiance. Perhaps this provides a negative example for the fact that the concept of action consists of more than the mere implementation of established rules of order. If the strict adherence to such rules of order is involved, we tend to view it as a case of normatively regulated modes of behavior that fall under custom, convention, or morality, where violations are punished with sanctions. In any event, the question of the (culturally specific) criteria of 'good' action is relevant, which is in fact obvious since the problem of moral judgment is in no way separable from the definition of the concept of action. This interrelation appears to be repressed in the scientific literature on ritual action; for example, in the work of Victor Turner, who often reinterprets the clear use of force in some ritual practices in the sense of a blind justification of social violence, according to which the condition for the successful passage from one form to another form of organization of collective social life lies in the ritually staged physical humiliation of the individual.

For this reason ritual action as social type is in no way free of the ambiguity of action in society referred to above. Quite the contrary: ritual and the use of force go together all too often, and the symbolic aspect of the ritual (*das Rituelle*) seems to be conducive in these cases to the combination of ritual and force, something that can be described as the shifting of the perpetrator's culpability to a third party that exerts imperatives—to a god, honor, country, cultural purity, and so on. Ritual abuse of children, ritualized torture, so-called honor killings to reestablish the clan's purity of blood, and not least acts of war make up the great terror scenario of a very contemporary *negative* ritualism,[12] not to mention the fact that hardly any forms of ritualization are more exaggerated than those destructive practices employed by political tyranny in order to come to power and its bombastic practices of self-presentation as public spectacle.[13]

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[12] I use the term 'ritualism' in the sense of an ideological overdetermination of ritual and ritualized forms of action. See J.R. Noblitt and P.S. Perskin, *Cult and Ritual Abuse: Its History, Anthropology, and Recent Discovery in Contemporary America* (Boulder, rev. ed., 2000); C. van Eck, *Purified by Blood: Honour Killings Among Turks in the Netherlands* (Amsterdam, 2003); and B. Ehrenreich, *Blood Rites: Origins and the History of the Passions of War* (New York, 1997).

[13] Cf., e.g., the papers on Italian and German fascism in S. Behrenbeck and A. Nütznadel (eds), *Inszenierungen des Nationalstaats. Politische Feiern in Italien und Deutschland seit 1860/71* (Köln, 2000).

The Ritual Tempering of Everyday Risks

Ritual forms of action that are not oriented towards sanctionable imperatives but that still produce and support cooperative attitudes already exist, according to many sociologists, throughout the societal microspaces of the everyday world. They are not confined to certain opaque, everyday practices of a highly formalized character, but include above all such socially integrative actions as the everyday-ritual forms of greeting that fall under the narrower term of 'symbolically mediated interaction'. From this perspective, social action appears as a rule-bound variant of communicative negotiation that is more or less ritualized according to a given situation, which sets into motion microstructural processes of societal creation of meaning, though without simply repressing the risks involved. In fact, with the help of ritual formality these dangers can be articulated and averted at the same time.[14]

To cite one prominent theory, Erving Goffman contends that the concept of "ritual order" is suitable for designating those symbolic control mechanisms that actors customarily employ in order at least to lessen if not to avoid the risks of loss of face and loss of personality that unavoidably arise in everyday face-to-face situations. The ritual design of such situations, he argues, allows the creation of a balance, an equilibrium between distance (detachment) and proximity (closeness) as it does in the interplay on stage.[15] When Goffman uses the term 'sacred', which he introduced into social practice to indicate the point at which the indefinable or unspeakable risks at work in interpersonal action are intensified and come to a head, he implies that the establishment of a "ritual order" is more than just a simple process of reciprocal control of self and other. On this premise, it could also be understood as that third party (outside of self and other) that arises *between* those resident tendencies to order towards which the action of interacting subjects normally is oriented.

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[14] Cf. A. Strauss, *Negotiations* (San Francisco, 1978); on everyday rituals, Soeffner 1992. On the order-producing, institutional function of ritual action, R. Franzpötter, *Organisationskultur. Begriffsverständnis und Analyse aus interpretativ-soziologischer Sicht* (Baden-Baden, 1997), and G. Melville (ed.), *Institutionalität und Symbolisierung. Verstetigungen kultureller Ordnungsmuster in Vergangenheit und Gegenwart* (Köln, Weimar, Wien, 2001).

[15] The performance of "ritual equilibrium" defuses the conflict latent in every encounter: Goffman 1967, 19–20.

This opens up a space for social cooperation that abounds with ethical issues; Goffman's index of corresponding forms of ritualization at the microlevel of everyday life is practically inexhaustible.[16]

One can summarize Goffman's phenomenology as a depiction of actors who respond to the uncertainties of social interaction with greater or lesser degrees of self-presentation or self-ritualization. In this way, 'meaningful' action (*sinnhaftes Handeln*) is directly linked to the meaning-constituting, symbolic processes of stage and ritual performance.[17] The advantage of this assumption is that symbolic action is not to be understood as an instrument for achieving certain goals but as an act of interpreting the world—in other words, as a means of interpreting the relationships between social actors. The disadvantage lies in the blurring of the boundaries that separate ritual and theater in the sense of genres of symbolic action.

The Usefulness of the Stage Model

It is no accident that Goffman employs the stage model to explain the phenomenological forms of social practice. Concepts such as 'plot', 'play', 'role', 'gesture', 'expression', 'mimesis', 'scene', and 'framing', but also 'ritual' are—at least in the context of the old world theater tradition—constitutive elements of this model. The stage model has long been the meeting point for theories of social and ritual action. The advantages are apparent, since this model provides recourse to an elaborate poetics of action, which in practically systematic fashion takes account of a great number of those factors that—in a complex interplay of institution, space, time, actors, observers, texts, things (props), and symbolic media—produce a delimited practice that can be related to culturally preformed and at the same time institutionally linked genre rules of action: a political or religious assembly, a marriage, a play, a banquet, a liturgy, a court proceeding, and so on. Moreover, it is implicit in this model to inter-

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[16] Rituals of courting, behaving, avoidance, submission, courtesy, apology, exchange, and so on. Overview in H. Willems, *Rahmen und Habitus. Zum theoretischen und methodischen Ansatz Erving Goffmans: Vergleiche, Anschlüsse und Anwendungen* (Frankfurt a. M., 1997).

[17] Cf. also H.-G. Soeffner, *Auslegung des Alltags – Der Alltag der Auslegung* (Frankfurt a. M., 1989), 150.

pret action that occurs according to both simultaneous (synchronic) and successive (diachronic) forms of motion and sequential orders. For the analysis of synchrony, the observer perspective can orient itself in terms of the spatial metaphors of the 'field' (Bourdieu) and 'frame' (Goffman) of action, whereas diachrony takes as its subject the temporality of the occurrence and directs the investigative glance toward the sequence of action and its phases, pauses, and jumps understood in the sense of a performance. The all-pervasive dimensions of space and time are at the same time renewed indications of the dependency of actions on conditions not fully at the command of the actors themselves; they are part of that 'reality' that resists action, against which action struggles to become what Sartre termed a "creative project".

Performance and Performatives

To gain a more precise understanding of this, I shall take the perspective of performance theory. Once again, we are faced with ambiguity, since within the context implied here performance stands for an apparently wide range of phenomena of social, linguistic, and aesthetic action as well as technical achievements.[18] An older and, in our context, promising definition of those performances that should be considered part of the complex of cultural practice and *poiesis*, and thus encompass the domains of art and religious ritual, is completely oriented towards the stage model. On this view, the individual parameters—the preconditions of the contextual framework and patterns of endogenous action—form a cluster in which the creative interaction among actors and things produces the cultural order: "a beginning and end, an organized program [. . .], a set of performers, an audience and a place and occasion of performance".[19] The terminological association of 'cultural performance' comes into play here as the designation of a change in analytical perspective. From this new vanishing point, the cultural orders are not perceived as

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[18] An overview of the multiple uses of this term in the literature is provided by U. Wirth, "Der Performanzbegriff im Spannungsfeld von Illokution, Iteration und Indexikalität", in U. Wirth (ed.) 2002, 9–60.

[19] M. Singer (ed.), *Traditional India: Structure and Change* (Philadelphia, 1959), xiii.

structures or systems, but rather—precisely by applying the stage model—as sequences of action that unfold dynamically and are situationally defined, well-ordered, sensuously fashioned, and produced interactively.

The preference of the stage model in an action analysis and interpretation conducted in terms of performance theory should not be understood, however, as simply a polemical rejection of the supposedly one-sided predominance of the text model in the cultural sciences.[20] Above all else it directs attention to the *meaning-constituting* processes of speech and action within the framework of a symbolic order preformed by culture and society. The reference to something preceding the actual implementation of action that is implicit in the term 'performance' (such as a program or script) should not, however, blind one to the room for maneuvering and the imponderables that arise in principle between a plan and its realization. The following definition of this primary concept, which draws attention to one of its essential underlying distinctions, is for this reason especially instructive: "performance [is] the actual execution as opposed to its potential".[21] In any case, by placing the implementation of an action between its potential and its realization, a hiatus is designated. And this underscores the idea once again (this time from the other side) that concrete action has to be viewed as an *intermediary event* in which something occurs that the actor himself cannot fully control or anticipate, something that—in positive terms—is part of the order-transforming creativity of the process of action.

From a socio-cultural point of view, *acting* according to one's own lights can only mean acting out traditional patterns of action (that is, action patterns acquired through social learning processes) as freely as possible and as adaptively as necessary. It only makes sense, however, to talk of performance if action corresponds to the most important criteria provided by the stage model. These include a clearly perceivable frame of action, an observable division of roles (regardless of how unstable), an audience in whose eyes the scene is reflected but that is perfectly capable of moving back and forth between the

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[20] Cf., e.g., D. Conquergood, "Rethinking Ethnography. Towards a Critical Cultural Politics", *Communication Monographs* 58:2 (1991), 179–194.

[21] J. Roach, *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance* (New York, 1996), 3. Roach paraphrases Baumann's lexicon article "Performance", 1989.

positions of participant and observer, and—last but not least—a coherent formal context that makes the action/plot 'readable' for anyone who knows the code.

Aside from performance as art, the concept of 'performance' in cultural studies is nothing more than a product of theory that makes it possible to describe, to 'read', to interpret social practices in terms of 'dramaturgical' or 'dramatological' action.[22] From this perspective, action is perceived neither as the representation of given structures of meaning nor as the synthesis of semiotically decipherable sign processes. What is instead involved is the effort to conceive of the course of action as a suspense-filled form of movement of expressive, communicative, and agonal manifestations that constitute contexts of meaning such that they can be analyzed both in iconic (form-related) and indexical (context-related) terms.[23]

If every kind of social action is analyzable in terms of performance theory (the question always being whether this analysis is worth undertaking), this holds all the more so for ritual practice and ritualized action. With one caveat: in precisely the latter case, performance can also be understood differently, namely as a construct of communications theory. Thus speech act theory terms certain utterances, specifically *declarative* ones, 'performatives'. A frequent linguistic quality of declarative sentences is their connection to the adverb 'hereby' and not infrequently to the formalistic "I hereby declare . . .".[24] It is not particularly difficult to recognize the ritual quality of such set phrases, for as a rule they signal the beginning or the end of a ritual, or at least a more or less ritualized social action. Some examples

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[22] For a discussion of several distinctions between the concepts of performance relevant to aesthetics as compared to cultural studies from the standpoint of drama theory, see E. Fischer-Lichte, "Verwandlung als ästhetische Kategorie. Zur Entwicklung einer neuen Ästhetik des Performativen", in E. Fischer-Lichte, F. Kreuder, and I. Pflug (eds), *Theater seit den 60er Jahren. Grenzgänge der Avantgarde* (Tübingen, Basel, 1998), 21–91. Ethnological remarks are found in Rao and Köpping 2000.

[23] A text that is cited repeatedly here is Goffman's *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (Garden City, N.Y., 1967). An interesting ethnosyntactic distinction between iconic and indexical meaning is found in C. Goddard, "Ethnosyntax, Ethnopragmatics, Sign-Functions, and Culture", N.J. Enfield (ed.), *Ethnosyntax. Explorations in Grammar and Culture* (Oxford, 2002), 52–73.

[24] J.R. Searle, "How Performatives Work", *Linguistics and Philosophy* 12 (1989), 535–558, here 547: "Performatives are declarations because they satisfy the definition of a declaration. The definition is that an utterance is a declaration if the successful performance of the speech act is sufficient to bring about the fit between words and world, to make the propositional content true."

are: the opening and closing of an assembly or event; acts of nam-
ing, appointment, investiture, endowment, and establishment; testa-
mentary dispositions, acts of enfeoffment, bestowal, and consecration;
revocations of such acts; the taking of an oath or making of a vow;
and the situations in which contracts are agreed upon ('closed') or
terminated. The term 'performance' in this context stands for the
congruence of verbal and nonverbal actions. The spoken declaration
functions in such cases in the same way as an act of settlement, of
establishing something, since it defines a frame of action and in this
sense distinguishes between two structures of order. Nonetheless, this
intermediary action, articulated via speech act, does not, as is some-
times claimed, constitute "new realities".[25]

Admittedly, every declarative act can, due to its obligational char-
acter, function as a cause that has concrete consequences in case of
a violation of the obligation entered into (for instance, breach of
contract or perjury). But frequently it only confirms authority struc-
tures and the boundaries that exist between distinct realms of action,
realms that are as a rule established institutionally. An uninvolved
third party may thus recognize in these practices the following char-
acteristics of classic ritual processes (which, incidentally, encompass
far more than just purely linguistic events and thus can be described
in terms of the stage model): delegation of the speech act on the
basis of collectively recognized authority, the formality of verbal and
nonverbal acts of initiation and closing, atmospheric shaping of the
scene of action (often only intimated symbolically), gestures of approval
by participants, and so on. Declarations are threshold phenomena,
that is, they mark the thresholds between different realms of action
and are thus very well suited for attributing (as well as denying) per-
sons and things the meaning that is sedimented in the classification
processes of the social world and that forms the reciprocal percep-
tions of actors.

For a Poetics of the Ritual (das Rituelle)

To get a better grasp of the significant differences between the gen-
eral theoretical concept of social action and the more specific forms

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[25] A claim made by U. Bohle and E. König, "Zum Begriff des Performativen in
der Sprachwissenschaft", *Paragrana* 10:1 (2001), 13–34, here 22.

of ritual practice (in spite of all the features they share), I propose the development of a poetics of the ritual (*das Rituelle*) that can give adequate articulation to the multifactorial scope of the action type it addresses. Potential content here is not limited to the rules of design and creation of verbal and nonverbal action but also includes the action *situations* typical for ritual and their *institutional* preconditions. Every social action without exception can be ritualized. If this occurs, it brings the organization of everyday life, regardless how loosely it may be structured, into contact with those intermediary worlds of the imaginary and the symbolic that either give legitimacy to well-established social meaning or subvert its very foundation. Discussion in this context, however, should take up particularly those rigorously composed ritual practices (of the life cycle, the religious calendar, or political commemoration, for instance) that are institutionally anchored and can be accepted as fairly clearly established genres of symbolic action.

Whereas the primary focus of this paper has been on the general forms of social action, the remainder of the discussion will focus on some of the approaches that make reference to the specific formal criteria of ritual events. The well-known semantic affinity between the ritual (*das Rituelle*), on the one hand, and the practices of religious cults and the inviolability of the sacred, on the other, has motivated researchers again and again to suspect that a power to provide foundations for such organizational creations is inherent in the ritual (*das Rituelle*), which, in the sense of a cosmological totality, blends the particular with the universal.[26] If from this standpoint the ritual (*das Rituelle*) is built up into a moment in the genesis of certain types of worldviews, a different direction in research focuses on the clear surface features of ritual formality in order to equip the processes of design with an especially effective power of interpretation. The basic thesis of this line of research can be summarized as follows: In the performance of forms of ritual action, the actors demonstrate that they seek to harmonize with that symbolic world whose spelled-out images are anchored in the institutionally crystallized foundations—in the conventions, statutes, and "holy" texts—of the ritual culture under investigation. On this assumption, rule compliance

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[26] R.A. Rappaport goes the furthest here, advocating a ritual-theoretical universalism in his book *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity* (Rappaport 1999).

appears as an approval index, and the physical enactment of the formative acts appears as the heightened pictorial realization (in the sense of iconicity) of that potential for organization and effect, the updating of which, realized not by discourse but by ritual performance, reinterprets the respective social world. In other words, on this view ritual action is not a representation of the rules of the normative order of social existence (although it can give expression to the normative order), but is instead the rule-governed 'intermediary event' of their deployment, their institutionalization and symbolic legitimation.[27] Pierre Bourdieu speaks here in a generalizing manner of "*rites d'institution*", and the universalist Roy A. Rappaport speaks, with reference to the performance of ritual, of the "tacit social contract" as "*the* basic social act".[28] Especially the emphasis made in the last quote I consider to be exaggerated: we should remind ourselves that under the conditions of modernity ritual has lost some of its foundational powers in society, which may have been inherent in it under different, premodern conditions of life.

Worth noting in this context is the emphasis on form with regard not only to verbally based action but also to bodily based action in the sense of nonverbal 'language'. Catherine Bell introduced—as a correlate to 'social body'—the term 'ritual body' into the debate. This term ascribes to the physical body a sense of ritual acquired in learning processes, with the help of which subjects are supposedly in a position to give shape to scenes of social action that transcend everyday life.[29] It is a moot point whether this shift to the physical is helpful. Form is both: *morphé* and *eidos*, sensuously perceivable form and a concept-model of well-shaped order. The two combine and meet in form-giving creation, and what the analysis should focus upon is a question of viewpoint. Nor is it the case that content retreats behind optical presence; instead, the form's surface should be conceived as the physiognomically 'readable' exterior of an inner

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[27] I take the concept of 'intermediary event' (*Zwischenereignis*) from B. Waldenfels, *Ordnung im Zwielicht* (Frankfurt a. M., 1987), 47: "As an *intermediary event*, I consider something that, in taking place, links itself to something else, and does so in such a way as to be a response to its stimulus and demands. Insofar as this holds for every utterance and every action, each would be an interlocutionary or interactive event."

[28] Cf. Bourdieu 1982, and Rappaport 1999, 135–138, respectively.

[29] Bell 1992, 98–117.

form. Indeed, it appears that the physiognomic aspect deserves particular attention as a special feature of ritual practice. For in the formality of ritual action an interpretive reference to material and content *shows itself* (in the Wittgensteinian sense).[30] If, for instance, the physical body becomes the medium of the performance, it may be interpretable as a 'ritual body'. In my view it is decisive here to understand the ritual action acted out with the body as an act of interpretation, which cannot be performed discursively but only through the distinct form of action itself.[31] The readability of this act may interest the outside interpreter of the event; the person caught up in the action, however, is only moved by its conformity with the immediate context (with the authority conducting the ritual and with the group acting along with him or her). It is fair to speak of an 'empty ritual' if the form of action, in conjunction with the contextual point of reference, has lost its functions of interpretive embodiment, a loss that includes the special 'formulaic' truth claim, which finds expression in the rhythmic repetition of specific patterns of action.[32] There is nothing particularly surprising in the fact that ritual form can be separated from ritual content. This phenomenon can be observed today wherever ritual comes back with a vengeance as a lifestyle accessory.

The ritual nexus between the form in which the action is carried out and the interpretation embodied in this performance refers to both the spoken word and nonverbal 'language'. It thus encompasses both practice and *poiesis*: *poiesis* in the meaning of the symbolically effective design and creation, *practice* in the meaning of the successful or unsuccessful action. In ritual both act together in a practically inseparable way: the constructs of *poiesis*—for instance, the atmospheric and architectonic fashioning of the scene and the incorporation of highly symbolic paraphernalia (such as costumes, relics, icons, [sacrificial] offerings)—lead the actors to situate themselves in relation

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[30] What holds for the form of the proposition should also hold for the form of symbolic action; cf. L. Wittgenstein, *Tractatus logico-philosophicus*, 4.022.

[31] Cf. also C.L. Briggs, *Competence in Performance. The Creativity of Tradition in Mexicano Verbal Art* (Philadelphia, 1988), and the observations made in reference to Nepalese ritual practices by M. Gaenszle (2000).

[32] Anthony Giddens referred to it as "formulaic truth" in his "Living in a Post-Traditional Society", U. Beck, A. Giddens, and S. Lash (eds), *Reflexive Modernization: Politics, Tradition and Aesthetics in the Modern Social Order* (Oxford, 1994), 56–109, here 63 and passim.

to the 'other' space, the 'other' time, and to respond in speech and gesture to the materially embodied claims of the ritual topic in question. This response may amount to the imitation and repetition of the patterned actions presented or may deteriorate into a collective performance rhythm in the course of which participating actively is turned into being carried along passively. This is a process that itself can include further transformations in the framework of which the spoken word becomes a thing and the thing becomes the author of someone's else's (sacred) speech.[33] This can go so far that words and sentences distorted to the point of incomprehensibility through rhythmic recitation are ascribed a greater level of truth than grammatically correct speech.[34] An analogous paradox holds for ritualized patterns of action whose customary semantics can be overturned in the performance of rhythmic repetitions such that taxonomy 'runs wild', so to speak, granting actors access to the outer limits of experience. If the performance of customary action is already capable of conveying the experience of passage to the actor, then, according to classical theories, it holds for ritual action that it is this and especially this experience that is supposed to be consciously produced by means of 'ritualization'. How this experience is to be interpreted, however, ultimately depends on the actors. Scholarly interpreters, specialists in generalization, like to make recourse to those models of passage that have arisen in the Van Gennep and Turner line of argumentation. This involves a prescientific decision, however, that harbors sympathy for the belief in magical powers. For no rite of passage *makes* a boy into a man or a sick man healthy. Instead, what it does do for a short period—as Maurice Bloch accurately describes—is to decouple one sphere of reality (that of culture, for instance) from another sphere of reality (for instance, that of the social).[35]

Maurice Bloch compared the criteria of formalized speech acts as they occur in ritual practice to the speech acts of everyday life and

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[33] I use the concept of transformation here solely in reference to the changes in state within ritual practice. To attribute societally transformative powers to rituals appears to me as a rather insignificant form of begging the question (*petitio principii*) of ritual research since every kind of social action has more or less transformative effects.

[34] P. Boyer, *Tradition as Truth and Communication: A Cognitive Description of Traditional Discourse* (Cambridge, 1990), 81.

[35] Bloch 1989, 43. For this reason Bourdieu does not speak of 'passage' in "Les rites comme actes d'institution" (1982) but of 'instituting' and 'boundary-setting'.

posited for the former an obligatory rule-bound character that cul-
minates in a demand for thoroughgoing stylization.[36] Once again,
the emphasis is accordingly on design and the production that builds
upon it. That which is ephemeral, the spoken word, receives—by
way of special, formative artifices (or strategems), which are not infre-
quently akin to those of poetic speech—a peculiar materiality, and
these artifices shift perception away from the meaning of what is
said to the speech event itself. These artifices include repetition,
anaphora, transmutation, duplication, inversion, and parallelism; all
artifices that shift meaning from the level of criticizable, proposi-
tional content to the level of noncriticizable, magical operations, at
the center of which the recursive articulation of formulaic gestures
and utterances is found. Contrary to a widely held prejudice, repe-
titions and set phrases in the ritual context cannot simply be deemed
part of an ossified formalism. On the one hand, ritual practice does
not limit itself in its use of repetition to language and its set phrases,
but also makes use, in its reiteration, of the fashioning of the scene
of action, the choice of paraphernalia, and the bodily conveyed
expressive functions (gestures) of the participants.[37] On the other
hand, ritual repetition is one of the mnemonic devices that does not
stop time but rather *emphasizes* it in order to establish that continu-
ity of order called 'tradition' and that is meant to form a bulwark
against the disintegration of community.[38]

   On these premises ritual (not *ritualized*) speech cannot be conceived
either as a customary speech act or as discourse in the sense of sen-
tences and texts interlinked in an *argument*. A good example is pro-
vided by the declarative utterances referred to above, which customarily
set up a framework within which other declarations in turn find a
place. Let us assume that rituals create community and thus display
an integrative effect that is ephemeral and accordingly in need of
constant renewal through repetition. If this is so, it transpires not on
the basis of statements or conveyed information but by means of
the formative texture of the community's bodily conveyed collective
action. Such action includes not only a harmonization and rhythmic

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[36] Bloch 1989, 19–45.
[37] The cognitive interrelations are discussed by P. Boyer in *Tradition as Truth and Communication*, 13–23 and 91–93.
[38] On the function of ritual practice as a constitutive medium of tradition, see Giddens, "Living in a Post-Traditional Society", 62–74.

coordination of gesture, but also the prosodic figures of speech recitation and—let us not forget—certain situational, frequently theatrical framing conditions. In other words, a ritual community arises in a space that is artificially created by means of the remodeling and, not infrequently, distortion of natural speech and gesture. In this space, stylization and production of form go beyond the constative, communicative, and strategic functions of customary speaking in the direction of the metaphorical, in order to create a level of interpretation upon which—as in an intermediary world—the modes of social category formation can be revitalized and reoriented. If they intend to achieve the desire for normative consensus characteristic of the ritual attitude, they are dependent upon a performative disconnection from the occurrences of everyday life.[39] This is a thesis that I would like to limit in its application only to those actions that, as compositionally thoroughly formed rituals, satisfy the demands made of a genre of symbolic action that is structurally comparable to the genre of onstage dramatic production.[40]

Schismogenesis, or Ritual Becomes Reflexive in Modernity

What holds for any process of stylization or formalization also holds for any given organizational form of ritual action: it can be located on a graded spectrum that ranges from strong to weak in ritual character. Highly ritualized action coincides with 'ritual practice'. This category encompasses all events that manifest themselves as well-composed productions and that as a whole make up an independent genre of symbolic action; the genre designation 'ritual' marks the relative autonomy of this form of action vis-à-vis other possible forms of action. At the opposite end of the spectrum, all the social actions would be listed that possess ritual qualities without associating this with the claim to membership in the genre of symbolic action; I term these 'ritualized actions'. By offering a graduated

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[39] Bloch 1989, 43, speaks in a similar context of the "disconnection which is produced by the mode of communication of ritual".

[40] The comparison refers in particular to the contemporary forms of *improvisational theater*, whose dramatic narratives arise out of the interaction with the audience and that, precisely because of this freedom, has to rely on a relatively strictly formalized art of performance.

model, my primary intent is not to make a diplomatic maneuver in research pragmatics. What is important here is to point out in a heuristic fashion that it pays to make the distinction between *modalities* and *species* of action. Put more simply, there is a big difference between ritualizing an everyday action (in other words, giving it a ritual form) and celebrating a ritual that allows the participants, right from the threshold of the performance onwards, to escape the constraints of the everyday world and enter a sphere of festivity and ceremony.

When the conceptualization of action is at stake, it is of little value to try to establish a rigid terminological framework. Admittedly, types of action can be distinguished according to form and function,[41] but from the perspective of performance theory the transitions, processes, and dynamic movements are the genuine objects of an analytic view. At this point I would like explicitly to draw attention to the term 'dynamics', but in a twofold sense: first, as a term of motion that refers to the processes *within* the ritual occurrence and, second, as a synonym for the cultural and social changes that ritual practices and ritualized action is subject to in the course of history.

We are indebted to Gregory Bateson for the neologism 'schismogenesis', with which he sought to conceptualize the paradox of *unity in diversity* taken up again and again in numerous anthropological studies of ritual.[42] In this view the ritual organization of turning points in time in the life-cycle, calendar, or social sense responds to the inexorably changing character of life. It does so by setting limits in a formal process of ritual collective action and, at the same time, lessening the concomitant risk of change to the established order with an appeal to a unity-granting primeval scene (such as a foundational or creational myth). To paraphrase briefly, in this context schismogenesis designates a breach in the social order (which is impending or has already occurred) that is balanced out by the performance of ritual that employs a time-transcending interpretive structure and thus can suddenly change, without harm, into the genesis of a transformed configuration of order.

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[41] See the construction of formally and pragmatically relevant types in J. Habermas, *Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns* 1: *Handlungsrationalität und gesellschaftliche Rationalisierung* (Frankfurt a. M., 1981), 440−460.

[42] G. Bateson, *Naven* (Palo Alto, 2d ed., 1958), 175.

It makes no sense, however, to restrict this effect to ritual action alone. I would argue that schismogenesis, in the sense alluded to above, is a phenomenon that accompanies social action per se. For in every act of *inter*action, which is to say, social action, there exists the latent potential for disruption and breakdown. The contradiction can be given an even more radical formulation, once the *longue-durée* processes of sociocultural evolution become the focus of attention. The interplay between differentiation and integration referred to by our 'magic word' is—that is, in this perspective—a sign particularly of the waves of socialization that mark modern life. Since the early period of European modernity, the sociocultural dialectic of differentiation and integration represents one of the key topics in historical thought. It is thus a component of that preparatory phase of modernity in which the gradual transition to the post-traditional form of society took place. "People can only be united through separation! Only through continuous separation can they be kept unified!"— This is how a classic text of Enlightenment philosophy rendered this dialectic.[43]

There is yet another argument that makes it possible to apply the magic word of schismogenesis to the macrocosm of sociohistorical change, including ritual traditions. For from the Archimedean point of post-traditional societies, the anthropological studies that pursue the trail of ritual in premodern or nonmodern life-forms have a museum-like character to them. What we associate today with the term 'ritual' in an emphatic and nostalgic sense are often phenomena that have been freed from or (with ethnographic care) cut out of contexts of the creation and maintenance of tradition: remnants of past life-forms whose precariously reconstructed meaning can no longer provide the present (with its pursuit of the open-ended) with any orientation but can be used for political purposes—as second-order rituals. And it is this that gives modern societies all the more reason to delegate critical reflection on the "schisms" opening up between old and new to those cultural studies experts whom they maintain in highly subsidized institutions created for precisely that purpose.

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[43] Lessing in the second dialogue from *Ernst und Falk* (1778/1780). On this and its context, cf. D. Harth, *Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, oder Die Paradoxien der Selbsterkenntnis* (München, 1993), 226–231.

Today the powers that form society are dependent neither on tradition nor its ritual transmission. They are instead 'embodied' in institutions, each of which invents its own particular tradition and, if it seems advisable for reasons of organization or power politics, takes the opportunity to give these traditions a ritual cast. Like the traditions they constitute and interpret, the media themselves have also long become reflexive. Ritual citations and inventions have infiltrated practically all of the modern art genres in terms of materials and technique: sculpture and painting use them as remedies in their struggles against conventions and academic art; in music they are present, as transmitted by jazz, as an idiom of creolization; in architecture, as ornament and quotation; in theater and opera, as a desire to win back cultic effects. What is more, ritual design has long been a commercial service with socio-therapeutic and hygienic claims and a specialty of the fashion industry. And there is a feedback loop from ethnographic studies to the consciousness of their previous objects of research, which contributes to theatrical revivals and syncretist mask games. The Australian aborigines whom Émile Durkheim cited as representatives of a prereflexive ritualism in their efforts to promote their land rights make reference to the studies of the same ethnologists with whom their ancestors had to do. It would be self-deceptive and in bad faith if one were to attempt to interpret the search for lost religious or esoteric rituals as a genuine revival of meaningfully oriented traditions. The schism between lived traditions and their excavation for the purpose of a forced revitalization cannot even be bridged ritually.

Anthony Giddens has taken up Paul Boyer's theory of tradition in order to bring that mechanism of reflexivity into play that, as a moment of globalization, has now pervaded, without exception, each and every culture. In post-traditional societies, the 'expert' has now assumed the place of the 'specialist' in the premodern society, who as the 'guardian of tradition' was ascribed the title of 'wise man' and possessed direct access to that formulaic truth that coincided with socially binding, ritually acted-out causal powers.[44] The modern expert does not listen to the voices of the ancestors or to those

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[44] "Those who hold authority [in traditional cultures]—or effectively 'are' authority—in this way do or are so by virtue of their special access to the causal powers of formulaic truth." Giddens, "Living in a Post-Traditional Society", 83.

of nature; he does not have wisdom at his disposal, but has acquired key competencies and is thus a specialist on the basis of theoretically grounded and experimentally tested knowledge that is subject to permanent revision.

It is not difficult to discover behind this sketch the image of the scientifically trained expert who reflects, with the detachment of an analyst, on ritual in early high cultures, in contemporary but alien lifeworlds, and even in his or her own everyday world. What this produces corresponds to the tendencies of post-traditional societies to collect, sort, and compare the most varied cultural patterns and frequently to fit them together into new applicable patterns. This results in a proliferating duplication of concepts and things, which demands ever new classifications, a dynamism, one could say, that has also brought into association that which we designate as 'the ritual' (*das Rituelle*) with fairly free conceptions of cultural improvisation. Victor Turner's project of using the ethnographic bookkeeping of traditional ritual practices of alien cultures as a score in order to track down their performance on the stage of the post-traditional age is a suitable answer to the ubiquity of cultural and scientific reflexivity in our 'second modernity'.[45]

Translated by Neil Solomon

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[45] Turner 1982a, 89–101.

CONCEPTUAL ALTERNATIVES TO 'RITUAL'

Don Handelman

Conceptual alternatives to ritual should shake us out of the complacency of thinking we know what 'ritual' is, how it works, what it does. The study of 'ritual' in anthropology is dominated by two vectors: one posits universal definitions of RITUAL; the other, a plethora of ethnographic instances of 'ritual'.[1] Though each vector, the theoretical and the ethnographic, has its own patterns of the production of knowledge, the effect on the study of ritual (even when unintended) is to posit a meta-level of RITUAL and to adduce numerous ethnographic instances of ritual that contribute to the space of knowledge *within* the meta-level.

This implicit collaboration between RITUAL, understood as a definable given of the human condition, and ethnographic instances of 'ritual' effectively blocks thinking about alternative conceptualizations. Alternative conceptions require comparison. Universal definitions of RITUAL nullify the possibility of comparison before it begins, apart from that among ethnographic instances.[2] Consequently, little critical thought is given to whether the meta-rubric justifies its encompassment of so many diverse ethnographic instances.[3]

Ironically, the ethnographic empiricism of anthropology also makes comparison difficult. Each ethnographic instance of 'ritual' has validity in and of itself. This justifies lodging the instance under the roof rubric of RITUAL, usually in accordance with a monothetic logic of classification. Monothetic classification is one in which each of the categories on a given level of abstraction is exclusive of all others on that level, and inclusive of itself. The level of abstraction is itself

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[1] I use RITUAL to refer to the premise that there is a meta-level that encompasses all ritual, and 'ritual' to refer to ethnographic instances.

[2] This holds as well for the multiplicity of universal definitions, since in its claim to universality each definition totalizes the space for knowledge about 'ritual' within itself.

[3] One signal exception is Goody 1977. Goody is critical of RITUAL, yet does not offer ways out of this monothetic constraint.

subsumed by a higher level, and so forth. In practice this means that each ethnographic case of 'ritual' is situated on the same level of abstraction together with all others, while each case is classified as distinct from and as separated from all the others. Classified implicitly or explicitly on the same level of abstraction, and clearly different from one another, these ethnographic cases necessarily bring into existence the meta-level or meta-category of RITUAL, which then subsumes all the ethnographic cases in keeping with monothetic classification.

Monothetic classification hardly theorizes or problematizes the subject. Instead, it simply opens up still more monothetic slots for ethnographic instances in an ever-widening space of knowledge, all of which is subsumed by the more abstract meta-level of RITUAL, yet without addressing critically the theoretical value of this roof rubric.

Conceptual alternatives to ritual cannot derive from a monothetic basis of classification. The monothetic makes RITUAL the mold in place of which conceptual alternatives are to be sought and to which they must answer. The premise that, unlike 'ritual', phenomena must share common attributes destroys the capacity to compare these phenomena and to question whether they should at all be placed under the roof rubric of RITUAL. I say that there is no such phenomenon as RITUAL and therefore no universal definition that indexes the existence of the non-existent. If there is no overarching rubric, then the presence of ethnographic instances should not be named in terms of this absence. What, then, are these ethnographic phenomena, reported as 'rituals'? As Pierre Smith comments, comparative studies of 'ritual' have lain quite dormant since the energetic efforts of Sir James Frazer.[4] Yet to pursue conceptual alternatives to ritual is hardly a matter of doing just that, for the starting point is itself of uncertain footing.

In the following sections I try not to refer to particular occasions as 'ritual', preferring instead to use the more effacing term 'public event'.[5] I argue the following in this chapter: Universal attributes proposed for RITUAL border on the banal. Recent scholarship in anthropology on universal definitions does not resolve this dilemma. In terms of alternative conceptions, one may do better to think of

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[4] Smith 1982, 103–128.
[5] Handelman 1990; Handelman 1998.

a field of possible forms of 'ritual'. The interior logics of these forms may help explain how these occasions do what they do.

Basic Attributes of the Meta-Category of RITUAL

Thinking about conceptual alternatives should proceed from the premise that there is no meta-category of RITUAL. This premise is strengthened if one argues that attributes used to characterize the meta-level are not especially informative about how 'rituals' or public events operate. What are some of the major attributes? The meta-category is understood first and foremost as the formulator of order, above all through formalization of space, place, time, sequence, behavior. Even Victor W. Turner, who profoundly shifted the study of RITUAL towards the processual, made the formality of behavior basic to his definition.[6] Formalization enables an occasion to be replicated time and again. Furthermore, in its replication a particular occasion is put together from more-or-less similar elements, performed by similar characters, and passes through similar actions. Therefore an event has direction—a fairly well-defined outset that points towards a particular ending. Having direction suggests that intentionality is built into the event—it exists to do something, and this necessarily connects the event to the wider world. Doing something, an event points beyond itself, and is said to be symbolic of something outside itself.[7] The event then is a representation of something outside itself, and so is inalienably connected to that which it represents. A structure or program composed of relationships among symbols can stand temporarily for the wider world.

However, if ritual is representation, then analytical attention is immediately drawn away from the event itself and more to the wider world as the source of explanation of how 'ritual' works. Do these attributes tell us anything beyond what we already know, commonsensically? I doubt it. Yet it is through such commonplace epistemologies that anthropologists theorize about RITUAL and from which they diverge into the welter of specific 'rituals', each labeled

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[6] Turner 1967.

[7] So Turner 1967, 19, argued that "the symbol is the smallest unit of ritual", in other words, its building block.

pragmatically (often functionally) in terms of some particularistic aspect of ethnography.[8]

One must go beyond such formulas to ask tough questions about 'rituals': Is order made? How is order made? What sorts of order are made? Is order a function of the organization itself or of its relationship to the wider world? Are public events informed by interior 'logics' that enable these events to exist in their own right, for limited durations? If such events act on cosmic and social worlds, then how this is done may be related to the logics through which the forms of events are put together. Whether these logics of design are more dynamic or less so is once more a question for comparative research. The project of comparison is integral to the study of forms of public events, as it is not when RITUAL is studied as a universal meta-category.

Two recent formulations of 'ritual' that have attracted attention demonstrate that adherence to an encompassing meta-category, with all its failings, continues apace. I mention these formulations here, but briefly. One is the definition of 'ritual' given by Roy A. Rappaport,[9] and the other, that of Caroline Humphrey and James Laidlaw.[10] Both argue in their own way that RITUAL is unique in what it does.

Rappaport's approach is in keeping with the attributes of ritual discussed above. He defines RITUAL as "the performance of more or less invariant sequences of formal acts and utterances not entirely encoded by the performers."[11] RITUAL, he argues, is a special medium of communication, in and of itself. Rappaport places great store in form, but form that is universal to all 'ritual'.[12] He emphasizes formality as adherence to form, and form as repetitive and relatively invariant. Also invariant are the canonical meta-messages that RITUAL communicates. These are meta-messages invested with enduring values, often perceived as eternal.

Form for Rappaport is structural and invariant rather than processual and variable, and cannot have instrumental or material efficacy. RITUAL is expressive of and for socio-cultural order, yet it is not

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[8] For a partial listing of such *ad hoc* labels, see Handelman 1990, 14.
[9] Rappaport 1999.
[10] Humphrey and Laidlaw 1994.
[11] Rappaport 1990, 24.
[12] Rappaport 1990, 31.

efficacious in the sense of operating actively in and on the worlds that create it. RITUAL is representation, an index both of the immediacy of changing conditions and of perduring moral and cosmic order. As representation, RITUAL lacks the potential to act on the world in order to change it, yet it is made "the social act basic to humanity".[13] Elemental and invariant, this conception kills comparison in its infancy.

Humphrey and Laidlaw are noteworthy because (like Catherine Bell)[14] they problematize the shift from not-ritual to ritual through ritualization, locating the meta-category of RITUAL within this movement. Their focus is the individual agent who acts with subjective intention and purpose in the everyday. They argue that when the agent passes into 'ritual' a qualitative change takes place within him, one that necessarily transforms his intentions and actions. The agent enters 'ritual' by being made compatible with this, by becoming ritualized. Ritualized, the agent need no longer grasp the intentions of another as a social being in order to act and interact. The agent's intentionality is stipulated by the rules that constitute ritualization, and so ritual acts are perceived as archetypal, as elemental.[15] Then the intentions and thoughts of the actor have no impact on the identity of the act performed. The ritualized act appears fully formed, object-like, apart from the ritualized actor, approaching him, apprehended externally by him. The actor is no longer the author of his actions.

Humphrey and Laidlaw argue that this ritualization of action is universal in that "there is something invariant in the difference between ritualized and everyday action."[16] Thus the presence of RITUAL can be identified by its ritualized actions, while the plethora of 'rituals' around the world are left with their usual ethnographic baggage full of functions for and representations of this or that. Universalizing the passage into ritual blocks comparative thought on the character of boundaries, on understandings of space and time, and, of course, on the passage itself.

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[13] Rappaport 1990, 31.
[14] Bell 1992, 90.
[15] Humphrey and Laidlaw 1994, 89, 94.
[16] Humphrey and Laidlaw 1994, 13.

Fields of the Possible

Why do public events exist? The question is hardly facetious, since there are contrasting responses in the history of religions and in anthropology. My own premise is that 'rituals' were invented in order to act on the world, on the cosmos, in predicted ways. This is no small matter when one considers that in the distant past there were few alternatives to this kind of acting on the world in order to change it. My premise presupposes that social orders work on themselves systemically in ongoing ways in order to adapt, correct, and change themselves and their cosmos. The issue is how social orders do so.

I suggest that some public events are crucial loci of these kinds of operations. This position immediately focuses on the relationship between the public event and the social order that creates it, leaving open just what the relationship may be, on the one hand, and on the interior constitution of the event, on the other. Thus public events, within the same society and among societies, differ in how autonomous they are in their own self-organizing capacities. The greater the autonomy, the more the capacity of the public event to act on social order in order to change it. The less the autonomy, the more the public event is a representation of, symbolic of, social order. The view that 'rituals' are representations continues to dominate the analysis of ethnographic cases in anthropology and is deeply embedded in universal definitions of RITUAL, such as those discussed above.

However, the following caveat is necessary. The more social and cosmic orders are tightly synchronized and integrated within one another, the less likely it is that this ordering may form public events to act on itself. By contrast, the more social and cosmic orders are loosely synchronized and integrated with one another, the more likely it is that this ordering may form public events to act on itself. From this it follows that the greater the autonomy of the public event from the wider world, the more likely it is that the event will be organized to effect transformations, through its own operations, that make change in that wider world.

This is still a crude formulation, yet one that points to variable, non-lineal relationships between 'rituals' and societies. From this perspective there are two hypothetical extremes among social orders: One extreme indexes those orders that work on themselves, that form themselves incessantly through public events; the other, those

that do not. The public events associated with these extremes vary in terms of their degrees of autonomy from the social orders that create them. Where the public event has greater autonomy, its form is stronger. In systemic terms the public event is more autopoietic, in other words, more self-organizing and self-sustaining within itself. Where the public event has less autonomy, it is weaker within itself and more representational, more symbolic, more mirroring of social order. Between these two extremes there opens a field of possibilities of stronger and weaker forms of public event that are related to different kinds of relationships between social and cosmic orders.

This kind of thinking constitutes a radical break with much received wisdom in anthropology on two grounds. One is the preparedness to give to public events relatively large degrees of autonomy from social life, through which to act on the latter. The other is the willingness to suspend disbelief in relationships of cause-and-effect that are not lineal, not physical, not contiguous, yet nonetheless are material. In both respects, anthropology is mired in Durkheimian thinking that is the last refuge for linear rationality and that continues to be obsessed with social solidarity as the saving grace of all 'ritual'.

Strange Conjunctions within the Field of the Possible

The field of the possible opens to curious conjunctions of comparison among social orders. Consider a society in which realities are constituted through the tightly woven integration of the cosmic and the social, such that each indexes the other to a high degree, and in which the interiors of macrocosmic and microcosmic bodies are homomorphic. A world of being that (in Jadran Mimica's terms) is powerfully mythopoietic in that it creates, organizes, and transforms itself through its mythic construction. Mimica argues this for the Yagwoia people of Papua New Guinea.[17] The practice of life and living in this mythopoietic cosmos is continually that of cosmic/social

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[17] J. Mimica, *Intimations of Infinity. The Cultural Meanings of the Iqwaye Counting System and Number* (Oxford, 1988); J. Mimica, "The Incest Passions. An Outline of the Logic of the Iqwaye Social Organization", *Oceania* 62 (1991), 34–58, 81–113; J. Mimica. "The Death of a Strong-Great-Bad Man. An Ethnography of Soul Incorporation Among the Yagwoia-Anga of Papua New Guinea" (unpublished, 2002).

reproduction. Mimica writes of this order of being as an ouroboros, the serpent that devours its own tail, that in so doing is also a moebius surface, one that as itself turns into itself becoming itself, over and over again, through infinity. The Yagwoia cosmos, argues Mimica, is the cosmic tree, but the tree whose branches and roots intertwine.

Of particular interest here is that Mimica has referred to the logic of 'rituals' among these people as the continuation of the dynamics of cosmic/social union. In this totalization of cosmic/social order, public events have few degrees of autonomy from the orders of being that creates them. Mimica has spoken of Yagwoia 'rituals' as 'swellings' of the dynamics of cosmic/social order.[18] Yagwoia public events are nodes or foci of the intensification of routine processes, perhaps to accelerate and to focus these processes, but not to transform them. These public events cannot be said to act on cosmic/social order, yet they do act through this ordering in ways that are causal and efficacious for the Yagwoia. Nonetheless, these public events definitely are not representations of the ordering of cosmos, since these 'rituals' are this cosmos, only swollen or concentrated more into prominence.

I want to bring into conjunction with Yagwoia public events others that at first glance have absolutely nothing to say to the actions and dynamics of this tribal people. I am referring to public events of the modern state. The modern state cannot exist without bureaucratic ethos and infrastructure on all its levels. Bureaucracy is a structure of hegemonic consciousness in the modern world. Much of the expertise of modern bureaucracy is in the creation of monothetic taxonomies. Every new monothetic classification, every modification of monothetic categories, every act of classifying, practices and reproduces the centrality of monothetic classification. That the taxonomic practices of modern bureaucracy are understood to be under the conscious invention, control, and implementation of human agency is crucial to bureaucratic classification.

Central to all projects of the invention, modification, and practice of bureaucratic classification is the changing of realities. Making and applying bureaucratic classification makes change in the most routine of ways in the modern state. Bureaucracy posits causal rela-

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[18] In discussion, following his lecture on "The Death of a Strong-Great-Bad Man" at The Institute for Advanced Studies, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, May 1999.

tionships between goals and the means for accomplishing these aims. Goals are posited in the premises of who or what are to be classified, and how this is to be done. Bureaucratic organization is teleological in positing goals that are to be accomplished through classification. Bureaucracy predicts and expects to control the effects it produces. The logic of bureaucratic ethos is no less processual than it is one of control and containment. In the modern state the control over processes of classification—over the bureaucratic means of production[19]—is perhaps the most powerful means through which to shape and to control social life and its cosmic groundings.

The public events of the modern state often take the form of what I have called 'events of presentation'.[20] These public events open themselves visually to inspection, such that all their contents are clearly on display. These contents often take the form of presentations of monothetic social classifications. The classifications are neat in their internal divisions, their categories being shown as clean-cut in their separation from one another. Such events present themselves as fact and truism. They suppress contradiction and disjunction in social order. They are imperative in their self-display and do not interrogate social order. These public events present themselves to the public gaze as carefully designed mirrors of society, reflecting and representing the moral and social orders desired by their designers. These events often are full of vision, value, and affect, yet within themselves they do not act on their public through controlled, causal teleologies. This kind of event is the dominant form of occasion that organizes, displays, enunciates, and indexes lineaments of statehood, nationhood, history, and civic collectivity through march-pasts, assemblies, theatrics, mass performances of close-order coordination, and synchronization among performers.

The Yagwoia and the modern bureaucratic state have nothing whatsoever in common, including their 'rituals'. Yet there is resonance between the two. If Yagwoia public events are understood as 'swellings' of mundane, mythopoietic dynamics, then one can argue that such swelling answers to the mythopoietic by never departing from this. The mythopoietic cosmos is utterly interior to itself, acting

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[19] L. Shamgar-Handelman and D. Handelman, "Celebrations of Bureaucracy. Birthday Parties in Israeli Kindergartens", *Ethnology* 30 (1991), 293–312.
[20] Handelman 1998, xxix–xlii; Handelman 1990, 41–48.

on itself by being utterly within itself, and therefore recreating itself through all its practices, which include the 'swellings' of everyday dynamics in public events. In a sense, these swellings are special representations of the mythopoietic to itself.

In the modern state, mundane bureaucratic decisions about social classification and their implementation answer to and act on social order from within itself, objectifying, reifying, and rationalizing order through these practices. The public events of the bureaucratic state can be thought of as expressive 'swellings' or presentations of aspects of a cosmos constituted by and changed through monothetic classification. In its own ways, this cosmic logic of the state is no less hermetic and interior to itself than is that of the Yagwoia, though its constitution stresses the monothetic rather than the mythopoietic. In comparative terms, these are two utterly dissimilar social setups that have in common self-enclosing cosmic interiorities, producing public events that reflect and are at one with this hermeticism, and that have little autonomy from it. These public events are representations of dynamics that act forcefully and continually in the wider worlds within which they exist.

Meta-Designs: Acting on the World

Within fields of the possible, there may be meta-designs for public events that offer greater autonomy from the wider world than the examples discussed above. More autonomous events are organized to act through their own interior dynamics on the wider world in predictive and material ways. The meta-designs of autonomy generate events as dynamic micro-worlds that are powerful transformers of person and cosmos. I mention two meta-designs here: one that I call modeling, and one that Bruce Kapferer terms a virtuality.

I use Chisungu, an occasion of initiation for girls among the central African Bemba people, to argue that the interior organization of this public event is put together as a system, and that it is systemic properties that enable this occasion to transform the girls who pass through it, turning them from immature youngsters into mature women ready for marriage.[21]

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[21] See A. Richards, *Chisungu. A Girl's Initiation Ceremony among the Bemba of Zambia* (London, 1982) and Handelman 1990, 23–40.

I argue that the following features characterize the event that models. First, it is a simplification of selected phenomena in the wider world, a specialized microcosm. Second, it is teleological, such that its purpose is integral to the actions organized to actualize that purpose. Third, the event makes change that has specified direction. The event previews the future condition that will be brought into existence. To do this, the event must have stipulated control of processes of causality, however these are understood. Fourth, the event should self-organize and regulate itself in order to control its operations, thereby monitoring its own progression. Fifth, the event that models has built into itself incompatible, contradictory, or conflicting states of existence—infertile/fertile, illness/health, entropy/regeneration, and so forth—which it must synthesize or otherwise resolve during the course of its existence. Sixth, this involves the introduction of uncertainty into whatever is to be transformed.[22]

My analysis argues that Chisungu is organized as a teleological system that models how it is to be an immature girl and a mature woman, positing relationships of transformation from one state to the other and actualizing these, while checking periodically on how this radical changing of being is progressing. Since Chisungu contains within its form the elements and relationships necessary to accomplish the transformation, the event has quite a degree of autonomy from Bemba everyday life.

Kapferer takes the issue of autonomy a step further in his analysis of the Sinhalese Suniyama exorcism, an event that he calls a 'virtuality'.[23] He argues that the Suniyama is utterly its own reality, complete within itself, indexing only itself, and therefore wholly without representation of anything outside itself. This is its virtuality.[24] The virtuality is the world with all its dynamics, though only the virtuality, not the world, can be manipulated, acted on, and operated through. This public event contains the generative processes of social life upon which the origination of human consciousness depends, and therefore the event has the capacity to re-originate (in Kapferer's language) the consciousness of the possessed person. The virtuality of the event enables life within it to be slowed down so that the

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[22] See also B. Lincoln, *Emerging from the Chrysalis. Studies in Rituals of Women's Initiation* (Cambridge, Mass., 1981), 103, on the idea of metamorphosis.

[23] Kapferer 1997, 176–184.

[24] See also, Williams and Boyd 1993, 17–25.

uncontrollable uncertainties of living can be entered, altered, and
the body of the patient reconstituted anew. As the exorcists reset the
consciousness of the patient to that of rebirth, space-time is speeded
up again, synchronized with the world, and the reborn patient is
returned to actuality.

In my usage both of these examples are predicated on the idea
of logics of design that enable one to enter into aspects of 'ritual'
efficacy that are usually ignored or treated as expressive and sym-
bolic. Again, dimensions of comparison come to the fore that lack
any loaded presuppositions as to what these occasions are or how
they should be understood.

The Forming of Form

Thinking about conceptions that are alternative to the encompass-
ing rubric of RITUAL—whether in terms of relationships between
cosmos and event or in terms of meta-designs—begs for greater con-
cern with epistemologies of how form is formed, shaped, created. In
other words, with how forms come to have the interior organiza-
tions that they do, and whether (and if so, how) these designs are
related to one another. The examples cited in this chapter are phe-
nomenal forms shaped into existence by meta-logics that also in-
form their realities. Rather than worrying about what RITUAL is,
what its functions are, and how it symbolizes mundane social order,
it would be preferable to think instead of a multiplicity of phenom-
enal forms being shaped into existence over and again, and ask why
they are formed as they are. What are the logics of the forming of
form and what are the relationships of these logics to moral and
social order? Why are certain forms of public event endowed cul-
turally with 'capacities to form', to shape persons and aspects of
order by acting on them in specialized ways? And why are other
event forms not so endowed?

One direction towards conceptual alternatives to 'ritual' is that of
a phenomenology of the forming of form. The forming of form is
the making of worlds. But then what sorts of worlds? With which
kinds of cosmic premises? With what kinds of interior dynamics?
The emphasis would be more on comparative dynamics, on the log-
ics of forming that practice public events into existence, trying not
to presuppose why this is so. In this chapter I have suggested that

there are public events that reflect society (the Yagwoia and the modern state), that model society (the Bemba Chisungu) in order to transform, and that create society (the Sinhalese Suniyama). In all these instances I have written not of analogies, not of symbols, not of functions, but of how public events can do what they do because they are formed as they are. And in this respect the forms of these events differ quite radically. The metier of some of these forms (Chisungu, the Suniyama) is to form other forms that will change socio-cultural order. The metier of other of these forms (among the Yagwoia, in the modern state) is to swell out of, to be formed by, socio-cultural order.

In closing, I suggest a small test of whether a public event is more one that forms other forms or whether it is formed more as a mirror of socio-cultural order. Run the sequence of a public event (the 'ritual', if you insist) backwards. If this reversal produces another narrative that may well make sense, though different from the original, then the event is more one that mirrors order. But if this reversal produces the obverse of what was intended originally (so that running an exorcism backwards produces ensorcelment), then the event is more one that forms other forms through controlled causal relationships. The directions of the anthropology of RITUAL and 'ritual' need to be reversed in order to undo the ensorcelment that has dangerously narrowed its angles of perception.

'RITUAL': A LEXICOGRAPHIC SURVEY OF SOME RELATED TERMS FROM AN EMIC PERSPECTIVE

Edited by Michael Stausberg[1]

In its very operation, the intellectual endeavor of studying rituals, constructing theories about 'ritual', and 'theorizing rituals'[2] apparently builds on the term 'ritual'. That points to the European legacy of this intellectual and academic undertaking and its possible Eurocentric underpinnings.[3] As many other key-terms in the humanities, 'ritual' and the related term 'rite'[4] go back to Latin, which has the noun *ritus* and the adjective *ritualis* ('relating to rites').[5] However, that does not imply semantic and pragmatic continuity, for the meaning of these Latin terms does not correspond to the modern way of employing them. Hence, when modern scholars write about 'rituals'

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[1] The editor is indebted to Jan G. Platvoet for a fruitful exchange of emails in the early stages of this project.

[2] For these modes of discourse, see the introductory essay ("Ritual Studies, Ritual Theory, Theorizing Ritual") to this volume.

[3] In this respect, the study of 'ritual' is not different from the study of 'religion', but while warnings of the Eurocentric implications of the study of 'religion' are by now part and parcel of the reflective self-understanding of the study of religion, the same cannot be said about ritual studies and ritual theory. Moreover, there are by now two German dissertations that discuss emic equivalents to the Western term 'religion': B. Schmitz, *"Religion" und seine Entsprechungen im interkulturellen Bereich* (Marburger wissenschaftliche Beiträge 10; Marburg, 1996); H.M. Haußig, *Der Religionsbegriff in den Religionen. Studien zum Selbst- und Religionsverständnis in Hinduismus, Buddhismus, Judentum und Islam* (Bodenheim, 1999).

[4] These terms are often used as synonyms in ritual studies and ritual theory. From a theoretical point of view, this is unsatisfactory and should be avoided. See also the essay by Snoek in this volume.

[5] While C.T. Lewis, *A Latin Dictionary Founded on Andrews' Edition of Freund's Latin Dictionary. Revised, Enlarged, and in Great Part Rewritten* (Oxford, 1996 [1879]), 1596, regards the etymology of *ritus* as "unknown", there are by now several etymological suggestions available. A. Ernout and A. Meillet, *Dictionnaire etymologique de la langue latine. Histoire des mots. Troisième édition, revue, corrigée et augmentée d'un index* (Paris, 1951), 85 and 1014, argue that *ritus* depends on the root **er- (ar-)*, enlarged by **-ei-* and the suffix—*tu-*. They find the word to be an example of the concordances between the Indo-Iranian and the Italo-Celtic religious vocabulary, as *rītus* would correspond to the Vedic *ṛtām*, designating the 'correct order'. Another etymology links the word to the Indo-European root **rē(i)*—'to reason', 'to count'; see C. Watkins, *The American Heritage Dictionary of Indo-European Roots. Second Edition* (Boston, 2000), 71.

in Roman religion, their way of using the term 'rituals' matches Roman discourses only superficially.[6]

As far as I know, the history of the term 'rite' from its Latin origins to its modern usage in different vernacular languages has not yet been written. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary* (http://dictionary.oed.com), the word 'ritual' is attested in English as a noun since the 17th century.[7] As an adjective, it is attested already in the 16th century.[8] However, there is ample evidence that the term 'ritual' underwent a serious semantic transformation in the late 19th/early 20th centuries.[9] Moreover, once it became a key-term in the humanities, in the scholarly vocabulary 'ritual' has increasingly replaced alternative (and partly synonymous) terms, such as 'ceremony', 'observance', 'celebration', 'custom', 'service', and 'tradition'.

The modern theoretical discourse about 'ritual' tacitly starts from the premise that 'rituals' can be found in each and every society, culture, and religion.[10] For this reason, virtually every book on any given culture or religion invariable devotes at least one chapter to the respective 'rituals' of the society/culture/tribe/group/movement/religion in question. In most descriptions, however, the question

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[6] See A. Henrichs, "Dromena and Legomena. Zum rituellen Selbstverständnis der Griechen", Fritz Graf (ed.), *Ansichten griechischer Rituale. Geburtstags-Symposium für Walter Burkert* (Stuttgart, Leipzig, 1998), 33–71, 37: "Hinter dem lateinischen Vokabular verbirgt sich ein neuzeitliches Verständnis von rituellem Verhalten, das in seiner Abstraktionsfähigkeit weit über den antiken Ritusbegriff hinausgeht." See also J. Scheid, *An Introduction to Roman Religion* (Edinburgh, 2003), 30: "The term *ritus* (in Greek *nomos*) designated the mode of action, a mode of celebrating religious festivals or rituals, not the content of those festivals. To designate that content, that is to say what we now call 'rites' or 'rituals', the Romans employed the terms *sacra* or *caerimoniae*." There is a similar discrepancy between the modern and the ancient usage of the term 'cult'; see B. Lang, "Wie sagt man 'Kult' auf lateinisch und griechisch? Versuch einer Antwort anhand antiker und christlicher Texte", Chr. Auffarth and J. Rüpke (eds), *Epitome tes oikumenes. Studien zur römischen Religion in Antike und Neuzeit für Hubert Cancik und Hildegard Cancik-Lindemaier*, (Potsdamer altertumswissenschaftliche Beiträge 6; Stuttgart, 2002), 29–36. Unfortunately, Lang does not comment on the fact that the modern varieties of the Latin term in modern English, French, and German have quite different semantic shadings.

[7] 1649 JER. TAYLOR *Apol. Liturgy* (ed. 2) § 89 "Then the Bishop prayes *ritè*, according to the rituall or constitution."

[8] 1570 FOXE *A. & M.* (ed. 2) 83/1 "Contayning no maner of doctrine . . . but only certayn ritual decrees to no purpose."

[9] See Asad 1988; Boudewijnse 1995; Bremmer 1998; Stausberg 2002.

[10] Occasionally, this assumption is made explicit, for instance by Rappaport 1999, 31: "the ubiquity of ritual . . .: no society is devoid of what a reasonable observer would recognize as ritual."

of which terms the people in question use in order to refer to what the scholar classifies (from an etic point of view) as 'rituals' remains surprisingly absent.[11] Yet, when a scholar holds the view that 'his' case at the same time presents prototypical evidence for the very fact, and theory, of 'ritual', the relevant emic terminology is mentioned. This is the case, for example, with Frits Staal and his views of Vedic ritual. Staal writes: "Vedic ritual . . . comprises data of which no one has denied that they come under ritual. There are, moreover, Indian terms which demarcate this domain and distinguish it from other things (e.g. Sanskrit *yajña*)."[12]

Staal implicitly points to what is at issue here for ritual theory and theorizing rituals. For the very occurrence of words (terms) that may be deemed to mean 'ritual' in English in the lexicon of any given language[13] may be considered to provide important evidence that the speakers of that language discursively construct 'ritual' as a demarcated domain of reality (including culture and possibly also religion). An analysis of how these demarcations are achieved could shed light on the very mechanisms of constructing 'ritual', and that could help to move beyond the Euro-American legacy of the discourse about 'ritual'. Instead of merely, in an almost colonial fashion, applying a Western term ('ritual') to non-Western phenomena, this may be a first step towards coming closer to indigenous ways of self-understandings. And such an endeavor should have to begin with a closer scrutiny of the relevant vocabulary from an emic perspective, i.e., by a scholarly (outsider) analysis of the way the terminology is employed and constructed in specific languages.

Since it is generally considered legitimate to speak, by way of example, of the 'economy' of societies that may not have a word that closely matches the English term 'economy' in their language(s),

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[11] One exception that confirms the rule is Lewis 1980, 39: "The Gnau have many ways to indicate what they are referring to when they talk about what I take to be 'ritual'; perhaps most commonly they speak of 'doing things', using the verb root -*bari*- which has roughly the range of the verbs 'work', 'do' and 'make' in English . . . But 'doing things' was not limited to ritual, and there were other ways to talk of it." The author even presents some extracts of recordings in order "to show how the Gnau talk about ritual."

[12] Staal 1989, 64. Surprisingly, Staal does not discuss these terms in his book.

[13] This act of stipulating meaning implies a certain understanding of 'ritual' and its possible equivalents on the part of the "reasonable observer" (Rappaport). Therefore, it is not sufficient merely to consult dictionaries in order to find out whether such terms occur in specific languages.

the generally shared assumption of the universality of 'ritual' does not depend on the occurrence of such 'emic terms' for 'ritual'. However, the documented occurrence of emic terms for 'ritual' that demarcate 'ritual' as a separate domain in several linguistic areas could to some extent weaken the obvious suspicion that 'ritual' is merely a modern, Western concept, one that is more than anything else indicative of modern, Western history and preoccupations. Emic equivalents to 'ritual'—i.e., terms that from a scholarly perspective seem to correspond to our notion of 'ritual'—could at least lay the groundwork for a 'referential' conceptualization of 'ritual', in the sense that different cultures or cognitive systems (languages) seem to 'refer' to a specific domain of life that we, in the West, happen to denote by the term 'ritual'.[14] If "most cultures see important distinctions between ritual and other types of activities", as Catherine Bell suggests,[15] it would be reasonable to assume that these distinctions are mirrored in the respective terminologies.

With theoretical questions such as these in mind, I started, in November 2002, contacting a number of colleagues to ask them to join the hunt for such terms and to invite them to contribute brief articles on the occurrence of possible equivalents to the Western term 'ritual' in their respective area of linguistic competence. In particular, I asked the contributors to address the following four questions (and to add some references to main dictionaries and literature for further reading):

(i) Is there a word/graphem/term (or several) that could be considered to be equivalent to 'ritual'?
(ii) How could one 'define' that word (or those words)—i.e. the attributes, the intension of the term(s)?
(iii) For which phenomena is it/are they applied—i.e. the range, the extension of the term(s)?
(iv) Conclusion: X vs. 'ritual': similarities and differences.[16]

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[14] For a similar attempt to address the question of the validity of a universally valid concept of 'religion', see M. Riesebrodt, "Überlegungen zur Legitimität eines universalen Religionsbegriffs", B. Luchesi and K. von Stuckrad (eds), *Religion im kulturellen Diskurs/Religion in Cultural Discourse. Festschrift für Hans Kippenberg zu seinem 65. Geburtstag/Essays in Honor of Hans G. Kippenberg on the Occasion of His 65th Birthday*, (Religionsgeschichtliche Versuche und Vorarbeiten 52; Berlin, New York, 2004), 127–149. It is from Riesebrodt that I have borrowed the term 'referential'. Riesebrodt, in turn, borrowed it from Robert K. Merton.

[15] Bell 1997, 76.

[16] Some authors went well beyond answering this set of questions.

The aim of this collection of brief articles was not to present an exhaustive dossier on all languages of the world.[17] Not even all linguistic groups and family of languages could be covered.[18] Nevertheless, the hope is that the following collection of articles may be useful as a first overview and that it may stimulate others to go deeper into individual areas of analysis or to apply this set of questions to languages not yet covered by this preliminary survey. For want of a better scheme, the arrangement of the languages follows in alphabetical order.[19] The following eighteen (partly modern, partly ancient, partly dead, partly still used and living) languages will be discussed: Akkadian, Anishnabe, Arabic, Chinese, Egyptian, Greek, Hebrew, Hittite, Hopi, Japanese, Mongolian, Old Norse, Persian, Sami, Sanskrit, Tamil, Tibetan, and Turkish. Thereafter, I present some concluding reflections.

Michael Stausberg

Akkadian

In addition to hundreds of words for specific rituals, there are several generic terms in Akkadian that can be connected with the modern notion of 'ritual'. Thereby, two basic meanings are clearly distinguished: Daily and other regularly performed rituals in connection with the cult are separated from rituals performed on a special occasion. The term *parṣu*, which appears in the earliest texts

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[17] The selection of languages is contingent because it depended partly on my knowledge of colleagues whom I knew were interested in the issue and who would be able to deliver a piece in a rather short span of time. (This chapter was the last that we included in the volume, and the delay in its publication could not be anticipated when I first approached the contributors.)

[18] I am particularly unhappy about the omission of African languages. The reason for this is that I had approached several colleagues, but some politely declined, and a chapter that I was promised never arrived.

[19] The most obvious solution would have been to arrange the languages according to language families. However, I was not satisfied by that solution, because languages such as Arabic and Sanskrit exert a terminological influence in their respective cultural and religious spheres of influence that transcends the borders of the linguistic families. The Persian terminology, e.g., is influenced by Arabic, but not by its 'relative' Sanskrit. Some of the languages and ritual terminologies covered here are interrelated (Arabic-Persian-Turkish; Sanskrit-Tamil-Tibetan), while others are not.

written in Akkadian, denotes the cultic order and—among other meanings, such as 'office' and 'divine power', which also fall within the category of divine order—it is sometimes used to describe the rituals performed within the temples. A more specific word for these rituals is *kidudû*, a Sumerian loan-word (from KI.DU.DU), though it is seldom used.

In contrast to the words for regularly performed rituals, terms for rituals performed on a special occasion are more numerous. The noun *nēpešu*, which as a *nomen instrumenti* can also mean 'tools' or 'utensils', is used from the beginning of the second millennium BCE until the end of cuneiform script to denominate ritual procedures. Its generic character becomes apparent in the usage of the word in connection with terms designating specific rituals (e.g. *enūma nēpešī ša Šurpu teppušu*, "when you perform the rituals of [the text-series] 'Burning'"). With regard to text-series, it is often used to denote rituals in contrast to the incantations, which they accompany. While *nēpešu* is exclusively used for rituals with a positive connotation, the word *epištu* can have a pejorative sense. The basic meaning of this term is 'handiwork', 'manufacture', 'achievement', but it also signifies positive and negative ritual acts, as well as evil magic. Both *nēpešu* and *epištu*, as well as the verb *epēšu*, the usual word for 'performing' a ritual, are derived from the stem *'pš, meaning 'to act', 'to be active', which has a much wider semantic range than 'ritual'.

A term that is exclusively used for the meaning 'ritual' is *kikiṭṭû*, a borrowing from the Sumerian KÌD.KÌD. Like *nēpešu* it is used for a variety of phenomena, such as medical or exorcist rituals, and has no negative connotation. It appears regularly before or after descriptions of rituals. In the first millennium BCE, the word *dullu* (originally meaning 'work', 'misery', 'hardship') is frequently used in letters to indicate rituals. In contrast to *kikiṭṭû*, which is a learned expression, *dullu* is a more colloquial word used by Babylonian and Assyrian scholars.

Still problematic is the Akkadian reading of the logogram DÙ.DÙ.BI, which appears ubiquitously in first millennium BCE magical, medical, or other exorcistic texts as a designation for rituals (*agenda*) in contrast to the incantations (*dicenda*). A late commentary explains DÙ.DÙ.BI as *epuštašu* (from *epištu*), 'its pertinent ritual' (BRM IV/32, line 4), but this remains an isolated reference. Apart from *epištu*, it could probably also be read *kikiṭṭû* or *nēpešu*.

The Akkadian terminology for rituals distinguishes between *parṣu* and *kidudû* as designations of the regular 'rites' of the temples and

nēpešu, epištu, kikiṭṭû, and *dullu* as generic terms for rituals performed on demand. While *kidudû* and *kikiṭṭû* are the only words exclusively used for the meaning 'ritual', *kikiṭṭû* appears in scholarly texts and *dullu* is used mostly in letters. The most common word for 'ritual' is *nēpešu,* which appears in all kinds of texts.

Dictionaries and further reading

The Chicago Assyrian Dictionary (Glückstadt, Chicago, 1956 ff.).
W. von Soden, *Akkadisches Handwörterbuch* (Wiesbaden, 1958–1981).
M.J.H. Linssen, *The Cults of Uruk and Babylon. The temple ritual texts as evidence for Hellenistic cult practises* (Cuneiform monographs 25; Leiden, Boston, 2004), 19–22.

Nils P. Heeßel

Anishnabe

Anishnabe belongs to the Algonquian family of Native American languages. Rituals or religious ceremonies in the Anishnabe context are not necessarily conceived as structured, although they may be. Hence, the term that is the equivalent of ritual, *Di-nen-daam*, is not descriptive, as, for example, the Chinese term *li* was originally, but denotes intention or state of mind. All a ceremony needs is an individual giving thanks or asking for help from the spirit realm in any setting, such as a crowded city street or a busy council meeting.

To begin the ceremony, all the individual has to do is to think it: *Di-nen-daam* ("I will now begin this thought"). With no set form for the ritual, the individual is free to communicate using only thought should he or she be in a place where undue attention would not be welcome. Ceremonial paraphernalia need not be present. All that is required is the presence of the individual carrying out the ritual. *Di-nen-daam* signifies the concept of being totally present; that is, one is present in mind, heart, body, and spirit, and with all one's faculties in a heightened state of alertness. The term signifies that one's heart-wish is in place. *Di* comes from the root word *de* for 'heart'. *Nen* comes from the root *nen-do-mo-win* ('the thought', 'idea', or the 'brain'). *Daam* comes from the root *Daa* ('being present'); e.g., this is the term with which one would answer, for example, in roll call. *Di-nen-daam* is in the first person; once the tense shifts from first person, any number of configurations will automatically take place.

Di-nen-daam is not ritual-specific and is applicable to any setting. There are other terms with which to designate specific rituals, and these are often descriptive, particularly of action. For example, *Jees-kee-ni-ni* is the term for one who performs a 'shaking tent' ritual. This is a ritual where the person performing it is assisted by others, and the ritual is performed for the benefit of people other than the one carrying it out. *Jees-ki-ni-ni* means someone who can make the ground—or at least the tent in which the ritualist is placed—shake. *Jees* comes from the root *jees-caam-gi-shkaa*: an 'earth tremor' or 'quake'. The root is versatile and is applicable to one's body, house, or most other objects afflicted with tremors. *Ni-ni* is the singular term for man. In the Great Lakes Anishnabe tradition, the *Jees-kee-ni-ni* is understood to be the most powerful religious ceremony, and it is a ritual that is associated with individuals who have the relationships with spirits necessary to carry it out.

Another example of a term for a specific ritual is *pwaa-gna-gaa*, meaning someone taking part in a dance at a pow-wow. The literal sense of the term is 'someone who dances with the pipe'. Linguistic liberty can stretch the term to 'someone who dances like a pipe'. *Pwaa-gun* is the ceremonial pipe central to Anishnabe ritual. *Gna-gaa* comes from the multivalent *nee-gaan*, meaning 'the front', in this case related to the term *beems-skwaa-kaa* ('to move and dance in a circle'). Hence, the pipe was at the forefront of the ceremony or at the front of an actual line of dancers moving in a circular fashion.

Di-nen-daam denotes the individualistic nature of Anishnabe spirituality, a reflection of what the anthropologist, Robert Lowie, termed "democratized shamanism" in the early 1930s. Traditionally, every individual was expected to attain a relationship with one or more spirits through fasting and other methods. Some, of course, become more powerful in these regards than others and will be able to perform certain rituals, such as the *Jees-ki-nini*, that require particular abilities. Hence, given the nature of Anishnabe spirituality, the focus in rituals is more often on intention and spontaneous spiritual achievement rather than a rigid structure.

Further reading

J. Paper, "Ceremony and Ritual, Anishnabe", *American Indian Religious Traditions. An Encyclopedia* 1 (2005), 103–111.

<div align="right">*Kenn Pitawanakwat and Jordan Paper*</div>

Arabic

Arabic has no word that exactly corresponds to the (modern) Western concept of ritual. In the following, those Arabic roots are examined that have to do with (religious) 'praxis', 'customs', or 'ceremonial behavior'. For this purpose, the commonly used modern dictionaries, lexica, and encyclopedias were consulted.[20]

The word *šaʿīra* is rendered in most dictionaries under the *lemma* 'ritual', but its use is in fact restricted to ceremonies performed during the Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca (*ḥaǧǧ*) and to pre-Islamic tribal war ritual on the Arab peninsula (from which part of the *ḥaǧǧ* performances seem to be derived). It stems from the root *š-ʿ-r*, which denotes something sensed, memorized (conf. *šiʿr*, pl. *ašʿār* 'poem', 'poetry'), or marked, signed, hinting at (*šiʿār* 'sign', pl. *šuʿur/ašʿira*),[21] hence known, being aware of, or (emotionally) felt (*šuʿūr* 'knowledge', 'perception'). Its plural, *šaʿāʾir*, additionally denotes the stations where prescribed rites during the *ḥaǧǧ* are performed. For that purpose, use is also made of *mašʿar* (pl. *mašāʿir*) stemming from the same root. Moreover, *išʿār* (pl. *išʿārāt*) denotes a special place for 'marked' sacrificial animals to be slaughtered, that is, 'holy places'. The marking of the animal to be sacrificed with two cuts itself is denoted by different forms derived from this root *š-ʿ-r*. In modern use, *išʿār* also means 'legal prescriptions'.

Prescribed Islamic rituals that are compulsory for every Muslim—such as the *ḥaǧǧ*, daily prayer (*ṣalāt*), *ramaḍān* fast (*ṣawm*)—are called *ʿibāda* (pl. *ʿibādāt*). According to Islamic law, an *ʿibāda* can only be performed validly in a state of ritual purity (*ṭahāra*). As a consequence, all practices that are necessary to bring about *ṭahāra* do not fall in the legal category of *ʿibādāt* (such as the minor or major ablution, *wuḍūʾ* and *ġusl*), as is the case with 'folk-religious' practices (such as shrine worship and pilgrimage, *ziyāra*).[22] Nevertheless, *ʿibāda* (which

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[20] Special attention was given to the analysis of the results of a full-text research in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam. CD-ROM Edition (EI CD-ROM)*, 2d update: vols. 1–11 (Leiden, 2003); see esp. the entries "'Āda'" (G.-H. Bousquet); "Adab" (F. Gabrieli); "'Ibādāt" (G.-H. Bousquet); "'Īd" (E. Mittwoch); "Marāsim" (P. Sanders et al.); "Shiʿār" (T. Fahd); "Sunna" (G.H.A. Juynboll and D.W. Brown); "'Urf" (G. Libson and F.H. Stewart).

[21] *Šiʿār* can also be the collective form of one single *šaʿīra*, i.e. *ḥaǧǧ*-ritual performances in general.

[22] This distinction is not always clear cut as some 'folk-religious' practices were

stems from the root ʿ-b-d, 'to serve', also 'to venerate', 'to worship'; cf. *ʿabd* 'servant', 'slave', e.g. of God) is used by Christian Arabs and members of non-orthodox Muslim sects for their respective religious rituals in general, most commonly for any form of individual or communal prayer ('service'). The celebration of the Christian mass (*qaddasa*) is called by Christian Arabs more specifically *quddās* (pl. *qadādīs/quddāsāt*), from the root q-d-s, 'holy'. The consecration is called *taqdīs*. On the other hand, other derivations from ʿ-b-d are used in Muslim Arabic—besides their basic meaning—with specific connotations implying non-Muslim contexts, such as *taʿabbud* for Christian saint worship, *maʿbūd(a)* for deity or idol (lit.: 'served', 'worshipped'), *maʿbad* for temple (i.e. non-Muslim place of worship).

Another word for observing a religious custom is *ṭaqs* (pl. *ṭuqūs*). Derivations of the word have a special Christian connotation (like *ṭaqsī*, *ṭaqsiyyāt* 'liturgical', 'priest', 'liturgy'), which hints at its original context. Nevertheless, *ṭaqs* (which also means 'weather', 'climate') is in use today in academic Arabic for religious rituals in general.

As in earlier Western usage, practices that are called 'ritual' in recent academic terminology are subsumed in Arabic under categories like 'prescriptions' or 'traditions' and 'customs and manners'. The respective terms can be used also to denote (or include) 'ritual' acts and practices, ceremonies, etc.

In the context of Islamic law, (binding) tradition—in the sense of 'imitating', that is, submitting to older authoritative practices—is called *taqlīd* ('custom', 'practice'; pl. *taqālīd*, adj. *taqlīdī* 'traditional', in modern usage also with pejorative meaning in the sense of 'blind obedience and imitation'). In contrast to religious Muslim law (*šarʿ/šarīʿa*) commonly accepted—and in some historical contexts even codified—customary law and practice is either called *ʿurf* ('custom' or 'common usage'; pl. *aʿrāf*, stems from the root ʿ-r-f 'to know') or *ʿāda*. Whereas *ʿurf* in the course of Islamic history referred more often to binding, especially fiscal, monetary and property regulations (accepted or granted by the ruling authority), *ʿāda* ('habit'; pl. *ʿādāt/ʿawāʾid*) definitely also includes other social and religious customary practices (such as 'rituals', say, the custom of saint veneration) that are not

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nolens volens integrated by the authorities of Islamic law (*ʿulamāʾ*) into an 'orthodox' context, such as recitations of poems in the mosque on the assumed birthday of the prophet Muḥammad, called *mawlid* or *mawlūd*.

part of *šarīʿa* and can be used analogously to the Western concept of 'manners and customs'.[23] *ʿĀda* stems from the root ʿ-w-d which has the general meaning 'to go back to', 'to belong to', 'to do something again'. Its many derivatives cover the semantic field of 'accustoming', 'customary', and 'repetition'.

Another term that has found its way into many other languages in the so-called Islamic World is *marāsim* in the sense of 'customs and manners'. It is formally and semantically a (collective) plural. The corresponding singular *marsam* does not exist with that meaning. In Arabic, *marāsim*—besides 'customs'—denotes 'secular' ceremonies (that is, those not primarily concerned with Islam, such as marriage ceremonies) or (commemorative) celebrations. It is derived from the root r-s-m, literally 'to paint', hence 'to inscribe', 'to prescribe'. Its verbal noun *rasm* (pl. *rusūm*)—among many others meanings (such as 'painting'or 'sketch')—has the meaning 'prescription', 'formality', 'ceremony'. The adjective *rasmī* ('official', that is, 'pertaining to the [prescribing] state' or some other 'secular' authority) is often opposed to *dīnī* ('religious'). The participle of the same root, *marsūm* ('inscribed', 'decreed'; pl. *marāsīm*) is also used as a noun meaning 'decree', 'prescription'. *Rasm/rusūm* and *marāsim* can be used synonymously for 'prescriptions' and 'ceremony'; *marāsim* seems to have a slightly more passive connotation, and is much more commonly used to denote 'customs and manners'.

When we speak of 'secular' ceremonies within the 'Islamic World', this includes customs in connection with the human life-cycle (childbirth, adolescence, marriage, death) as they do not form part of the 'rituals' which are regulated by Islamic law (for example, the name-giving ceremony to a new born child, circumcision rituals, marriage ceremonies, etc.).[24] Secular festive events are called *ḥafl/ḥafla* (pl. *ḥaflāt*)

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[23] Sometimes both *ʿurf* and *ʿāda* are used with the same meaning, depending on the respective regional and historical terminology. Other synonyms in that sense would be *dastūr/dustūr* (pl. *dasātīr*, of Iranian origin; in modern usage, 'constitution') or *qānūn* (pl. *qawānīn*; from the Greek *kanón*).

[24] Of course, there are detailed legal regulations concerning those acts which affect kinship relations, especially regulations for inheritance. But there are no prescribed rituals. Customary rituals were either integrated, tolerated, or condemned, even combated, by the religious authorities, although ordinary believers tried to appease them by means of commissioning religious 'officials' (such as muezzins, mosque preachers, imams, kadis, etc.), applying certain Islamic symbols and ritual elements to these customs. For example, as far as prayer is concerned in this context, only a prayer for the deceased is prescribed by religious law.

or *iḥtifāl* (pl. *iḥtifālāt*)—both from the root h-f-l, 'to assemble'—in contrast to the clearly religious feast called *ʿīd* (pl. *aʿyād*). Other celebrations—especially when one or more persons are 'honored', as in (modern) marriage festivities—can be called *tašrīfa* (pl. *tašrīfāt*), which is derived from *šaraf* ('honor').

This leads into the field of ritualizations in social life. The traditional term for 'good manners' is *adab* (pl. *ādāb*),[25] which subsequently became the Arabic word for 'literature' in the early Middle Ages, as the earliest prose works written in Arabic were guidelines and regulations of decency and etiquette for the members of the caliphate court. Ceremonial courtesy is called *taklīf* (pl. *takālīf*, adj. *mutakallaf*), which contains the notion of unnatural stiffness and constraint, as the basic noun of the same root, *kulfa* (pl. *kulaf*), denotes tiresomeness, affectedness, formality, and therefore ceremonial behavior (which reflects the ritual critique that accompanies every ritualization of social life).

It should be borne in mind that Arabic is used as a secondary language by many populations forming lingual minorities in the Arabic-speaking world. Moreover, it plays the role of a *lingua franca* in several other regions bordering the Arabic-speaking world, such as in East and sub-Saharan Africa, or even far from it, such as in Dagestan in the Northern Caucasus up to the 19th century. 'Ritual' terminology (religious and 'secular') of Arabic origin (itself often originally derived from Aramaic and Iranian roots) has disseminated widely—parallel to the spread of Islam—into many other languages. The usage of Arabic vocabulary in those languages (such as Afro-Asiatic/Hamitic, Turkic, Caucasian, Indo-Iranian, and Malay) was adapted, altered, and sometimes actively expanded according to Arabic rules of morphology. We must take into account a repercussion of those *arabesque* forms—created by speakers (and writers) of non-Arabic languages—into modern Arabic, a field that so far has not been systematically researched.

To conclude: In common Arabic usage, *ʿibāda* refers to the central rituals of the Abrahamic religions. A more abstract word in academic usage for religious rituals in general is *ṭaqs*. All other cus-

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[25] The original meaning of *adab* seems to be 'norm of conduct', and—again—'custom', which resembles the same semantic field as *sunna*, another term worth mentioning in the context of regulated social behavior. *Sunna* refers to the generally approved standard or practice introduced by the prophet Muḥammad which should be followed by every Muslim.

tomary rituals are referred to with the terms *rasm/rusūm* or *marāsim*. The semantic field of Arabic terms referring to 'ritual' in the strict sense—such as *rasm* or *šaʿīra*—can be circumscribed by the notions of 'marking', 'sketching', 'ordering', 'prescribing', and 'ruling'. Ceremonies 'assembling' many people can be called *ḥafl* or *iḥtifāl*. Especially *marāsim* and *iḥtifāl* are often differentiated with the adjectives *dīnī* ('religious') and *rasmī* ('official', that is, pertaining to some secular authority).

Further reading

The Encyclopaedia of Islam. New Edition: Index of Subjects to Vol. I–XI & to the Suppl., Fasc. 1–6, compiled by P.J. Bearman (Leiden, Boston, 2003), s.vv. 'Ritual', 'Customs', etc.

Robert Langer

Chinese

In Classical Chinese and in the different Chinese local dialects there are hundreds of terms denoting specific rituals or rites. In the following, only such terms shall be dealt with which can be taken as the most basic generic terms for 'ritual'.

The best known generic term denoting a similar field of religious performances as the term 'ritual' is the term *li* 禮, which is mainly used in the Confucian tradition. It is not used in the Daoist tradition perhaps because of the negative connotation associated with it in *Laozi* (*Daode jing* 38) and *Zhuangzi*. In the Buddhist tradition, it is used in connection with worship. The most important Chinese term for rites used in all traditions is *yi* 儀, which denotes the formal model aspect of individual rites.

The Confucian tradition has reflected on the concept of ritual *li* 禮 the most theoretical and abstract way in ritual chapters and books, such as *Xunzi* "Li lun", *Liji*, and *DaDai Liji*. The Daoist term for ritual is a binome composed of the words *ke* 科 and *yi* 儀. Other Daoist terms referring to religious performances are *zhaijiao* 齋醮 and *baibai* 拜拜. In the Buddhist tradition, we find mainly the term *yi (shi)* 儀(式), but also the terms *libai* 禮拜, *gong* 供, and *fashi* 法事 or *foshi* 佛事.

Li 禮 might be defined as performing a Confucian ideal system of rules (on a religious, socio-political, moral, and cosmic level); *ke* 科,

bai 拜, *gong* 供, and *shi* 事 can be defined as Daoist/ Buddhist per-
formative acts; and *yi* 儀 is the notion of the outer appearance of
rites, the model ceremonial form.

Confucian *li* 禮 is a generic term denoting all sorts of human
activities that establish an order that is conceived to accord with the
proper order of an ideal system of rules. It comprehends official eti-
quette, as well as sacrificial, birth, capping, wedding, and mourning
rites, religious services, clothing, correctness, rules of behavior, officials
equipment, and also inner attitudes. Its meaning is thus much broader
than the meaning of 'ritual'. In traditional Chinese encyclopedias,
we find highly differentiated subdivisions of ritual which follow a basic
fivefold division into rites concerning auspicious affairs (religious rites)
(*ji li* 吉禮), imperial affairs (*jia li* 嘉禮), guest affairs (*bin li* 賓禮),
military affairs (*jun li* 軍禮), and unlucky affairs (*xiong li* 凶禮). Ritual
is distinctly opposed to codified positive legal statutes.

According to Pines, in the Western Zhou (1040–771 BCE) *li* refers
to sacrificial rites.[26] The broad concept of ceremonial propriety appears
in these texts under the name of "ceremonial decorum" (*yi* 儀) or
"awe-inspiring ceremonies" (*weiyi* 威儀), which referred to the pre-
cise, orderly performance of the complicated ceremonies in which
each participant behaved according to his rank and seniority in his
lineage. In the early Chunqiu (770–476 BCE) speeches, *li* primarily
referred to the inter-state etiquette, and, more broadly, to the proper
handling of international relations. From the mid-Chunqiu period,
statesmen began applying the term *li* to a broad range of political
activities, such as personnel policy, proper handling of rewards and
punishments, and ensuring smooth functioning of the administration
in general. *Li* thus evolved into an overall pattern of governing, and
this meaning clearly overshadowed its ceremonial origins. This inter-
pretation of *li* gained popularity in late Chunqiu discourse. At that
time, *li* was for the first time connected to Heaven and Earth, and
its value was further elevated thereby. At the end of the Chunqiu
Period, Confucius concentrated on ethical aspects of *li* at the expense
of its political functions. In the Zhanguo Period (475–221), *li* com-
prised two distinct meanings as a signifier of the social order: on the

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[26] For this and the following, see Y. Pines, "Disputers of the *Li*: Breakthrough
in the Concept of Ritual in Preimperial China", *Asia Major* 13 (2000), 1–41.

one hand, it referred to hierarchic order in general; on the other, *li* was intrinsically linked to the aforementioned Western Zhou set of ritual regulations, with their overt hereditary connotations. Further on, it was developed as a moral principle, a norm of interpersonal intercourse; it became an internal virtue, part of the innate good nature of human beings. Finally, at the end of the Zhanguo Period, *li* became a multi-faceted term that referred to political, social, economic, military, ethical, religious, and educational spheres, to mention only a few. Yet this richness of functions should not obscure the nature of *li* as primarily a sociopolitical term, a regulator of society and the state. It further achieved a cosmic dimension, becoming the terminological counterpart of the True Way—*Dao* as a supreme truth; the unique force applicable at the cosmic, social, and individual level, the One that Pervades All. At its highest level, *li* is treated as an unchanging, unifying force of the universe. In later times, *li* always comprises these different layers of meaning: Zhou religious ritual, socio-political order, moral principle, and cosmic law.

Structurally,[27] at least since Zhanguo times ritual has to be understood as a twofold relationship. Firstly, it is an outer formal expression of an invisible ideal order. On the other hand, correct ritual is the expression for the realization of a correct order. The realization of correct ritual is thus the correct order itself. Secondly, ritual action is always directed towards a certain context and thus always responds to a given situation that is encountered (any kind of persons, such as superiors, inferiors, friends, family members, enemies; gods, ancestors; occasions such as birth, marriage, death; state affairs, such as audiences, covenants, meetings; specific places, certain times—in the broadest sense, any situation). Ritual is defined not through its particular context but through the correctness of its formal correspondence to every single situation, a correctness through which the ideal order is expressed. That is why it can be applied to such different spheres as political, social, economic, military, ethical, religious, and educational spheres. Talking about ritual, we thus have a threefold structure: firstly, a certain context; secondly, a certain action that

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[27] The structural analysis is based on J. Gentz, "Ritus als Physiognomie. Frühe chinesische Ritentheorien zwischen Kosmologie und Kunst", Dietrich Harth and Gerrit Jasper Schenk (eds), *Ritualdynamik. Kulturübergreifende Studien zur Theorie und Geschichte rituellen Handelns* (Heidelberg, 2004), 307–337.

responds to this context; and thirdly, an invisible ideal with which this action is to accord. Ritual action is the formal encoded expression of a confrontation between a certain ideal and a certain context, a confrontation of which the action is the only visible intermediary. The ritual act thus becomes the visible judgment of the invisible ideal regarding the concrete context. The ritually acting person is therefore judge and witness at the same time.

The Daoist terms *ke* 科 and *yi* 儀 refer to religious performative acts, such as commands, dances, prayers, purifications, invocations, consecration and offering formulas, hymns, and perambulations. The terms *ke* 科 and *yi* 儀 are taken as class categories for such scriptures in the Daoist Canon (approx. 600) which contain rules for religious performances, such as fasting, prayers, and offerings. They stand in between the classes '("magical") methods' (*fa* 法) and 'monastic regulations' (*jie* 戒, *lü* 律). Schipper[28] gives the following subordination of the terms: he translates *ke* 科 as a great (for example, two-day) service for a local community which may consist of some fifteen rituals (*yi* 儀), which include a succession of rites (*fa* 法): purification, invocation, etc. In contrast to *yi* 儀, which is a standard Chinese term for rite, the term *ke* 科 has a more Daoist implication in that it refers less to a moral than to a cosmological order in the sense of a hierarchical classification of beings. According to Lagerwey,[29] "the binome *k'o-yi* (*keyi* 科儀 jg) then, may be defined as 'regular patterns of behavior that give concentrated expression to the order of things'". They recreate the universe through returning to the Origin. The synecdochial term *zhaijiao* 齋醮 denotes the sphere of fasting and offering and thus the whole sphere of Daoist ritual. Of all the rituals, the Offering (*jiao* 醮) is the basic liturgical service conducted for the living which comprises rituals of communion and covenant. Fasts (*zhai* 齋) include rituals for the living and for the dead and comprise rituals to obtain merits. *Baibai* 拜拜 is a general term for worship. It also means a religious festival or any kind of ritual or festive event. It is also frequently used in colloquial popular language. In opposition to Confucian ritual, only a small part of these religious performative acts, which are performed by ritual spe-

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[28] Cf. K. Schipper, *The Taoist Body* (1982), foreword by N. Girardot, trans. K.C. Duval (Berkeley, 2000), 74–76.

[29] See J. Lagerwey, *Ritual in Chinese Society and History* (London, 1987), 286.

cialists, themselves realize the cosmic order. Great rituals and small rites have to be distinguished: small rites are part of the daily practice of healing, exorcising, and purifying individuals. By contrast, the great rituals, which contain many rites, concern groups of people and may be divided in funerary services for the ancestors (kin rituals, called 'somber', *you* 幽, referring to the world of the dead) and in services for the gods (Heaven rituals, called 'pure', *qing* 清, referring to Heaven).[30]

The Buddhist terms *li* 禮 and *bai* 拜 (also *libai* 禮拜) denote many different sorts of inner and outer reverence, worship and adoration acts (*vándana*). *Yi (shi)* 儀(式) denotes only the outer formal aspect of the performative ceremonial act, the visible part as expression of worship. *Yigui* 儀軌 is an expression for a genre of Buddhist esoteric literature continuing the vedic *kalpa sūtras*, which contains prescriptions for secret ceremonies and rituals, secret ritual methods such as mudras and mantras, and rules of behavior. *Gong* 供 are Pūjā-offerings and *foshi* 佛事 or *fashi* 法事 are expressions for all kinds of services that are carried out to honor the Buddha or the Dharma. The semantic field of all Chinese generic terms denoting ritual always includes the semantic realm of rules, precepts, and discipline. On the generic level, the concepts of ritual and rule are never differentiated terminologically. In the Confucian and Daoist traditions, the different rituals basically serve to reenact the cosmic order that has been disturbed or endangered either by human non-ritual behavior (Confucianism) or by powers of darkness (Daoism). Since the cosmic order is envisioned as a moral order and the rites embody cosmic order, as liturgical matrices on which conduct must be modeled the rites are taken to carry moral meaning. That is why they are so closely related to moral precepts and rules.

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Joachim Gentz

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[30] See Schipper, *The Taoist Body*, 72–76.

Egyptian

The few Egyptian terms that allow of being associated with our con-
cept 'ritual' are distributed between two aspects, 'prescription' and
'performance'.[31] For 'ritual' in the sense of 'prescription' (what is to
be done and how), there are two expressions: *tp-rd* and *n.t-ꜥ*, both of
which can be translated as 'ritual prescription'. The former is based
on the word for 'foot' and thus means as much as guidance, orien-
tation; the latter is based on the word for 'arm' or 'hand' ('that
which belongs to the hand'; it is unclear if it means 'action', or
'handbook', 'manual', yet for the latter there is the word *jmj-ḏr.t*,
'what is in one's hand'). In association with *jrj*, 'to do, carry out,
make', *jrj n.t-ꜥ* means 'to perform a ritual', while *jrj tp-rd* means 'to
make or enact a prescription'. *Tp-rd* also means 'order' (cf. Hebrew
siddur and *seder*). For 'ritual' in the sense of 'performance', there is
the expression *jrj-j ḫ.t*, 'to do things' ('to sacrifice', especially as the
title of the king as the "lord of the sacrificial cult". For 'to sacrifice',
there are a number of other expressions with *jḫ.t*. The expression
jḫ.t-nṯr ('divine things') denotes both 'divine sacrifice' and 'sacrificial
ritual', and is often best rendered as 'sacred action', 'service', 'cult'.
The word for celebration, *h3b*, also appears in two forms that are
distributed between the aspects 'performance' and 'prescription': as
a masculine noun, *h3b* means 'celebration'; as a feminine noun, *h3b.t*,
it means 'order of festivals, list of festivals, celebratory ritual, cele-
bratory role'. The expression *bs*, which occasionally is to be ren-
dered as 'rite', comes from the word 'to initiate' and is related to
secret rites into which one has to be initiated, just as in the case of
the more common word *št3.w*, 'secrets'. Then there are, of course,
also expressions for specific ritual actions, such as 'purification' (*wꜥb*),
'libation' (*jr.t qbh*), 'burning incense' (*jr.t snṯr*), 'slaughtering' (*sfṯ*),
'transfiguration' (*s3ḫ.w*), 'to worship, worship' (*dw3*), 'to perform the
sacrificial litany' (*wdn*).

   For the Egyptian concept of ritual, its proximity to 'law' and 'pre-
scription' is important—rites are prescribed actions that must be exe-
cuted on certain occasions and whose execution has to occur in strict
accordance with the prescription—as is its proximity to the concept

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[31] The article "Rituale" in the *Lexikon der Ägyptologie*, V, 271–285 (W. Helck) pro-
vides no references on terminology.

of the secret. Rituals are performed partly in public, as in the case of processional celebrations, or they exclude the public, which is normally the case for Egyptian rituals.

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Jan Assmann

Greek

The (ancient) Greek language does not have a word that corresponds to the modern notion of a 'ritual'. Instead, it uses different words that designate specific rituals: *thysía*, for example, designates a sacrifice offered to the gods, *enagismós*, a sacrificial offering to the dead, *spondé* a libation for the gods, *choaí* a drink-offering to the dead, etc. Similarly, the general word for 'festival' (*heorté*) is often replaced by a paraphrase, which lists the main components of a festival: "a procession, a contest and a sacrifice" (*pompè kaì agòn kaì thysía*).

Nonetheless, several terms that belong to the semantic field 'to act', 'action', can be used in a more general sense to designate rituals, though without encompassing all rituals. The paraphrase *hierà poieîn* ('to perform the sacred things/rites') may be used in this sense, with *hiera* referring to ritual actions concerning the gods. Another paraphrase that can be used as a very general term in connection with ritual actions is *therapeúein toùs theoús* ('to serve the gods', that is, to perform cultic actions; cf. *sébein*, 'to revere').

Three other words, which belong to the semantic field 'to act', 'to perform', 'to do'—the verb *teleîn* (cf. the substantive *teleté*), the participle *drómena*, and the substantive *órgia* (plural)—are used almost exclusively in connection with the rituals of mystery cults and initiation. *Teléo* ('to perform', 'to execute', 'to fulfill') is used in the specific sense of 'to initiate' (usually into a mystery cult, but also to initiate a priest), but also/as well as in the more general sense of 'to perform' (for example, *hierà* or *thusían teleîn*, 'to perform sacred rites or a sacrifice'); the word *teleté* expresses the mystic rites practiced at initiation. *Drómena* ('the things done', from *drân*, 'to act, to perform', for example, *hierà drân*, 'to perform a sacrifice') is the term that comprises all the mystical rites. The word *órgion*, etymologically connected

with *ergon* ('work', 'deed'), from *érdo* ('to work', 'to do', 'to perform'; but also in a more specific sense: 'to sacrifice'), is the word that most closely corresponds to 'ritual'. Although it is most commonly used only to designate secret rites, it is also attested in the more general meaning of 'rites' in the service of gods. Similarly, *orgiázein* ('to perform orgies') usually means the celebration of rites in the cult of Dionysos, but it can also designate any ritual service to gods.

Instead of using a word that corresponds to our notion of a ritual, the Greeks often use the general term *tà nomizómena* ('the actions prescribed by custom') in order to refer to ritual actions, not only of a religious nature. The ancient lexicographer Harpokration, for example, gives the following definition of *orgiazein* in his lexicon (s.v. *orgeônes*): "*orgiázein* means to sacrifice and to do the actions prescribed by custom" (*orgiázein gár esti tò thyein kaì tà nomizómena poieîn*).

This brief—and incomplete—survey of Greek words used in connection with rituals suggests that the Greek concept of rituals emphasizes the performance of (specific) actions prescribed by custom. This can be clearly seen in the following anecdote (Athenaios VII 297d/e): "The Boiotians sacrifice to the gods those eels of the Kopaic Lake which are of surpassing size, putting wreaths on them, saying prayers over them, and casting barley-corns on them as on any other sacrificial victim; and to the foreigner who was utterly puzzled at the strangeness of this custom and asked the reason, the Boiotian declared that he knew one answer, and he would reply that one should observe ancestral customs, and it was not his business to justify them to other men".

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Angelos Chaniotis

Hebrew

There are basically three words that, in some way or the other, cover the meaning of 'ritual' in Hebrew: (1) *'aḇodāh*, (2) *pulḥān*, and (3) *ṭeqes* (or sometimes *ṭekes*). However, none of these words has the same basic meaning or the same extension as the English word 'ritual'.

The basic meaning of *'aḇodāh* is 'labor, work'. From Biblical times on, the term also denoted the whole complex of the temple cult in Jerusalem. Occasionally, however, in Biblical Hebrew, it is used for specific ritual prescriptions, such as the eating of the unleavened bread during Passover (Ex. 13:5). The term *'aḇodāh* was always restricted to the Jewish ritual and never denoted rituals outside Judaism, unless the adjective *zarāh* ('foreign') was added. The compound *'aḇodāh zarāh* may denote a foreign cult as a whole, as well as the object of this cult, for example, an idol. The latter meaning is predominant. Moreover, there are some word compounds that are parallel to *'aḇodāh zarāh*, such as *'aḇodat elīlīm* (literally 'the cult of idols') or *'aḇodat koḵāḇīm* (literally 'the cult of stars'), which generally have the same meaning as *'aḇodāh zarāh*. We may conclude, then, that the term *'aḇodāh* can be seen to a certain degree as an emic equivalent to the etic concept of 'ritual'. As such, it denotes a complex of ritual prescriptions, as well as a single ritual. However, it differs from the etic concept of 'ritual' by the fact that it is never used as a comparative concept, but is either restricted to the Jewish cult or, with the aforementioned compounds, confined to non-Jewish rituals.

Closer parallels to the etic concept of 'ritual' can be seen in the term *pulḥān*, which first occurred in Rabbinic Hebrew. Its basic meanings are 'service' and 'worship'. The term is more or less used equivalently to *'aḇodāh*, which may be seen, for example, in Sifre Deut. § 41. Here, within the context of an exegesis of Dan. 6:17, the question arises as to whether worship (*pulḥān*) existed in Babylonia. The actual meaning of the question is whether a sacrificial service existed in Babylonia and the answer is given by the explanation that as the sacrifice service is called *'aḇodāh* ('labor'), so is the prayer called *'aḇodāh* ('labor'), that is, there is no 'service' but 'prayer' in Babylonia. In general, *pulḥān* is used less frequently than *'aḇodāh*. Only in modern Israeli Hebrew does *pulḥān* appear as a definite equivalent for the

English 'worship', 'cult', or 'ritual', and in this manner it can be
used for Jewish as well as non-Jewish 'rituals'.

Like *pulḥān*, the term *ṭeqes* (or *ṭekes*) also first occurred in Rabbinic
Hebrew, but its general use is even less frequent than the former.
Ṭeqes is derived from Greek τάξις and its basic meaning is 'order',
but it also covers 'ceremony' or 'ritual', Jewish as well as non-Jewish
ones. In modern Israeli Hebrew, it also has the meaning of 'protocol'.

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Hans-Michael Haußig

Hittite

Many Hittite texts from the second millennium BCE are usually
characterized or catalogued by modern scholars as "ritual texts" or
"festival rituals",[32] mainly based on their contents. These texts indeed
give (brief) descriptions of how to perform rituals or ceremonies.
There are two central terms, namely *aniur* and $EZEN_4$, and a num-
ber of related words, but they all refer to specific kinds of rituals.

The word *aniur* (sometimes also written with logograms, such as
KIN, SISKUR, or SÍSKUR, which also can be applied to other
Hittite readings) can be taken as the generic Hittite term for 'rit-
ual', as can be derived from such expressions as: "When I perform
the great ritual on behalf of a man" (KUB 32.9+ rev. 36: *man
antuhšan šalli aniur aniyami*) or "She arranges the ritual" (KBo 15.19
i 18: *aniur handaizzi*). Sentences like "I am performing the ritual
of/against impurity" (KUB 12.58 ii 31: *paprannaš aniur aniškimi*) or
"When the morning comes, the king performs . . . the ritual of the
house, the 'pure' ritual" (KUB 24.5+ obv. 28f: *mahhan lukzi nu=za
haššuš . . . parnaš aniur parkui aniur iyazi*) otherwise make clear that *aniur*

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[32] E. Laroche, *Catalogue des textes hittites* (Paris, 1971), no. 390–470, 591–724.

as a generic term can also be used for a special kind (or part) of a concrete ritual. The etymology of *aniur* is uncertain; some favor a relation to Latin *onus* ('load'), but it may be more convincing to interpret the verbal basis of *aniur* as one way of expressing (perhaps solemnly) the verb 'to do'.[33]

In Luwian, another Anatolian language closely related to Hittite, *malhašša* is the general term for 'ritual', as we learn from the phrase "master of the ritual" (*malhaššaššiš* EN-*aš*), which correspondents to the Hittite phrase (*aniuraš* EN-*aš*).

Besides this generic term for 'ritual', some other nouns in Hittite refer to special rituals: *maldeššar* may mean a special ritual in fulfillment of a vow, while *mukeššar* can refer to a ritual to evoke gods or the dead. But both nouns have a broader semantic field: *maldeššar* also means 'recitation' (cf. etymologically German 'melden') or 'vow'; *mukeššar* in most contexts simply means 'evocation' and not a special ritual of evocation.

The second generic term is EZEN$_4$. A phonetic Hittite reading of this logogram has yet to be determined. While *aniur* refers to rituals that deal with the removal of all kind of 'impurity' or harm, EZEN$_4$ is the technical term for (ritual) actions concerning the cult that mainly the king and/or the queen (or sometimes even a prince) performed in honor of the gods. In absolute use, EZEN$_4$ refers to the description of cultic acts (processions, ceremonies for the deities, and the like), but in compound construction the word is semantically restricted to refer to a special festival, and we know of at least eighty different festivals (EZEN$_4$) celebrated in the Hittite capital. The two most important of these festivals during the New Hittite Empire in the 14th and 13th centuries BCE—the EZEN$_4$ AN.TAH.ŠUM and the EZEN$_4$ *nuntarriyašha*—were celebrated in spring and fall, respectively, both lasting more than one month.

While we can take EZEN$_4$ as the generic term covering all rites and ceremonies that make up all the festival, it is worth mentioning some further interesting terms. *Hazziwi-* means 'ceremony', which is part of the cultic entertainment of the gods. The "masters of the ceremony" (KUB 20.19 iii 2: LÚ.MEŠ *hazziuwaš*) belong to the cultic staff, and we also read in a text that there are "no ceremonies

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[33] See further J. Puhvel, *Hittite Etymological Dictionary*, vols. 1–2 (Berlin, 1984), 66–71.

for the gods" (KBo 10.20 i 2: DINGIR.MEŠ-*aš hazziwi* NU.GÁL *kuitki*), but also about "ceremonies (and) festivals of the house/palace" (KBo 2.8 iv 6: *nu=kan hazziwi* EZEN₄ É-*aš*). Such references show that *hazziwi*- is also a ritual term, but does not refer to 'ritual' in general. The same is the case with *šaklai-*, whose semantic field ranges from 'customary behavior', 'rule', 'privilege', to 'rite' or 'ceremony', especially 'rites' performed for different deities. Oracular questions are sometimes raised to make clear which rite should be carried out for the deity (cf. KUB 5.6 i 44–45: *naš ŠA* DINGIR-*LIM šaklai punuššer*). But also offering food and drink to the deity is part of such a ceremony (cf. KUB 13.4 iii 69–70: *nu=kan mahhan* DINGIR.MEŠ-*aš šaklain aššanuzi* DINGIR-*LIM-ni adanna akuwanna pai*). Though both *hazziwi*- and *šaklai-* refer to cultic and ritual behavior, these words never denote 'ritual' or 'festival' as generic terms.

Many texts of the Hittite cuneiform corpus refer to religion and official cult in Anatolia in the second millennium BCE, by providing us with detailed descriptions of ritual acts and behavior. According to terminology, we can distinguish two types: *aniur* is used for rituals that treat an individual person to counteract magic, to remove impurity, to help somebody to recover his/her health again or to re-integrate him or her into Hittite society; on the other hand, EZEN₄ is used for the ritual performance of festivals, including the feeding of gods and the entertainment of people alike in the course of such festivals.

Further reading

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Manfred Hutter

Hopi

The Hopi language is spoken by a Puebloan people of northeastern Arizona. The exact number of speakers is difficult to estimate, but the *Hopi Dictionary* places the number between 5,000 and 10,000 speakers (there are about 11,000 Hopis, but not all of them speak the language).[34] Hopi is a separate branch of the Northern Uto-

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[34] *Hopi Dictionary. Hopìikwa Lavàytutuveni. A Hopi-English Dictionary of the Third Mesa Dialect* (Tucson, 1998).

Aztecan language family (the other branches are Californian and Numic; the Southern family consists of Tepiman, Taracahitan, and Corachol/Aztecan). The Hopi language consists, technically, of four dialects: one on First Mesa, two on Second Mesa, and one on Third Mesa. This section is based on the Third Mesa dialect.

Hopi religion is extremely ritualized, and there are several terms for 'ritual'. The most important term is the cover term *wiimi*, which the aforementioned *Hopi Dictionary* defines as follows: "*n.* 1. religious rite, ritual, ceremony, religion, religious practices open only to initiates, esoteric rites. *~t ang momngwit muuyawuy epyangwu.* The leaders of ceremonies go by the moon (to determine their respective dates).— *Maraw momoymuy ~'am.* The Maraw ceremony is a religious practice carried out by women. – *Hopi ~t.sa enang sutsep hintsakma.* The Hopi do [*sic*] everything incorporating religion with it. – *Nu' pay iwimiy ang nukwangwkuyvanta.* I'm going through my religious ceremonies in good stead. 2. (met., *poss.*) habit. *Pam mòoti pas kwayngaptat pu' nösngwunìiqey put ~'yta.* Going to the bathroom prior to eating is a habit with him." The term often takes the suffix form in the names of specific ceremonies, such as *Alwimi* (Al or 'Two-Horn' ceremony), *Katsinwimi* (Kachina ceremonies), *Lakonwimi* (Lakon ceremony), and *Wuwtsimwimi* (Wuwtsim ceremony). When referring to religious societies or offices in those societies, the stem is used as a prefix, such as *wimkya* ('member or initiate of a society'), *wimmomngwi* ('society chief'), *wimna'at* (his or her 'ceremonial father'), *wimtawi* ('ritual song'), and *wimnavoti* ('knowledge of an esoteric religious practice').

The stem is also used in verb constructions such as *wimkyati* ('become initiated as'), *wimmatsiwa* ('be given a ceremonial name'), *wìmta* ('introduce a religious practice', 'make a new ceremony'), and *wìmtuvoylata* ('induct' or 'initiate', 'mark with a badge of priesthood by initiation into a religious society').

There are other terms used for rituals, such as *hiihimu* ('various things'), from *himu*, ('thing'). In its accusative form, it can be used to refer to a ceremony just like *wiimi*, as in *Marawhiita* ('Maraw thing', that is, Maraw ceremony). In fact, a combination of the two terms has also been attested by the *Hopi Dictionary*: *wimhimu* ('ritual object' or 'practice'). A very common indefinite form often used to denote actual ritual practice is the verb *hintsatskya* ("they are performing something"). Parallel uses of the term are *suvohintsatskya* ("they performed it jointly"), *tsakohintsatskya* ("they performed it like amateurs"), and *kwangwahintsakngwu* ("he performed really well as a rule"). I have also found a nominal form: *wukohintsakpi* ('a very involved performance'),

and the *Hopi Dictionary* records the terms *wimhitsakpi* ('religious prac-
tice[s] and ritual[s] open only to initiates') and *pavasiwhintsakpi* ('rit-
ual practice'). The latter stem is a term indicating prayer: *pavasiwa*
('be engaged in ritual supplication', 'intensive common prayer and
ritual in esoteric session').

Wiimi, thus implies the esoteric knowledge of matriclans and their
associated secret societies (both male and female), which are passed
on through oral traditions, secret initiations, public ceremonies, songs,
dances, and masked performances; and the possession of which is
evidenced by various privileges, objects, properties, and tracts of land.
Thus the term implies ritual knowledge, object, person, and action.

I have argued elsewhere that the Hopi worldview envisions a causal
chain of givens to which esoteric knowledge and its expression through
ritual are integral: "The Hopi conceive of human life as an integral
part of a chain reaction. It is a logical sequence of givens: proper
attitude and the careful completing of ceremonials bring the clouds,
which drop their moisture and nourish their children (the corn and
vegetation). The crops are harvested and human life is regenerated,
the stages of life continue and the Hopi ideal is reached: to become
old and die in one's sleep."[35] The causal chain depends on individ-
ual morals, especially those of the chiefs, and on the proper com-
pletion of the ceremonies. To complete ceremonies properly, one
needs to be initiated into clan knowledge and tradition, maintain a
'ritual attitude' to life, that is, *pam qatsit aw hintsaki* ("he or she works
for life"), and maintain a pure heart and good intentions. There is
also an evil causal chain, which is the inverse of the good one and
is expressed through the activities of witches and sorcerers, which in
Hopi thought are evil by definition.[36]

All Hopi individuals are initiated before puberty into one of the
two societies that perform the Kachina masked dances, the *Powamu-
ywiwimkyam* and the *Katsinwiwimkyam*. Over the course of a lifetime,
any man or woman can simultaneously be an initiated member of
several esoteric societies and, thus, spend a large amount of time
engaged in ritual activity. There were about ten major ceremonies

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[35] A.W. Geertz, "A Typology of Hopi Indian Ritual", *Temenos* 22 (1986), 41–56,
here 48.
[36] For more information, see A.W. Geertz, "Ethnohermeneutics and Worldview
Analysis in the Study of Hopi Indian Religion," *Numen* 50 (2003), 309–348.

performed by the various secret societies during the year, some of which could take up to three weeks. The usual time span was nine days (an initial day accompanied by two sets of four days). Modern time schedules, however, have favored the much shorter Kachina dances, which take only four days. Only a few of the major ceremonies are still being performed today.

The broader range of semantic nuance in the Hopi term for 'ritual' constitutes the major difference between the English and Hopi terms. Whereas the English term is more precise and restricted, the Hopi term comes closer to our understanding of 'religion'.

Dictionaries and further reading

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Armin W. Geertz

Japanese

For the purpose of this article, 'rituals' shall be understood as standardized, repetitively performed actions that possess a political, administrative, or religious significance. The Japanese language has not produced a general term for this range of possible meanings. The relevant texts use either different terms or the proper names of the actions.

Etymologically, the term *matsurau* ('to visit the Gods') came to be identified with the word *matsuru*, meaning 'to worship' or 'to dedicate something to a god' (*kami*). In ancient Japan, the term *matsuru*, or rather *matsurigoto*, combined the meanings of 'government' and 'ritual feast'. This concept was re-invoked after the Meiji Restoration (1868) through the proclamation of *saisei itchi* ('the unity of religion and politics').

The term *matsuri* and its Sino-Japanese reading *sai* were used to designate festivals of sacrifice, supplication to the gods, thanksgiving, and purification, all of which initially possessed some relation to the

Emperor (Tenno). With the development of seasonal festivals and festivals of seasonal change in Shinto shrines, the application of the terms *matsuri* or *sai* was extended to cover also those festivities, as the words *reisai*, the annual shrine festival, or *jichinsai*, the Shinto consecration of a building site, show. Many *matsuri* comprise an initial, solemn part conducted by priests called *saigi*, and an informal, celebratory part in which the laymen participate, the latter often being a modern addition.

In a Buddhist context, one can cite the terms *e* ('assembly'), as in *hôe* ('Buddhist service'), and *shiki* ('rite', 'form'), as in *sôshiki* ('funeral rite'). However, religious actions that follow a fixed pattern are often designated within both the Shinto and the Buddhist traditions by their proper names, such as *kuyô* ('offering to the ancestors'), *kitô* ('prayer') or *zazen* ('ritual sitting'). The common religion of Japan, which is usually referred to as 'folk religion', encompasses an abundance of practices that follow a prescribed pattern.

To the present day, no single meta-lingual term has emerged out of this multitude of different practices. There has been some theorizing about the meaning of practices and ceremonies, however, as the Sôtô-Zen teachings on the unity of practice and enlightenment attest. The modernization of Japan began in the second half of the 19th century as a monumental project of translating Western works on the natural und human sciences. In the process of establishing itself in Japan, the academic discipline of religious studies took over crucial theories and terms from its Western models. Terms such as 'religion', 'magic' and 'belief' were introduced as analytic categories, often without any consideration of the applicability of these terms to an analysis of Japanese religions. Likewise, the term 'ritual' was appropriated without much reflection and translated into Japanese with the term *girei*, which has a long prehistory in Chinese and Buddhist texts. The definition of *girei* in the relevant dictionaries largely draws on theoretical outlines of Western research. Japanese scholars of religious studies often pursue the division of religious teaching and practice inherent in the term ritual/*girei* and thus present a distorted view of Japanese religion. The term ritual/*girei* as used in the discourse on religion in Japan not only implies the division of religious teaching and practice but also demotes religious practice to a status below that of religious teaching. In the face of this Christian, more specifically Protestant polemic inherent in the term, it would have been surprising, indeed, if an emic equivalent

had been found in Japan. Since religious acts form the core of Japanese religions, it is not necessary to designate them as such with a discrete term.

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Inken Prohl

Mongolian[37]

Despite having been incorporated into the larger religio-cultural context of Tibetan Buddhism, the indigenous religious traditions are still present as a separate autochthonous tradition even in present-day Mongolia. If we consider the Mongolian Buddhist context that is heavily dependent on Tibetan Buddhism,[38] we may take the Mongolian *jang üile* as an appropriate term to denote 'ritual'. *Jang üile* is a composite expression, formed by the components *jang* ('character', 'disposition', 'habit', 'custom') and *üile* ('action', 'deed'). Translated literally, the term signifies 'actions that are performed out of habit'. Lessing gives the translation "manner or method of doing, religious ceremony",[39] and adds as the Tibetan equivalent *cho ga*.[40] Thus the term *jang üile* translates the Tibetan *cho ga*. This is verified in the translations of Tibetan ritual texts into Mongolian.[41]

After the conversion of the Mongols to Buddhism, the indigenous texts that the Shamans had recited orally up to that date were partially written down. The orally transmitted texts were collected by

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[37] The following reflections are tentative and should be taken as provisional. More research has to be carried out in order to determine the exact meaning and use of the terms suggested here.

[38] Tibetan terminology is discussed in a separate entry.

[39] F.D. Lessing et al., *Mongolian-English Dictionary* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, 1960), 1034.

[40] For this term, see the essay on Tibetan.

[41] See V.L. Uspensky, *Catalogue of the Mongolian manuscripts and xylographs in the St. Petersburg State University Library*. With assistance from O. Inoue, edited and foreword by T. Nakami (Tokyo, 1999), 365–367.

researchers and later published in written form. We have to ask whether the term *jang üile*, used in the Buddhist translation language, is being extended to these non-Buddhist texts, and thus serves as an abstract literary category as it does in the Tibetan language.

The evidence from the indigenous Mongolian sources clearly shows that only the texts heavily influenced by Buddhism use the term *jang üile*. Several texts that describe the rituals to be performed for the deity of the hearth-fire bear the title *ghal-un tngri takiqui-yin jang üile* ("offering-ritual to the fire-tngri"). Most of the ritual texts of the indigenous religious tradition, however, use the term *yosun* instead of *jang üile*. Mongolian *yosun* is a broad and rather unspecific term, already used in the oldest written Mongolian source, the *Secret History of the Mongols* dating from 1228 CE. Signifying, among other meanings, a "generally accepted rule, traditional custom, habit, usage",[42] it encompasses the cultural, social, and religious norms and customs that specify Mongolian culture as distinct and unique from the surrounding cultures. *Yosun*, however, is a term that has different meanings dependent on the context. It may be translated as 'way of living', but also as 'political rule' or 'mode of government'. In our context, it has to be understood as 'generally accepted method of doing'.

To conclude: We find evidence of the use of two different terms that serve as emic equivalents of 'ritual'. In a religio-cultural context heavily influenced by Buddhism the term *jang üile* is preferred, whereas in an indigenous religious context *yosun* is used. Both terms, however, have in common that they point to the way, or method, of doing something. They both describe performative actions.

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Karénina Kollmar-Paulenz

Old Norse

There are several terms referring to ritual actions in Old Norse. The verb *blóta* ('to sacrifice', 'to worship the god[s]'), for instance, appears

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[42] Lessing et al., *Mongolian-English Dictionary*, 435.

frequently in sacrificial contexts, while *vígja* ('to consecrate') is evidenced in connection with initiations. There are also expressions for divinations, such as *fella blótspánn* ('to cast lot-twigs'). All these terms have a restricted signification implying certain activities often considered as religious. Old Norse (ON) *siðr* (Gothic *sidus*, Old High German *situ*, Old English *sidu, seodu*), however, is a more general term connoting 'custom', 'habit', 'manner', 'conduct', 'moral life', 'religion', 'faith', and 'ritual', ceremonial'.

In the Icelandic Sagas (13th century), relating to the historical and cultural conditions in pre-Christian Scandinavia, *siðr* is attested in religious and/or ritual contexts. The Christian author Snorri Sturluson (1179–1241), for instance, described the sacrificial cult in Trøndelag, Norway, during the 10th century: "It was ancient custom (*forn siðr*) that when sacrifice (*blót*) was to be made, all farmers were to come to the *hof* (sanctuary, multifunctional building)" (*Hákonar saga góða*, 14). In this passage, Snorri describes the public sacrificial rituals, the holy objects, and the participants in cult activities. Since he describes these actions as something taking place in ancient times, he used the concept *forn siðr* ('ancient custom'). In the compound *siðvenja* ('custom', 'practice'), the term relates to other kinds of 'ritual' activities, such as death ceremonies. The *Eyrbyggja saga* 33 mentions the last service to the dead (*nábjargir*) that Arnkel rendered to his father Thorolf. He wrapped some clothes around Thorolf's head and "got him ready for burial according to the custom of the time (*eptir siðvenju*)". In *Ynglingasaga* 36, Snorri uses the term *siðvenja* when describing the rituals of the funeral and inheritance feast (*erfi*) after the death of King Önund, such as the libation ceremonies, vows, and the ritual entering of the high-seat.

The term *siðr* also occurs in contexts where the religious element is less apparent. In *Egils saga* 25 (13th century, but set in pre-Christian period), Grim says to his companions when coming into the presence of the king: "It is said to be the custom (*siðr*) here to meet the king unarmed". It seems as if the term here is primarily concerned with the formality that had to be observed in the presence of the king as the physical embodiment of political power. On the other hand, ancient Scandinavian rulers appeared in important cultic roles and legitimised their power with religious symbolism. Thus a religious dimension may also be traceable in this situation. In chapter 65 of the same saga, the traditional single combat, the ON *hólmgangr*, is referred to as *lǫg, . . . ok forn siðvenja* "law, . . . and ancient

custom". Such ritualized duels were means of resolving legal dis-
putes. Most likely, they also included religious elements. In medieval
legal texts, *siðr* is used in a general sense to denote traditional cus-
tomary laws. According to the Swedish Östgöta-Law (Bygd. 44. §1),
for instance, (Old Swedish) *siÞvænia* ('custom', 'law') was supposed to
be followed when fire damage occurred.

There is an interesting authentic piece of evidence of *siðr* in a
10th century poem composed by Hallfred Ottarsson. This poet had
met the Christian King Olaf Tryggvason, but still respected the hea-
then gods. He tells us that he was reluctant to hate Odin because
he now must serve Christ. Despite his doubts, he proclaimed his loy-
alty to the new faith: "This ritual/religion/faith (*siðr*) has now come
to the prince of the men of Sogn [i.e. King Olaf], who has for-
bidden [heathen] sacrifices (*blót*)". In connection with conversion, the
ancient customs and heathen rituals (*hinn forni siðr; heiðinn siðr*) were
contrasted with Christian liturgy and beliefs (*hinn nýi siðr, kristinn siðr*).
ON *siðaskipti* ('change of faith/custom/ritual', 'conversion') indicates
that the term had gained wider religious connotations in conversion
contexts and referred to 'religion' in a more general sense. At this
stage of its semantic development, the term seems to encompass
aspects of faith and belief, as well as those of religious usage. *Heilagra
manna sôgur* (II, p. 276) states: "he had fully converted to one reli-
gion (*sið*), to belief in God the Father".

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Olof Sundqvist

Persian

Although Zoroastrianism, the pre-Islamic religion of Iran, is a ritualistic faith, no specific term for 'ritual' seems to exist in Middle Persian. Since ritual plays a much lesser role in Islam, it is not surprising to find that no single, well-defined term for 'ritual' has developed in modern Persian.

For the noun 'ritual', Haïm gives *āyin-e parasteš, marāsem-e ʿebādat, dastur, dasturnāme-ye parasteš*. An on-line English-Persian dictionary (www.farsidic.com), which generally reflects modern usage, gives: *tašrifāt-e mazhabi, āyin-e parasteš, tašrifāt*. For 'religious rite', Haïm has *šaʿāyer-e mazhabi, ādāb-e dini*. For 'rite', the on-line dictionary gives the translations: *farmān-e asāsi, marāsem, tašrifāt-e mazhabi, ādāb*.

Of these, *farmān-e asāsi* ('fundamental order', 'essential command'), is evidently based on an understanding of the term 'rite', which has little to do with 'ritual'. Similarly, *dastur*, ('rule', 'instruction', 'custom', permission'); (Junker and Alavi: "A: Instruktion, Vorschrift, Anweisung; B. Brauch, Sitte, Regel, Ordnung; C. Erlaubnis"), does not correspond to the concept of 'ritual' as most Westerners would understand it. Nor does it appear to be widely used in this sense in modern Persian usage. The more elaborate *dasturnāme-ye parasteš*, ('system of rules for worship') comes closer in that it reflects the idea of a prescribed sequence of actions connected with religious worship; nevertheless, the words are not given as an idiomatic expression in any of the standard dictionaries, and presumably represent an attempt to define what is meant by 'ritual' rather than being an idiomatic translation.

The expressions *āyin-e parasteš, marāsem-e ʿebādat, tašrifāt-e mazhabi, šaʿāyer-e mazhabi*, and *ādāb-e dini* all consist of the construction 'noun + *ezāfet* (connecting particle) + qualifier (noun or adjective)'. The adjectives *mazhabi* and *dini* both mean 'religious, connected with religion'. Another synonym, though with some non-Islamic connotations, is the adj. *āyini*, deriving from Middle Persian *ēwēn* ('manner', 'custom', 'form', 'propriety') (MacKenzie). *Parasteš*, a verbal noun of Persian origin, means 'worship'; according to Haïm, it is a synonym of the (originally Arabic) term *ʿebādat*, although the latter has stronger connotations of Islamic acts of devotion and ritual.

Of the nouns qualified by these terms, *marāsem* means 'ceremonies', 'formalities', 'observances', 'program' (Haïm, Junker-Alavi), and can be used, for example, for ceremonies connected with the Opening

of Parliament (Haïm). Haïm lists both *ādāb* and *āyin* as its synonyms. *ādāb* (the plural of *adab*: 'politeness', 'courtesy', 'good breeding') basically means 'etiquette', 'formalities', 'ceremonies', 'rites'. According to Haïm, *āyin* means 'rite', 'ceremony', 'custom', 'law', 'institution', 'religion', 'decoration', 'ornament'; Junker and Alavi give 'rule', 'ceremony', 'doctrine' ("Regel, Zeremonie, Doktrin"). As was said earlier, the term *āyin* is of pre-Islamic origin and carries some associations of non-Islamic religion. The word *tašrifāt* derives from the Arabic root s̱-r-f, which denotes the concept 'noble', and may originally have been used for ceremonies to honor someone (cf. *raʿis-e tašrifāt*, 'master of ceremonies'; see Haïm). In modern Persian, it is used for 'ceremonies', 'formalities' (Haïm, Junker-Alavi). *šaʿāyer*, the plural of *šaʿire*, means 'rites', 'ceremonies', 'customs'.

   The relatively imprecise definition of these terms is illustrated by the usage found in a book on religion, *Marāsem-e mazhabi va ādāb-e Zartoštiyān* (Teheran, 1372/1993–4), whose title can be translated as *Religious Rites and Customs of the Zoroastrians*. The initiation ceremony is referred to by the word *āyin* ('rite', 'ceremony', 158), and is said to be one of "the Zoroastrians' religious rites" (*marāsem-e mazhabi-ye Zartoštiyān*). *āyin* ('rite', 'ceremony'), is also used for festivals (226f.), wedding ceremonies (168f.), the last rites for the dead (194f.), and the investiture of priests (256f.). Only for the last two would the term 'ritual' seem wholly appropriate. *Marāsem-e āyini* is used regularly as synonym of *marāsem-e mazhabi* (e.g., 224), with the adjective *āyini* reflecting the wider sense of *āyin* as 'religion'.

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Philip G. Kreyenbroek

Sami

Sami (Lappish), the western-most of the Uralic languages, is spoken by about 30,000 persons in central and northern Norway, Sweden, and Finland, and in northwestern Russia. The differences between the regional varieties are considerable and comparable to those between

the Romance languages. The words presented in this short survey are collected from the six largest Sami dialect groups: South (S.), Lule (L.), North (N.), Inari (I.), Skolt (Sk.), and Kildin (Kld.) Sami.

The words of the ritual terminology in Sami can be divided into three groups: words referring to the indigenous religion (which in the main was abandoned during the 18th century after several centuries of Christian missionary work), words referring to Christian practices, and words that are used regardless of religion and in non-religious contexts.

(1) There is no traditional Sami word for 'ritual' as a generic concept, but several words for different types of ritual activities, among them general words for 'sacrifice' like *värro* (L.), *uhre* (I.), *palvv* (Sk.), and *anntmušš* (Kld.), as well as words for special types of sacrifices, such as *tseegkuve* (S.: 'reindeer sacrifice'), and *sjiele* (S.: 'offering' ([of small things, like rings, pieces of metal, or glass beads]). Other words are related to the most important ritual specialist, the *noaidi*. His ritual activities were called *nåajtome* (S.) or *noaidevuohta* (N.), and characterized by the verb *gievvut* ('act under the influence of a profound religious emotion'). Since his most important tool was the drum, there are several words for 'to drum'. One of them is *meevredh* (S.).

(2) Other words are solely used for Christian practices. *Gásta* (N.) (related to *gástat*, 'get wet') and *risttâm* (Sk.) are words for 'baptism', 'christening', whereas *skallo* (L.), *bassimállásat* (N.) (from *bassi*, 'sacred' and *mállásat* [pl.], 'meal at which there are guests'), and *pričas* (Sk.) are words for 'the Lord's supper', 'communion'. *Vihat* (pl.) means 'wedding', 'marriage (ceremony)', and *vihahus* (N.) means both 'wedding' and 'consecration of a church'. *Hávdádus* (N.) and *ruõk'kmõš* (Sk.) are words for 'burial', 'funeral'; *biedna* (L.), *tjåhkalvis* (L.), and *ruhkosat* (pl., N.) for 'prayer-meeting'; *girkomeanut* (pl., N.) for 'religious ceremony', and *ipmilbálvalus* for '(divine) service'.

(3) Of course, there are words that are not bound to any special religion, as well as words for non-religious rituals. Words such as *bálvalus* (N.)/: 'service', worship'), *meanut* (plur., N.)/: 'behavior', 'conduct', 'ceremonies'), and *oaffar* (N.)/: 'sacrifice'), are used both for indigenous and Christian ritualizations. The same is true for *juoigat* (N.)/: 'to perform a Sami chant'), and *namahit* (N.)/: 'name'), and the many words for greeting rituals, such as *buorástahttet* (L.: 'greet' [by saying *buoris*, "good day"]), *fármastit* (L.: 'greet' [by embracing a person]), and *dearvvahit* (N.: 'greet' [by putting one's hand on a person's shoulder or shaking hands]).

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Håkan Rydving

Sanskrit

In Sanskrit, there is no one single word or term that could be con-
sidered equivalent to 'ritual' (whatever it might mean), but a num-
ber of terms that come close to it:

1. *karma(n), kriyā* (both from *kṛ-*, 'to do', 'make'): 'action', 'work',
'religious rite', 'ceremony'. In Vedic texts (ca. 1750–500 BCE), *karma*
predominantly denotes a religious rite, especially the sacrifice (see
below). From the early Upaniṣads onwards, it also denotes all deeds
leading to the cycle of rebirths (*saṃsāra*), as well as the ethical per-
spective that good action leads to higher forms of life. *Karmakāṇḍa*
means those parts of the Veda that are related to sacrificial rites and
the merits resulting from them.

2. *saṃskāra* (from *sam-kṛ-*, 'to put something correctly together', 'to
make something perfect'; cf. Sanskrit from *saṃskṛta*, lit. 'the well-
formed [language]'): 'making perfect', 'purificatory rite', 'rite' in gen-
eral, especially 'lifecycle rite', for example, *upanayana* ('initiation'),
vivāha ('marriage'), *antyeṣṭi* ('death ritual'); also, though it is not a
saṃskāra in a strict sense, *śrāddha* ('ancestor ritual'). The term often
denotes the twelve 'canonical' life-cycle rites. As was aptly argued

by Brian K. Smith, through *saṃskāras* somebody is made fit or equivalent for the sacrifice or the holy, because gods only accept what is correct and perfect.[43]

3. *pūjā* (probably from Skt. *pūj-*, 'to honor', possibly from Tamil *pūcu*, 'to anoint somebody with something'), 'worship', 'adoration', 'respect', 'homage'. *Pūjā* basically denotes the worship of deities according to a ritual script that traditionally includes sixteen elements of service (*upacāra*) that can be reduced to five essential parts (*pañcopacāra*): anointment of the deity (*gandha, anulepana*), flowers (*puṣpa*), incense (*dhūpa*), lights or lamps (*dūpa*), feeding of the deity (*naivedya*). The difference between it and Vedic rituals (see entry 4, below) is that in Pūjās all food is vegetarian, and that women and members of the 'low' Śūdra class (*varṇa*) are by and large also entitled to perform it. The Pūjā has been analyzed as honoring a deity like a respected guest (Thieme), a deliberated subordination under the power of the deity (Babb) or a commensual act that shows the union between worshipper and god (Fuller).

4. *yajña, yāga* (from *yaj-*, 'to sacrifice'): 'sacrifice', 'sacrificial rite'. In Vedic religion, there are essentially two major types of sacrifices: a) domestic sacrifices, for example, lifecycle rites (*saṃskāra*, see above) or morning and evening rituals (*agnihotra, saṃdhyā*); b) public rituals (*śrauta*) performed by a sacrificer (*yajamāna*) and a Brahmin priest. These rituals have been classified variously: according to the sacrificial objects, for example, vegetarian food (*haviryajña, iṣṭi*), human sacrifices (*puruṣamedha*), animal sacrifices (*paśubandha, aśvamedha*), sacrifices including pressing the *soma* drink (*agniṣṭoma*); according to the time, for example, new- and full-moon sacrifices (*darśapūrṇamāsa*); or according to the function, for example, royal consecration (*rājasūya*). The Vedic sacrifice is basically a fire sacrifice. If sacrificial objects are poured into the fire (*agni*), the sacrifice is also called *homa* (from *hu-*, 'to pour').

5. *utsava* (from *ud-sū*, 'to rise'),[44] *melā* (from *mil-*, 'to meet'): 'festival'. Both terms commonly denote communal festivals that are related to mythological events, the harvest cycle, ancestors, or pilgrimages

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[43] B.K. Smith, *Reflections on Resemblance, Ritual, and Religion* (New York, 1989), 86.
[44] See, however, J. Gonda, "Skt Utsava—'festival'", in: *India antiqua. A volume of Oriental studies presented by his friends and pupils to Jean Philippe Vogel, C.I.E., on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of his doctorate* (Leiden, 1947), 146–155, who derives *utsava* from *ut-su* ('to press').

(*tīrthayātrā*). Festivals often include worship (*pūjā*), sacrifices (*yajña*, *homa*, etc.), fasting, night vigil, dances, music, donations (*dāna*), and/or religious vows (*vrata*). Hindu festivals, sometimes also called *līlā*, '(divine) play', are generally characterized by a large number of folk-religious elements.

6. *kalpa* (from *klp-*, 'to bring something in proper order'; cf. *sam-kalpa* below): 'A prescribed sacred rule', 'manner of acting' (especially in rituals). *kalpa* generally refers to a set of ritual rules or laws that are prescribed and that one has to follow, but also to procedures or manners of acting. It does not refer to a specific ritual or ceremony.

Religious acts have been variously classified by Indian philosophers and theologians. A basic distinction is that between *laukika* ('worldly', 'secular') and *vaidika* ('related to the Veda', 'religious'), or that between acts that are 'compulsory' (*nitya*), 'occasional' (*naimittika*), and 'optional' (*kāmya*). Sacrificial acts are further divided by different words, repetitive acts, numbers, accessory details, contexts, and names.[45] Moreover, the *mīmāṃsakas*, or hermeneutical interpreters of Vedic rituals, defined (*Śrauta*) sacrifices (*yāga*) by three constituents: *dravya* (material, substance), *devatā* (deity), and *tyāga* (abandonment).[46] This means that the sacrificer offers (and thereby abandons) substances to deities. P.V. Kane paraphrases it correctly: "*yāga* means abandonment of *dravya* intending it for a deity".[47] In a *homa*, for instance, the sacrificer pours the substance *ghee* into the fire and thus abandons it for the sake of a deity.

Even more sophisticated than this emic definition of sacrifice is the scholastic point of the philosophical-hermeneutical *Pūrvamīmāṃsā* tradition that ritual/religious acts are divided into primary acts (*pra-dhāna* or *arthakarma*) and (several) subsidiary acts (*kratvartha* or *guṇakarma*).[48] The *mīmāṃsakas* argue that only primary acts bring about transcendental effects (*apūrva*). For, according to them, every act is related to some material substance, but only in primary acts is the result not seen immediately or after some time. Thus the act of 'thresh-

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[45] Mīmāṃsāsūtra 2.1.1–2 and 2.2.21–24; see *Ganganatha Jha, Pūrvamīmāṃsā in its Sources* (Varanasi, 2d ed. 1964), 235 ff.
[46] Cf. Mīmāṃsāsūtra 4.2.27.
[47] P.V. Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstra* (Poona, 1974), vol. II/2, 983.
[48] Mīmāṃsāsūtra 2.1.6–8.

ing' serves to clean the corn used in a sacrifice; the result is seen immediately because the act is focused on subordinate material substance. However, in primary ritual acts the material substance is subordinate; the act relates in itself and its relation to *apūrva*. For the *mīmāṃsakas*, any Vedic injunction would be meaningless if the relationship between the sacrificial act and its future result were not separable.

According to the philosopher Kumārila[49] (7th century), *apūrva* is a potency (*yogyatā*) that is created by the sacrifice (not by the sacrificer!) and that makes it possible for the sacrificial act to show its result later, for example, in the heaven (*svarga*). Kumārila is well aware that 'worldly' acts, too, show their result only after some time, as do farming, eating, or studying, for example. From this general idea of causal efficiency of acts, he develops an elaborate and rather technical theory of the relationship between the primary and subsidiary acts regarding the accumulation or hierarchy of *apūrva* and smaller units of it. However, it is important that for Kumārila any correctly performed sacrificial act (that is, any act that follows Vedic injunctions) creates a persistent, never-ending potency that ontologically is not located in the capability of the sacrificer but exists in and of itself. This potency becomes a disposition (*saṃskāra*) in the sacrificer's soul, where it develops its results. Kumārila thus connects the efficacy of a sacrificial act with the sacrificer but not with his personal or individual motives or possibilities. Moreover, he also develops a theory of the unseen (*adṛṣṭa*) results of acts which forms the basis of nearly all Indian notions of *karman* and reincarnation.

The Mīmāṃsā classification of acts makes it clear that Indian scholars of ritual generally distinctively separated sacrificial acts from normal or worldly acts. This is also evident from the learned (*Śāstric*) prescription that all rituals should start with an intentional ritual act (*saṃkalpa*),[50] which *inter alia* implies a declaration of what the ritual is for. Any *saṃkalpa* ideally includes the following elements: 1) mantra (e.g. *oṃ tatsad*), 2) *hic et nunc* (usually, *adyeha*), 3) place names, 4) time

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[49] For the following, see also W. Halbfass, *Tradition and Reflection. Explorations in Indian Thought* (New York, 1991), 300ff.

[50] See A. Michaels, "Saṃkalpa: The Beginning of a Ritual", J. Gengnagel, U. Hüsken, and S. Raman (eds), *Words and Deeds. Hindu and Buddhist Rituals in South Asia* (Ethno-Indology 1; Wiesbaden, 2005), 54–64.

parameters, 5) genealogical and kinship data, 6) personal name(s), 7) aim or purpose, 8) ritual action, 9) verb (mostly in present tense used as future tense). By means of such a declaratory formula, the performer of a specific ritual has to specify and identify himself in accordance with spatial, chronological and genealogical criteria.

From a more ordinary Brahmanic-priestly point of view, ritual activity results in religious merit (*puṇya*), which leads to fruition, enjoyment (*bhukti*), and liberation (*mukti*), but from an ascetic point of view, any ritual is *karma*, thus not the source of immortality but, on the contrary, a cause of suffering because it leads to rebirth and not final liberation. However, it is significant that in both positions ritual activity is considered to replace nature. Rituals are seen as constructions of a world with which man ritually identifies himself: "Man is born into a world made by himself" (Śatapathabrāhmaṇa 6.2.2.7). Only by ritual, but not by 'normal' (*karma*) action, can he be liberated. Thus, ritual action has to be separated from non-ritual action, as the Bhagavadgītā (3.9) clearly says: "this world is bound by the bonds of action (*karma*) except where that action is done sacrificially." The difference between the Brahmanic and a renunciatory view of ritual lies in the fact that in the latter, ritual action is abandoned (cf. the term *saṃnyāsa*, that is, total abandonment) or interiorized. Renunciation, highly ritualized as it is, is therefore often declared as a non-ritual state.

In conclusion, one can say that in India in the sacrificial context there exists an awareness of ritual action but that is limited to Vedic-Brahmanic rites, whereas other forms of ritual action (festivals, etc.) are regarded as substantially different. In other words, within the Vedic-Brahmanic worldview it is always clear and demarcated (e.g. *saṃkalpa*) when ritual (sacrificial) action begins and where it ends. Whatever is not construed by ritual (sacrificial) action is not seen as ritual. This could be regarded as a kind of warning for modern ritual theory when 'ritual' is seen as a construction of acts that are regarded as separated from 'normal' or 'natural' action.

Further reading

A. Michaels, *Hinduism. Past and Present* (Princeton, 2003), 235–252 (with further references).

Axel Michaels

Tamil

Tamil signifiers for 'rite'/'ritual'/'ritualistic'/'ritualism'/'ceremony'/
'cult'/'worship' are often Tamilized Sanskrit forms either preserved
in their original Sanskrit (= Skt.) form as *tarcamam*, ("thus like"), or
in Tamilized form as *tarpavam*, ("thus becoming"). An example of
the former: Skt. *karaṇam*>T. *karaṇam*, 'rite', 'action'. 'Rite' has to be
understood as a specific case of human action. An example of the
latter is *kiriyā* > *kiriyai*, 'rite', 'action'.

There are common composites based on *caṭaṅku* and on *viṉai*. The
former is a *tarpavam* of Skt. *ṣaḍ aṅga*> *caṭaṅku*, 'six limbs'. This is
associated with a collection of texts known as the six Vedāṅgas. In
these we find knowledge supplementary to the Veda including knowl-
edge about rites/ritual, especially in the first Vedāṅga. Therefore, I
interpret *caṭaṅku* as a ritual action that is evaluated by Hindus as
being in accordance with the Vedāṅgas. When using Tamil *caṭaṅku*,
only very few Tamils know the origin of the word. The meaning is
lost for many, but the referent is clear to almost everyone. It refers
to a rite/ritual/ceremony that is specified in compounds such as the
following: *camaya-c-caṭaṅku*, ('religious rite/ritual/ceremony'), *caṭaṅku-
muṟai*, ('ritual order'), *caṭaṅkuneṟi*, ('ritualism'). *Caṭaṅku* alone makes
Tamils think of a ceremony performed at the pubescence of girls
and at nuptials. *Caṭaṅkāka* means 'arrive at puberty (as a girl)'. When
translating expressions like 'Hindu ritual' or 'myth and ritual', *caṭaṅku*
should be chosen for 'ritual'. 'To perform a ritual' would be *caṭaṅkuceyya*.

Viṉai is a Tamil word. It is commonly used to translate Skt. *kar-
man*, 'action', which determines rebirth. It is also used as grammat-
ical term for 'verb' and can mean 'that which is to be done'. It has
also been adopted in the language of rituals in composites such as
camaya viṉaimuṟai, ('religious ritual order'). The Sanskrit word *karman*
in the meaning of 'rite/ritual' may also be rendered as >*karumam* in
Tamil. There is no semantic change. *Karumam* may replace *viṉai* or
alternate with it.

There is a signifier for 'worship' that is *valipāṭu*, meaning 'song of
homage'. *Murukak kaṭavul valipāṭu* means 'worship of god Murukaṉ'.
What we call 'cult' is also *valipāṭu*, but 'ceremony' would be the
aforementioned *viṉaimuṟai* ('ritual order'). There is no specific term
for liturgy; several words have to be used to explain it.

Finally, in Tamil we find many specific terms for specific rituals.
Knowing their meaning opens up a new and more precise knowledge

of them than the English signifiers. What in English is called 'chariot festival' is in Tamil̲ *tēr-t-tiru-vil̲ā* ('holy festival for the chariot').
This is a temple procession with a chariot being drawn through
streets. The chosen god, placed on the chariot, appears to the public. What in English is called 'ritual hair cutting' is in Tamil̲ *muṭi
koṭuttal* ('giving of the tuft') or *muṭi kāṇikkai*, ('gift of the tuft'). Today
this refers not only to the offering of a male's tuft, but to the giving of males', females', and children's complete hair-set. It has grown
under a vow, and then, as a fulfillment of the vow, it is cut and
offered to the god. What is called 'body rolling' is in Tamil̲ *aṅka-p-
pirataṭciṇam*, ('the limb's [= body's] rolling round'). The word *pirataṭciṇam*
or *pirataṭciṇai* is a Tamil̲ loanword from Sanskrit *pradakṣiṇā*. It refers
to the ritual of men and women lying down on the ground and the
(threefold) rolling clockwise around the temple. They act under a
vow and the proceedings end in the fulfillment of this vow. What
is called 'piercing' in English is in Tamil̲ *tuḷaittal* ('piercing'), being
a verbal noun. The noun *tuḷai* means 'hole'. The verbal noun means
'making a hole', 'piercing'. It has also the extended meaning of 'torturing'. What is called 'hook swinging' in English is a translation
from Tamil̲ *ceṭilāṭṭam* ('post swinging'). Not a hook but a post is
swinging.

Peter Schalk

Tibetan

Toni Huber's remark that "there is no Tibetan category that corresponds well to either 'ritual' or 'rite', and no detailed classification
of practices either"[51] is likely to discourage everybody who embarks
upon the project of trying to identify an emic Tibetan term that is
equivalent to the Western term 'ritual'. Huber's remark, however,
suggests that there exists a generally accepted, clear-cut definition of
'ritual' and 'rite' in cultural anthropology and religious studies. As
this is not so, I dare to undertake the task to suggest an emic equivalent for 'ritual'.

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[51] T. Huber, *The Cult of Pure Crystal Mountain. Popular Pilgrimage and Visionary Landscape
in Southeast Tibet* (New York, Oxford, 1999), 232, n. 1.

Concerning Tibetan scientific and religious terminology, we are in the unique situation of being able to consult terminological dictionaries that were composed for the purpose of assigning a specific meaning to a word conventionally used in a different context. The oldest and at the same time most important terminological dictionary is the so-called *Mahāvyutpatti*, composed in the 9th century CE in order to develop a standard language for the translations of Buddhist texts from the Sanskrit. The *Mahāvyutpatti* gives as equivalent for the Sanskrit term *vidhi* the Tibetan *cho ga* (Mvy 4247), but sometimes also *bya ba* (Mvy 208(6)), the latter signifying 'action', 'deed'. In its original meaning, Tibetan *cho ga* signifies the method or way of doing something. It relates to action and the way actions are performed.

Beside this terminological assignation based on the Sanskrit term *vidhi*, further help in determining an emic equivalent for 'ritual' comes from the autochthonous differentiation of Tibetan literary categories. The literary category of *cho ga*[52] comprises a bulk of texts dealing with specific actions (including speech) that are differentiated from other actions with regard to the goals pursued and the means by which these goals are pursued. The intended goals may be characterized as pragmatic-religiously orientated. Sarat Chandra Das (1981) and Rerich (1985) list ten kinds of *cho ga* (*cho ga bcu*) documented in texts, among them *bzung dkyil `khor cho ga* ('rituals of magical circles and figures painted on the ground and on paper'), *rim pa dbang gi cho ga* ('rituals of initiation and religious service'), *byin rlabs rab gnas gyi cho ga* ('rituals of empowerment and consecration'), *mnyes byed mchod pa`i cho ga* ('rituals for propitiation'), *mgron mchod gtor ma`i cho ga* ('rituals for *gtor-ma* offerings to a deity'), *sku gzugs tsha tsha`i cho ga* ('rituals for making miniature *tsha tsha*-images'), and *bkra shis tshe`i cho ga* ('rituals to secure a happy and long life').

In the spoken language the term *cho ga* is used to denote "an action which is performed following a close sequence of events".[53] However, the action does not necessarily imply a religious goal.

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[52] See Y. Bentor, "Literature on Consecration (Rab gnas)", J.I. Cabezón and R.R. Jackson (eds), *Tibetan Literature. Studies in Genre* (Ithaca, New York, 1996), 290–311, here 290.

[53] *Dag yig gsar bsgrigs* (Xining, 1979), 236.

To sum up: As an emic equivalent for 'ritual' I suggest the Tibetan term *cho ga*. This term denotes the method, or way, of performing an action, mostly, but not necessarily, of a pragmatic-religious kind. Moreover, in Tibetan literature *cho ga* designates a specific literary genre, namely texts that deal with the performance of religious ceremonies and actions in general. In the modern spoken language, *cho ga* is used to characterize a specifically outlined, repetitive action that is performed within a specific succession of events. The action may be of a religious cum pragmatic orientation. We may thus conclude that where we apply the English term 'ritual' exclusively to religious performances, the range of the suggested emic equivalent is broader.

Further dictionaries and other materials

Sakaki, Ryozaburo (ed.), *Bonzo Kanwa Shiyaku Taiko, Honyaku Myogi Taishu. Mahāvyutpatti.* Pts. I and II (Kyoto Teikoku Daigaku. Bunka Daigaku Sosho 3; Kyoto 1916–1925).
K. Nishio, *A Tibetan Index to the Mahavyutpatti* (Kyoto, 1936).
J.N. Rerich, *Tibetsko-russko-anglijskij slovar` s sanskritskimi paralleljami*, 10 vols. (Moskva, 1983–87).
S.Ch. Das, *A Tibetan-English Dictionary.* Compact edition (Kyoto, 1981; reprinted from the first edition: Calcutta, 1902).

Karénina Kollmar-Paulenz

Turkish

The Turkish language does not have a word covering the same semantics as the word 'ritual' in most European languages. Nevertheless, it does exist in Turkish as a loanword, but only as a scientific term, as well as the adjective derived from it: *ritual.*

Several Turkish words have the meaning 'festivity', 'celebration', 'ceremony', etc. When hearing or using these words, a native speaker knows whether there are rituals included in these festivities or ceremonies. The word that is mainly used nowadays for rendering the meaning 'ceremony', 'festivity' is *tören*. This word is a neologism that was introduced during the first years of the Turkish language reform (that started systematically in 1932 and is still going on), replacing several Arabic words with the same meaning. When using this word, the speaker might refer to any kind of celebration, but this can, of course, be specified by adding further information.

Let us take an example. *Sünnet* is the word denoting the male circumcision, which is carried out during the first years of life. It is

the most important and traumatic event in the life of a young man. It is celebrated according to the financial abilities of the family.

Accordingly, the compound non *sünnet töreni* denotes the 'festivities on the occasion of the circumcision'. The ceremony is carried out according to an arrangement determined by tradition. There is no word for the system of this arrangement as a whole. Every member of the community is perfectly familiar with the arrangement of these ceremonies, and thus it is sufficient to use the word *tören* to give satisfactory information to any other member. If someone—for whatever reason—wants to describe or discuss certain details or steps of the ceremony, he can form a compound using the word *usul*, meaning 'method', 'system'. He thus forms the compound noun *sünnet usulü*, denoting something like 'the order of the festivities', or 'system of the ceremony'.

Another word that is frequently used in connection with festivities is the Arabic loanword *adet*. As this word denotes 'custom', 'tradition', it can also refer to single steps or phases of a celebration, depending on the communicative situation. Moreover, the meaning 'custom', 'tradition' includes the speaker's familiarity with the proceedings of the ceremony in question anyway, as it refers to events that are customary within a certain group. The term *sünnet adeti* can then denote 'the tradition of circumcision', as well as 'the procedure that is traditionally common during a circumcision'.

The linguistic situation is the same in pre-sünnet, that is, pre-Islamic, times. When, for example, a Turkish Buddhist text mentions a certain religious event, we do not find a reference to a certain system behind it.

Even in texts that describe, for example, how a mandala is created, we will simply find a remark like the following: "These are the procedures of creating a mandala."

An explanation of this lack of meta-language has to lies in the fact that speakers (and also writers) move within a communicative situation that is determined by the participation of speakers on an equal footing.

Wolfgang Scharlipp

Concluding Reflections

Reviewing the preceding sections of this article, it is striking to find that none of the contributors could build on an existing body of relevant literature on their particular fields. It seems that questions as those addressed here still lie outside mainstream concerns.

The contributors have chosen different paths to answer the questions I had posed to them. One way of dealing with the challenge is to consult relevant dictionaries and to analyze the terms given by the (mostly Western) lexicographers as synonyms for 'ritual', 'rite', etc. This strategy can be complemented by the reverse operation: To base the search on a wider spectrum of terms that seem to have an obvious semantic affiliation with the concept of 'ritual'; this includes such terms as 'praxis', 'ceremonial behavior', 'customs', and 'performance'. In cases where no term imposes itself as an emic term for 'ritual', one can nevertheless occasionally be proposed (Tamil, Tibetan).

In almost all languages there are dozens, hundreds, if not thousands, of terms that designate specific rituals. At the same time, it seems that there always are some terms that are more general in intension and/or extension. Linguistically, this term can then be taken in the form of a suffix in order to refer to specific rituals (Hopi) or in building a compound construction in order to construct a more general concept (Tamil). Another variety is a construction in which the noun is qualified by a word referring to the 'religious' quality of what is perceived to be ritual-like (Persian). A further option is the use of a combination of terms, each designating specific rituals, in order to refer to a larger ceremonial unity (Greek). On the other hand, linguistic derivates from more general terms may also be found (Arabic).

Some languages have developed a lexicon that restricts the application of ritual terms to specific classes of phenomena. Such emic terminological classifications are of different kinds. Some languages use different terms depending on the occasions on which the respective 'rituals' are performed (Akkadian, Hittite); there may also be a positive and a pejorative terminology (Akkadian), and there are clusters of terms linked to a ritual specialist (Sami). In several languages, 'rituals' belonging to different religions, religious traditions, or spheres are designated by employing different terms or terminological clusters (Arabic, Chinese, Greek, Hebrew, Japanese, Mongolian, Sami).

Some languages, however, have produced one or several general terms that come close to being semantic equivalents of the modern Western notion of 'ritual'. This is not necessarily correlated with the existence of complex ritual cultures. Hence, while rituals are key elements in pre-Islamic Iranian religion, Zoroastrianism, and while ritual acts are the core of all Japanese religions, neither Persian nor Japanese have developed a general term corresponding to 'ritual'. In her contribution on Japanese, Inken Prohl suggests that this did not happen because of the paramount importance of ritual practice for Japanese religions ("Since religious acts form the core of Japanese religions, it is not necessary to designate them as such with a discrete term"). Wolfgang Scharlipp makes a similar point for Turkish. In other words, when rituals are a given social reality, one does not need a term to mark them off and conceptually frame them as a separate class of 'things' (whether they be actions, performances, events, or something else). In both of these languages, however, a term for 'ritual' was introduced in modern times within academic discourse, be it as a loanword (the Turkish *ritual*) or as a reframing of a term with a complex semantic pre-history (the Japanese *girei*).

As the experts found the term in such languages as Hopi and Nishnabe, the emergence of general terms does not seem to be the result of the existence of explicit written reflective intellectual traditions ("ritualistics"[54]). However, in both of these cases, the terms seem to refer to mental properties, whether it is esoteric knowledge passed on in secret societies as in the case of Hopi or an intention or state-of-mind as in the case of Nishnabe. In both instances, moreover, the extension of the term goes well beyond the conceptual boundaries of the Western term 'ritual', pointing instead to something we would refer to by such terms as 'religion' or 'spirituality'. Also the Old Norse term *siðr* and the Chinese (Confucian) *li* have broader meanings (both with respect to intension and extension) than 'ritual'.

Sanskrit has several terms that come close to the semantic range of 'ritual', and some of these terms have had an influence other languages, such as Tamil and Tibetan. The evolved ritualistic reflections on the divisions and effects of the rituals and the differences between ritual and non-ritual ('normal', 'worldly') acts, however, did not lead

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[54] For this term, see Stausberg 2003.

to the emergence of one single generic term (*Oberbegriff*) denoting 'rituals'. Thus one obviously does not need such a term in order to engage in 'ritual theory'.

On the other hand, it seems that 'ritual' does not constitute a transcultural referential unity, and while it is clearly possible to find 'rituals' wherever one looks, the conceptual category 'ritual' (much more than 'religion') is a specific modern Western tool of self-reflection and intellectual *modus operandi*.

Let us take a brief look at the semantic spectrum of the concepts analyzed by the authors. The concepts as analyzed in the preceding sections can be grouped into the following semantic fields (which in many cases can be combined), which are listed here according to the pervasiveness of occurrence: (a) order, command, prescription, precepts, rules, laws; (b) custom, tradition, norm, habit, etiquette, morals; (c) action(s), performance, work, and perfection; (d) worship, honoring, serving, and assembling; (e) secret(s), (secret) knowledge, intention, and memorization; (f) marking off and separation. Moreover, (g) many terms seem to correspond to specific types, or instances, of 'ritual'(s) such as sacrifice or festival.

This, then, is what 'ritual' seems to be mostly about when taking reflections on possible emic equivalents of 'ritual' as a starting point. The next step—though one that moves beyond the scope of this chapter—would be analytically to carve out (explicit or implicit) indigenous theories of ritual.

PART TWO

CLASSICAL TOPICS REVISITED

MYTH AND RITUAL

Robert A. Segal

Myth is commonly taken to be words, often in the form of a story. A myth is read or heard. It says something. Yet there is an approach to myth that deems this view of myth artificial. According to the myth and ritual, or myth-ritualist, theory, myth is tied to ritual. Myth is not just a statement but an action. The most uncompromising form of the theory maintains that all myths have accompanying rituals and all rituals have accompanying myths. In tamer versions, some myths may be without accompanying rituals and some rituals without accompanying myths. Alternatively, myths and rituals may originally operate together but subsequently go their separate ways. Or myths and rituals may arise separately but subsequently coalesce. Whatever the tie between myth and ritual, the myth-ritualist theory is distinct from other theories of myth and from other theories of ritual in focusing on the tie.

In this essay I trace the history of the myth and ritual theory, beginning with its creation by William Robertson Smith and then its development by J.G. Frazer and in turn by Jane Harrison and S.H. Hooke. Next I describe the application of the theory to the ancient world as a whole and subsequently to the whole world. Outside of religion, the theory has been applied above all to literature, which is considered thereafter. Then follows a summary of the contemporary revisions of the theory undertaken by Claude Lévi-Strauss, René Girard, and Walter Burkert. Finally, I offer some suggestions for further development of the theory.

William Robertson Smith

In his 1889 *Lectures on the Religion of the Semites*, the Scottish biblicist and Arabist William Robertson Smith pioneered the myth-ritualist theory. Smith warns against the anachronistic "modern habit . . . to look at religion from the side of belief rather than of practice".[1]

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[1] W.R. Smith, *Lectures on the Religion of the Semites*, First Series (Edinburgh, 1st ed., 1889), 17.

Belief is central to *modern* religion but not to *ancient*, or 'antique', religion. In studying modern religions, we should look first for the creed, which will then unlock the ritual. In studying antique religions, we should do the reverse.

In fact, we should not even expect to find an antique creed, for "the antique religions had for the most part no creed; they consisted entirely of institutions and practices".[2] Smith grants that ancients, like all others, doubtless gave a reason for performing rituals, but he contends that the reason was secondary and could even fluctuate. Rather than formal declarations of belief, or creeds, the various explanations were stories, or myths, which simply described "the circumstances under which the rite first came to be established, by the command or by the direct example of the god".[3] "The rite, in short, was connected not with a dogma but with a myth. In all the antique religions, mythology takes the place of dogma . . .".[4]

Yet myth itself was 'secondary'. Where ritual was obligatory, myth was optional: "provided that [the worshiper] fulfilled the ritual with accuracy, no one cared what he believed about its origin".[5] Ritual outright produced myth, which arose only once the reason for a ritual had somehow been forgotten: "the myth is merely the explanation of a religious usage; and ordinarily it is such an explanation as could not have arisen till the original sense of the usage had more or less fallen into oblivion".[6]

Smith does allow for the subsequent development of myth. In what for him is the first stage of religion, ritual alone exists. In the second, myth-ritualist stage, myth arises to explain ritual. In the third stage—still ancient—myth branches out beyond ritual to become part of philosophy, politics, or poetry *rather than* of religion "pure and simple".[7] Even here, then, myth carries scant clout *within* religion.

Only in the fourth stage of religion does myth become significant. Now myths become allegories employed to defend one's religion against rivals, such as in the defense of paganism against Christianity. Myths now get linked to theology and therefore to creed.

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[2] Smith, *Lectures on the Religion of the Semites*, 18.
[3] Smith, *Lectures on the Religion of the Semites*, 18.
[4] Smith, *Lectures on the Religion of the Semites*, 18.
[5] Smith, *Lectures on the Religion of the Semites*, 18.
[6] Smith, *Lectures on the Religion of the Semites*, 19.
[7] Smith, *Lectures on the Religion of the Semites*, 20.

In the fifth and final stage of religion—the modern stage—there are no longer any myths. Yet, rather than a reversion to the initial stage of sheer rituals, there is now creed, which becomes more important than ritual. Creed now directs religion, the way ritual once did.

Smith was the first to argue that myths must be understood vis-à-vis rituals, but the nexus by no means requires that myths and rituals be equal in importance. The far greater emphasis that Smith accords ritual in the *Lectures* evinces its far greater importance for him. Without ritual there would never have been myth, regardless of whether, without myth, there would have ceased to be ritual.

One major limitation of Smith's theory is that it explains only myth and not ritual, which is simply presupposed. Another limitation is that the theory obviously restricts myth to ritual, at least initially. Yet, insofar as the mythic explanation of ritual typically involves the action of a god, myth from the start is about more than the sheer ritual, as Smith himself grants: "the ancient myths . . . are plainly of great importance as testimonies to the view of the nature of the gods . . .".[8]

E.B. Tylor

In claiming that myth is an explanation of ritual, Smith was denying the standard conception of myth, espoused classically by the founding father of English anthropology, E.B. Tylor.[9] For Tylor, myth is an explanation of the physical world, not of ritual. It operates independently of ritual. It is a statement, not an action. It amounts to creed, merely expressed in the form of a story. For Tylor, ritual is to myth as, for Smith, myth is to ritual: secondary. Where Smith devotes just one chapter of his *Lectures* to myth and accords six chapters to ritual, Tylor devotes but one chapter of his two-volume *Primitive Culture* (1871) to ritual and accords three chapters to myth (and another seven to animism, of which myth is a part). Where for Smith myth presupposes ritual, for Tylor ritual presupposes myth. For Tylor, myth functions to explain the world as an

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[8] Smith, *Lectures on the Religion of the Semites*, 21.
[9] See E.B. Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, 2 vols. (London, 1st ed., 1871), I, chs. 8–10 (on myth); II, 18 (on ritual).

end in itself. Ritual is the *application*, not the *subject*, of myth, which remains the world. Both because ritual depends on myth and, even more, because explanation is more important than control, myth for Tylor is a more important aspect of religion than ritual. Smith might as well have been directing himself against Tylor, then, in stating that "religion in primitive times was not a system of beliefs with practical applications" but instead "a body of fixed traditional practices".[10] For Tylor, myth serves the same function as science. Indeed, myth is the ancient counterpart to modern science.

Smith is like Tylor in one key respect. For both, myth is wholly ancient. Modern religion is without myth—and also without ritual. For both Tylor and Smith as well, myth and ritual are not merely ancient but 'primitive'. In fact both regard ancient religion as but a case of primitive religion, which is the fundamental foil to modern religion. Where for Tylor modern religion is bereft of myth and ritual because it is no longer about the physical world but is instead a combination of ethics and metaphysics, for Smith modern religion is bereft of myth and ritual because it is a combination of ethics and creed. For Tylor, modern religion, because it is bereft of myth, is a fall from its ancient and primitive height. For Smith, modern religion, because severed from myth and, even more, from ritual, is a leap beyond ancient and primitive religion. The epitome of modern religion for Smith is his own vigorously anti-ritualistic, because anti-Catholic, Presbyterianism. The main criticism to be made of both Tylor and Smith is that they confine myth and ritual alike to ancient and primitive religion.

J.G. Frazer

In the several editions of *The Golden Bough* (1890, 1900, 1911–15) the Scottish classicist and anthropologist J.G. Frazer developed the myth-ritualist theory far beyond that of Smith, to whom he dedicated the work.[11] While *The Golden Bough* is best known for its tripartite divi-

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[10] Smith, *Lectures on the Religion of the Semites*, 21.
[11] J.G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, 1st ed., 2 vols. (London, 1890); 2d ed., 3 vols. (London, 1900); 3d ed., 12 vols. (London, 1911–15); one-volume abridgment (London, 1922). Citations are from the abridged edition.

sion of all culture into the stages of magic, religion, and science, the
bulk of the tome in fact concerns an intermediate stage between reli-
gion and science—a stage of magic and religion combined. Only in
this intermediate stage, itself still ancient and primitive, is myth-rit-
ualism to be found, for only here do myths and rituals work together.

Frazer, who is rarely consistent, actually presents two distinct ver-
sions of myth-ritualism. In the first version myth describes the life
of the god of vegetation, for Frazer the chief god of the pantheon,
and ritual enacts the myth describing the death and rebirth of that
god. The ritual operates on the basis of the magical Law of Similarity,
according to which the imitation of an action causes it to happen.
The ritual directly manipulates the god of vegetation, not vegetation
itself. But as the god goes, so goes vegetation. That vegetation is
under the control of a god is the legacy of religion. That vegetation
can be controlled, even if only through the god, is the legacy of
magic. The combination of myth and ritual is the combination of
religion and magic:

> Thus the old magical theory of the seasons was displaced, or rather
> supplemented, by a religious theory. For although men now attributed
> the annual cycle of change primarily to corresponding changes in their
> deities, they still thought that by performing certain magical rites they
> could aid the god who was the principle of life, in his struggle with
> the opposing principle of death. They imagined that they could recruit
> his failing energies and even raise him from the dead.[12]

The ritual is performed at the end of winter—better, at the point
when one wants winter to end, such as when stored-up provisions
are running low. A human being, who may be the king, plays the
role of the god and acts out what he magically induces the god
to do.

In Frazer's second version of myth-ritualism the king is central.
Here the king does not merely act the part of the god but is him-
self divine, by which Frazer means that the god resides in him. Just
as the health of vegetation depends on the health of its god, so now
the health of the god depends on the health of the king: as the king
goes, so goes the god of vegetation, and so in turn goes vegetation
itself. To ensure a steady supply of food, the community kills its king

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[12] Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, 377.

while he is still in his prime and thereby safely transfers the soul of
the god to his successor:

> For [primitives] believe . . . that the king's life or spirit is so sympa-
> thetically bound up with the prosperity of the whole country, that if
> he fell ill or grew senile the cattle would sicken and cease to multi-
> ply, the crops would rot in the fields, and men would perish of wide-
> spread disease. Hence, in their opinion, the only way of averting these
> calamities is to put the king to death while he is still hale and hearty,
> in order that the divine spirit which he has inherited from his prede-
> cessors may be transmitted in turn by him to his successor while it is
> still in full vigour and has not yet been impaired by the weakness of
> disease and old age.[13]

The king is killed either at the end of a short term or at the first
sign of infirmity. The aim is to fend off or at least to end winter.
The withering of vegetation during even a year-long reign is ascribed
to the weakening of the king. How winter can ensue if the king is
removed at, let alone before, the onset of any debilitation, Frazer
never explains.

This second version of myth-ritualism has proved the more influential
by far, but it in fact provides only a tenuous link between myth and
ritual and in turn between religion and magic. Instead of enacting
the myth of the god of vegetation, the ritual simply changes the res-
idence of the god. The king dies not in imitation of the death of
the god but as a sacrifice to preserve the health of the god. What
part myth plays here, it is not easy to see. Instead of reviving the
god by magical imitation, the ritual revives the god by a transplant.

In Frazer's first, truly myth-ritualist scenario myth arises prior to
ritual rather than, as for Smith, after it. The myth that gets enacted
in the combined stage emerges in the stage of religion and there-
fore antedates the ritual to which it is applied. In the combined stage
myth, as for Smith, explains the point of ritual, but from the out-
set. Myth gives ritual its original and sole meaning. Without the
myth of the death and rebirth of that god, the death and rebirth of
the god of vegetation would not be ritualistically enacted.

Frazer was innovative in shifting both the subject matter and the
function of myth from ritual to the world. For Tylor as well, the
subject matter and the function of myth involve the world, but Tylor

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[13] Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, 312–313.

was no myth-ritualist. Frazer established what constituted the dominant nineteenth-century view of myth and ritual. Predominant in the twentieth century was the view that neither the subject matter nor the function of myth and ritual involves the world. Instead, it was argued, myth and ritual are about the human, or social, world, and their function is sociological, psychological, or existential. Ironically, this view is a partial return to Smith's, according to which myth is about ritual, even if ritual itself still deals with the physical world.

For Frazer, as for Tylor, myth serves to explain the physical world, but for Frazer explanation is only a means of control. Myth is still, as for Tylor, the ancient and primitive counterpart to modern science, but it is the exact counterpart to applied science rather than to scientific theory. The severest limitation of Frazer's theory is not only that it, like Tylor's and Smith's, precludes modern myths and rituals but also that it restricts even ancient and primitive myth-ritualism to myths about the god of vegetation, and really only to myths about the death and rebirth of that god.

Jane Harrison and S.H. Hooke

For all Frazer's extension of the myth-ritualist theory beyond Smith, he gradually became an ever more vociferous Tylorian and even a critic of the very ritualists inspired by him.[14] In turn, he came to be condemned by some myth-ritualists for precisely his Tylorian stance. Purer exemplars of the myth-ritualist theory than he are the English classicist Jane Harrison and the English biblicist S.H. Hooke.[15] Their positions are close. Fittingly, they disagree most sharply over the

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[14] See J.G. Frazer, Introduction to Apollodorus, *The Library*, trans. Frazer (Loeb Classical Library; London, New York, 1921), I, esp. xxvii–xxviii.

[15] See J.E. Harrison, *Themis* (Cambridge, 1st ed., 1912); J.E. Harrison, *Alpha and Omega* (London, 1915), ch. 6; J.E. Harrison, *Epilegomena to the Study of Greek Religion* (Cambridge, 1921); S.H. Hooke, "The Myth and Ritual Pattern of the Ancient East", S.H. Hooke (ed.), *Myth and Ritual* (London, 1933), ch. 1; S.H. Hooke, Introduction to S.H. Hooke (ed.), *The Labyrinth* (London, New York, 1935), v–x; S.H. Hooke, *The Origins of Early Semitic Ritual* (Schweich Lectures 1935; London, 1938); S.H. Hooke, "Myth, Ritual and History" and "Myth and Ritual Reconsidered", S.H. Hooke, *The Siege Perilous* (London, 1956), chs. 3 and 12; S.H. Hooke, "Myth and Ritual: Past and Present", S.H. Hooke (ed.), *Myth, Ritual, and Kingship* (Oxford, 1958), ch. 1.

status of Frazer: where Harrison lauds him as her mentor, Hooke lambastes him as the arch-Tylorian.

Both Harrison and Hooke largely follow Frazer's first myth-ritualist scheme, though Hooke, who is nearly as inconsistent as Frazer, sometimes follows the second scheme. Unlike Frazer, Hooke and Harrison postulate no distinct, prior stages of magic or of religion and instead begin with the equivalent of Frazer's combined stage. For them, myth-ritualism is likely the earliest stage of religion. Like Frazer, they deem myth-ritualism the ancient and primitive counterpart to modern science, which replaces not only myth-ritualism but myth and ritual per se. Harrison and Hooke follow Frazer most of all in seeing heretofore elevated, superior religions—those of Hellenic Greece and of biblical Israel—as primitive. The conventional, pious view had been, and often continues to be, that Greece and Israel stood above the benighted magical endeavors of their neighbors.

As a myth-ritualist, Hooke, who scorns Frazer as a Tylorian, is ironically even closer to Frazer than Harrison, who applauds him. For Hooke stresses the role of the king, which Harrison downplays. Insofar as Hooke makes the king only the human representative of the god of vegetation, he follows Frazer's first myth-ritualist version. The king imitates the death and rebirth (as well as the victory, marriage, and inauguration) of the god and thereby automatically causes the god and in turn vegetation to do the same. But insofar as Hooke alternatively makes the king himself divine, he follows Frazer's second myth-ritualist version. Now the ritual is the actual killing and replacement of the king.

Venturing beyond both Frazer and Hooke, Harrison adds to the ritual of the renewal of vegetation the ritual of initiation into society—a notion taken from Arnold van Gennep. She even argues that the original ritual, while still performed annually, was exclusively initiatory. There was no myth. God was only the projection of the euphoria produced by the ritual—a direct application of Émile Durkheim. Subsequently, god became the god of vegetation, the myth of the death and rebirth of that god arose, and the ritual of initiation became an agricultural ritual as well. Just as the initiates symbolically died and were reborn as full-fledged members of society, so the god of vegetation and in turn crops literally died and were reborn. Eventually, the initiatory side of the combined ritual faded, and only the Frazerian, agricultural ritual remained.

Against Smith, Harrison and Hooke alike deny vigorously that myth is an explanation of ritual: "The myth", states Harrison, "is not an attempted explanation of either facts or rites".[16] But she and Hooke really mean no more than Frazer the myth-ritualist: namely, that myth flourishes alongside ritual to provide its script rather than, as for Smith, arising only after the meaning of ritual has been forgotten. Myth is still an explanation of what is presently happening in the ritual, just not of how the ritual arose. Myth is like the sound in a film or the narration of a pantomime. Hooke writes: "In general the spoken part of a ritual consists of a description of what is being done. . . . This is the sense in which the term 'myth' is used in our discussion".[17] Harrison puts it pithily: "The primary meaning of myth . . . is the spoken correlative of the acted rite, the thing done".[18] Where for Smith myth arises later than ritual, and where for Frazer ritual arises later than the myth used with it, for Harrison and Hooke myth and ritual arise simultaneously, though sometimes Harrison does put ritual first.

Harrison and Hooke carry myth-ritualism further than Frazer by conferring on myth the same power harbored by ritual. Where for Frazer the power of myth is merely dramatic, for Harrison and Hooke it is outright magical. "The spoken word", writes Hooke, "had the efficacy of an act".[19] "A myth", writes Harrison, "becomes practically a story of magical intent and potency".[20] We have here word magic.[21]

Application of the Theory to the Ancient World

In the history of the myth-ritualist theory, the next stage was the application of the theory. The initial application was still to the ancient world. Most famously, the classicists Gilbert Murray, F.M. Cornford, and A.B. Cook, all English or residents of England, applied

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[16] Harrison, *Epilegomena to the Study of Greek Religion*, 32.
[17] Hooke, "The Myth and Ritual Pattern of the Ancient East", 3.
[18] Harrison, *Themis*, 328.
[19] Hooke, "The Myth and Ritual Pattern of the Ancient East", 3.
[20] Harrison, *Themis*, 330.
[21] For the fullest analysis of word magic in ritual—though word magic not limited to myth—see Tambiah 1968 (reprinted in Tambiah 1985, ch. 1).

Harrison's theory to such ancient Greek phenomena as tragedy, comedy, the Olympic games, science, and philosophy.[22] These seemingly secular, even anti-religious phenomena were interpreted as latent expressions of the myth of the death and rebirth of the god of vegetation.

Among biblicists, the Swede Ivan Engnell, the Welshman Aubrey Johnson, and the Norwegian Sigmund Mowinckel all accepted Hooke's formulation of the myth-ritualist theory, but differed over the extent to which ancient Israel in particular adhered to the myth-ritualist pattern.[23] Engnell saw an even stronger adherence than Hooke; Johnson and especially Mowinckel, a weaker one. Hooke was never the mentor of the biblicists, the way Harrison was for the classicists, but he was still their myth-ritualist stalwart.

Application of the Theory Worldwide

The English anthropologist A.M. Hocart and the English historian of religion E.O. James applied the myth-ritualist theory to cultures around the world.[24] Hocart uses a simplified version of myth-ritualism—

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[22] See G. Murray, "Excursis on the Ritual Forms Preserved in Greek Tragedy", in J.E. Harrison, *Themis*, 341–363; G. Murray, *Euripides and His Age* (New York, London, 1st ed., 1913), 60–68; G. Murray, *Aeschylus* (Oxford, 1940); G. Murray, "Dis Geniti", *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 71 (1951), 120–128; F.M. Cornford, "The Origin of the Olympic Games", in J.E. Harrison, *Themis*, ch. 7; F.M. Cornford, *The Origin of Attic Comedy* (London, 1914); F.M. Cornford, "A Ritual Basis for Hesiod's *Theogony*" (1941); F.M. Cornford, *The Unwritten Philosophy and Other Essays*, ed. W.K.C. Guthrie (Cambridge, 1950), 95–116; F.M. Cornford, *Principium Sapientiae*, ed. W.K.C. Guthrie (Cambridge, 1952), 191–256; A.B. Cook, *Zeus*, 3 vols. in 5 (Cambridge, 1914–1940).

[23] See I. Engnell, *Studies in Divine Kingship in the Ancient Near East* (Uppsala, 1st ed., 1943); I. Engnell, *A Rigid Scrutiny*, ed. and trans. J.T. Willis (Nashville, 1969) (retitled *Critical Essays on the Old Testament* [London, 1970]); A.R. Johnson, "The Role of the King in the Jerusalem Cultus", S.H. Hooke (ed.), *The Labyrinth*, 73–111; A.R. Johnson, "Hebrew Conceptions of Kingship", S.H. Hooke (ed.), *Myth, Ritual, and Kingship*, 204–235; A.R. Johnson, *Sacral Kingship in Ancient Israel* (Cardiff, 1st ed., 1955); Sigmund Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*, trans. D.R. Ap-Thomas, 2 vols. (New York, 1962); S. Mowinckel, *He That Cometh*, trans. G.W. Anderson (Nashville, 1954), ch. 3.

[24] See A.M. Hocart, *The Life-giving Myth and Other Essays*, ed. Lord Raglan (London, 1952; New York, 1953), chs. 1, 4, 5; A.M. Hocart, *Kingship* (Oxford, 1927); A.M. Hocart, *The Progress of Man* (London, 1933), chs. 13, 19; E.O. James, *Christian Myth and Ritual* (London, 1933); E.O. James, *Comparative Religion* (London, 1st ed., 1938), ch. 4; E.O. James, *The Beginnings of Religion* (London, 1948), ch. 7; E.O. James, "Myth and Ritual", *Eranos-Jahrbüch* 17 (1949), 79–120; E.O. James, *Myth and Ritual in the Ancient Near East* (London, 1958), esp. ch. 9.

the lowest common denominator of Frazer, Hooke, and Harrison. James's more complicated version combines Frazer's two versions. The myth-ritualism of Hocart and James, while extended to phenomena worldwide, was less radical than that of Harrison's followers because the application was to manifestly religious phenomena—that is, to overt myths and rituals.

Invoking Frazer, the Polish-born anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski, who settled in England, applied his own, qualified version of the theory to the myths of native peoples the world over.[25] Malinowski argues that myth gives rituals a hoary origin and thereby sanctions them. Society depends on myth to spur adherence to rituals. But if all rituals depend on myth, myth extends beyond rituals to sanction as well many other cultural practices on which society depends. Myth and ritual are thus not coextensive. The South African anthropologist Max Gluckman, who came to England, offered an original analysis of the social function of, especially, "rituals of rebellion", which exaggerate conflict in order to reaffirm unity, but on myths he follows Malinowski almost to a tee.[26] Malinowski and Gluckman are the classic exemplars of what is called the 'functionalist' approach to myth and ritual—a misleading term since it really refers to social function only.

The English anthropologist Edmund Leach offered a new twist to Malinowski's social functionalism.[27] First, he tightens the tie between myth and ritual beyond that of either Malinowski or, so he assumes, Harrison: "Myth, in my terminology, is the counterpart of ritual; myth implies ritual, ritual implies myth, they are one and the

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[25] See B. Malinowski, *Myth in Primitive Psychology* (London, New York, 1926) (reprinted in his *Magic, Science and Religion and Other Essays* (Glencoe, Ill., 1948), 72–124); B. Malinowski, "Magic, Science and Religion", J. Needham (ed.), *Science, Religion and Reality* (London, New York, 1925), esp. 76–78 (reprinted in *Magic, Science and Religion and Other Essays*, 1–71); B. Malinowski, "The Role of Myth in Life", *Psyche* 6 (1926), 29–39; I. Strenski (ed.), *Malinowski and the Work of Myth* (Princeton, 1992).

[26] See M. Gluckman, *Order and Rebellion in Tribal Africa* (London, 1963); M. Gluckman, *Politics, Law and Ritual in Tribal Society* (New York, 1968 [1965], ch. 6 (on ritual), 319–321 (on myth)).

[27] See E. Leach, *Political Systems of Highland Burma* (Boston, 1965 [1954]); E. Leach, "Ritualization in Man", *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society*, Series B, no. 772, vol. 251 (1966), 403–408; E. Leach, "Ritual", *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* 13 (1968), 520–526. Leach's later, Lévi-Straussian writings do not connect myth to ritual: see, e.g., E. Leach, *Genesis as Myth and Other Essays* (London, 1959).

same . . . . As I see it, myth regarded as a statement in words 'says' the same thing as ritual regarded as a statement in action".[28] In fact, Leach is really drawing the same close tie as Harrison. But for him, in contrast to Malinowski (as well as Gluckman), myth and ritual can promote factionalism as well as unity, for each group within a society can interpret the myths and rituals of the society to suit itself.

The Romanian-born historian of religion Mircea Eliade, who spent the last portion of his life in the United States, applied a similar form of the theory, but he went beyond Malinowski to apply the theory to modern as well as "primitive" cultures.[29] Myth for him, too, sanctions phenomena of all kinds, not just rituals, by giving them a primeval origin. For him, too, then, myth and ritual are not coextensive. Eliade further went beyond Malinowski in stressing the importance of the ritualistic enactment of myth in the fulfillment of the ultimate function of myth: when enacted, myth serves as a time machine, carrying one back to the time of the myth and thereby bringing one closer to god.

Application of the Theory to Literature

The most notable application of the myth-ritualist theory outside of religion has been to literature. Harrison herself boldly derived all art, not just literature, from ritual. She speculates that eventually people ceased to believe that the imitation of an action caused that action to occur. Yet, rather than abandoning ritual, they now practiced it as an end in itself. Ritual became art, her clearest example of which is drama. More modestly than she, Murray and Cornford rooted specifically Greek epic, tragedy, and comedy in myth-ritualism. Murray then extended the theory to Shakespeare.[30]

Other standard-bearers of the theory—taken from Frazer, Harrison, or Hooke—have included Jessie Weston on the Grail legend, E.M.

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[28] Leach, *Political Systems of Highland Burma*, 11–12.
[29] See M. Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, trans. W.R. Trask (New York, 1959), ch. 2; M. Eliade, *Myth and Reality*, trans. W.R. Trask (New York, 1963); M. Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion*, trans. R. Sheed (London, 1958), esp. ch. 15.
[30] See J.E. Harrison, *Ancient Art and Ritual* (New York, London, 1913); in addition to the references in n. 22 above, see G. Murray, "Hamlet and Orestes: A Study in Traditional Types" (Annual Shakespeare Lecture, 1914), *Proceedings of the British Academy* 6 (1913–14), 389–412.

Butler on the Faust legend, C.L. Barber on Shakespearean comedy, Herbert Weisinger on Shakespearean tragedy and on tragedy per se, Francis Fergusson on tragedy, Lord Raglan on hero myths and on literature as a whole, C.M. Bowra on primitive song, and Stanley Edgar Hyman and Northrop Frye on literature generally.[31] As literary critics, these myth-ritualists have understandably been concerned less with myth itself than with the mythic origin of literature. Works of literature have been interpreted as the outgrowth of myths once tied to rituals. For those literary critics indebted to Frazer, as are most of them, literature harks back to Frazer's second myth-ritualist scenario. "The king must die" becomes the familiar summary line.

To take a few examples: In *From Ritual to Romance* (1920) the English medievalist Jessie Weston applied Frazer's second myth-ritualist version to the Grail legend. Following Frazer, she maintains that for ancients and 'primitives' alike the fertility of the land depends on the fertility of their king, in whom resides the god of vegetation. But where for Frazer the key primitive ritual is the *sacrifice* of an ailing king, for Weston the aim of the Grail quest is the *rejuvenation* of the king and thereby of the god. At the same time Weston adds an ethereal, spiritual dimension that transcends Frazer: the aim of the

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[31] See J.L. Weston, *From Ritual to Romance* (Cambridge, 1920); E.M. Butler, *The Myth of the Magus* (Cambridge, New York, 1948); C.L. Barber, *Shakespeare's Festive Comedy* (Princeton, 1959); H. Weisinger, *Tragedy and the Paradox of the Fortunate Fall* (London, East Lansing, 1953); H. Weisinger, "The Myth and Ritual Approach to Shakespearean Tragedy", *Centennial Review* 1 (1957), 142–166; H. Weisinger, "An Examination of the Myth and Ritual Approach to Shakespeare", H.A. Murray (ed.), *Myth and Mythmaking* (New York, 1960), ch. 8; H. Weisinger, *The Agony and the Triumph* (East Lansing, 1964); F. Fergusson, *The Idea of a Theater* (Princeton, 1949); F. Fergusson, "'Myth' and the Literary Scruple", *Sewanee Review* 64 (1956), 171–185; Lord Raglan, "The Hero of Tradition", *Folk-Lore* 45 (1934), 212–231; Lord Raglan, *The Hero* (London, 1936); Lord Raglan, "Myth and Ritual", *Journal of American Folklore* 68 (1955), 454–461; C.M. Bowra, *Primitive Song* (London, 1962), ch. 9; S.E. Hyman, "Myth, Ritual, and Nonsense", *Kenyon Review* 11 (1949), 455–475; S.E. Hyman, "The Ritual View of Myth and the Mythic", *Journal of American Folkore* 68 (1955), 462–472; S.E. Hyman, "The Standard Dictionary of Folklore", "The Child Ballads", and "The Ritual View of Myth and the Mythic" [reprinted], *The Promised End* (Cleveland, 1963), 198–212, 249–270, 278–294; S.E. Hyman, "Jesse Weston and the Forest of Broceliande", and "Myths and Mothers", P. Pettingell (ed.), *The Critic's Credentials* (New York, 1978), 284–297, 298–304; N. Frye, "The Archetypes of Literature", *Kenyon Review* 13 (1951), 92–110; N. Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism* (Princeton, 1957), 131–239; N. Frye, "Myth, Fiction, and Displacement", *Daedalus* 90 (1961), 587–605; N. Frye, "Literature and Myth", J. Thorpe (ed.), *Relations of Literary Study* (New York, 1967), 27–55; N. Frye, "Myth", *Antaeus* 43 (1981), 64–84.

quest turns out to be mystical oneness with God and not just food
from God. Like other literary myth-ritualists, Weston is not reduc-
ing the Grail legend to primitive myth and ritual, only tracing the
legend back to primitive myth and ritual. The legend is itself liter-
ature, not myth. Yet, because Frazer's second myth-ritualist scenario
is not about the enactment of any myth of the god of vegetation
but about the condition of the reigning king, the myth giving rise
to literature is not about the life of a god like Adonis—one of Frazer's
main examples—but about the life of the Grail king himself.

In *The Hero* (1936) the English folklorist Lord Raglan extended
Frazer's second myth-ritualist version to hero myths. Where Frazer
identifies the king with the god of vegetation, Raglan in turn identifies
the king with the hero. For Frazer, the king's willingness to die for
the sake of the community may be heroic, but Raglan outright labels
the king a hero. Frazer presents a simple pattern for the myth of the
god: the god dies and is reborn. Raglan works out a detailed, life-
long pattern for the myth of the hero. By making the heart of hero
myths not the gaining of the throne but the losing of it, Raglan
matches the myth of the hero with the Frazerian ritual of the top-
pling of the king. The myth that Raglan links to ritual is, then, not
that of the god but, like Weston, that of the king—some legendary
figure whose selflessness real kings are expected to emulate.

In *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957) the famed Canadian literary critic
Northrop Frye argued that all literature derives from the myth of
the hero. Frye associates the life cycle of the hero with several other
cycles: the yearly cycle of the seasons, the daily cycle of the sun,
and the nightly cycle of dreaming and awakening. The association
with the seasons comes from Frazer. The association with the sun,
while never attributed, perhaps comes from Friedrich Max Müller.
The association with dreaming comes from C.G. Jung. The associ-
ation of the seasons with heroism, while again never attributed, may
come from Raglan. Frye offers his own heroic pattern, which he
calls the "quest-myth," but it consists of just four broad stages: the
birth, triumph, isolation, and defeat of the hero.

Each main genre of literature parallels at once a season, a stage
in the day, a stage of consciousness, and above all a stage in the
heroic myth. Romance parallels at once spring, sunrise, awakening,
and the birth of the hero. Comedy parallels summer, midday, wak-
ing consciousness, and the triumph of the hero. Tragedy parallels
autumn, sunset, daydreaming, and the isolation of the hero. Satire

parallels winter, night, sleep, and the defeat of the hero. The literary genres do not merely parallel the heroic myth but derive from it. The myth itself derives from ritual—from the version of Frazer's myth-ritualism in which divine kings are killed and replaced. Still, Frye, far from reducing myth to literature, stresses the autonomy of literature.

For literary myth-ritualists, myth becomes literature when severed from ritual. Myth tied to ritual is religious literature; myth cut off from ritual is secular literature, or plain literature. When tied to ritual, myth can serve any of the active functions ascribed to it by the myth-ritualists. Myth bereft of ritual is demoted to mere commentary.

The main limitation of literary myth-ritualism is that it assumes rather than explains myth and ritual. It is a theory not of myth and ritual themselves but of their impact on literature. Yet it is not a theory of literature either, for it refuses to reduce literature to myth. Literary myth-ritualism is at most an explanation of the transformation of myth and ritual into literature.

Theodor Gaster and Adolf Jensen

It is especially in *Thespis* (1950) that Theodor H. Gaster, an English-born Semiticist who emigrated to the United States, proposed a brand of myth-ritualism intended to accord myth the same importance as ritual.[32] Gaster's myth-ritualist scenario, which he painstakingly reconstructs for the ancient Near East, comes from Frazer, whose dual versions of myth-ritualism Gaster combines in a fashion akin to Hooke and James. The king, who either is God or represents God, is either literally or symbolically killed and replaced annually. The killing and replacing of the king parallel the death and rebirth of the god of vegetation and, by magical imitation, cause the rebirth of the god. But for Gaster the myth does more than explain the ritual. By itself, the ritual somehow operates on only the human

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[32] See T.H. Gaster, "Divine Kingship in the Ancient Near East: A Review Article", *Review of Religion* 9 (1945), 267–281; T.H. Gaster, *Thespis* (New York, 1st ed., 1950); T.H. Gaster, "Myth and Story", *Numen* 1 (1954), 184–212; T.H. Gaster, *The New Golden Bough* (New York, 1959), 462–464; T.H. Gaster, *Myth, Legend, and Custom in the Old Testament* (New York, 1969), xxv–xxxvii.

plane. Myth connects ritual to the divine plane. The renewal sought
thereby becomes spiritual, as for Weston, and not merely physical.
Rather than merely articulating the inherent, worldly meaning of rit-
ual, as for Frazer, Harrison, Hooke, and James, myth for Gaster
gives ritual its spiritual meaning. In so doing, myth becomes at least
the equal of ritual.

The German anthropologist Adolf E. Jensen also proposed a ver-
sion of myth-ritualism intended to elevate the status of myth even
above that of ritual.[33] As insistently as Eliade, Jensen argues that the
function of myth and ritual alike is irreducibly religious, or 'spiri-
tual': myth and ritual serve to put adherents in contact with God.
Jensen, like Eliade, dismisses as virtual sacrilege any purported func-
tion that is other than religious.

The difficulty with both Jensen's and Gaster's purported innova-
tions is that few other myth-ritualists denigrate myth. While none
may make myth superior to ritual, few except for Smith make rit-
ual superior to myth. Indeed, the aim of myth-ritualism is to show
how myth and ritual work together for a common end. Against
whom, then, are Gaster and Jensen directing themselves?

Claude Lévi-Strauss

An especially influential contemporary variety of myth-ritualism has
come from the French structural anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss.[34]
While Lévi-Strauss focuses overwhelmingly on myth, he does consider
ritual. He asserts that all human beings think in the form of classifi-
cations, specifically oppositions, and project them onto the world.
All human activities, not just myths, express this form of thinking.

Myth is distinctive in not only expressing oppositions, which are
equivalent to contradictions, but also partially resolving them: "the

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[33] See A.E. Jensen, *Myth and Cult Among Primitive Peoples*, trans. M.T. Choldin and
W. Weissleder (Chicago, 1963); A.E. Jensen et al., "Myth and Cult Among Primitive
Peoples", *Current Anthropology* 6 (1965), 199–215.

[34] See C. Lévi-Strauss, "The Structural Study of Myth", *Journal of American Folklore*
68 (1955), 428–444 (reprinted in his *Structural Anthropology*, trans. C. Jacobson and
B.G. Schoepf (New York, 1963), ch. 11); C. Lévi-Strauss, "Structure and Dialectics",
in his *Structural Anthropology*, ch. 12; C. Lévi-Strauss, "Comparative Religions of
Nonliterate Peoples", in his *Structural Anthropology II*, trans. M. Layton (New York,
1976), ch. 5.

purpose of myth is to provide a logical model capable of overcoming a contradiction".[35] Myth resolves a contradiction dialectically, by providing either a mediating middle term or an analogous, but more easily resolved, contradiction. Because the contradictions have been projected onto the world, the subject matter of myth is really the mind and not the world.

Not only do whole myths have the same dialectical relationship to one another that the parts of each have internally, but so do myths and rituals. Rather than mirroring each other, as they do for other myth-ritualists, myth and ritual oppose each other. Lévi-Strauss thus presents a new slant to the relationship between myth and ritual.

René Girard

In *Violence and the Sacred* (1972) and many subsequent works, the French-born literary critic René Girard, who has spent his career in the United States, has offered an ironic twist to the theory of Raglan, whose theory Girard never cites.[36] Where Raglan's hero is heroic because he is willing to die for the sake of the community, Girard's hero is killed or exiled by the community for having caused the present ills of the community. Indeed, the 'hero' is initially considered a criminal who deserves to die. Only subsequently is the villain turned into a hero, who, as for Raglan, dies selflessly for the community. Both cite Oedipus as their key example. For Girard, the transformation of Oedipus from reviled exile in Sophocles' *Oedipus the King* to revered benefactor in Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus* evinces this transformation.

The change from criminal to hero is for Girard only the second half of the process. Originally, violence erupts in the community. The cause is the inclination, innate in human nature, to imitate others and thereby to desire the same objects as those of the imitated.

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[35] Lévi-Strauss, "The Structural Study of Myth", 443.

[36] See R. Girard, *Violence and the Sacred* (1972), trans. P. Gregory (London, Baltimore, 1977); R. Girard, *"To double business bound"* (London, Baltimore, 1978); R. Girard, *The Scapegoat* (1982), trans. Y. Freccero (London, Baltimore, 1986); R. Girard, *Things Hidden since the Foundation of the World* (1978), trans. S. Bann and M. Metteer (London, Baltimore, 1987); R. Girard, *Job, the Victim of his People* (1985), trans. Y. Freccero (London, Stanford, 1987).

Imitation leads to rivalry, which leads to violence. Desperate to end
the violence, the community selects an innocent member to blame
for the turmoil and usually kills the victim. The killing is the ritu-
alistic sacrifice. The scapegoat can range from the most helpless
member of society to the most elevated, including the king or the
queen. Where for Raglan myth inspires the killing of the hero, for
Girard myth is created after the killing to excuse it. All myths come
from ritual, as for Smith, but they come to distort, not to explain,
the ritual. The myth first turns the scapegoat into a criminal who
deserved to die but then turns the criminal into a hero, who has
died willingly for the good of the community.

   While Girard never cites Raglan's theory, he does regularly cite
Frazer's, praising Frazer for recognizing the key primitive ritual of
regicide but berating him for missing its real origin. For Frazer,
sacrifice is the innocent application of a benighted, pre-scientific
explanation of the world: the king is killed and replaced so that the
soul of the god of vegetation, who resides in the incumbent, stays
healthy. The function of the sacrifice is wholly agricultural. There
is no hatred of the victim, who simply fulfills his duty as king and
is celebrated for his self-sacrifice. According to Girard, Frazer thereby
falls for the mythic cover-up.

Walter Burkert

Perhaps the first to temper the dogma that myths and rituals are
inseparable was the American anthropologist Clyde Kluckhohn.[37]
The German classicist Walter Burkert has gone well beyond Kluckhohn
in not merely permitting but assuming the original independence of
myth and ritual. He maintains that when the two do come together,
they do not just serve a common function, as Kluckhohn assumes,
but reinforce each other.[38] Myth bolsters ritual by giving mere human

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[37] See C. Kluckhohn, "Myths and Rituals: A General Theory", *Harvard Theological
Review* 35 (1942), 45–79; C. Kluckhohn, "Recurrent Themes in Myth and
Mythmaking", H.A. Murray (ed.), *Myth and Mythmaking*, ch. 2; C. Kluckhohn and
D. Leighton, *The Navaho* (1946), (Cambridge, Mass., rev. ed., 1974), 229–240.

[38] See W. Burkert, *Structure and History in Greek Mythology and Ritual* (Berkeley, 1979),
esp. 56–58, 99–101; W. Burkert, *Homo Necans* (1972), trans. P. Bing (Berkeley, 1983),
esp. 29–34; W. Burkert, *Ancient Mystery Cults* (Cambridge, Mass., 1987), 73–78;
Burkert 1987; Burkert 1996, chs. 2–3.

behavior a real, not to mention divine, origin: do this because the gods did or do it. Conversely, ritual bolsters myth by turning a mere story into prescribed behavior of the most dutiful kind: do this on pain of anxiety, if not punishment. Where for Smith myth serves ritual, for Burkert ritual equally serves myth.

Like Girard, Burkert roots myth in sacrifice and roots sacrifice in aggression, but he does not limit sacrifice to human sacrifice, and he roots sacrifice itself in hunting—the original expression of aggression. Moreover, myth for Burkert functions not to rationalize the fact of sacrifice, as for Girard, but on the contrary to preserve it and thereby retain its psychological and social effects. Finally, Burkert connects myths not only to rituals of sacrifice but also, like Harrison, to rituals of initiation. Myth here serves the same socializing function as ritual.

Ritual for Burkert is 'as if' behavior. To take his central example, the ritual is not hunting but 'as if' hunting. 'Ritual', as Burkert uses the term, is not the customs and formalities involved in actual hunting but the transformation of actual hunting into dramatized hunting. The function is no longer that of securing food, as for Frazer, since the ritual proper arises only after farming has supplanted hunting as the prime source of food: "Hunting lost its basic function with the emergence of agriculture some ten thousand years ago". But "hunting ritual had become so important that it could not be given up."[39] The communal nature of actual hunting, and of ritualized hunting thereafter, functioned to assuage individuals' fear and guilt over their own aggression and their own mortality, while simultaneously functioning to cement a bond among participants. The functions were psychological and sociological.

The Future of Myth-Ritualism

In the hundred-plus years since the myth-ritualist theory was first advanced, the theory has been not only developed, extended, and revised but also tested. As influential as the theory has been, it has, alas, been rejected by most theorists of myth and by most theorists

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[39] Burkert, *Structure and History in Greek Mythology and Ritual*, 55.

of ritual.[40] They have concluded that myths and rituals exist largely independently of each other. Even those who accept some linkage typically limit the tie to a fraction of myths and rituals.[41]

The future of myth-ritualism does not lie, then, in reasserting the claim that all or most myths and rituals operate together. The claim is not only hopeless but also unnecessary. The theory still has much to offer about the cases, which remain considerable, in which myth and ritual do work together.

One future development for the theory lies in tightening the tie between myths and rituals in these cases. Myth now ceases to be the mere text of ritual, however indispensable, and becomes part of the ritual itself—a notion first proposed by Harrison and Hooke, for whom myth has the same magical power as ritual, or as the rest of the ritual. It was Edmund Leach who, as noted, claimed to be going beyond even Harrison in so conceiving of myth. (He was doubtless unaware of Hooke's kindred conception.) Since Leach's time, work

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[40] Criticisms of the myth-ritualist theory abound. In addition to Frazer's criticism cited in n. 14 above, see esp. W. Ridgeway, *The Dramas and Dramatic Dances of Non-European Races* (Cambridge, 1915), 41–64; N.H. Snaith, *The Jewish New Year Festival* (London, 1947); H. Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods* (Chicago, 1948); H. Frankfort, *The Problem of Similarity in Ancient Near Eastern Religions* (Frazer Lecture 1950; Oxford, 1951); H.M. Block, "Cultural Anthropology in Contemporary Literary Criticism", *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 11 (1952), 46–54; W.W. Douglas, "The Meanings of 'Myth' in Modern Criticism", *Modern Philology* 50 (1953), 232–242; S. Thompson, "Myths and Folktales", *Journal of American Folklore* 68 (1955), 482–488; W. Bascom, "The Myth-Ritual Theory", *Journal of American Folklore* 70 (1957), 103–114; S.G.F. Brandon, "The Myth and Ritual Position Critically Examined", S.H. Hooke (ed.), *Myth, Ritual, and Kingship*, 261–291; H.J. Rose, "The Evidence for Divine Kings in Greece", *The Sacral Kingship/La Regalità Sacra* (Leiden, 1959), 371–378; J. Fontenrose, *Python* (Berkeley, 1959), ch. 15; J. Fontenrose, *The Ritual Theory of Myth* (Berkeley, 1966); F.L. Utley, "Folklore, Myth, and Ritual", Dorothy Bethurum (ed.), *Critical Approaches to Medieval Literature* (New York, 1960), 83–109; A.N. Marlow, "Myth and Ritual in Early Greece", *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 43 (1961), 373–402; G.S. Kirk, *Myth* (Berkeley, 1966), 12–31; G.S. Kirk, *The Nature of Greek Myths* (Harmondsworth, 1974), ch. 10; H.H. Penner, "Myth and Ritual: A Wasteland or a Forest of Symbols?" *History and Theory* Beiheft 8 (1968), 46–57.

[41] The fullest presentations of the myth-ritualist theory are to be found in R.F. Hardin, "'Ritual' in Recent Criticism: The Elusive Sense of Community", *PMLA* [*Publications of the Modern Language Association*] 98 (1983), 846–862; H.S. Versnel, "What's Sauce for the Goose Is Sauce for the Gander: Myth and Ritual, Old and New", L. Edmunds (ed.), *Approaches to Greek Myth* (Baltimore, 1990), ch. 1 (revised version in H.S. Versnel, *Transition and Reversal in Myth and Ritual* (Leiden, 1993), ch. 1); R. Ackerman, *The Myth and Ritual School* (1991), (Theorists of Myth Series, no. 3; New York, 2001). For a collection of writings by and about the leading myth-ritualists, see my *The Myth and Ritual Theory* (Oxford and Malden, Mass., 1998).

on oral literature has enabled the American classicist Gregory Nagy, who dutifully cites Leach, to declare that "The common assumption that myth is a text—even if we use 'text' merely as a metaphor—threatens to flatten our conceptualization of myth: it removes the dimension of myth-*performance*." Echoing Leach but appealing to contemporary research on oral tradition, Nagy maintains that once myth is taken as performance, "we can see that myth itself is a form of ritual: rather than think of myth and ritual separately and contrastively, we can see them as a continuum in which myth is a verbal aspect of ritual while ritual is a notional aspect of myth".[42] Myths that either have become severed from rituals or were never connected to rituals—a category of myths acknowledged even by Smith—would surely have to be considered separately.

Without claiming more than a layperson's familiarity with the trendy, cognitive approach to religion—itself a partial return to Tylor—I continue to be surprised by the almost exclusive focus of that approach on ritual and not at all on myth, let alone on the connection between myth and ritual.[43] Somehow a concern for the cognitive mechanisms that produce, or constrain, conceptions of God has been applied to rituals and not, as one would have assumed, to myths. Surely another future development for the myth-ritualist theory lies in applying to it the insights garnered so far by the cognitive study of ritual alone.

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[42] Gregory Nagy, "Can Myth Be Saved?" G. Schrempp and W. Hansen (eds), *Myth: A New Symposium* (Bloomington, 2002), 242–243.
[43] See, e.g., Boyer 1994; Andresen 2001; McCauly and Lawson 2002.

RITUAL AND PSYCHE

Barbara Boudewijnse

Introduction

For over a century ritual has been a broadly researched topic of study within a heterogeneous range of disciplines, but especially within the social sciences—anthropology in particular—and the sciences of religions.[1] Discussion has focused on the kinds of behavior that can be isolated as ritual—its basic characteristics—and the purposes of this behavior.

In their attempts to answer the question of how ritual has to be defined, anthropologists and scholars of religions have analyzed ritual mainly as a special type of *social* behavior functionally connected to the social structure of society or as instrumental for the transmission of cultural values. From the nineteenth century onwards, most theories have awarded a certain role to the psyche, be it implicitly or explicitly. Ritual was, for instance, said to answer a 'human need' or was traced back to the 'human capacity to symbolize'. Thus ritual was seen as somehow inherent to the human constitution.

Today also it is remarkable how easily ritual is described in psychological terms or how matter-of-course the origin or ultimate function of ritual action is psychologically explained. In relation to the individual or social construction of identity rituals are said to be instructive and formative; they are said to convey knowledge, moral values, solidarity and tradition. Likewise, ritual is qualified as an instrument for the regulation of human relationships; it is said to further the integration and continuity of human relationships. In this respect they are often characterized as mechanisms that suppress selfish, socially damaging impulses or, alternatively, as mechanisms that enable the expression or channeling of emotions. In addition,

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[1] Approaches to ritual as developed within other disciplines have, generally speaking, borrowed heavily from the social sciences or the sciences of religions. For practical reasons, I therefore take these two fields as representative.

they are seen as instrumental for both the formation of the individual 'self' and the social identity of the group. In the next section a few examples will be discussed so as to illustrate the foregoing. Because 'the psyche' has been attributed such a basic role by social scientists and scholars of religions, it is then asked how ritual has been dealt with in psychology.

The Role of Psychology in Social Theories of Ritual[2]

Psychological Axioms in Social Theories of Ritual

To start with, social definitions of ritual may refer to aspects relevant to psychology, although the terms applied are used primarily in a descriptive and not an explanatory manner. The treatment of 'ritual' in *The Encyclopedia of Religion* may serve as an example: "we shall understand as 'ritual' those conscious and voluntary, repetitious and stylized symbolic bodily actions that are centered on cosmic structures and/or sacred presences."[3] In this definition a psychological dimension of ritual is explicitly assumed to be characteristic of ritual behavior: ritual actions are, among other things, *conscious* and *voluntary*. No psychological explanation as to why this should be so is offered. It is simply taken as a fact.

In contrast, other approaches in the social sciences take ritual as a form of *un*conscious behavior. For example, in the "Epilogue" of *Pluralism and Identity. Studies in Ritual Behaviour*, Jan Platvoet and Karel van der Toorn identify the collective findings of the various contributions. In accordance with the general approach of identity in the social sciences and the sciences of religions, they describe how 'identity' is by definition 'social identity'.[4] A person's identity is derived from the group to which that person belongs. The authors state that if the individual acquires identity through membership, the group bestows it by admitting its members to its rituals. Its rituals, per-

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[2] For practical reasons I will speak of 'social theories' or 'social definitions' of ritual when I refer to the studies on ritual of social scientists and scholars of religions in general.

[3] Zuesse 1987, 405.

[4] J.G. Platvoet and K. van der Toorn, "Pluralism and Identity. An Epilogue", Platvoet and Van der Toorn (eds) 1995, 349–360, esp. 353, 355, 357, 358, 359.

formed collectively though not necessarily simultaneously, are often exclusive and create distinction. Identities, they write, are a valuation of one's social position, and it is in the interest of the cultural majority to protect its position and privileged status by defining unequivocally who is 'in' and who is 'out'. The pursuit of identity is in reality the pursuit of power, honor, and prestige. Nevertheless, though rituals create distinction, there is also the moment in and out of time at which they may forge a *communitas* beyond the usual divisions; rituals may afford relief from the unremitting pursuit of social prestige.[5]

According to the authors, the desire for distinction increases at about the rate in which the actual differences between groups decrease. The thirst for distinction seems often insatiable. No wonder, then, that the search for identity by means of ritual assertion is never-ending—also because people always tend to strive for the highest distinctions, especially in their own class.

Having established ritual as linked to the human desire for distinction, the authors turn to the way this is achieved. According to them, a fundamental mechanism in ritual behavior, as an assertion of identity, is that it causes the 'misrecognition' of its purpose. This means that the participants, be they performers or audience, are usually unaware of what a ritual really does. People cannot bear too much reality; they prefer to deceive themselves and each other into thinking that what is at stake is the orthodoxy of their doctrine, the propriety of their conduct, and the purity of their community.

This approach to ritual is illustrative of the way social scientists and scholars of religions have treated ritual in general: as an essentially *social* phenomenon that is ultimately based, implicitly or explicitly, on *psychological* conditions, in this case the individual *desire* (or even 'thirst') for distinctive identity. This apparently innate desire offsets the process of identity formation, which takes place in the context of social groups. For this reason identity is defined as *social* identity. Having established this, the authors then focus on the social aspects of the process in which ritual is awarded a crucial role.

Notwithstanding the importance of the social context, the formation of individual identity ultimately is a *psychological* process. Nonetheless,

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[5] Platvoet and Van der Toorn, "Pluralism and Identity. An Epilogue", 359.

the developmental psychological mechanisms involved are not dis-
cussed or even referred to by the authors. The ways internal men-
tal processes are related to external social processes are apparently
taken as self-evident. Thus, the desire for identity as well as the ensu-
ing psychological process of identity formation are taken as obvious:
they axiomatically explain why ritual is performed at all.

In addition, not only the 'why' but also the 'how'—how ritual
achieves its effects, how it works—is explained in psychological terms:
People *cannot bear* too much reality and therefore *prefer* to be *unaware*
of (to *misrecognize*) what a ritual really does. Thus 'a fundamental
mechanism' in ritual behavior, apparently caused by an innate inabil-
ity to directly cope with reality, gives rise to an unconscious process
of 'misrecognition'. Set in motion by an innate avoidance of reality
and resulting in unconscious misrecognition, the fundamental mech-
anism itself must be taken as innate. Thus it can be concluded, rit-
ual is embedded in the human disposition.

As late as the last decade of the twentieth century, then, even
authoritative studies in the social sciences and the sciences of reli-
gions still describe the origin or ultimate function of ritual action in
psychological terms in a remarkably matter-of-course way without
specifying the precise nature of the psychological processes involved.

The Influence of General Psychoanalytic Theory on Social Studies of Ritual

Although many scholars within the social sciences or sciences of reli-
gions who have been studying ritual tend to take the psychological
aspects of ritual behavior as axiomatic, throughout the twentieth cen-
tury there has been another line of social inquiry into ritual that has
focused explicitly on psychoanalytic explanations of ritual action.[6] In
this context the ritual studies of Victor Turner must be mentioned,
because they have been very influential in the field of ritual studies
as a whole. As Turner himself explained, psychoanalytic theory had
a strong formative influence on his conceptualization of ritual sym-

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[6] The aforementioned, divergent qualifications of ritual as 'conscious' or 'uncon-
scious' behavior can also be traced back to Freudian theory, but in these cases they
are not applied in the context of a full-fledged psychoanalytic analysis; they are
merely used as labels.

bolic processes.[7] Most important in this context is Turner's view that implicit social conflicts find a symbolized expression in ritual. According to him, the ritual symbolic representations refer to existing social and/or intrapsychic tensions, which are normally subconscious and repressed. Thus the interpretation of ritual amounts to the analysis of ritual symbolism.

As Turner repeatedly stated, the ritual symbol is a factor in social action. On his view symbols entice action and generate strong emotions. He specifically dealt with the question of how they manage to do this. Among other properties, ritual symbols possess two clearly distinguishable poles of meaning. One is the 'normative' pole, where a cluster of meanings can be found that refers to moral values and social principles; the other pole is the 'sensory' pole, where the content of meaning refers to natural and physiological phenomena and processes. According to Turner, the emotions generated by a symbol's association with human physiology (like blood or milk) or natural processes (such as death or birth) serve to 'energize' the social order, thus making the 'obligatory' desirable.[8] In this way it is possible to overcome the fundamental conflict between repressive social exigencies and natural individual impulses.

Taking the sensory pole of meaning as a constant, Turner implicitly acknowledged the universality of unconscious psychological processes as underlying symbolic ritual behavior. In his work he ultimately sought to explain the variable social and moral meanings of ritual symbols.

Like Turner, other social scientists inspired by psychoanalytic theory have also approached ritual as social action that is essentially symbolic. When studying ritual, they have explored the latent meanings of ritual symbolism. Thus they have taken intrapsychological processes as underlying and somehow engendering the social processes on which they have focused. As I will show, psychoanalytic theories of ritual have focused instead on exploring these underlying, intrapsychological processes.

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[7] V.W. Turner, "Encounter with Freud: The Making of a Comparative Symbologist", G.D. Spindler (ed.), *The Making of Psychological Anthropology* (Berkeley, 1978), 558–583.

[8] See V.W. Turner 1977, 49.

Lawson and McCauley: A Cognitive Approach to Ritual Action

In addition to a fairly constant interest in psychoanalytic theory within the field of ritual studies, over the last decade of the twentieth century ritual studies profited from a new interest in cognitive psychology within the social sciences and sciences of religions.[9] Distinct proponents of a cognitive approach to ritual action are Robert Lawson and Thomas McCauley. In *Rethinking Religion. Connecting Cognition and Culture* and *Bringing Ritual to Mind*, they present a model designed to chart 'ritual competence'.[10] They proceed from the basic assumption that ritual participants must recall their rituals well enough to insure a sense of continuity across performances. Likewise, rituals have to motivate participants to transmit and re-perform them. According to the authors, most religious ritual systems make use of *either* a high performance frequency *or* an exceptional emotional stimulation to achieve recollection. This difference can be traced to a difference in 'ritual forms'. The authors advance the hypothesis that ritual participants possess cognitive representations of ritual forms that enable them to re-enact specific ritual performances competently. To trace the general principles of religious ritual structure, which they believe are universal, they develop a model that is based on linguistic methods (in the structuralist tradition) and cognitive competence theories. Their focus is ultimately on mapping the structural features of religious ritual action. Psychological theory is used to identify the universally constant, mental processes that are thought to underlie and structure these socio-cultural performances.

Put simply, the psychological explanations on which many of the theories developed by social scientists and scholars of religions are based often are little more than very general notions—such as 'the human need to symbolize'—functioning as *a priori* assumptions that, as such, are not questioned or clarified. When, on the other hand, psychological theory serves as an explicit frame of reference—as with psychoanalytic theory or cognitive psychology—it is used to portray the universal psychological conditions that structure the variable social processes of which ritual is a part. Ritual is invariably seen as a *social* mechanism. The methodology developed to understand ritual—

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[9] See, e.g., P. Boyer (ed.), *Cognitive Aspects of Religious Symbolism* (Cambridge, 1993).
[10] Lawson and McCauley 1990; McCauley and Lawson 2002.

why it exists, how it works—is dependent on the particular psycho-
logical theory chosen. Once the psychological constants are estab-
lished, they themselves are not discussed further but are used to lay
bare the supposed universal principles of ritual structure.

Psychological Theories of Ritual

Considering that 'the psyche' has been awarded such a basic role
by social scientists and scholars of religions, an obvious question is
how psychologists have dealt with ritual. How have *they* conceptual-
ized ritual and how have *they* explained its origin and existence?

   In comparison with social scientists, psychologists have not often
concerned themselves with the concept of ritual. Generally speaking,
four different approaches can be discerned: the psychotherapeutic,
neurobiological, psychoanalytical and social-psychological approaches.

General Psychotherapeutic Approaches

As far as the psychotherapeutic interest is concerned, there is an
enormous proliferation of publications, mostly case-studies. Three
thematic interests can be identified in this field.[11] First, the useful-
ness of 'ritual' in psychotherapeutic treatments. In the case of prob-
lematic mourning processes, for instance, the wholesome effects of
designing and practicing personal rituals of transition are empha-
sized.[12] Secondly, the similarity between (religious) ritual and ther-
apy is addressed: the therapeutic session as a ritual setting on the
one hand and religious ritual as a therapeutic setting on the other.[13]
Thirdly, the importance of family rituals receives attention.[14] Though

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[11] See Roberts 1988.

[12] See, e.g., M.B. Aune and V. DeMarinis (eds), *Religious and Social Ritual.
Interdisciplinary Explorations*, (Albany, NY, 1996); O. van der Hart, *Rituelen in psy-
chotherapie. Overgang en bestendiging* (Deventer, 1978), English translation: *Rituals in
Psychotherapy: Transition and Continuity* (New York, 1983).

[13] E.g., R.L. Moore, "Contemporary Psychotherapy as Ritual Process: An Initial
Reconnaisance", *Zygon* 18 (1983), 283–294; V.P. Gay, "Ritual and Psychotherapy.
Similarities and Differences", Aune and DeMarinis (eds), *Religious and Social Ritual*,
217–234.

[14] E.g., E. Imber-Black, J. Roberts, and R.A. Whiting (eds), *Rituals in Families and
Family Therapy* (New York, 1988).

of interest, I will not elaborate on these therapeutic studies any further because they have generally derived their basic ideas on ritual from social studies of ritual, especially from anthropological theories concerning *rites de passage*.

Jungian Studies of Ritual and Therapy

A few studies focus on ritual and therapy from the Jungian perspective.[15] They all see ritual conduct as rooted in a deeply felt need to communicate with the sacred core of being; as such it is said to spring from an extramundane or extrapersonal source. Rituals are seen as essential to the individual's 'transformation' in the course of the *individuation* process as described by Jung. Therefore, in therapeutic treatment the individual's (lack of) ritual commitment or actions is of central concern.

According to these Jungian studies, rituals make it possible to experience 'the other', 'the sacred'. *How* they manage to do so, however, remains unclear. They postulate the psychological dimension of ritual without unraveling it. The psychological processes involved not only are not analyzed but are even mystified: "Ritual's origin is an energy beyond human control, an energy that originates form as well as defies explanation for the rite is also a creation that, though emanating from outside, parallels one's inner and unique condition".[16] On my view the profound influence of Jungian theory on the development of new religious movements, with their concomitant rituals, is based, paradoxically, not on any clear-cut analysis or 'design' of ritual (which Jungian theory does not provide) but on the postulated mystery involved.

Neurobiological Studies of Ritual

For the few neurobiological studies on ritual, the same holds true as for most of the therapeutic approaches: they have been inspired by

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[15] E. Neumann, "Zur psychologischen Bedeutung des Ritus", *Eranos Jahrbuch* 19 (1950), 65–120; A. Plaut, "Where have all the ritual gone? Observations on the Transforming Function of Rituals and the Proliferation of Psychotherapies", *Journal of Analytical Psychology* 20 (1975), 3–17; B. Shorter, *Susceptible to the Sacred. The Psychological Experience of Ritual* (London, 1996).

[16] Shorter, *Susceptible to the Sacred*, 108.

anthropological treatments of ritual, more specifically by Victor Turner's approach. Furthermore, neurobiological interest is mainly inspired by exotic (religious) ritual practices in which a change of bodily experiences is achieved, such as the experience of trance or possession.[17] Thus the neurobiological approach of ritual does not aim at defining its own distinctive concept of ritual but focuses on the analysis of specific socio-cultural practices on the basis of the physical processes and patterns involved. A crucial issue in this respect is how the connection can be satisfactorily established between general biological processes on the one hand and socio-cultural differences on the other.

Psychoanalytical Approaches to Ritual

There are many case-studies on ritual which make use of psychoanalytic theory. I will only treat studies in which the concept of ritual itself is discussed.

A. Sigmund Freud: Ritual and Repression

Psychoanalytic theory on ritual begins with Freud's classic treatise *Zwangshandlungen und Regligionsübungen*.[18] Here Freud compares the obsessive actions of neurotic patients with religious actions of the faithful. According to him, the similarities between the two are not just superficial.

In the eyes of the spectator, neurotic obsessive actions are pointless; they are formalities without meaning. To the obsessed patient, however, refraining from these actions causes tremendous fear. According to Freud, the similarities between neurotic and religious ritual action are obvious. In both instances there is a ban on interrupting the acts, a crisis of conscience when refraining from them, and a painstaking punctuality in performing them.[19]

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[17] See, e.g., B.W. Lex, "The Neurobiology of Ritual Trance", D'Aquili, Laughlin, and McManus (eds) 1979, 117–151.

[18] S. Freud, "Zwangshandlungen und Religionsübungen" (1907), *Studienausgabe* VII (Frankfurt a. M., 1982), 11–22.

[19] In addition, Freud also sees important differences. First, neurotic ceremonies would be more variable in form, while religious rituals would be more stereotypical. Secondly, obsessions would be individual and private, whereas religious rituals are public and social. Thirdly, the smallest details of religious ritual would have symbolic meaning, while obsessive rituals would seem senseless and childish.

The same psychological mechanism responsible for the formation of obsessional neurotic behavior, repression, is also responsible for the formation of apparently normal religious ritual acts. Fear and guilt characterize obsessive action. The compulsion to act focuses on insignificant daily actions and expresses itself in senseless rules and restrictions. Freud marks this as a consequence of the mechanism of *Verschiebung* (displacement). The original meaning of the acts (the original mental image) is repressed and its energy load transferred to other, less significant images, until the most trivial has become the most important. Thus a central characteristic of obsessive action is that the patient is unaware of its real meaning. With religious ritual the symbolic meanings of the acts are usually known to the priests or other ritual specialists, but the motives that incite ritual action—"die zur Religionsübung drängen"—are unknown to the ordinary worshippers or are represented in consciousness by disguising (*vorgeschobene*) motives. In other words, on Freud's view ritual participants, like neurotic patients, are unaware of the real reasons underlying their actions.

According to Freud, repression and the relinquishment of egotistical, socially damaging impulses underlie religious formation. As with individual neurosis, repression in religious life is an ongoing process. Because repression is never complete, religious action needs to be repeated time and again, thereby giving rise to ritual. In this context, Freud characterizes neurosis as 'individual religiosity' and religion as a 'universal obsessive neurosis'.[20]

To summarize, Freud sees religious ritual action as symbolic behavior based on rules and restrictions that give it its obligatory nature. Although similar to individual neurotic action, this behavior is fundamentally public in nature. It is a form of social behavior intended to contain socially damaging individual impulses or else to express collective feelings of guilt.

B. *Volnay Gay: Ritualization and Ego-Maintenance*

Freud's ideas have inspired many case studies on religious behavior, most of which apply psychoanalytic concepts to a specific ritual in

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[20] See also S. Freud, "Totem und Tabu" (1912/1913), *Studienausgabe* IX (Frankfurt a. M., 1982), 291–444.

order to understand this particular behavior.[21] In this respect, Volnay Gay's work forms an exception.

Gay examines Freud's theoretical framework on the analogy between religious ritual action and individual neurotic behavior.[22] He argues that Freud mistakenly claims to have pinpointed the essential mental mechanism that underlies both the formation of obsessive neurosis and the formation of religious action. According to Gay, Freud forgot that he based his original ideas on an *analogy* between the two, and in fact made a clear distinction between the mechanisms involved in neurosis (i.e. repression, *Verdrängung*) and the psychological processes involved in religion (i.e. suppression, *Unterdrückung*). Repression has to do with intra-psychic conflicts and occurs unconsciously. It is an ineffective process of adaptation. Suppression is a far more efficient and adaptive response of the ego to instinctual impulses. Moreover, it is a conscious process, normally having to do with interpersonal conflicts.

Gay argues that the actual theoretic propositions Freud used suggest that ritual behavior is the product of the non-pathological, often beneficial, mechanisms of suppression. The ego and other mental structures are essentially dynamic; the hypothetical border between the ego and the id is dependent on the capacity to control the basic impulses (sex and aggression). The greater one's capacity to control one's impulses, the stronger one's ego. Gay argues that the borderlines between mental structures (either conceived in terms of ego-id or in terms of conscious-unconscious) can only be maintained by the repeated performance of specific acts (which are functional, symbolically charged, and normative). In other words, to be strong the ego requires ritual behavior. Thus the focus is no longer on ritual as a type of action that stands apart from daily behavior but on repetitive behavior as an elementary condition to normal psychological functioning. Consequently, Gay prefers to speak of 'ritualization' instead of 'ritual'.

Although Gay places ritualization in the context of the intra-psychic functioning of the individual, his analysis nevertheless suggests an

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[21] See, e.g., T. Reik, *Ritual. Four Psychoanalytic Studies* (New York, 1946).

[22] V.P. Gay, "Psychopathology and Ritual. Freud's Essay 'Obsessive Actions and Religious Practices'", *Psychoanalytic Review* 62 (1975), 493–507; Gay 1979; Gay, "Ritual and Psychotherapy".

important relational aspect. 'Ritualization' is situated on the borderline between the inner and the outer world and is described as 'specific, repeated acts' that are 'symbolic' and 'normative'. In Gay's approach, this relational aspect remains implicit. This is different in the following psychoanalytic approaches to ritual: Donald Winnicott's object-relation theory and Erik Erikson's concept of ritualization.

C. *Donald Winnicott: Ritual as Transitional Phenomenon*

The theoretical framework concerning the meaning of transitional objects in developmental psychology, as first developed by Winnicott,[23] has inspired an approach to ritual as a 'transitional phenomenon'. In the earliest period of a child's development, the mother fulfills its every need immediately. Later on, this comfortable situation changes. The mother is not always immediately present, so the child's desires are not always answered instantaneously. In this situation, transitional objects—such as their fingers or a soft toy—function as a bridge between inner fantasy and external reality. With the emergence of transitional objects, a 'transitional space' or 'potential space' is created which mediates between wish and reality. It is an intermediate area of play and make believe, a world of illusory experience. This illusory character does not inhibit the perception of reality, but instead makes it possible. Thus the emergence of this fantasy world is a positive and healthy development.

Important in this context is that Winnicott sees a direct developmental link between 'transitional objects', 'play', 'playing together', and 'cultural experience'. Cultural experience is located in the potential space between the individual and the outside world. It is here, Winnicott argues, that cultural phenomena—such as art, science, and religion—are born.

Following Winnicott, Mary Ellen Ross and Cheryl Lynn Ross, two psychologists of religion, have tied religious ritual to the potential space.[24] According to them, rituals present an ideal order just as transitional phenomena constitute the ideal situation of 'presence' in the actual reality of 'absence'. Like the potential space, ritual is located intermediately between inside-outside, subject-object, ideal-

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[23] D.W. Winnicott, *Playing and Reality* (London, 1971).
[24] M.E. Ross and C.L. Ross, "Mothers, Infants, and the Psychoanalytic Study of Ritual", *Signs* 9 (1983), 26–39.

reality. As with the play of a child, these distinctions dissolve in the illusory reality of a ritual.

Whereas in the approaches of Freud and Gay the element of repetition (to control impulses from the inner and outer world) constitutes an important element in the explanation of the development of ritual behavior, here the emphasis is foremost on the symbolic and transitional dimensions of ritual. Ritual functions as a bridge between the inner experience of the individual and the external sociocultural world. This bridging function is deemed important to the psychological development of the individual in two ways: first, to the development of self-perception and the experience of identity; second, to the experience of unity with other people.

D. *Erik Erikson: The Ritualization of Human Experience*
Erikson also locates ritual behavior in the context of the psychological development of the individual. Like Winnicott, the early relationship between mother and child is considered to be constitutive. But where the object-relation theory is focused on the ways in which ritual behavior effects inner experience, Erikson focuses on the 'ritualization' of experience. He is not looking at ritual as something standing apart from daily life, but at the ritual dimension of daily behavior.

In "Ontogeny of Ritualization"[25] Erikson distances himself from such older connotations of ritualization as the clinical, Freudian concept (in which the term 'private ritual' refers to obsessive individual behavior) and the anthropological one (which ties ritualization to the social ceremonies of adults). Instead, on the basis of the ethological concept of ritualization,[26] Erikson develops a different approach. According to him, ritualization is rooted in interpersonal interaction and based on implicit or explicit agreements. It is characterized by repetition, it is meaningful and adaptive.

This approach to ritualization plays an important part in Erikson's developmental theories. He sees ritualization as fundamental to the development of psychosocial identity during the life cycle. In addition, he connects the ontogeny of ritual behavior in the first developmental stage of the life cycle to large scale, public rituals. By doing

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[25] Erikson 1966.
[26] See Baudy, this volume.

so, he does not intend to reduce formalized ritual practices to infan-
tile processes. But the elements that characterize the collective ritu-
als of adults can be traced to the specific developmental stages of
the human life cycle. Thus ritualization begins as a special form of
daily behavior: the stereotypical way in which mother and child greet
each other during the very first stage of the child's life. On the one
hand, such ritualization is conditioned by social traditions; on the
other, it is extremely individual, that is, typical for this particular
mother and her child. According to Erikson, this desire for repeated
mutual confirmation—the desire for mutual attachment and mutual
distinction—is innate.

To summarize, on the one hand Erikson traces the ontogeny of
ritualization to innate psychological needs, which are presupposed *a
priori*. On the other hand, he places the development of ritual behav-
ior in the context of social relationships, for ritual behavior occurs
only between two or more people. As in the object-relation approach,
ritual establishes the bridge between the individual and social real-
ity and serves to create the psychological balance necessary for the
adequate functioning of the individual in his social environment.
Remarkably, this approach differs little from general anthropologi-
cal treatments of ritual.[27]

Social-Psychological Approaches to Ritual

A. *Erving Goffman: Interaction Ritual*
In his early work, Goffman, like Erikson, sees ritual behavior as part
of daily interaction.[28] He focuses on the detailed analysis of the many
encounters between concrete individuals in ordinary day-to-day sit-
uations. These occasions are fleeting, accidental moments in the inter-
action between people. Though transient and unplanned, the ways
these occasions unfold are highly regulated. Presupposing the rule-
based nature of daily interpersonal behavior, Goffman introduces the
concept of 'interaction ritual'.

He inquires into the unwritten rules that inform the interactions
between people by focusing on those situations in which the normal

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[27] J.S. Kafka, "Challenge and Confirmation in Ritual Action", *Psychiatry* 46 (1983),
31–39.
[28] Goffman 1967.

routines are disturbed and people 'lose face' or do anything to pre-
vent this. On Goffman's view, ritual practices are designed first of
all to 'save face'. The function of ritual—to maintain social rela-
tionships—is analyzed in relation to the concept of 'self image'.
According to Goffman, ritual has to do with the social construction
of the person—the social self—and consequently with the psycho-
logical formation of the individual, his experiences, emotions, and
definitions of self.

Goffman attributes an important role to the symbolic dimension
of interpersonal interaction. Unlike traditional Durkheimian studies
of ritual, this does not imply the transmission of abstract social val-
ues. On Goffman's view, ritual expresses the aspect of 'trust'.[29]
Individuals follow rules as long as they can trust others to do the
same. Thus ritual behavior is possible only on the basis of mutual
trust, trust expressing itself in respect for the other person's image.
Whereas Erikson claims that 'basic trust' arises in the natural process
of ritualization between mother and child, Goffman starts from a
pre-existent social frame of reference that shapes the individual. On
this view, ritual does not arise because of internal psychological mech-
anisms, but originates in social interaction. The core of ritual is its
rule-based nature which serves to regulate social interaction and con-
sequently shape the individual person.

Ritualization as conceptualized by Gay or Erikson presupposes a
learning process. The individual gradually acquires 'ritual compe-
tence', which enables a positive, adaptive, psychological development.
Goffman's analysis in fact reveals nothing about the origin of ritual
behavior, but merely demonstrates how regulated behavior unfolds
in daily practice. He unravels the ritual codes that inform interaction.
In this sense, Goffman is describing a cognitive competence. Thus
his painstaking analysis of social acts leads to a cognitive approach
to ritual behavior. Exactly *how* the individual acquires the moral
directives of the specific cultural settings in which he finds himself
remains unclear.

B. *Michael Argyle: Ritual and Non-verbal Communication*
In *Bodily Communication* Argyle discusses the biological background of
human, non-verbal patterns of communication. He proceeds from

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[29] P. Manning, *Erving Goffman and Modern Sociology* (Cambridge, 1992), 58.

the ethological concept of ritual: "Ritualization in animals . . . is of three main kinds: (1) clear social signals or displays evolved from originally non-social acts (for example, bodily intention movements); (2) patterns of behavior which prevent aggression . . .; (3) rituals which bring about social bonding, such as courtship ceremonies."[30] According to Argyle, human ritual behavior is a continuation of animal ritual and is essentially based on non-verbal communication. But whereas animal ritual is the result of biological evolution, human ritual results from cultural developments. In both cases, ritual has to do with communication, but human ritual is foremost a cultural-communicative phenomenon.

Argyle also differentiates between social and neurotic ritual. Neurotic ritual has nothing to do with communication because the signals it displays are not socially shared. In addition, ritual can also be distinguished from normal, day-to-day behavior because it expresses things that cannot easily be put into words. Here Argyle touches on the classical anthropological view, which takes ritual as a form of social behavior in which abstract ideas and emotions that cannot be verbally expressed are expressed by means of physical symbolic acts. In this way, ritual permits communication on an unconscious level, linking the inner experiences of the individual to external reality. In the process, strong emotions are aroused, while psychological anxiety is contained. As in many social scientific approaches to ritual, these presumed psychological effects are not further examined.

In the social-psychological approaches of Goffman and Argyle, ritual is analyzed as a social-relational process. They are primarily focused on unraveling the social process; ritual in itself is not their main concern. Because of this, they do not formulate their own, specific concepts of ritual, but derive their ideas basically from the social sciences or sciences of religions. While 'ritual' has been a major issue within the social sciences for over a century, within social psychology the ritual analyses of Argyle and Goffman are isolated studies. It is probably for this reason that both authors do not discuss 'ritual' in their later work.[31]

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[30] M. Argyle, *Bodily Communication* (London, 1975), 174.
[31] Goffman makes no mention of 'ritual' in *Frame Analysis* (1974), nor does Argyle mention ritual in the revised edition of *Bodily Communication* (1988).

Conclusions

When psychologists discuss ritual, what do they focus on? When studying ritual, they are concerned with culture and cultural differences. Furthermore, most of them are informed by social scientific—mainly anthropological—theories on ritual. Conversely, social scientists and scholars of religions often do not refer to psychological theories when addressing psychological aspects of ritual.

Also within psychology there is no debate on ritual comparable to that within the social sciences and the sciences of religions. When using the concept of ritual or the concept of ritualization, this is done within an author's own theoretical framework. No reference is made to the different ways in which these concepts are interpreted by others. As a consequence, ritual can be seen as standing apart from daily life (Freud, Winnicott, Argyle) or, conversely, as an integral part of it (Gay, Erikson, Goffman). The genesis of ritual behavior can be considered, with different emphases, as a function of the psyche (Freud, Gay, Erikson) or of social-cultural interaction (Goffman, Argyle). Ritual or ritualization can be the specific object of study (as with the psychoanalytic approaches), or the inquiry into ritual serves other interests (Goffman, Argyle). The emphasis can be on the nature of ritual behavior as stereotypical or repetitive (Freud, Gay, Goffman) or on the symbolic dimension of ritual action (Winnicott, Argyle).

This essay's point of departure was the role awarded the psyche in ritual theory. Considering that 'the psyche' has been attributed such a basic role by social scientists and scholars of religions, it was then asked how ritual has been dealt with in psychology. As I have indicated, the number of notable psychological studies on ritual is small. Within the discipline of psychology, next to no attention has been paid to the issue of ritual action. Why this apparent lack of interest?

As a discipline, psychology knows many different schools and subdisciplines. When addressing psychology in general, attention is focused on the dominant current in academic psychology, which is based on the theory of knowledge, derived from the natural sciences, in which the specific qualities or functions of the human psyche are taken to be the same everywhere. The basic assumption of the universal uniformity of mental structures and processes results in a focus on the individual person as detached from his socio-cultural context. Mainstream psychology inquires into the mental structures or processes

that determine individual human behavior. The specific contents of consciousness—concrete desires, intentions, or religious beliefs—are left out of consideration. In this context, it is not surprising that the problem of 'ritual' as a form of symbolic behavior is addressed in comparatively few psychological studies. Furthermore, within psychology human behavior is *a priori* conceived as patterned, rule-governed. When studying human behavior, psychologists concentrate on finding these regularities or patterns—as engendered by mental processes or structures—in individual behavior. In this context, a concept that is used to focus on the rule-based structure of *inter*personal behavior, with the mental processes underlying this behavior taken as self-evident, is not obvious to psychologists as an instrument of analysis. What is more, in the social sciences and sciences of religions, ritual is mostly seen as a *specific form* of behavior: its rule-based nature makes it stand apart from 'normal' or daily behavior. To psychologists all behavior is rule-governed. As an analytical tool, then, the concept of ritual offers little to psychologists which their own concepts do not provide. Only when psychologists study social behavior—be it in terms of 'interaction' or in terms of 'culture'—'ritual' comes into focus.

As I have shown, 'ritual' is a social concept. It appears useful only as an instrument for the analysis of social behavior, that is, behavior concerned with interpersonal relationships. Thus in the near future it is not likely that academic psychology, with its focus on individual psychological processes, will develop research projects that aim at producing evidence-based knowledge about the psychological dimensions of ritual behavior. This does not relieve social scientists and scholars of religions of the responsibility to pay *systematic* attention to the role they award to the psyche. It is not enough, for instance, to state that ritual is a form of 'conscious behavior'—or *un*conscious behavior—without explaining what this means *psychologically*. Such basic assumptions should not only be made explicit in advance; they also need to be accounted for in order to prevent the *ad hoc* combination of premises derived from different theories which may in fact be mutually exclusive. The uncritical linking of psychological concepts eclectically derived from opposing theoretical frameworks is a serious defect of many social studies of ritual.

A methodologically sound approach to ritual behavior—on both the individual and social levels—requires a thorough explication of

one's basic assumptions concerning the workings of the human psy-
che. Conversely, if this requirement is met, the study of ritual, in its
diverse social and cultural contexts, may even prove to be a test
case for the appropriateness of basic tenets of Western psychologi-
cal theories.

RITUAL IN SOCIETY

Ursula Rao

Rituals serve important functions for the organization and reorganization of social contexts. This is the baseline of many ritual studies. It would be impossible to provide an overview of the vast number of theories dealing with problems of how social interactions are shaped and rendered meaningful through ritual activities. The aim of this article will be to discuss a selected number of approaches that have influenced contemporary debates and to assess their contribution to an understanding of the social relevance of ritual dynamics. The article is written from an anthropological point of view that gives particular importance to case studies. This has implications for the theoretical argument.

Initially the editors asked me to write an article entitled 'Ritual *and* Society'. When starting to write, I struggled with two different perspectives, which appeared to be possible in view of the available anthropological and sociological literature I intended to discuss. I could have attempted to give an overview that compares societies and rituals and classifies them in relation to each other. A famous study of this kind is Mary Douglas's book *Natural Symbols*.[1] I decided against this approach and instead developed an argument about the way rituals are embedded in society. Guiding questions were: How are interrelations organized during and through rituals and what effects does that have in non-ritual contexts? How do rituals affect face-to-face relations and how do they become relevant to the imagination of larger communities?

There are reasons for this decision. Accelerated global exchange, debates on globalization, as well as influences from postmodern philosophy and post-colonial debates, have effectively destroyed the idea of the existence of bounded and stable entities called 'cultures' or 'societies'. In effect, such established dichotomies as the distinction between tradition and modernity, global and local, center and

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[1] Douglas 1970.

periphery, have been questioned. Scholars acknowledge that social entities have 'sub-cultures' that overlap, interact and reconnect, and are embedded in global contexts that introduce changes and trigger reflection. With this in mind, I felt that there was greater value in trying to see the interconnections between various social contexts and rituals instead of trying to struggle with definitional problems in order to produce general classifications, which then may or may not withstand the test of actual practices at the various sites of cultural production. The result is an article about 'Ritual *in* Society'.

Rituals at the Foundation of Social Order

Émile Durkheim[2] has firmly established a sociological view of religion. He describes rituals as 'social facts' that shape and are shaped through society. At an abstract level all rituals are said to have the same meaning and serve the same function. They are social actions that express and reestablish the collective consciousness of a society that is encoded in its belief system. Through the performance of rituals, the mental and emotional state of individuals is altered in such a way that participants experience themselves as members of a larger social group. Durkheim's question of what ritual does and how it works in society has set the agenda for a whole range of studies. Yet most of them departed from the idea that religion and ritual are identical with society. Instead ritual appears as a particular type of social activity that needs to be studied in reference to other areas of social interaction.[3]

Alfred Reginald Radcliffe-Brown[4] follows Durkheim in his conclusion that religious rituals play an important role in maintaining social cohesion and equilibrium. His analysis focuses on various reli-

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[2] É. Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (1912), translated by J.W. Swain (New York, 1965).

[3] This shift is already apparent in the works of Hubert and Mauss (H. Hubert and M. Mauss, *Sacrifice. Its Nature and Functions* (1898), translated by W.D. Halls (Chicago, 1981)). They define sacrifice as a transformative act that effects social relations by modifying "the condition of the moral person who accomplishes it or that of certain objects with which he is concerned" (13). Rituals not only encode social meaning, but serve as a medium to overcome rupture in the social system and protect individuals from uncertainties.

[4] A.R. Radcliffe-Brown, *Structure and Function in Primitive Society* (London, 1952).

gious traditions, showing how in each society religious institutions are connected to other social institutions essential for the constitution of society. Together they are said to form an integrated whole that ensures the orderly functioning of society.

Bronislaw Malinowski[5] distinguishes between the three complementary systems of magic, science, and religion. Science provides human beings with essential knowledge about nature. Religion inscribes a pragmatic knowledge. Religious practices create a mental state that strengthens the belief in tradition, the feeling of harmony with nature, and mental stability in times of crises. Magic is applied in concrete situations of insecurity and is used to bring such situations under control.

Although there are significant differences between these theories, they all share a common assumption. Ritual is seen as a medium for the integration of society. Interestingly, this idea remains important even where attention is shifted to conflict and change. Thus Max Gluckman writes that rituals provide effective stimuli to produce "the approved sentiments of loyalty and solidarity over and above conflicts and the strife these engender".[6]

Victor Turner[7] has been most prominent in developing this idea, focussing on social conflicts, individual crisis, and cultural contradictions. He shows that rituals are used to overcome the dangers connected with experiences of rupture and transformation. His theory had a lasting effect on the anthropological debate. Turner describes rituals as "distinct phases in the social process whereby groups become adjusted to internal changes and adapted to their external environment".[8] The effect is brought about by the use of (dominant) symbols, the smallest units of rituals, which possess three properties: they condense meaning, offer a range of disparate significations, and polarize meaning along a spectrum of culturally established associations. During ritual performances, symbols effect a condensed communication, channel emotions, and reestablish the participants as members in a moral community. However, these effects are not permanent.

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[5] B. Malinowski, *Magic, Science, and Religion* (1948), (Prospect Heights, 1992).

[6] M. Gluckman, *Politics, Law and Ritual in Tribal Societies* (Oxford, 1965), 252; also M. Gluckman, *Rituals of Rebellion in South-East Africa* (Manchester, 1952).

[7] V.W. Turner, *Schism and Continuity in an African Society. A Study of Ndembu Village Life* (Manchester, 1957); V.W. Turner 1969.

[8] V.W. Turner 1967, 20.

Although rituals may solve concrete conflicts, they do not extinguish contradictions, which continue to exist at a more basic structural level. Thus there will be new breaches and the need for further rituals.[9] Turner here departs in a very important respect from earlier studies of ritual by members of the 'British School of Anthropology'. Unlike Radcliffe-Brown, Turner does not conceive of religion as a fixed system that expresses and inculcates in participants' sentiments of solidarity.[10] For Turner the effect of a ritual is a result of the performance that stimulates an emotional response and thereby transforms perception.[11]

Clifford Geertz made a major contribution to the theory of ritual, when he pointed to the creative force of rituals. Rituals, he asserts, are not only expressive of social relations, but are also *models of* and *models for* behavior. Ritual performances transform perception by fusing these two perspectives and allowing imagined reality and experienced reality to merge, thereby recreating social contexts. Through the involvement in creative performances, ritual participants create and internalize a belief system, while playing it.[12] Geertz[13] develops the idea of the constitutional quality of performance in his study of the nineteenth century kingdom in Bali. He asserts that the historical state of Bali—he calls it a "theatre-state"—was constituted through ritual activity. Rituals did not mirror the political order, but provided moments for the paradigmatic foundation of power relations. Through dramatic performances the court shaped the world according to the ideals it proclaimed. This happened with special intensity during the ceremonies of royal cremation. The excessive display of wealth provided a platform for the competition for status and the realization of hierarchy, the ultimate legitimization for the use of force.

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[9] V.W. Turner 1967, 39–43; V.W. Turner, *Vom Ritual zum Theater* (1982), (Frankfurt a. M., 1989), 112–113, 121.

[10] Radcliffe-Brown, *Structure and Function*, 157.

[11] V.W. Turner 1967, 29–30, 43.

[12] Geertz 1966, 28–35. Handelman (1990) develops this idea, distinguishing between "events that model", "events that present", and "events that represent". Analyzing different events and proto-events, he shows how various social activities participate in the creation of meaning. He offers a careful analysis of a number of events, showing how in each case the intersection between modeling, presenting, and representing is accomplished in a different way and to differing degrees.

[13] Geertz 1980.

These new perspectives introduced by Turner and Geertz con-
tributed significantly to a change in the way rituals were studied.
The focus shifted from structure to performance and context. Stanley
Tambiah[14] distinguishes three aspects of rituals as performative action:

> Ritual action in its constitutive features is performative in these three
> senses: in the Austian sense of performative wherein saying something
> is also doing something as a conventional act; in the quite different
> sense of a staged performance that uses multiple media by which the
> participants experience the event intensively; and in the third sense of
> indexical values—I derive this concept from Peirce—being attached to
> and inferred by actors during the performance.[15]

Tambiah asserts that rituals are effective. They are performed in
order to constitute or regulate certain defined areas of social life.
However, there are also moments of uncertainty. Ritual action—like
all social action—can fail. A good example of the uncertain outcome
of a performance is given by Edward Schieffelin.[16] He analyzes the
events of a spirit possession observed among the Kaluli in New
Guinea, during which one of the performers was thrown out of the
séance. A detailed description of the dialogues between the possess-
ing spirits and the audience shows that only one of the performers
was able to convince the audience of the authenticity and quality of
his work as medium. The inability of the other to sense the mood
of the audience, the bad timing of his interventions, and his clumsy
style of performance undermined his authority. He was sidelined dur-
ing the performance because his actions did not meet the expecta-
tions of the audience. Schieffelin concludes that "performative authority
is a fundamental condition of *emergence*".[17] It is an outcome of an
interactive process that interconnects a whole range of actors. While
the aim of a ritual may be defined beforehand, its actual effects are
an outcome of the concrete performance.

This observation can help to investigate the pitfalls in the second
part of Tambiah's definition of ritual. He considers a number of
media that bring about moments of condensed and heightened

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[14] Tambiah 1981.
[15] Tambiah 1981, 119.
[16] Schieffelin 1996. See also L. Kendall, "Initiating Performance. The Story of
Chini, a Korean Shaman", C. Laderman and M. Roseman (eds), *The Performance of
Healing* (London, 1996), 17–58.
[17] Schieffelin 1996, 81; see also Schieffelin 1998.

communication. Redundancy and stereotypy are described as means for producing "a 'single experience' and a single 'message'"[18] that actualizes social knowledge. However, if ritual is a process with an emergent quality, then the outcome of the event cannot be fixed beforehand. It is a result of the particular ways in which people relate to each other and to non-human agents invoked during the performance. This also means that we can expect experiences and meanings to be multi-layered, contradictory, and negotiated. Ritual performances do not necessarily lead to a smooth integration of an existent social hierarchy with a certain representation of the cosmos, as Tambiah[19] and Geertz[20] seem to suggest. Rather, rituals provide special frames for the meeting of actors and the expression of opinions, frames that can become forums for the renegotiation of world-views and power relations. It is in this extended sense of social dynamics as an integral part of the performance that I want to understand rituals as a process, not only for the expression and realization of power relations but also for their renegotiation and the formulation of alternatives. In order to elaborate this point of view, let me discuss some of the positions that address the relevance of ritual action for the exercise of power.

Ritual and Power

Maurice Bloch[21] develops a theory of "rebounding violence"[22] to explain the political impact of religious actions. He sees a ritual as an exercise of violence that proceeds through three stages.[23] The first two stages in a ritual contain a devaluation of the original vitality

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[18] Tambiah 1981, 140; cf. also Leach 1966; Leach 1976.
[19] Tambiah 1981, 153.
[20] Geertz 1966, 28–35.
[21] Bloch 1986; Bloch 1992.
[22] Bloch 1992, 6.
[23] Bloch refers to the ritual studies by A. van Gennep (*The Rites of Passage* (1909), trans. M.B. Vizedom and G.L. Caffee (London, 1960)) and V.W. Turner (1969). However, he gives a different meaning to the siginificance of the three stages. He sees separation and reintegration as processes located in the pariticpants of the ritual. He also sees a continuity of the three stages, contrary to Van Gennep's and Turner's notion of liminality as a quite separate phase in the ritual process (Bloch 1992, 6).

of the human condition. Initially, each person experiences a division into a vital and a transcendental part and subsequently a destruction of his vitality, which in the second stage leads to the creation of purely transcendental beings. The third part of the ritual reintegrates a refined vitality in the persons through an aggressive consumption of a transcendental subject. It is a vitality that comes from outside and is different from the vitality originally lost. It transforms the participants, allowing them to remain transcendental persons who can dominate the world they used to be part of. This exercise of violence is essential for the political effect of rituals. Political order, Bloch argues, is built on an image of unchanging eternal reality. It has to be established against human experience of chaos and change. Through violent consumption of a ritual object, the original vitally is conquered, members of a society are integrated into a structure of order and identified as group through dissociation from the 'other'.[24] However, a ritual statement has no lasting effect. It has to be made again and again. According to Bloch, rituals do not have a convincing argument, nor do they actually establish the order they proclaim. They create an illusion, making an attempt to structure that can never succeed because social life cannot escape human nature. Bloch's analysis appears to be virtually the antithesis of Geertz's view of the nineteenth century state in Bali.

Geertz[25] describes the court life of the Negara as separate entity that is only loosely connected to other areas of social and ritual life. He identifies three independent bodies: the village as civil community, the irrigation society as economic network, and the temple as norm giving. Intersections between these self-governed bodies were

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[24] Elements of this theory can be found also in earlier works of Bloch. One example is his analysis of the royal bath, celebrated in the Merina state in Madagascar in the nineteenth century (Bloch 1987). The festival, Bloch states, involved all citizens in a common celebration. The main ritual elements included the synchronized mourning of the dead, a ritual bath, and a ritual meal of rice and meat taken together by members of a family. The parallel reenactment of these dramatic moments integrated individual experience into a celebration of unity and order and recreated vitality by drawing upon the power of the ancestors, a dead but legitimate authority, and combining it with the potentially dangerous but necessary vitality of the water. It thereby invested people with a refined vitality and placed them into a structured society. In this order the king was supreme because he was the only person who transcended the contradictions inherent in the celebration, because he appeared as having conquered the dangerous elements of water and meat.

[25] Geertz 1980.

brought about through multiple-membership and ritual interconnec-
tion. Village and state were interconnected in two ways. A system
of authority obliged every person to offer goods, services, and loy-
alty to his lord, who was from the next higher rank. At the same
time, temple life established a ritual and symbolic connection between
the two ends of the political entity. In this complex network of loosely
connected intersecting bodies, the royal rituals provided an exem-
plary display of what the world was about and what it should be
like: "What the Balinese state did for Balinese society was to cast
into sensible form a concept of what, together, they were supposed
to make of themselves: an illustration of the power of grandeur to
organize the world."[26]

Here the opposition between the two theories about the founda-
tional quality of rituals becomes apparent. While Bloch sees ritual
as a guise that hides the reality of the human condition and the
organization of social relations, for Geertz state rituals in Negara
served as examples that helped people orient their life by an ideal
they created and realized through the ritual processes. According to
Bloch, power exists prior to and independent of ritual action that
can only dramatize and thereby legitimize existing relations of sub-
ordination and coercion. By contrast, Geertz sees power relations as
created in performances, which are obsessed with the display, com-
petition, and creation of status. I believe that Geertz provides an
important tool for understanding the mutually constitutive quality of
political and ritual activity. However, there is a weakness in his analy-
sis of the Negara that results from the assumed distance between rit-
ual activity of the state and the everyday politics at the local level.
Bloch criticizes interpretations such as Geertz's since they fail to
account for the ways in which ideological constructions of the ritual
are grounded in everyday life. He asserts that rituals not only pro-
vide transcendental models but also connect them to everyday life
by repeating and advancing symbolism relevant to the daily life of
the social members.[27]

Catherine Bell's extensive review of the debate on ritual leads to
conclusions that avoid the pitfalls of both of the theories just reviewed.
She asserts that rituals do not just refer to politics but are an exer-

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[26] Geertz 1980, 102.
[27] Bloch 1987, 272, 194; see also Bloch 1986, 188–189.

cise of politics. "Ritual is the thing itself. It *is* power; it acts and it actuates."[28] Thus her emphasis is not on models provided by rituals but on processes of negotiation that shape the effect of ritual action in the settings in which they are embedded. Bell acknowledges that rituals support the authority of those in control and involve participants in acts of subordination. But she insists that we also need to investigate how power is limited and constrained through ritual activities and how participation is negotiated and subordination resisted.[29]

Jean Comaroff's[30] study of the Zionist movement among the Tshidi in the South Africa-Botswana borderland exemplifies that rituals do not always support dominant structures of authority but may also suggest alternative interpretations and thus become forums for resistance. In Zionism Christian messages are taken but given new meanings though a recontextualization that connects them to meanings of traditional Tshidi religion. The new church thereby incorporates a source of power associated with the dominant group and turns it into a tool for the transformation of the condition of subalternity. Central to the reinterpretation is the metaphor of the body. In Zionist ritual the body—understood also in terms of the social body—is subjected to a procedure of healing in order to overcome the fragmentation inflicted through outside forces. Of course, this expression of resistance through incorporation does not directly effect power relations in the colonial or post-colonial order. However, this does not discourage Comaroff from regarding the reinterpretation as an effective tool in the struggle for human liberation, because it effectively reshapes the consciousness of the oppressed and recreates their self-respect.

Bell offers a definition of ritual that is open to the various effects of ritual action, including instances of resistance and symbolic reinterpretation. For her ritual is a means for appropriating an ideal order through bodily enactment and social negotiations: "I will argue that the projection and embodiment of schemes in ritualization is more effectively viewed as a 'mastering' of relationships of power

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[28] Bell 1992, 195.
[29] Bell 1992, 211.
[30] J. Comaroff, *Body of Power, Spirit of Resistance. The Culture and History of a South African People* (Chicago, 1985).

relations within an arena that affords a negotiated appropriation of the dominant values embedded in symbolic schemes."[31] Basic to this assumption is the view that state power is created through and dependent on the many acts of realizing power at various levels of the social order. Here Bell makes extensive reference to Michel Foucault's concept of power.[32] Foucault describes power as a relation. It is not a thing as such but an activity that creates super- and subordination as an effect of interaction. Relations of power are a product of and are productive of all social transactions.[33]

Renegotiation of Status through Ritual Action

The assumption that power is all-pervasive is taken up by Sherry Ortner[34] in her study of Sherpa rituals. She defines politics as an aspect of all relations through which the relative position of people in a system of authority is negotiated. Ortner describes the political order of Sherpa society as contradictory because it gives similar importance to egalitarianism and hierarchy. This relation between the two value systems is played out and negotiated in the everyday struggle for economic and political power, to which theoretically every person is entitled, but which can be seized and acquired only by the winners of the ongoing contests for influence and higher protection. Though narrations about conflicts single out winner and loser, they do not suggest an end of competitions but point towards a momentary cessation, a temporary victory. Ortner investigates the stories of temple foundations as one example of how society is structured in contradictory terms. The construction of temples is embedded in a process of competition between human as well as non-human actors, who all try to gain superiority. Structurally only 'big' people who have sufficient supporters and have secured divine protection can succeed in building a temple. Yet it is also the foundation of temples that make people 'big', since the temples serve as a medium

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[31] Bell 1992, 182.

[32] Bell 1992, 122–204.

[33] M. Foucault, *The Will to Knowledge. The History of Sexuality* (Vol. I; London, 1978), 94–96.

[34] S.B. Ortner, *High Religion. A Cultural and Political History of Sherpa Buddhism* (Princeton, 1989).

for the acknowledgment of social greatness, for securing divine pro-
tection.[35] Power relations are at the same time potentially open and
momentarily closed. Every person can try to gain control by win-
ning resources and protection, but few succeed. This two-sided mes-
sage is also embodied in ritual action. Rituals play out the fight
against demons. Humans can win this fight only by securing pro-
tection from divine actors. The deities drive the evil spirits out, the
latter are forced to leave the area, but will return again later. Ortner
concludes that rituals provide moments for the grounding of the cul-
tural schema in practice. They are "transformations on a common
underlying structure, which takes the form of a schema for encoun-
tering and overcoming hostile forces, for expressing the triumph of
that encounter, and for routinizing the relations that make that tri-
umph possible".[36] By doing so, rituals are far from simply repre-
senting or legitimizing power. They are in themselves contradictory
since they acknowledge and applaud the powerful while also giving
an example of how authority is challenged, encouraging people to
use their wits to overcome illegitimate forces and become moral per-
sons. Thus rituals are both affirmative and subversive; they lend
themselves to contradictory readings, thereby opening rather than
closing the contest.

Ortner elaborates on a theme well established in ritual theory.
Rituals are dramatic performances that create reality through the
use of symbols. As discussed earlier, the working of symbols in the
ritual process has been most clearly developed by Turner. David
Kertzer summarizes three qualities of symbols that are important in
this context: "condensation of meaning, multivocality, and ambiguity".[37]
Analyzing political rituals, he emphasizes that the ability of rituals
to create political solidarity is an effect of the openness of their mean-
ing. In a ritual, people act together and are emotionally drawn into
the performance without having to subscribe to one meaning and
one interpretation of the act.[38]

However, Ortner's theory reaches further. Her study is of inter-
est here because she is able to show that ritual activities can become

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[35] Ortner, *High Religion*, 76–81.
[36] Ortner, *High Religion*, 74.
[37] Kertzer 1988, 11.
[38] Kertzer 1988, 9–12.

a forum for contesting power equations. The case studies of the temple foundations demonstrate that people are invested with agency in the ritual domain to renegotiate their position in the social network. I have developed this idea in my own study of Hindu temples in urban India.[39] Take, for example, the case of the main Kali temple in Bhopal, founded and managed by a caste of former untouchables (*Khatiks*). The president of the temple, Bagware, is among the few *Khatiks*[40] who have reached a middle class status. As such he claims authority in the caste against the traditional leaders, who are illiterate and poor. These ambitions are met with severe opposition from the caste, which has even excommunicated him a couple of times. Yet he continues as manager of the temple and head of its most important ritual activities. Unable to dominate his caste fellows in 'secular times', during rituals he can exercise control, deciding who participates in which position, determining when the ritual starts and how it should proceed. His opponents do not dare disrupt a ritual, because this could anger the goddess and would have negative consequences for the whole caste. They can avoid Bagware's domination only by staying away from the ritual. Yet this would mean missing an auspicious occasion and a demonstration of their importance for caste matters.[41] This latter point is important. Temple rituals are not held for political reasons, even though participants acknowledge (sometimes reluctantly) that rituals are also forums for the negotiation of status positions. The aim is to fulfill a religious duty and to secure divine blessings for the participants and the community. At the center of activity is the goddess. Her will is supreme. However, the organization of a ritual in her honor and the interpretation of her will are tied to questions of authority. Those with political and financial power, together with the religious authorities, determine the ritual procedure and are likely to draw maximum profit (in terms of religious merit and acknowledgment of their sta-

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[39] U. Rao, "Regeln in Bewegung. Die Gestaltung indischer Tempelrituale zwischen Formalität und Offenheit", Köpping and Rao (eds) 2000, 45–59; U. Rao, "Eine Frage des Glaubens. 'Illegale' Tempel und der Kampf um die Gestaltung des urbanen Raums in Indien", *Sociologus* 50 (2000), 145–174; U. Rao, *Negotiating the Divine. Temple Religion and Temple Politics in Urban India* (Delhi, 2003).

[40] A caste of former butchers and fruit sellers.

[41] U. Rao, "Playing Politics. Ritual and the Negotiation of Status-Position in Contemporary Urban India", K.-P. Köpping (ed.), *Encountering the Divine. Essays in Play and Performance* (Münster, forthcoming).

tus) from it. However, with the existence of various contexts from which status can be generated, there exists an ongoing contest between numerous persons who can, for different reasons, claim the right to dominate the ritual order. In this case the traditional leaders of the caste compete with Bagware, with his newly gained status as successful professional.[42] However, the ritual domain also offers opportunities for the subversion of ongoing power contests. At times, hierarchies can even be reversed. The Hindu context offers various approaches to the divine. One powerful conception sees the divine as equally assessable to all. In a popular understanding of *bhakti*, the core value is given to the devotee's surrender to the deity as a means for gaining privileged access to divine powers. In temples and during rituals there are moments when persons in otherwise marginal positions are given authority because they convincingly display their special closeness to the goddess. This may happen when a person becomes possessed or is able to heal as an effect of divine inspiration. It can be the result of the performance of exceptionally difficult devotional exercises or the display of a self-sacrificing engagement for the goddess. Such experiences of momentary (religious) empowerment do not always have consequences for enduring power structures, but the exercise of power in a ritual can have the potential to trigger a renegotiation of positions also in non-ritual contexts.[43]

The example from Bhopal makes it necessary to reformulate Pierre Bourdieu's[44] argument about the performative effect of rituals. Bourdieu explains that the effect of a performance depends on the authority of the main actors. They have accumulated symbolic capital that gives them the power to bring about the anticipated transformation.[45] The two cases discussed above show that the effect of rituals is not only a result of the predetermined status of the participants; it is also part of the social process of negotiating power relations. Rituals are often used to change the status of participants. Thus the effect of a ritual is not only a result of the invested symbolic capital, but the ritual itself is a forum for the accumulation of symbolic capital.

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[42] See also M. Mines, *Public Faces, Private Voices. Community and Individuality in South India* (Delhi, 1996).

[43] Rao, "Playing Politics", 93–95.

[44] P. Bourdieu, *Was heißt Sprechen? Die Ökonomie des sprachlichen Tausches* (1982), translated by H. Beister (Wien, 1990).

[45] Bourdieu, *Was heißt Sprechen?*, 72.

Klaus-Peter Köpping[46] has described this double relationship as the paradox of ritual authority. Rituals depend for their effects on authorizing contexts, a divine actor who can transform reality, a priest who is able to invoke the deity, a medium that receives the deity, etc. However, these authorities gain their status only through the performance that reestablishes them as powerful agents. Here we have returned to the idea that rituals are risky. They have an emergent quality and open up contingent processes in spite of the seeming orderliness and redundancy of their procedures. Ritual effects can be planned and anticipated but not fixed beforehand. Ambiguousness does not end with the final act of the ritual. Ritual events can be variously understood and interpretations can change as the social struggle for the creation of meaning continues.[47]

Form and Content

Rituals not only represent social relations but take part in their renegotiation. In view of this finding, the definition of ritual given by Sally Moore and Barbara Myerhoff is telling: "collective ritual can be seen as an *especially dramatic attempt* to bring some particular part of life firmly and definitely into orderly control."[48] The introduction to their book *Secular Rituals* starts with the observation that "social life proceeds somewhere between the imaginary extremes of absolute order, and absolute chaotic conflict and anarchic improvisation".[49] Rituals support the creation of order through stylistic rigidities and internal repetitions, which gives the ritual content a tradition-like outlook. The form is part of the message.[50] These observations are very helpful for gaining an understanding of the special contribution of ritual actions to the recreation of social contexts.

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[46] I have discussed this matter extensivly with Klaus-Peter Köpping and cite the statement in this passage from my memory of these talks.

[47] See also Köpping and Rao (eds) 2000; K.-P. Köpping and U. Rao, "Macht und Ohnmacht des Mediums. Transformationen individueller und kollektiver Wahrnehmung durch religiöse Performanz", E. Fischer-Lichte et al. (eds), *Wahrnehmung und Medialität* (Tübingen, 2001), 197–211.

[48] Moore and Myerhoff 1977, 3 (my emphasis).

[49] Moore and Myerhoff 1977, 3.

[50] Moore and Myerhoff 1977, 7–8.

While Moore and Myerhoff draw attention to the ways in which rituals structure experience and cognition, I have given preference to the other side of human experience, less often discussed in relation to ritual: the openness of the ritual act for multiple negotiations and interpretations and the intrusion of contingency into the ritual domain. However, even when considering the dynamic element of ritual acts, questions of form play an important role. The authorizing effect of rituals is related to a perception that constructs traditions as essentially untouched by the context in which they appear. During a ritual, participants do not act independently but are bound by tradition or the will of non-human agencies. Here I agree with Caroline Humphrey and James Laidlaw, who note that actors take on a different attitude during a ritual, which the authors call 'ritual commitment'. Humphrey and Laidlaw understand a ritual as a non-intentional act that is external to the actor in the sense that it is prescribed by tradition and considered to have taken place only if the prescription has been followed. Nevertheless, the actor is considered to be a conscious and thinking self, an agent responsible for his performance as one possible interpretation of the prescriptions. Hence, the actor is simultaneously the author and not the author of a ritual act.[51]

During my study of temple rituals, I observed that participants carefully judge any ritual performance in keeping with an imaginary construct of tradition. This does not mean that all innovations are rejected, but only that new elements have to pass the scrutiny of whether they are an adequate addition to or even an improvement upon 'the tradition'. When Bagware allowed women to participate in the fire-sacrifice during the Navratri celebration, his supporters defended this with reference to the history of Hinduism. The new form was considered to be closer to its 'original' in pre-modern India, where women were supposed to be equal to men. The fact that Bagware was given the right to make this innovation added to his status. He became a powerful innovator in the religious domain. However, there was another occasion on which he lost face. He had changed the priest of the Kali Temple because he wanted someone more in line with an orthodox understanding of Hindu temple rituals. The new priest did not stay long. Soon he was thrown out by

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[51] Humphrey and Laidlaw 1994, 88–110.

the temple attendants, who felt that he did not know the 'correct rituals' for the goddess. Bagware had to bring back the old priest and lost this battle for influence in the temple.[52]

The status elevation effected through ritual innovation is connected to the importance given to tradition. Whereas participants are not allowed to act independently of an imaginary tradition, those who are able to vary or reinterpret the rules become powerful agents. Influence is a result of the ability to persuade others of the superiority of one's own knowledge of the tradition. It is connected to acknowledged status positions in the society, but not determined by them. People bring in various forms of religious and social capital in order to win a contest. Thus the ritual once again appears as a domain that invites negotiations. One important conclusion drawn from recent studies of ritual is that the procedures and effects of rituals cannot be predetermined. Although rituals are associated with redundancy, predictability, and stability and are thought to be part of a lasting tradition, they are subject to changes, negotiations, and unexpected result. Studies of actual ritual performances have shown how form and content of rituals are changed and status is renegotiated, even within a frame that appears relatively stable.

Conclusions

How are rituals embedded in society? The argument I have advanced here views rituals as arenas for the enactment and renegotiation of power relations. This is not to say that rituals are always designed to accomplish a stabilization or subversion of existing hierarchies. Rituals are held for a variety of reasons. In some societies there are distinguished political rituals that are associated with the secular institutions in a society and designed to display, strengthen, or reestablish political authority.[53] However, more often than not the term 'ritual' is associated with the religious domain and understood to provide a forum for the communication of social actors with non-human agents. Rituals are held to heal individuals or social rela-

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[52] Rao, "Regeln in Bewegung"; Rao, *Negotiating the Divine*, 69–74.
[53] See, e.g., M. Edelman, *The Symbolic Uses of Politics* (Urbana, 1967); Kertzer 1988; Moore and Meyerhoff 1977.

tions; they are needed in order to secure divine blessing for human activities; they are thought to renew the communion between humans and a transcendent being; they aim to rectify imbalances between the human and the spiritual world—to give just a few examples.

In spite of and aside from the many meanings given to rituals, they are also always embedded in ongoing power negotiations. Through social framing, rituals may be set apart from other aspects of life, for example, when people declare that religious activities do not or should not have anything to do with politics. However, rituals are never fully disconnected from other social processes, even where they belong to a separate domain. First, authority within the ritual is established with reference to other social contexts and has an effect on them. Second, occurrences and transformations effected by rituals are relevant for the rearrangement of relations. Third, the meaning given to rituals or sequences within rituals are part of a cultural repertoire in which connections between the various domains of life are established and negotiated. Thus rituals are always embedded activities. They exit subsequent to other occurrences that make them necessary, give them meaning, or generate their effects. It is in view of these interconnections that I have analyzed rituals *in* society.

This statement is banal insofar as all social actions are embedded and become relevant for the reformulation of related contexts. What I propose here is that rituals are distinguished from other actions through social framing.[54] Within their context they generate their own rules and thus offer an altered context within which power struggles are differently situated. This is not to say that there is a meta-category of ritual with definite characteristics. Rather, I refer to the observation made in many ethnographic studies that there are specifically framed public events that are given over to high routinization and are justified by tradition. The frame 'this is ritual' imposes upon actors special rules, which are defined for this particular purpose. They may agree with other more general rules for social interaction, but they may also contradict or complement them and may introduce additional (transcendental) actors. Insofar as rituals

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[54] I am referring here to Goffman's understanding of 'framing' as a social activity that sets the context and determins the 'sense' in which an activity is understood (E. Goffman, *Encounters. Two Studies in the Sociology of Interaction* (Indianapolis, 1961)). Goffman builds on Bateson's classic formulations on social and psychological frames (G. Bateson, *Steps to an Ecology of Mind* (St. Albans, 1973)).

can momentarily rearrange (social) relations, they create separate but
not unconnected forums for the negotiation of relations.[55] To under-
stand how rituals are relevant for the reformulation of connected
contexts, we need to look at shifts in rules and their efficacy for
rearranging perception and have to explore the ways in which alter-
native perceptions are transported from one frame into another.

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[55] For a contribution that discusses a similar concern, see Handelman 2004.

RITUAL: RELIGIOUS AND SECULAR

Jan G. Platvoet

> Definition is itself the historical product of discursive processes. [. . .] A transhistorical definition [. . .] is not viable.[1]

'Ritual' has by now established a virtual monopoly—terminological, conceptual, and theoretical—for itself in the semantic field of terms denoting not only actions by means of which believers presume that they communicate with meta-empirical realms and beings, but also in clusters designating secular modes of expressive behavior, social as well as solitary. The term rules supreme now, not only in scholarly research but also in ordinary language, as two random quotes from the Dutch daily paper *Trouw* of 20/09/2003 testify. One refers to "the rituals and etiquette of [Parliament]", that is, a secular social interaction;[2] the other, to "the immensely satisfying ritual of setting a table", that is, a form of solitary stylized behavior.[3] Charles Darwin's notion of the survival of the fittest and elimination of the weak may therefore be applied also to ritual insofar as it has so successfully eliminated its semantic competitors.

The purposes, and parts, of this essay are three. The aim of the first and longest part is to present preliminary data on when, how, and why the *etic*, or scholarly, concept of 'ritual' began to serve as an imaginative theoretical construct for specific heuristic, analytical, and theoretical purposes in the academic study of, first, the social interaction (postulated by believers) between themselves and meta-empirical worlds, and soon also for secular communication between

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[1] T. Asad, *Genealogies of Religion. Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* (Baltimore, 1993), 29–30.
[2] S. Ephimenco, "Ephimenco" [column], *Trouw* (Saturday, September 20, 2003), 13. All translations are the author's.
[3] C. Forceville, "Weg is die lieve wereld: De laatste roman van Carol Shields", *Trouw* (Saturday, September 20, 2003), 43.

humans, humans and animals, and between animals, and even for solitary, expressive, but non-communicative behavior of humans and animals. My ulterior purpose is to develop a historical approach to the methodological problem of whether one should adopt an 'exclusive' or 'inclusive' definition of ritual, that is, whether one should restrict it to religiously inspired behavior, or also include secular stylized interaction in it. The result is that that issue, however important it is in itself, is not determined by reflection on methodology or the practicalities of research so much as by the wider semantic and symbolic processes in the societies of which scholars of religions happen to be part. I suggest that the terminology of the study of religions and ritual studies is determined much more by processes of semantic change in Northwest European languages in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and by other contingencies of our cultural histories, than by reflexive methodologies. Even so, the goal of the second part is to argue for an inclusive approach to the methodology of the study of ritual on pragmatic grounds, and so to move towards a pragmatics of ritual studies.

However, neither the semantic developments described in the first part, nor my advocacy of an inclusive approach in the second, are innocent of the use of (symbolic) power in human societies. Therefore, thirdly, I shall also briefly address the politics of defining 'ritual', be it only in my conclusion.

Ritual's Rise

In this part, I first examine the cluster of terms that six prominent scholars of religions—three Dutch, and three British—used in the constitutive period of the science of religions, 1860–1890, for designating the religious actions that are now termed 'ritual' by virtually all scholars of religions. I do so in four parts. I begin by briefly discussing the conceptual division of religion into 'belief' and 'worship' that dominated early scholarship on religions. Then I examine first the cluster of terms that the three Dutch authors used for designating 'worship', as well as when and how they introduced the terms 'rite' and 'ritual' for it; secondly, I consider how the same semantic changes occurred with the three British authors. In my fourth section, I propose an explanation of this semantic change. The explanation is clearly provisional, for I have not studied all the publications

of Cornelis Petrus Tiele in that period, only two by Pierre Daniel Chantepie de la Saussaye, Abraham Kuenen, and Edward Burnett Tylor, and only one by Andrew Lang and William Robertson Smith.[4] It is necessary to examine not only additional publications by these and other Dutch and British authors, but also publications in other European languages from this period, because the semantic clusters for denoting religious actions and their dynamics were quite peculiar in the several West European languages in the mid-nineteenth century. It will therefore be necessary to investigate these semantic

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[4] C.P. Tiele, "Iets over de vóór-christelijke godsdiensten", P.A. de Génestet and C.P. Tiele (eds), *Christelijke Volksalmanak voor het jaar 1857. Nieuwe serie; tweede jaargang* (Amsterdam, 1856), 115–131; Tiele, "Het onderwijs in de godsdienstgeschiedenis aan de Leidsche Hoogeschool", *De Gids* 24 (1860) 815–829; Tiele, "Theologie en godsdienstwetenschap", *De Gids* 30 (May 1866), 205–244; Tiele, "Godsdienstwetenschap en theologie. Nadere toelichting van het artikel, 'Theologie en godsdienstwetenschap' in *De Gids* van mei 1866", *Theologisch Tijdschrift* 1 (1867) 38–52; Tiele, "Een proeve van vergelijkende godsdienstwetenschap" [review of A.H. Post, *Untersuchungen über den Zusammenhang der christlichen Glaubenslehre mit den antiken Religionswesen nach der Methode der Vergleichende Religionswissenschaft* (Bremen, 1869)], *Theologisch Tijdschrift* 4 (1870) 158–168; Tiele, "De oorsprong van mythologie en godsdienst. Naar aanleiding der theorien van De Quatrefages en Brinton", *Theologisch Tijdschrift* 4 (1870) 1–27; Tiele, "Een probleem der godsdienstwetenschap", *De Gids* 35 (1871) 98–128; Tiele, "Het wezen en de oorsprong van den godsdienst", *Theologisch Tijdschrift* 5 (1871) 373–406; Tiele, *De Plaats van de godsdiensten der natuurvolken in de godsdienstgeschiedenis. Redevoering bij het aanvaarden van het professoraat aan het Seminarium der Remonstranten, den 13ᵉ Februari 1873, in het Groot Auditorium der Leidsche Hoogeschool* (Amsterdam, 1873); Tiele, "De godsdienst voor de uitvinding van het vuur", *Theologisch Tijdschrift* 7 (1873) 235–250; Tiele, "Een mislukte poging om den godsdienst der oude Aryers te beschrijven", *Theologisch Tijdschrift* 7 (1873) 386–408; Tiele, "Over de geschiedenis der oude godsdiensten, haar methode, geest en belang", *Theologisch Tijdschrift* 7 (1873) 573–589; Tiele, "Over de wetten der ontwikkeling van den godsdienst", *Theologisch Tijdschrift* 8 (1874) 225–262; Tiele, "De ontwikkelingsgeschiedenis van den godsdienst en de hypotheze waarvan zij uitgaat", *De Gids* 38 (1874) 421–450; Tiele, "Over den aanvang en de ontwikkeling van den godsdienst", *Theologisch Tijdschrift* 9 (1875) 170–192; Tiele, "Religion", in *The Encyclopaedia Britannica, 9th edition* (Vol. 20; Edinburgh, 1886), 358–371; P.D. Chantepie de la Saussaye, *Methodologische bijdrage tot het onderzoek naar den oorsprong van den godsdienst* [Academic dissertation, RU-Utrecht, 19 April, 1871] (Utrecht, 1871); Chantepie de Saussaye, *Lehrbuch der Religionsgeschichte* (Freiburg i.B., 1887¹), I, 1–170; A. Kuenen, "De godsdienst, de wetenschap en het leven. Gedachten over 'Godsdienst zonder metaphysica'", *Theologisch Tijdschrift* 8 (1874), 617–648; Kuenen, *National and Universal Religions. Lectures Delivered at Oxford and in London, in April and May, 1882* (London etc., 1882); E.B. Tylor, *Primitive Culture. Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Language, Art, and Custom* (2 vols.; London, 1871¹/1913³); Tylor, *Anthropology. An Introduction to the Study of Man and Civilization* (Vol. II; London, [1881¹]/1946⁴), 87–109, 131–160; A. Lang, *Myth, Ritual and Religion* (London etc., 1887¹/1913³); W. Robertson Smith, *Lectures on the Religion of the Semites. The Fundamental Institutions* (New York, 1889¹, 1894², 1927³, 1972⁴).

histories in Western scholarship on religious and other stylized behavior from this period much more fully before firm conclusions can be drawn. After this examination of the When and How, and my tentative explanation of the Why of ritual's early advance, I present a 'bird's eye view' of the semantic developments after 1890 that led to ritual's present conceptual hegemony. This survey is clearly in even greater need of substantiation by further research than is my examination of the developments before 1890.

A Dominant Division

Religion was divided by Tylor in 1871 into 'beliefs and practices', the latter being defined by him as the "rites and ceremonies [that are a religion's] outward expression and practical result". He reiterated this division time and again as 'ideas and rites', 'doctrines and ceremonies', 'doctrines and practices', 'doctrines and rites', and 'belief and worship', and proposed to view belief as the theory of animism and worship as its practice. "Doctrine and worship correlate as theory and practice", that is, religious rites and ceremonies function as "the dramatic utterance of religious thought, the gesture-language of theology". They are "expressive and symbolic performances" for "the practical purpose" of "intercourse with and influence on spiritual beings".[5] Tiele echoed him when he wrote in *The Encyclopaedia Britannica* in 1886: "Every religion has two prominent constituent elements, the one theoretical, the other practical—religious ideas and religious acts", or 'rites'. He also termed them 'belief and divine worship', 'dogma and ritual', 'mythology and ritual', 'faith and worship', 'doctrines and rites', 'myths and rites', 'thought and worship', and—inverting the order—'worship and mythology'. The two elements, he said, are hardly ever neatly balanced, "some faiths being pre-eminently doctrinal or dogmatic, others pre-eminently ritualistic or ethical".[6] In 1887, Chantepie de la Sausaye likewise divided religion into *Cultus* (worship) and *Religionslehre* (religious doctrine), or "more generally, religious action and representation".[7] Robertson

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[5] Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, I, 23, 427, 500; II, 362, 451.
[6] Tiele, "Religion", 358, 365, 366, 369, 370, 371.
[7] Chantepie, *Lehrbuch der Religionsgeschichte*, I, 48; cf. also 37–38, 52, 132, 135, 141, 162.

Smith referred to the same division when he remarked that no one had as yet attempted a systematic comparison of "the religion of the Hebrews [. . .] with the beliefs and ritual practices of the other Semitic peoples". But he criticized the modern habit "to search for a creed, and find in it the key to ritual and practice".[8] Even Lang, who construed an idiosyncratic "essential conflict between religion and myth" and allotted to 'ritual' positions in both myth and religion, did not escape the constraining force of the dichotomy 'belief and rites'.[9]

This 'thought' versus 'action' division in modern scholarship on religions is the springboard from which 'rite' and 'ritual' began their triumphal march forward towards semantic supremacy in scholarship on stylized behavior, and outside it. Radcliffe-Brown, for instance, in his Myers Lecture before the Royal Anthropological Institute in 1945, follows the authors cited above in assuming "that any religion or any religious cult normally involves [. . .] beliefs [. . .] and observances", and terms the latter 'rites'.[10] And Goody writes in 1961 that "generally the term ['ritual'] has been used to refer to the action as distinct from the belief component of magico-religious phenomena".[11]

When and How

Dutch Semantics, 1856–1888

The terms Tiele, Chantepie, and Kuenen used for denoting the religious actions of (postulated) communication and community with the supernatural clearly reflected a Christian semantic past. For Tiele, the central terms in the texts examined were *aanbidding* (adoration), which he used 159 times,[12] *vereering* (worship), which, including the

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[8] Robertson Smith, *Lectures on the Religion of the Semites*, IV, 16; cf. also 13, 15.

[9] Lang, *Myth, Ritual and Religion*, I, 3–5, 283; II, 147, 185, 186, 229, 238, 249, 280, 287, 365, 366.

[10] A.R. Radcliffe-Brown, *Structure and Function in Primitive Society. Essays and Addresses* (London, 1952¹/1971⁷), 154–155.

[11] J. Goody, "Religion and Ritual. The Definitional Problem", *The British Journal of Sociology* 12 (1961), 142–164, here 147.

[12] The counts include not only how often the nouns (e.g. adoration, adorer) and the verb (e.g. to adore) have been used but also the use of the adjective (adorable), and other forms of a term. How important a term is, becomes apparent, moreover, not only from the frequency with which it is used, but may also be measured

English term 'worship' (in Tiele 1986), he employed 213 times, and *eerdienst*, (divine 'service' or worship), which he used 64 times. A fourth term was *cultus*, which he equated with *eerdienst* and employed 12 times.[13] The central term for Chantepie was *cultus*, which he used 283 times,[14] in addition to 'cults', in the meaning of organized groups of believers who perform a distinctive *cultus*, which he employed 25 times. His second main term was *vereeren* (to worship) and *eeredienst* (worship), which he used 162 times. His supplementary terms were 'ceremony' and 'ceremonial', which he employed 29 times, and 'adoration', which he used 14 times.[15] Kuenen employed all four terms: 'worship', 61 times; 'adoration', 24 times; *vereeren* (to worship) with 'to honour' and 'to reverence', 22 times; 'ceremonies' and 'ceremonial', six times; and *cultus* and 'cult', five times.[16]

Ritus, 'rite', appeared, in its Latin form, for the first time in 1871, when Chantepie asserted that it is "quite hazardous" for archaeologists to infer "from the position of a skeleton the existence of a *doodenritus*" (rite for the dead, burial rite) in Paleolithic times.[17] Tiele

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by how often a term is employed in set composite terms, e.g. nature-worship, sun-worship, etc. I do not, however, present data on this semantic phenomenon in this article.

[13] All four terms are actually best rendered in English as 'worship', for as Protestants Tiele and the other authors discussed disregarded the sharp Roman Catholic distinction between adoration as due to God only, and veneration as proper for Mary and the saints. The authors examined used all these terms indiscriminately for any object of worship. Cf. e.g. Tiele, "Iets over de vóór-christelijke godsdiensten", 119, 127; Tiele, "Theologie en godsdienstwetenschap", 237, 238; Tiele, "Een proeve", 164, 167; Tiele, "De oorsprong", 14, 22; Tiele, "Een probleem", 99, 103, 105, 122, 123; Tiele, "De oorsprong", 384, 394, 406; Tiele, "Het wezen", 378, 390, 395, 396, 402; Tiele, *De Plaats*; 14, 43; Tiele, "De godsdienst", 238, 240, 241; Tiele, "Over de wetten", 262; etc.

[14] I have counted *cultus* and other terms in both Chantepie, *Methodologische bijdrage* (in Dutch) and Chantepie, *Lehrbuch der Religionsgeschichte*, volume I (in German), which I treat here as one body of texts. So, here and below, I refer to the terms as he actually used them, whether in Latin (e.g. *cultus*), in Dutch (e.g. *eeredienst*), or in German (e.g. *ceremoniel*).

[15] Chantepie used it 3 times in the (Roman Catholic) meaning of 'adoration due to God only', but the other 11 times to denote the 'adoration' of gods and such diverse objects as fire, soma, the relics of the Buddha, etc. Cf. Chantepie, *Lehrbuch der Religionsgeschichte*, I, 60, 67, 70, 73, 76, 85, 86, 87, 91–92, 107, 109, 118.

[16] Cf. e.g. Kuenen, "De godsdienst, de wetenschap en het leven", 625, 628, 630, 631, 642, 643, 644; Kuenen, *National and Universal Religions*, 11, 25, 26, 32, 33, 41–45, 151,

[17] Chantepie, *Methodologische bijdrage*, 21. Chantepie, *Lehrbuch der Religionsgeschichte* (I, 20), however, refers to traces of *Todtenopfer* ('sacrifices for the dead') and *Todtenmahlzeiten* ('meals for the dead') in Paleolithic graves and seems to imply that these burial customs signify belief in life after death.

used *ritus* for the first time in 1873, in a review of a book discussing what the discovery of fire may have meant for Paleolithic religion. He agreed that it probably caused "a big reformation", but cautioned that further study would also show that "not a little of the mythological matter and the *ritus* belonged to an earlier period", when man worshipped (*vereerde*) not only humans but also "trees and animals, sun, moon, and stars". From this passage, it is clear that Tiele used *ritus* in a quite broad sense and as synonymous with *aanbidding, eerdienst*, and *vereering*, in brief as a synonym of worship. In the same year, he also employed it in Dutch as *riten* (rites), which he equated with 'religious actions' (*godsdienstige handelingen*) and used as a synonym of *godsdienstplechtigheden* (religious solemnities). Here again he used the term in quite a general and imprecise sense. The same broad meaning is apparent when he speaks of Vedic, Brahmanic, Parsi, and Mosaic 'rites', in the meaning of the entire *cultus* or worship of these religions. Before 1886, he used *ritus* and *rite(n)* only seven times, but the two terms appear 18 times in his contribution to the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, all again in an imprecise sense.[18] Chantepie used 'rite' 34 times, a few times in a narrow sense, but mostly in an unspecified sense. But he also mentioned twice that "the gods" or a "ritualist [. . .] piety" might require "the strict observance of the *ritus*", thereby intimating a feature that he and others specifically associated with *ritus*, rites (and ritual).[19] Kuenen employed 'rites' only once, in the translation of the prayer in which the Koran (Sura 2: 122) has Abraham ask Allah to "teach us our holy rites".[20]

Tiele, Chantepie, and Kuenen employed 'ritual', and the pejorative term 'ritualistic', only after 1880, and even more sparingly than *ritus* and 'rites'. Tiele used ritual only five times, and only in a wide, general sense, when he wrote that religions may be divided into 'dogma and ritual', 'belief and ritual [. . .] institutions', 'mythology and ritual', and that the magic and sorcery of ancient Egypt may be labeled 'traditional ritual', and that some religions may be said to be dogmatic, others ritualistic.[21] Chantepie employed 'ritual' 11

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[18] Tiele, "De godsdienst", 250; Tiele, "Een mislukte poging", 394–395; Tiele, "Over de wetten", 230–231, 237; Tiele, "Religion", 358, 359, 361, 362, 364, 365, 366, 369, 370.

[19] Chantepie, *Lehrbuch der Religionsgeschichte*, I, 19, 50, 51, 58, 61, 62, 66, 69, 82, 96, 110–116, 121, 127, 134, 138, 142, 167, 168.

[20] Kuenen, *National and Universal Religions*, 12.

[21] Tiele, "Religion", 358, 365, 368.

times, only one of which carried the restricted meaning of *Opferritual* (sacrificial ritual). The other times he used it in an unspecified sense, except that he pointed time and again to its special qualities of being ordered and requiring painstaking observance. For instance, "with the civilized peoples of the ancient world sacrifices formed the main part of an ordered *cultus*, a ritual. [. . .] The diligent and conscientious observation of the ritual was a condition for the unperturbed relation with the gods". Therefore, "the particulars for the choice of the gifts [. . .] for the gods [were] often laid down with painstaking precision in ritual prescriptions", for rituals demanded "strict observance". He noted that some ceremonies were "rites regulated in smallest detail by a complicated ritual", laid down in ritual books, tracts, texts, and scriptures. The latter were sometimes a "kind of handbook", presenting "prescriptions for the *cultus*", and explanations "where the *cultus* was somewhat complex". Chantepie, too, used 'ritual' to refer to shamanism as *Zauber- und Ritualwesen* (sorcery and ritual of some sort), and asserted that "in ancient religions human sacrifice was no longer part of the ritual". He used it in the same general sense when he spoke of 'ritual purity', of ethics being emphasized at the expense of ritual in some religions, of the coincidence of the ritual and civil year in some societies, and of feasts being characterized by an accumulation of ritual ceremonies. He implied the same imprecise sense when he asserted that "magic and ritualistic views" are alien to some modern religious persuasions, and that "ritualistic and nomistic piety requires merely the strict observation of the *ritus* or the ceremonial law, and leads to the casuistry that corrupts morality so completely".[22] Kuenen used 'ritual' and 'ritualistic' eight times. He employed it twice to refer to it as *cultus* subject to 'detailed regulations', and spoke of the 'ritualistic code' with its "minute precepts about the sanctuary [at Jerusalem], the priests and their vestments, the sacrifices and ceremonial cleanness". But like Tiele, he employed it usually in the general meaning of 'worship'.[23]

The late and relatively rare usages of the terms 'rite', 'ritual', and 'ritualistic' by Tiele, Chantepie, and Kuenen demonstrate that

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[22] Cf. Chantepie, *Lehrbuch der Religionsgeschichte*, I, 53, 82, 103, 104, 112, 113, 119, 123, 129, 137, 138, 140, 168.

[23] Cf. Kuenen, *National and Universal Religions*, 80, 160, 163n3, 166, 172, 179, 183, 220.

Chantepie and Kuenen used these terms a few times: first, in the classical sense of religious behavior of which the orderly flow (*ritus*) was regulated by rules, and secondly, a few times also in the Roman Catholic seventeenth century sense of a *rituale*, a book containing the ritual rules, explanations, and texts.[24] But they used them more often in the broad, imprecise sense of the other current terms of 'worship', 'ceremony', *cultus*, and 'adoration'. They thereby dissociated 'rite' and 'ritual' from the classical meaning of *ritus* as the well regulated flow of religious actions and established their current, prototypical, vague meaning by which we now grasp them intuitively as synonyms of, and additions to, the Christian cluster of terms of adoration, (religious) ceremony, *cultus, eerdienst, vereering*, and worship, and with as general a meaning as those terms have always had.

British Semantics, 1871–1889

As is to be expected from authors writing in English between 1870 and 1890, the normal term for denoting religious acts was 'worship'. Tylor used worship 507 times.[25] Other main terms were 'ceremony' and 'ceremonial', which he employed 160 times, including the pejorative term 'ceremonialism'. Supplementary terms were 'adoration', which he used 47 times; 'veneration', 28 times; *cultus*, 12 times; and 'celebration', eight times. Andrew Lang used 'worship' 249 times. Another important term for him was 'mysteries', which he employed 118 times. Supplementary terms were 'adoration', which he used 55 times; 'ceremony' and 'ceremonialism', 43 times; and 'cult', 29 times.[26] Robertson Smith's main focus was on sacrifice. He employed that term 844 times. But he used 'worship' 518 times. Supplementary terms were 'feasts', which he used 128 times; 'ceremonies' and 'ceremonial', 105 times; 'communion', 95 times; 'cult(s)', 38 times; 'service', 38 times; 'adoration' and 'to adore', 11 times; and *cultus*, six times.[27]

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[24] Chantepie, *Lehrbuch der Religionsgeschichte*, 103, 138; Kuenen, *National and Universal Religions*, 179.

[25] And in 26 set combinations; cf. e.g. Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, I, 143, 476; II, 35, 118–120, 184, 216–218, 221, 224–226, 229, 231, 237–239, 242, etc.

[26] E.g. Lang, *Myth, Ritual and Religion*, I, 34, 73, 76, 74, 192, 200, 216–219, 261, 272–278, 312–317, 334; II, 1–5, 41–45, 128, 218, 229, 231, 233n2, 234, 235 (3x), 240, 248, 281.

[27] E.g. Robertson Smith, *Lectures on the Religion of the Semites*, 3, 4, 17, 22–24, 27,

Tylor used 'rite(s)' 212 times. He employed it both as referring to some particular rite, (and once as being 'prescribed'), and in a wide, general meaning as a synonym of 'ceremony', 'veneration', and 'worship'.[28] 'Ritual' and 'ritualistic', however, appear only rarely, and mainly towards the end of volume II of *Primitive Culture*, but not at all in the parts of *Anthropology* that I examined. Tylor used the pejorative 'ritualistic' only once. 'Ritual' appears only once in volume I of *Primitive Culture*, and 15 times in volume II. He used 'ritual' twice in the 'Catholic' meaning of *(liber) rituale*, the book of rules and prescribed texts by which the worship of a particular Christian church is regulated. He also used 'ritual' both in restricted and general senses, and noted that some rituals were 'complex', 'elaborate', 'systematic', or 'dark'.[29]

Lang and Robertson Smith, however, used both 'rite' and 'ritual' frequently. But whereas Lang employed 'rites' 137 times, and 'ritual' 123 times, in *Myth, Ritual and Religion*,[30] that order was inverted by Robertson Smith. He used 'rites' 124 times, and 'ritual' 275 times in *The Religion of the Semites*. It would seem, therefore, that 'ritual' began its victorious march forward in these two books. It did so by changing progressively from an adjective into a noun and by gradually shedding, as a noun, its former particular meaning of *rituale* as a book of rules for worship in exchange for its modern vague and general meaning of synonym of 'worship'. That enabled it to begin to replace the traditional Christian cluster of terms for 'worship'. From these two books onwards, however, 'ritual' not only gradually eliminated the traditional Christian terms for 'religion in action' but also began to swallow up its parent, 'rite'. The beginning of this important semantic change can be discerned in how Lang and Robertson Smith used the terms 'rite' and 'ritual'.

Lang virtually always employed 'rite(s)' as referring to specific religious actions. He also remarked twice unfavorably on them as "endless minute ritual actions" and as "minute and elaborate". Yet he

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35, 36, 38, 48, 56, 57,60, 76, 79, 80, 81, 96, 101, 111, 134, 147, 157, 165, 177, 185n 188, 190, 195, 209. 210.

[28] Cf. Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, I, 8, 23, 70, 84–85, 116, 461; II, 19, 118, 142, 164, 179,213, 196, 284, 285, 288, 363–442, 370, 373, 376, 409, 428, 424, 425, 428, 429, 439, 440, 441.

[29] Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, I, 116; II, 19, 118, 142, 196, 283, 288, 370, 373, 376, 409, 424, 425, 428, 439, 440, 441.

[30] The first book, to my knowledge, to have 'ritual' in its title.

also used 'rites' often as a vague, general plural, such as in 'classical rites', 'superstitious rites', 'savage rites', 'wild and cruel rites', 'religious rites', 'magical rites', 'rites and myths', 'rites and ceremonies', 'the rites of the Khoin', or Egypt, or Dionysus. He also used 'rites' as a synonym not only of 'mysteries', 'ceremonies', and 'rituals' but also of 'worship', 'cult', 'adoration', and 'ritual'. So, despite Lang's awareness that the term 'rite' referred to specific religious actions, there is also quite a marked tendency towards a generalist, unspecified usage of the term by the use of this 'unspecified plural'.[31] That tendency is even more pronounced in his use of 'ritual', 'ritualistic' and 'ritualism'. Lang used 'ritual' some 40 times in specific meanings, such as that of a book of [ritual] 'laws', or *rituale*, ruling the performance of worship, cult or mystery; or as referring to single rituals; or to rituals specified by the name of a particular god; or by some other quality. But he used it more than 60 times in the broad, generalized sense of the stylized behavior people demonstrate in 'worship',[32] and employed it as an addition to, and a synonym of, the cluster of standard Christian terms for mythical, magical, superstitious, religious, and other kinds of 'worship'.[33]

Robertson Smith used 'rite' some 80 times to refer to specific religious actions, and some 16 times in an unspecified sense. More important, however, 'rite(s)' served Robertson Smith as a synonym of, and supplementary term for, ceremony, (religious) ritual(s), ritual practice(s), 'ritual and practice', worship(s), 'sacred acts', religious institutions, 'ordinances of religion', 'prescribed forms of *cultus*', 'practices of religion', superstitions, 'ritual acts', 'service', 'homage', cult(s),

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[31] E.g. Lang, *Myth, Ritual and Religion*, I, XLII, 31, 75, 112, 138, 145, 251–252, 257, 260, 270–271, 274–277, 333; II, 23, 26, 43, 63, 97, 103, 121, 138, 147, 185, 227, 229, 236, 237, 249, 251–252, 261, 272–274, 281, 283, 284, 287–289, 298, 365.

[32] Cf. e.g. Lang, *Myth, Ritual and Religion*, I, 13, 31, 126, 136, 192, 216, 217, 219, 224, 248, 251, 252, 254, 256, 266, 278, 307, 317; II, 4, 14, 32, 61, 62, 64, 67, 68, 87–89, 97, 97n1, 101, 104, 109, 110, 117, 118, 129, 131, 143, 147, 148, 185, 190, 205, 210, 211, 215, 218, 229, 231, 236, 249, 250–254, 256, 262, 271–276, 278, 283, 287, 292, 298–299, 355, 363, 365.

[33] Lang did not usually link 'ritual' in its generalized meaning to (religious) worship, because he constructed a dichotomy between myth as foolish fancy and (true) religion as reverent belief in a Maker, Master, and Father. He connected the many instances of sanguinary, savage, horrid ritual with myth, magic, superstition, legend, abomination, etc., rather than with religion (Lang, *Myth, Ritual and Religion*, I, 3–5; II, 186).

etc.[34] And 'rite' was patently a term of decreasing importance. Unlike Lang, Robertson Smith used 'ritual' much more often in a specific sense than in a broad, generalized one. Apart from employing 'ritual' some 20 times as an adjective, he used 'ritual(s)' some 110 times in the sense of some specific religious act or activity. In addition, he employed it some 27 times to refer to peculiar larger conglomerations, or traditions, of religious activity, such as Semitic, Arabian, or Hebrew ritual, and six times to indicate sets of rules, or 'ordinances', that govern religious actions. As for his unspecified use of 'ritual', he employed the term some 50 times in an abstract manner, 26 times to refer in a general way to 'rituals', 'ritual practice(s)', 'ritual observance(s)', 'ritual traditions', c.q. 'traditional ritual', 'ritual formations', 'ritual institutions', and 'ritual systems', and a few times to refer to ritual as 'fixed and obligatory', 'established', 'restricted', or 'ordinary'.[35] Lastly, Robertson Smith presented three times a brief analysis of 'acts of ancient worship' that come close to a definition of 'ritual'. In these passages, he emphasized that 'ritual' in the (primitive) past had to have a material embodiment, and had to be rule-governed.[36]

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[34] Robertson Smith, *Lectures on the Religion of the Semites*, 16–19, 22–24, 55, 80, 84, 90,138, 186–187, 191–192, 198, 201–203, 213–214, 221n3, 231, 232, 239, 240, 258, 263–264, 282, 291, 294, 314, 315, 317, 320–324, 327, 364–365, 348–349, 357–362, 364–366, 371, 373, 374, 394–395, 398–400, 404, 405, 409–411, 415, 416, 422, 424–426, 431, 438, 439.

[35] Robertson Smith, *Lectures on the Religion of the Semites*, VI, IX, 2, 3, 4, 16–18, 18–22, 24, 25, 26, 28, 38, 44, 46, 47, 53, 86–87, 107, 108, 114, 116, 117, 119, 138, 151, 161, 165, 167–169, 172, 175–177, 180, 182, 184, 191–192, 195, 199, 200–203, 205, 212, 214, 215, 218, 219n2, 222, 223n3, 224, 230,-233, 236, 239, 240, 246, 248, 251, 252, 254, 256, 263, 275, 285, 288, 293, 295, 304, 308, 312, 320, 321, 325, 328, 331, 335, 340n1, 338–346, 348–351, 353, 356, 357, 361–365, 367, 368, 371, 373, 377–379, 382, 384–390, 393–395, 397–401, 403–404, 406, 408–411, 412, 414, 416n6, 418, 425, 423, 431, 435, 439, 440.

[36] Robertson Smith, *Lectures on the Religion of the Semites*, 85: "All acts of ancient worship have a material embodiment, which is not left to the choice of the worshipper, but is limited by fixed rules. They must be performed at certain places and at certain times, with the aid of certain material appliances and according to certain mechanical forms. These rules import that the intercourse between the deity and his worshippers is subject to physical conditions of a definite kind, and this again implies that the relations between gods and men are not independent of the material environment. [. . . Therefore], the gods too are in some sense conceived as part of the natural universe, and [. . .] men can hold converse with them only by aid of certain material things". Cf. also 213, 439–440.

Why

The Liabilities of Ceremonial

Having show when and how 'ritual' emerged as a term for denoting 'religion in action', it remains to show why it began not only to complement but also to supplant the traditional Christian cluster of terms. The evidence presented shows that by 1890 'ritual' had emerged as a quite flexible term. It served, on the one hand, as an equivalent of, and synonym and substitute for, other terms denoting specific religious actions, such as 'ceremonies', 'cults', 'customs', 'feasts/ festivities/festivals', 'mysteries', '(religious or ritual) observances', 'practices', 'rites', and 'worships'; and on the other hand, it denoted with equal ease unspecified religious activity. So it could also be employed both as a synonym and equivalent of other general terms, such as 'adoration', 'ceremonial', 'communion', *cultus*, 'homage', 'religious practice', 'religious service', 'veneration', and 'worship', and begin to replace them. This versatility provided 'ritual' with the potentiality for substituting them all, the specific as well as the general traditional terms derived from the Christian tradition.

That 'ritual' would do so was, however, not yet obvious by 1890, for it was not the only rising star in this semantic field. From its Latin origin as an adjective of *ritus* (rite), 'ritual' had developed in the seventeenth century, to *rituale* as a book of rules and prescribed texts for ordering religious action, after the *Rituale Romanum* of 1614 by means of which Roman Catholic liturgy had been made uniform; and after 1850 also to a noun for designating religious action itself in both specific and unspecified senses. The body of the texts by Tiele, Chantepie, Kuenen, Tylor, Lang, and Robertson Smith examined shows that 'ceremony' and 'ceremonial' had also set out on a similar trajectory. Apart from the fact that 'ceremony' was part of the traditional Western-Christian cluster of terms for denoting religious action and was therefore regularly used by all these authors— with the exception of Tiele—as a synonym of 'rite' for denoting particular religious actions,[37] 'ceremonial' was increasingly employed

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[37] Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, used 'ceremonial' 97 times; Kuenen, *National and Universal Religions*, employed it three times; Lang, *Myth, Ritual and Religion*, 37 times; Chantepie, *Lehrbuch der Religionsgeschichte*, 25 times; and Robertson Smith, *Lectures on the Religion*

by them not merely as an adjective[38] but also as a noun in mean-
ings that were synonymous with *cultus*, 'ritual', 'worship', and simi-
lar terms, and in both specific and general senses. Tylor used
'ceremonial' three times, and only in a specific sense. Lang employed
it twice in a specific, and once in an unspecified sense. And Robertson
Smith used it six times to refer to a specific religious action, twice
in an unspecified sense, and once in the prescriptive sense, to refer
to a set of rules for purification, analogous to that of *rituale* as a set
of prescriptions for religious action. Chantepie, too, used the adjec-
tive 'ceremonial' (*ceremoniel*) six times in a sense analogous to *rituale*,
that is, meaning the 'ceremonial law' that contained the rules for
the purity required for engaging in religious action(s).[39] So, between
1871 and 1889, the triad 'ceremony', 'ceremonial' (as an adjective),
and 'ceremonial' (as a noun) was developing semantic functions quite
similar to those that the other triad, 'rite(s), 'ritual' as an adjective,
and 'ritual' as a noun, had been acquiring for denoting specific and
unspecified religious action, as well as the collections of rules for
them.

The supremacy of the 'ritual' triad was ensured, however, by two
liabilities under which the 'ceremonial' triad labored. One was that
it belonged to the traditional cluster and so was less fit than 'rite'
and 'ritual' to serve for denoting not only religious but also so-called
'magical' and 'superstitious' action in all human societies and his-
tory. Another was that 'ceremonial', in the sense of a set of rules,
developed a particularly intimate association with purity as a pre-
requisite for religious action in early scholarship on religious actions,
whereas 'ritual' always referred to religious (and 'magical') action.
Finally, 'ritual' gained superiority also because it proved to serve

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of the Semites, 86 times. Cf. also n. 63 below and the paragraph (pp. 191–194) on
S.G. MacCormack, *Art and Ceremony in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley, 1982), for the con-
tinuation of this tradition in modern Western scholarship in the study of the his-
tory of the ceremonies of both the 'pagan' and Christian Roman empire.

[38] Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, I, 96; II, 128, 196, 210, 297, 364, 380, 386, 387, 394,
396, 397, 403, 404, 429–431, 433–435, 437, 438, 440, 441; Kuenen, *National and
Universal Religions*, 179, 203, 207; Chantepie, *Lehrbuch der Religionsgeschichte*, 138, 139,
140, 168; Lang, *Myth, Ritual and Religion*, I, 221; Robertson Smith, *Lectures on the
Religion of the Semites*, 158, 161, 179, 239, 301, 333, 401, 426.

[39] Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, II, 35, 224, 437; Lang, *Myth, Ritual and Religion*, I, 209,
335; II, 254; Robertson Smith, *Lectures on the Religion of the Semites*, 305, 339, 342,
367, 399, 403, 404, 427; Chantepie, *Lehrbuch der Religionsgeschichte*, 137–138, 139,
140, 168.

scholars of religious actions better in theory development, and in the comparison of the savory in the religions of humankind with the unsavory.

As for theory development, Tylor argued that "as prayer is a request made to the deity as if he were a man, so sacrifice is a gift made to the deity as if he were a man", thereby not only establishing the theory of "the anthropomorphic model and origin" of religion and ritual but also proposing and developing the gift-theory of (primitive) sacrifice.[40] Robertson Smith likewise accepted that in ancient Semitic religion "the god and his own proper worshippers make up a single community, and that the place of the god in the community is interpreted on the analogy of human relationship". But he argued against Tylor's gift-theory of (primitive) sacrificial ritual, and in favor of his own analysis that originally sacrificial rituals were not only acts of communication with the gods but also of (sacramental) communion with them and with all other members of a 'tribe', and so served to create and maintain the community of believers with their god(s) and with one another.[41]

'Rite' and 'ritual' probably served better than 'ceremony', 'ceremonial', and the other traditional terms for the purpose of comparing religious, and so called 'magical' and other 'superstitious' activity across the whole depth and width of the history of the religions of humankind for these and later scholars of religions for two more reasons. The lesser one is that they may have regarded 'rite' and 'ritual' as better instruments for the production of an all-embracing 'objective' knowledge of human religious action, because they were felt to provide a wider and more neutral coverage of it by their easy inclusion of non-Christian religious actions, and their being free—unlike traditional Christian terms such as 'adoration', 'veneration', and 'worship'—of typically Christian associations and theological interpretations. This quest for total coverage, neutrality, and objectivity certainly was an inspiration,[42] be it an explicitly polemical

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[40] Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, II, 247–248, 364, 375–399.
[41] Robertson Smith, *Lectures on the Religion of the Semites*, 84, 111, 240, 243–245, 265, 267, 269–272, 312–387, 388–398, 400, 401.
[42] Cf., e.g., Tylor's plea that "the true historian [. . .] shall be able to look dispassionately on myth as a natural and regular product of the human mind" (Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, II, 447; also 452); cf. also Tiele, "Theologie en godsdienstwetenschap", 237–240; Tiele, "Godsdienstwetenschap en theologie", 41, 44–48; Tiele, *De*

and reformatory one of opposing orthodox Christian "theological bias, which caused all religions to be regarded as utterly false", and the "philosophical bias which caused all religions [. . .] to be decried as mere superstitions".[43]

Yet the quest for all-encompassing breadth, neutrality, and objectivity seems not to have been the decisive factor for why 'rite' and 'ritual' gradually emerged as the focal terms in the comparative study of religious action, since the six scholars examined freely used the traditional Christian *emic* terms for *etic* comparative purposes. And they did so eagerly for strategic reasons, because applying traditional terms to other religions was a slow but sure way of gradually divesting them of their specifically Christian connotations, and of fostering the relativist views about Christianity dear to liberal theologians and positivist scholars of religions. The second and decisive factor was a legacy from the past that they all shared: pagano-papism.

The Pagano-papist Legacy

The main reason why 'rite' and 'ritual' gradually began to replace the traditional Christian cluster in the publications of these late nineteenth-century scholars of religions is that they served them in a special way. 'Rite' and 'ritual' served the reformatory strategies of these scholars equally well, as did the traditional terms, whether they battled orthodox Christian theology as liberal theologians or, as secular scholars, confidently expected all 'superstition' to evaporate before the light of natural science.[44] But in addition, 'rite' and 'ritual' articulated their own deep-seated biases, ambivalences, and feelings of downright contempt, disgust, and despair in facing the 'monstrosities', 'stupidities', 'irrationality', and 'superstitions' with which the history of human societies, cultures, and religions confronted them in

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Plaats, 30–34; Tiele, "Over de geschiedenis", 577–580, 582–583; Robertson Smith, *Lectures on the Religion of the Semites*, 22–23.

[43] Tiele, "Religion", 358; also Tiele, "Theologie en godsdienstwetenschap", 224–244; Tiele, "Godsdienstwetenschap en theologie", 42–43, 52; Tiele, "De oorsprong", 26–27; Tiele, "Het wezen", 374–376, 380, 390–392, 399–491, 403–406; Tiele, "Over de geschiedenis", 580–582. Cf. also Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, II, 449–453; Lang, *Myth, Ritual and Religion*, II, 344–366, Chantepie, *Lehrbuch der Religionsgeschichte*, I, 7–11, 22, 24; Kuenen, *National and Universal Religions*, 292–298; Robertson Smith, *Lectures on the Religion of the Semites*, 424–425, 439–440.

[44] Cf. Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, II, 183, 450.

such abundance, not only in 'savage' and 'barbaric' societies but also in their own, 'civilized' ones.[45] Moreover, detailing them, and 'explaining' them by the theory of survivals, or by Robertson Smith's theory that ancient ritual systems suffered from the congenital defect of being materialist and could therefore never embody spiritual truths,[46] suited their reformatory passion very well, as did other views of the cultural evolution of humankind then current.[47] They all felt a need to confront their contemporaries with descriptions and analyses of those cruel or foolish superstitions, for they must be converted to 'enlightened' Protestantism, or to the 'scientific' understanding of humanity's cultural progress. The long tradition of virulent Protestant pagano-papism in the cultural backgrounds of these Dutch Calvinist, English Dissenter, and Scottish Presbyterian scholars of religions—whether they were liberal Protestants or secular adherents of a positive natural philosophy that had "simply deposed and banished

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[45] It is most outspoken in Lang (*Myth, Ritual and Religion*, I, 4, 6–8, 11–13, 52–53, 97, 112, 219, 251, 255, 257, 260, 275, 278, 301; II, 62, 97, 103, 147, 229, 236, 237, 249–250, 259, 260, 399–400); but also strong in Tylor (*Primitive Culture*, I, 13, 94–96, 97, 102, 106, 108, 128, 142, 437, 458, 459, 461, 464–467, 474, 486, 490; II, 7, 91, 229, 271, 307, 363, 370, 371–372 [the rosary as 'devotional calculation machine'], 379, 389, 400, 403, 405–410, 415, 420–421 [demonic possession in modern England as a revival of 'the religion of mental disease'], 425, 428 ["the revived mediaevalism of our day"], 438, 441, 443–444, 449, 450, 453). Cf. also Tiele, "De oorsprong", 22–23; Tiele, "Een probleem", 100–101, 111, 117; Tiele, "Het wezen", 384–385, 387, 393–394, 402, 404; Tiele, *De Plaats*, 6, 10, 15–20, 22, 25–26; Tiele, "De godsdienst", 244–250; Tiele, "Over de geschiedenis", 576–577; Tiele, "Over de wetten", 235, 237, 244–245, 250–251, 254–256; Tiele, "Religion", 362, 364, 367, 368, 370; Chantepie, *Methodologische bijdrage*, 43, 71–72; Chantepie, *Lehrbuch der Religionsgeschichte*, I, 42–44, 53–60, 81–82, 93–100, 104–107, 110–111, 124–125; Kuenen, *National and Universal Religions*, 32–33, 36–45, 76, 100–101, 121–122, 154, 229, 293; Robertson Smith, *Lectures on the Religion of the Semites*, esp. 415; also 55, 56, 58–59, 87–90, 119–139, 152–154, 159n1, 231–232, 261–262, 264, 282, 313, 321–325, 338–339, 357–359, 362–379, 395, 402–404, 409–410, 418–419, 422, 428.

[46] Robertson Smith, *Lectures on the Religion of the Semites*, 439–440; Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, 23–25; II, 355–363, 421, 442.

[47] Cf. e.g. Tiele (Tiele, "Een probleem", 100–115; Tiele, *De Plaats*, 7–20; Tiele, "Een mislukte poging", 580–582; Tiele, "Over den aanvang", 183–189) on his rejection of theories of degeneration by which e.g. Max Müller and Chantepie (Chantepie, *Methodologische bijdrage*, 26, 32–34, 37, 41–43, 51–76, 102, 109; Chantepie, *Lehrbuch der Religionsgeschichte*, 21–34) explained the unpalatable facts of religious history, whereas Tylor criticised Lang's theory that "comparatively pure, if inarticulate religious belief" in a moral Maker and Master came first—"even among the savages"—and "fanciful legend was attached later" (Lang, *Myth, Ritual and Religion*, I, XV–XVII, 4–5, 310–328, 330).

[religious authority] without a rival even in name"[48]—was clearly still in full swing in their perceptions and publications. They connected 'rite' and 'ritual' intimately not only with the quaint rites of sneezing but also with the savage rituals of human sacrifice and cannibalism, foundation sacrifices, head-hunting and widow-burning, as well as the 'dark, cruel madness' of the 'doctrine of witchcraft', the 'morbid knavery' of 'maniacal' demon-possession, 'foolish' popish superstitions, and the long tradition of 'oppression' of intellectual freedom and scientific progress by the Roman Catholic Church, which found its proof and apogee for Tylor in 1870 in the proclamation of the dogma of papal infallibility.[49]

'Rite' and 'ritual' therefore proved most suited for voicing and cultivating pagano-papist sentiments,[50] and for passionately advocating these views as 'objective', 'scientific', and 'rational'. Tylor and Tiele were certain that their theories were, or would soon be, validated by the 'laws of nature' (*natuurwetten*) that they had established, or would soon establish, by their research into human progress from primitive stupidity to modern enlightenment.[51] And they were equally sure that their books must be used "as a source of power to influence

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[48] Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, II, 450.

[49] Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, I, 97–104, 104–108, 138–141, 458–467; II, 124–142, 409–410, 415, 441–442, 449–453, esp. 450 ("the Roman scheme, [...] a system so hateful to the man of science for its suppression of knowledge, and for that usurpation of intellectual authority by a sacerdotal caste which has at last reached its climax, now that an aged bishop can judge, by infallible inspiration, the result of researches whose evidence and methods are alike beyond his knowledge and mental grasp"); Tylor, *Anthropology*, 90–91, 94, 97, 109. Cf. also Tiele, "Iets over de vóór-christelijke godsdiensten", 116–118, 125; Tiele, "Theologie en godsdienst-wetenschap", 212n1; Tiele, "Een probleem", 100; Tiele, "Het wezen", 377, 385, 387–388, 395–396, 405–406; Tiele, "Over de geschiedenis", 585; Tiele, "Over de wetten", 240–246 (242–243, "In order to maintain its own religious system, Rome has totally condemned modern civilizsation [in 1870 in the first Vatican Council]. Absolutely correct! For in that civilization lies the germ of a development in religion that spells disaster for all obsolete religion, the Roman Catholic one in the first place"; 244, "when the Pope has himself proclaimed infallible and at the same time damns all our freedoms, all the fruits of modern development as from the Evil One, then he demonstrates that he correctly understands the conditions under which only he can maintain his authority"), 248.

[50] For similar analyses, cf. Janowitz (2004, 23, 28) on "the distorting lens of Protestant-based theories of ritual"; S.J. Tambiah, *Magic, Science, Religion, and the Scope of Rationality. The Lewis Henry Morgan Lectures 1984* (Cambridge, 1990), 18–23, 31, 50, 53 (but note Janowitz's important critique of Tambiah).

[51] Cf. Tiele ("Over de wetten", 238–262) for the six *vaste wetten* (firm laws) of the development of religion. Cf. also Kuenen (*National and Universal Religions*, 7–8) on the 'lofty task' of scholars of ordering religions in 'higher' and 'lower'.

the course of modern ideas and actions" and show, and expose, "what is but time-honoured superstition in the garb of modern knowledge". For, said Tylor, "the science of culture is essentially a reformer's science" with the harsh and painful office "to expose the remains of crude old culture which have passed into harmful superstition, and to mark these out for destruction".[52]

This evolutionary paradigm and commitment prevented them from perceiving the conflict between their reformatory strategies and their quest for, and claims of, scholarly neutrality, objectivity and rationality. But they provided 'rite' and 'ritual' with a great leap forward towards a monopoly in the semantic cluster of terms by which scholars of religions denote religious action. 'Rite' and 'ritual' became focal terms for scholars, such as Frazer, Harrison, and other members of the Cambridge 'Myth and Ritual' school, who had taken leave of religious worship, were anti-ritualist, and so could, and did, take not only an external and detached but also unsympathetic, polemical position towards any religiously inspired behavior.[53]

A Bird's Eye View, 1890–2000

Due to lack of space here, I can only summarily indicate the developments after 1890. Detailed research into the semantic developments

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[52] Cf. Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, I, 3 sq.; II, 355–363, 443, 445, 450–453.

[53] "But worship as such, as homage to God, will be replaced by doing his will [. . .], by dedicating ourselves to Him, by a life of holy love, [. . .] by 'adoration in spirit and truth'" (Tiele, "Het wezen", 405–406; also Tiele, "Religion", 369). For Lang (*Myth, Ritual and Religion*, I, 312, 315–317, 328) myth and most ritual were products of degeneration. He emphasised that the moral Maker and Master of the 'low savages' was not worshipped, whereas "ritual and myth [. . .] retained vast masses of savage rites and superstitious habits and customs" (I, 251). For Robertson Smith (*Lectures on the Religion of the Semites*, 16–18, 439–440), ritual was crucial for early, materialist religion, but not for the religion of 'spiritual truth'. For Tylor's anti-ritualism, cf. Tylor (*Primitive Culture*, II, 371) on civilisation arranging worship into formalist, mechanical routine. Only Chantepie (*Lehrbuch der Religionsgeschichte*, I, 132, 136) regarded worship as more essential to religion than doctrine, and as the foundation of any religious, and even the Christian community, provided the latter also became a 'community of faith'. On Frazer's insidious anti-religious, anti-ritualist drive, cf. R. Ackerman, *J.G. Frazer: His Life and Work* (Cambridge, 1987[1], 1990[4]), 1, 10, 66, 70–74, 83, 95–96, *passim*. On Harrison and the Cambridge and other Myth and Ritual schools, cf. Bell 1997, 5–8. On the long history of Christian anti-ritualism in Manichean dualism, Puritanism, Jansenism, etc., cf. Bocock 1974, 38; Tambiah, *Magic, Science, Religion, and the Scope of Rationality*, 6–8, 16–24.

in the terminology of late nineteenth- and twentieth-century scholarship on 'ritual' is in order. It will certainly greatly nuance and modify, and perhaps disprove, my outline below and present assumptions.

'From inclusivism to exclusivism, and back' is an appropriate caption for this period. It certainly is anachronistic to term the vocabularies discussed so far 'inclusive', for scholars had not as yet become aware analytically of the 'exclusive'-'inclusive' distinction, because these concepts had yet to emerge. The earliest vocabularies may therefore be termed 'inclusive' only in retrospect, from our point of view, for two reasons. One is that clearly no separation had yet occurred between terms deemed exclusively fit for designating religious action, and other terms for indicating stylized secular social interaction. Ceremony and ceremonial, feasts, festivities and festivals, and other terms later deemed appropriate only for denoting secular commerce, were used as freely for religious action as were adoration, *cultus*, veneration, worship, rite, and ritual. The other reason is that none of these terms were deemed specifically, let alone exclusively, fit for designating religious action. That is clear from the fact that 'religious' was regularly added to them,[54] even though that was quite superfluous, for it was always clear from the matter examined and from the semantic contexts in which the terms were used that the reference was to religious action only.

I discuss first the tendency towards reserving 'ritual' solely for religious action, and then how that development was arrested and reversed by quite a complex set of contemporary and later developments, involving as diverse disciplines as psychology/psychiatry, ethology and social and political sciences, as well as anthropology, religious studies, and ritual studies.

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[54] For 'religious adoration', cf. Tiele, "Een proeve", 167; for 'religious ceremonies', cf. Chantepie, *Lehrbuch der Religionsgeschichte*, I, 109, 119, 128; Kuenen, *National and Universal Religions*, 332; Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, II, 436; Lang, *Myth, Ritual and Religion*, II, 281; Robertson Smith, *Lectures on the Religion of the Semites*, 330, 367; for 'religious rites', cf. Tiele, "Over de wetten", 237; Chantepie, *Lehrbuch der Religionsgeschichte*, I, 119; Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, I, 97, 474; II, 90, 292, 362, 380, 383, 415, 416, 421, 438, 442; Lang, *Myth, Ritual and Religion*, II, 23, 63; for 'religious worship', cf. Tiele, "Een probleem", 99, 126; Tiele, "De godsdienst", 239; Tiele, "Over den aanvang", 128; Tiele, "Religion", 358; Chantepie, *Lehrbuch der Religionsgeschichte*, I, 29, 43, 44, 61, 62, 66, 70, 76, 78, 86, 101, 166; Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, II, 157.

Towards Exclusivism

In the first half of the twentieth century, an 'exclusivist paradigm' was gradually established in both the religiously inspired 'science of religions' (*godsdienstwetenschap, Religionswissenschaft*), pioneered by Tiele, Chantepie, and Kuenen, of Protestant liberal theologians and a few post-Christian ones like Eliade,[55] and in the anthropology of religions initiated by Tylor, Lang, and Robertson Smith, by ritual gradually eliminating all the traditional terms for denoting religious action. The victory of 'ritual' had become so complete by the 1960s[56] that a terminological near-monopoly was established for it in these branches of the study of religions.[57] Whereas the six pioneers had been

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[55] Cf. e.g. B.C. Alexander, "Ceremony", M. Eliade (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Religion* (New York etc., 1987), III, 179–183, here 179: "a prevalent trend [in Religious Studies] identifies ceremonial with secular, as opposed to religious or sacred interests"; E.M. Zuesse, "Ritual", M. Eliade (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Religion* (Vol. 12; New York etc., 1987), 405–425, here 405: "According to Rudolf Otto and Mircea Eliade [. . .], ritual arises from and celebrates the encounter with the 'numinous', or 'sacred'"; R.L. Grimes, "Ritual Studies", M. Eliade (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Religion* (New York etc., 1987), XII, 422–425, here 422: "religious ritual in contrast to secular ceremony". Cf. also Bell (1997, 8–12) on 'ritual' in Phenomenology of Religion; and A.W. Geertz, "Can We Move Beyond Primitivism? On Recovering the Indigenes of Indigenous Religions in the Academic Study of Religion", J.K. Olupona (ed.), *Beyond Primitivism. Indigenous Religious Traditions and Modernity* (New York etc., 2004), 37–70 (here 55–56) on Eliade as founder of the 'new primitivism' in the History of Religions at the University of Chicago and in the USA.

[56] In the Frazer Lecture, which Radcliffe-Brown delivered in 1939, and in the Myers Lecture which he read in 1945, 'rite' and 'ritual' have become the standard terms, and the other semantic options, such as 'worship', 'ceremony', and 'ceremonial', are definitively receding. Radcliffe-Brown used 'rite' and 'ritual' 215 times, but 'ceremony' and 'ceremonial' only 22 times, and 'worship' only 18 times (Radcliffe-Brown, *Structure and Function in Primitive Society*, 133–152; 153–177). But he expressly included both 'ceremonies' and 'collective and individual rites' into the category of "specifically religious actions" (Radcliffe-Brown, *Structure and Function in Primitive Society*, 177). Radcliffe-Brown, therefore, did not initiate the tradition of defining 'ritual' as exclusively referring to religious action. He must rather be regarded, with Durkheim, as maintaining the inclusive tradition of early scholarship on religion and ritual, and as laying the groundwork for its re-emergence in Anthropology of Religion and Ritual in the mid-1970s on the basis of their 'functional' definition of religion and ritual in which religion and ritual are studied solely in terms of their empirical function of solidifying societies.

[57] Cf. the definitions of 'ritual' by A. van Gennep, *Les rites de passage. Étude systématique des rites de la porte et du seuil etc.* (Paris, 1909), 13–14, 16–17, 23–24, 275; É. Durkheim, *Les formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse: Le système totémique en Australie* (Paris, 1912), 56; R. Firth, *Elements of Social Organisation* (London, 1951), 222; The Royal Anthropological Institute, *Notes and Queries on Anthropology* (London, 1951), 175; M. Wilson, *Rituals of Kinship among the Nyakusa* (London, 1957), 9; C. Geertz 1966,

terminologically ecumenical and inclusive in their use of both the traditional terms and the new terms 'rite', 'ritual' and 'ceremonial', by the 1960s not only had the typically Christian terms, such as 'adoration', '(divine) service', 'veneration', and 'worship', been nearly completely eliminated in the exclusive paradigm, but so were broader terms, such as *cultus*, 'ceremony', and 'ceremonial'. It was also by this time that some scholars proposed that 'rite' and 'ritual' serve as a term for religious action only,[58] and that they reserved, explicitly or implicitly, 'ceremony' and 'ceremonial' for secular stylized inter-action such as occurred in civil societies and in 'civil religion'.[59]

Much more research is needed to establish precisely how, when, why, and to what degree this restriction to one term happened in these two disciplines. In both the 'science of religions'—commonly termed 'religious studies' in Anglo-American universities—and the anthropology of religions, this definitional and terminological mono-latry was due, at least in part, to the need felt for an all-embrac-ing, unified, well-definable terminology in the study of so huge and complex a field as human religious action. In the anthropology of religions, moreover, ritual's supremacy was strongly fostered by two pre-occupations. One was the 'Durkheimian' functional view of reli-gious ritual as productive of a society's cohesion and expressive of its structure. The other was the positivist rational-irrational dichotomy anthropologists had constructed between, on the one hand, techno-logical acts as demonstrably effective of the results to be achieved by them, and therefore as rational and inexpressive of social struc-ture, and, on the other hand, religious rites as ineffective with respect to the results intended by believers, and therefore irrational, though expressive of a society's structure.[60] This rational-irrational dichotomy

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1, 28–29; C. Geertz 1973, 87, 111–112; V.W. Turner 1967, 19; V.W. Turner, *The Drums of Affliction. A Study of Religious Processes among the Ndembu of Zambia* (Oxford, 1968), 15; V.W. Turner and E. Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture. Anthropological Perspectives* (Oxford, 1978), 243; all quoted in Platvoet 1995, 42–45.

[58] E.g. Firth, *Elements of Social Organisation*, 222; The Royal Anthropological Institute, *Notes and Queries on Anthropology*, 175; Wilson, *Rituals of Kinship*, 9; Max Gluckman, "Les Rites de Passage", Max Gluckman (ed.), *Essays on the Ritual of Social Relations* (Manchester, 1962), 1–52, here 22; Mary Gluckman and Max Gluckman, "On Drama, and Games and Athletic Contests", Moore and Myerhoff (eds) 1977, 227–243, here 251.

[59] Cf. Bocock 1974, 15, 39.

[60] Cf. Bocock 1974, 21–23, 24, 26; J. Goody, "Against Ritual. Loosely Structured

is one of the several transformations of the opposition anthropologists continually constructed between the 'primitive', or religious, mentality, or patterns of thought, and 'modern', or secular mentality,[61] which again are themselves two more transformations of the paganopapist anti-ritualist bias pointed out above.

The Return to Inclusivism

Meanwhile, however, 'ritual' had been marching forward in a few other disciplines also. It had been introduced into psychiatry and ethology first as another, but soon the privileged *etic* (scholarly) term for the classification, description, and analysis of forms of stylized behavior, solitary and communicative, and in particular for patterned interaction among humans. One was Freud's study of *Zwangshandlungen*, the solitary obsessive actions that are only seemingly completely meaningless and trivial. Freud concluded that as the obsessive ceremonials constitute the rites of the neurotic's *Privatreligion* (private religion), so the rites and ceremonies of religion constitute a public, collective, and 'universal obsessive neurosis'. Another was Reik's psychoanalytic interpretation of *couvade*, puberty rites, the singing of the *Kol nidré* (all vows) on Yom Kippur, and the blowing of the *shofar* (ram's horn). A third was ethological research on animal and human interaction, in which Julian Huxley introduced the notion 'ritualization' in 1914. And a fourth was the analysis of patterns of human political and social communication in the social and political sciences.[62] It should

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Thoughts on a Loosely Defined Subject", Moore and Myerhoff (eds) 1977, 25–35, here 25, 27; Platvoet 1995, 45, also 37. For definitions of 'ritual' as non-technological behaviour and therefore irrational or non-rational, cf. E.E. Evans-Pritchard, *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic among the Azande* (Oxford, 1937), 12, 492; E. Leach, *Political Systems of Highland Burma* (Boston, 1954¹/1964²), 13; Leach 1968, 522; Goody, "Religion and Ritual", 159. Cf. also the remark by J. Goody, "Against Ritual. Loosely Structured Thoughts on a Loosely Defined Subject", Moore and Myerhoff (eds) 1977, 25–35, here 31, that "the pejorative implications of formal, ritual, convention, etiquette, are in fact embedded in their very substance, [and] intrinsic to their nature".

[61] On the history of Western 'primitivism', cf. A.W. Geertz, "Can We Move Beyond Primitivism?"

[62] Cf. S. Freud, "Zwangshandlungen und Religionsübungen" (1907), S. Freud (ed.), *Der Mann Moses und die monotheistische Religion. Schriften über die Religion* (Frankfurt am Main, 1939¹/1975²), 7–14; S. Freud, "Vorrede zu *Probleme der Religionspsychologie* von Dr. Theodor Reik", T. Reik, *Probleme der Religionspsychologie. I. Teil: Das Ritual* (Leipzig, Wien, 1919), vii–xii; quoted here from S. Freud (ed.), *Der Mann Moses und*

be noted that anti-ritual sentiments and biases inspired Freud's and Reik's analogy of neurotic ceremonial and religious ritual, as well as the comparison of animal and human 'ritualized' behavior by ethologists. They also informed some of the 'ritualist' analyses of the behavior of humans in political and other institutional settings in modern Western societies, such as the mental asylum, by social and political scientists. After 1960, however, developments to be noted below caused anti-ritualist sentiments and biases to decrease markedly, and more empathic approaches, exclusive as well as inclusive, to emerge.

In the second half of the twentieth century, three other developments caused the exclusivist paradigm of anthropologists and historians of religions to fuse with that of the ethologists and sociologists into an explicitly inclusive definitional approach to the study of human communicative behavior, religious as well as secular. Chronologically, the first of these three developments was decolonization and the effect it had on the study of ritual in British anthropology of religions in the early 1960s. The second was a paradigm shift in 'religious studies' in the early 1970s. And the third was a new type of 'ritual studies' that emerged in the early 1980s. Together they estab-

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die monotheistische Religion. Schriften über die Religion (Frankfurt am Main, 1939[1]/1975[2]), 15–18; T. Reik, *Probleme der Religionspsychologie. I. Teil: Das Ritual* (Leipzig, Wien, 1919), XV–XIX, 52n6, 58, 123, 133, 154, 157, 162, 171, 190, 191, 193, 194, 199, 210–213, 217, 220, 221, 225–229, 241–243, 248–255, 275n2, 290; T. Reik, *Ritual. Psycho-analytic Studies* (New York, 1931[1]/1958[2]), 15–19, 83n1, 158, 190, 193, 198, 199, 209, 234, 236, 237, 239, 244, 256–259, 263, 266–267, 271–272, 275–276, 288–290, 295, 297, 300, 303, 324n1; K.Z. Lorenz, *On Aggression* (London 1967), 47–71; N. Tinbergen, *Sociaal gedrag bij dieren* (Utrecht, 1968), 157–163; Huxley 1966; J.H. Bossard and E.S. Boll, *Ritual in Family Living* (Philadelphia, 1950) on "rituals of family living"; N. Leites and E. Bernaut, *Rituals of Liquidation. Communists on Trial* (Glencoe—Ill. 1954) on communist "rituals of liquidation"; Goffman 1967, 19–23, 31–40, 44–45 (on the "ritual organisation of social encounters"), 56–76 (on two categories of 'deference rituals', 'avoidance rituals', and 'presentation rituals'); Bocock 1974, 35–59 (on his 'action approach' to ritual as the symbolic use of the [human] body for the articulation of meaning; he distinguishes civic, political and religious rituals [60–117], life-cycle and life-crises rituals [118–146], and aesthetic rituals [147–170], each with their own kinds of 'congregations', 'communities' or 'audiences', and modes of, and rules for, participation); C. Lane, *The Rites of Rulers. Ritual in Industrial Society—the Soviet Case* (Cambridge, 1981) (on the several kinds of Soviet socialist rituals); Kertzer 1988 (on political rituals as ritualisation of power). On Freud's, Reik's and other psycho-analytic approaches to ritual as an obsessive mechanism by which tabooed desires are repressed and appeased, cf. Bell 1997, 12–15.

lished not only the inclusive approach to 'ritual' but also its a nearly absolute[63] semantic supremacy.

Anthropology of Religions

Decolonization forced the anthropology of religions out of its relative isolation in the study of (the so-called) 'primitive religions' (a construct that never existed) in (supposedly) backward, colonial societies, and to enter the study of religious behavior in modern Arab and European rural societies, located in complex institutional and historical settings. This shift brought it into much closer contact with the disciplines employing the concept of 'ritual' for the study of human interaction in the institutions—political, legal, and so on— of Western and other societies. It made anthropologists aware that the balance and integration of culture, religion, and society, which their functionalist paradigm had postulated—incorrectly—for the relatively small and institutionally undifferentiated colonial societies, was absent not only from the large, highly differentiated, modern Western societies but also from colonial 'tribal' societies, and certainly from the postcolonial states.

They also found in modern Western societies a different relation between ritual and religion than in 'tribal' societies. In the pre-colonial and early colonial societies, religion had been at most an embryonic institution and mostly only a smaller or greater aspect of the other, equally embryonic institutions. That caused rituals to have usually at least a minor, and sometimes a major religious referent, and so, according to Durkheimian theory, to contribute to that society's integration. However, in the complex but institutionally highly differentiated Western societies, which moreover were rapidly secularizing, there was clearly much ritual without any religious referent, yet some of it contributed greatly to a society's cohesion.[64]

Anthropologists reacted to this confrontation with ritual in modern Western societies in several ways. Here I discuss only three. One

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[63] 'Nearly absolute', because MacCormack, in *Art and Ceremony in Late Antiquity*, points to an important exception to the general trend towards the semantic and notional supremacy of 'ritual'. See below on C. Geertz 1980 and MacCormack, *Art and Ceremony in Late Antiquity*.

[64] Cf. Bocock 1974, 34–36, 40, 49.

was to abandon the Durkheimian exclusive terminological link between 'ritual' and 'religious action' in favor of an inclusive approach. Another was to insist on the 'greater elaboration of ceremoniousness' in 'tribal societies' than in modern society in accordance with Durkheim's theory of the 'difference of kind' between mechanically solid and organically solid societies, and thereby to maintain the essential link between 'ritual' and religious action.[65] A third one was to plead for the abandonment of the term 'ritual' as denoting everything and therefore meaning nothing. Jack Goody is representative of the first and third reactions; Max Gluckman, of the second.

In 1961, Goody published his "Religion and Ritual: The Definitional Problem" not in an anthropological journal, but in *The British Journal of Sociology*. In it he opted with Nadel[66] and against Monica Wilson[67] for an inclusive approach to 'ritual' because "both in common usage and in sociological writings, the term is frequently given wider significance" than religious action only.[68] For 'common usage' he referred to the Oxford English Dictionary; and for sociological writings, to two recent publications by American sociologists on the 'rituals of family living' in the USA and on the 'rituals of liquidation' of political opponents in the Soviet Union.[69] Goody was also terminologically inclusive: he used 'rite' and 'ritual' 79 times in this article, and 'ceremony' and 'ceremonial' 18 times. And though he opposed the 'indiscriminate' use of 'ritual' and 'ceremonial' for designating religious phenomena,[70] he used both terms for religious and secular actions of an "elaborate conventional form". But following

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[65] Max Gluckman, "Les Rites de Passage", 2, 5, 48–49.

[66] S.F. Nadel, *Nupe Religion. Traditional Beliefs and the Influence of Islam in a West African Chiefdom* (London, 1954[1]/1970[2]), 99 considered as 'ritual' all "stylised or formalised" actions, "made repetitive in that form" and "exhibiting a striking or incongruous rigidity, that is some conspicuous regularity not accounted for by the professed aims of the actions". He regarded an action as a 'religious ritual', if "we further attribute to the action a particular manner of relating means to ends which we know to be inadequate by empirical standards, and which we commonly call irrational, mystical, or supernatural".

[67] Wilson, *Rituals of Kinship*, 9 defined 'ritual' as "a primarily religious action . . . directed to securing the blessing of some mystical power", and 'ceremonial' as an "elaborate conventional form for the expression of feeling, not confined to religious occasion".

[68] Goody, "Religion and Ritual", 158.

[69] Bossard and Boll, *Ritual in Family Living*; Leites and Bernaut, *Rituals of Liquidation*.

[70] Goody, "Religion and Ritual", 142–143.

Radcliffe-Brown, he reserved 'ceremonial' for "a specific sequence of ritual acts performed in public". So both a Corpus Christi Day procession celebrating mystical powers and the parade of the Red Army commemorating the October Revolution were 'ceremonials'. But U.S. rituals of family living and Soviet rituals of liquidation were not 'ceremonials', because they were not public performances.[71]

Goody also began to modify slightly and tone down the positivist view and wholesale condemnation of all and any religious ritual as 'irrational'. He continued to regard all 'magical action', and most religious actions, such as sacrifice and prayer, as 'irrational', because they have "a pragmatic end which [their] procedures fail to achieve, or achieve for other reasons than the patient [. . .] supposes".[72] But he added two more categories of 'ritual'. One comprised 'non-rational', 'transcendental' religious rituals, "based upon theories which surpass experience". They have "no pragmatic end other than the very performance of the acts themselves, and cannot therefore be said to have achieved, or not to have achieved such an end".[73] Examples are "the many public celebrations which involve supernatural beings", for instance, "those collective actions [or ceremonials] required by custom [which are publicly] performed on occasions of change in the social life".[74] The other category consists of secular rituals. They are "neither religious nor magical; [they] neither assume the existence of spiritual beings nor [are] aimed at some empirical end". Examples are "civil marriage ceremonies and rituals of birth and death in secular households or societies".[75]

Gluckman, however, took his point of departure from Van Gennep's statement that the more primitive societies are, the more religious they are; and from Durkheim's view that a "regression of religion [. . .] accompanies the developing division of labour". He added to these his own observation that in tribal societies social relations are 'ritualized', whereas in modern societies "congregations assemble to worship a general God and each man is in communion with the

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[71] Goody, "Religion and Ritual", 159–160.
[72] Goody, "Religion and Ritual", 159.
[73] Goody, "Religion and Ritual", 154. Goody owed these insights to T. Parsons, *The Structure of Social Action* (New York, 1937), 429 and Pareto.
[74] Goody, "Religion and Ritual", 159.
[75] Goody, "Religion and Ritual", 159–160.

Deity".[76] He concluded that "the study of modern religion raises
some very different problems from the study of tribal religion and
ritual".[77] Gluckman agreed with Goody that definitions are mere
"proposals for convenience only" so that words be used "in the most
fruitful way". But he sided with Monica Wilson in defining 'cere-
mony' and 'ceremonial' as any complex conventional stylized behav-
ior, secular or religious, by which social relations are expressed.[78]
Such 'ceremony' or 'ceremonial' was 'ritual' behavior if religion[79]
was involved, and 'ceremonious' behavior if it was secular.[80] Gluckman
enumerated four kinds of 'rituals' among the South-Eastern Bantu:
'magical' rituals "connected with the use of substances acting by mys-
tical powers"; religious rituals, such as the cult of ancestors; 'consti-
tutive' rituals, such as rites of passage, which express or alter social
relations by reference to mystical notions; and 'factitive' rituals, such
as fertility rituals, which increased the material well-being of a group.
The latter, he noted, included elements from the other three: not

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[76] Max Gluckman, "Les Rites de Passage", 19–20, 25–26, 49. Cf. also 42–43:
"in tribal societies, rituals are built out of the very texture of social relations",
whereas in modern societies one finds "mere congregations with a generalised, uni-
versalistic belief at which people pray"; and Mary Gluckman and Max Gluckman,
"On Drama, and Games and Athletic Contests", 231 on "the [. . .] 'universalistic'
religions, in which adherence to beliefs was sufficient to give membership in con-
gregations".

[77] Max Gluckman, "Les Rites de Passage", 25.

[78] Max Gluckman, "Les Rites de Passage", 22. Cf. also Mary Gluckman and
Max Gluckman, "On Drama, and Games and Athletic Contests", 230–231, 233,
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[79] Gluckman borrowed his definition of 'ritual' from E.E. Evans-Pritchard, *Witchcraft,
Oracles and Magic among the Azande* (Oxford, 1937), 12 who defines it as "any behav-
iour that is accounted for by mystical notions", i.e. by "patterns of thought that
attribute to phenomena supra-sensible qualities which, or part of which, are not
derived from observation or cannot be logically inferred from it, and which they
do not possess". The irrationality of 'mystical' behaviour is implied, for, says Evans-
Pritchard, *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic*, 12, "there is no objective nexus between the
[ritual] behaviour and the event it is intended to cause".

[80] Max Gluckman, "Les Rites de Passage", 22–23, 29n1, 30. Cf. also Mary
Gluckman and Max Gluckman, "On Drama, and Games and Athletic Contests",
231: "'Ritual' ceremonialism was stipulated [in 1962] to cover actions which had
reference, in the view of the actors, to occult powers; where such beliefs were not
present, it was suggested that the word 'ceremonious' be used". For Mary Gluckman
and Max Gluckman, "On Drama, and Games and Athletic Contests", 231, 236, it
would, therefore, be a "contradiction in those stipulated terms"—though "not inher-
ently so"—to term secular games, athletic contests, sport and drama, 'secular ritu-
als'. They preferred to continue to term them 'secular ceremonials'.

only sacrifices to the ancestors and the use of magical substances but also the performance of prescribed actions by members of the congregation in terms of their secular roles.[81]

He devoted the rest of his contribution to the latter two groups of rituals. He analyzed them as the 'ritualization' of [Bantu] social relationships, that is as "stylized ceremonial in which persons [. . .] perform prescribed actions according to their secular roles [. . .] so as to secure general blessing, purification, protection and prosperity [. . .] in some mystical manner which is out of sensory control".[82] He expected to find this 'high ritualization' of social relations "wherever people live in largish groups", such as in Homeric Greece, early Rome, pagan Europe, and modern 'tribal' societies. He proposed as a sociological explanation of it, "that each social relation in a subsistence economy tends to serve manifold purposes", in part because of the "low level of technological development" of these societies, in part because "the uncertainties of anxiety about crops, [. . .] children, [etc. . . .] become intricately involved in the social relations themselves". In these societies, many special customs and stylized etiquette, with moral connotations and religious consequences, are developed to mark the numerous, different roles males and females are playing at any moment, whereas "relations in our own families" are marked by "rather vague patterns of respect [. . .] or egalitarianism", without any moral and religious associations.[83]

Gluckman saw a "sharp contrast", and even an incompatibility and difference in kind, between tribal and modern societies. In tribal societies, roles are segregated by taboos and ritualization, because there are "radical conflicts in their very constitution" that need to be cloaked by ritual. In modern industrialized urban life, roles are fragmented by being played out on different stages, and by this spatial segregation "conflicts between roles are segregated", or they are solved by judicial decision or other "empirical and rational procedures". Gluckman acknowledged that the degree of ritualization of roles in tribal societies varied. He explained that variation by the degree of secular differentiation that had occurred in social roles:

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[81] Max Gluckman, "Les Rites de Passage", 23; cf. also Mary Gluckman and Max Gluckman, "On Drama, and Games and Athletic Contests", 230–231.
[82] Max Gluckman, "Les Rites de Passage", 23–24, 49–50.
[83] Max Gluckman, "Les Rites de Passage", 26–33, 36, 39.

"the greater the secular differentiation of role, the less the ritual, and [. . .] the less mystical is the ceremonial of etiquette".[84]

It is apparent from these two summaries that Goody adopted an inclusive approach to the definition of 'ritual', because he included—or better: began to include—both 'tribal' and 'modern Western' rituals in the scope of his analysis and category.[85] It is also clear that Gluckman took an exclusive approach, be it a mitigated one,[86] because his theory was predicated on the dichotomous mindset fundamental to virtually all anthropology of religions till then: that of regarding 'primitive mentality' and society as religious, ritual, and irrational, and 'modern mentality' and society as technological, 'objective', rational, and secular. The message is that modern societies are not only inhospitable to, but also basically incompatible with, religion and 'ritual': their "whole social bias is against [. . .] rituals".[87] Though modern societies have pockets resembling tribal society, such as a college of Cambridge University, 'ritual' is "reduced to a minimum" in them, for even in those pockets 'ritualization' does not develop. Modern societies merely have worship and (Roman Catholic) ritualism.[88] Despite his own definition of 'ritual', Gluckman seemed unable to regard Christian worship as a ritual.

In 1977, Goody took leave of the concept of 'ritual', because it is "vagueness itself", "accepts, implicitly or explicitly, a dichotomous view of the world", and "we find widespread confusion" in its analy-

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[84] Max Gluckman, "Les Rites de Passage", 33–40, 46–47, 49. 51–52. Kimball, who held that people in a secular urbanized world need rituals as much as anyone else, was "on a false trail", said Gluckman, for modern rites of passage "do not involve any ideas that the performing of prescribed actions by appropriately related persons will mystically affect the well-being of the initiands", or that misfortune requires "ritual dealing with mystical forces" to "achieve re-aggregation" (Max Gluckman, "Les Rites de Passage", 37, 38).

[85] Goody was critical of the 'ethnographic myopia' of functionalist anthropology of religions, and its too easy dismissal of earlier approaches to "funeral ceremonies and ancestor worship". He pleaded that analytical tools be developed for a 'comparative sociology' of 'mortuary institutions' (J. Goody, *Death, Property and the Ancestors. A Study of the Mortuary Customs of the LoDagaa of West Africa* (London, 1962), v–vi, 11, 13).

[86] 'Mitigated', because Gluckman did not dichotomize between secular 'ceremony' and 'ceremonial' on the one hand, and religious 'rite' and 'ritual' on the other. He proposed only that 'ceremony' and 'ceremonial' be used as the superordinate category for any stylized act, whether religious or secular, and that 'ritual ceremonial', or 'ritual', serve as the subordinate category for religious actions; and that the (awkward) 'ceremonious ceremonial' serve as such for secular ones.

[87] Max Gluckman, "Les Rites de Passage", 48.

[88] Max Gluckman, "Les Rites de Passage", 20, 43–45.

sis. Only when it is restricted to religion did he see it as having "some minimal utility".[89] But he admitted: "Of course if one defines ritual as a formalistic type of behaviour, leaving out any connotation of 'religion', then it would be absurd [. . .] to suppose that 'ritual' was any less common in Western societies than in any other. 'Routinisation', regularisation, repetition, lie at the basis of the social life itself".[90] 'Ritual', therefore, might serve to comprise both secular and religious formal behavior.

Goody's leave-taking article appeared in 1977 in a volume entitled *Secular Rituals*, which comprised papers on the study of ritual by anthropologists. It may be regarded as concluding the paradigm shift from an exclusive to an inclusive approach to ritual in the anthropology of religions.[91] Gluckman, however, stuck to his 1962 proposal.[92]

An 'inclusive terminology' prevailed also in Clifford Geertz's study of the 'theater state' (*negara*) of pre-colonial Bali in the nineteenth century,[93] and in MacCormack's terminology in connection with the political role of religion, 'pagan' and Christian, in the Roman empire between the first century BCE and the sixth century CE.[94] In both books, 'cult',[95] 'ritual' and 'rite',[96] and 'ceremony' and

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[89] E.g. Goody, "Against Ritual", 25–26.

[90] Goody, "Against Ritual", 28. Cf. also n. 118 below.

[91] Moore and Myerhoff (eds) 1977.

[92] Mary Gluckman and Max Gluckman, "On Drama, and Games and Athletic Contests".

[93] C. Geertz 1980.

[94] MacCormack, *Art and Ceremony in Late Antiquity*.

[95] Geertz used 'cult' not only for religio-political 'state' rituals, such as the "cult of the universal monarch" (or 'divine king', or 'royal divinity'), the 'king's cult', and 'lingga-divine-king cults', that provided a Hindu cosmic basis for royal political power, but also for other types of religious behavior, e.g. in connection with irrigation and the cultivation of rice (the 'rice-mother/rice-wedding cult', the 'rice-field cult', 'rice cult'), the earth ('earth cult'), and witches ("the Balinese have a well-developed witch-cult") (C. Geertz 1980, 3, 76, 80, 85, 125, 131, 186, 222, 248). MacCormack likewise used 'cult' both for religio-political ceremonials for *post mortem* divinized Roman emperors and the goddess Roma, personifying the city of Rome (MacCormack, *Art and Ceremony in Late Antiquity*, 95, 100, 101, 103, 110, 112, 135,141, 178), but also for 'proper' religious behavior, such as the 'pagan' *cultus deorum* (MacCormack, *Art and Ceremony in Late Antiquity*, 19, 25, 67, 113, 120, 140, 141, 151, 280).

[96] 'Rite' and 'ritual' (as nouns as well as adjectives) were used by Geertz not only for religio-political 'court rites', 'court rituals', 'rites of state', 'mass rituals', 'royal rituals', 'state ritual' and *puputan*: "this strange ritual of dynasty-ending military suicide" (C. Geertz 1980, 11, 13, 18, 24, 85, 87, 103, 104, 108, 116, 120, 129, 215, 216, 217, 250, 252, 255), but also for purificatory rites, rites of invocation, rites for

'ceremonial'[97] were used as synonyms for designating the elaborate, formal, stylized acts of these polities.[98] These rituals and ceremonials were by their very nature public, political and religious. A cosmological reference was always at the heart of the political rituals of the state cult of divine kingship on Bali, said Geertz;[99] and the

the dead, the last rites, first fruits rites, Water Opening rites, realm-purifying rites, and rites of passage (C. Geertz 1980, 49, 51, 82, 86, 117, 120, 125, 129, 132, 188, 193, 215, 216), and for popular and priestly rituals, communal rituals, season opening rituals, Water-Opening rituals, harvest rituals, regional and Balinese rituals, and complex realm-purifying rituals (C. Geertz 1980, 47, 50, 75, 76, 81, 103, 106, 108, 117, 122, 124, 126, 135, 156, 158, 167, 186, 188, 194, 215, 216, 217, 220, 222, 223, 237, 248). MacCormack, too, used 'rite' and 'ritual' not only for religio-political "complex courtly rituals", such as "the ritual of consecration", "the ceremony of *adventus* [as] the traditional rite of welcome for a ruler", "the 'ritual [of *adventus*] as a whole", the "rites of imperial funeral", "the ritual of imperial ascent to heaven", "accession ritual", "enthronement in the palace as a timeless visual expression of the accession ritual", "imperial *vota* as rites performed on anniversary of the emperor's accession", "rites of accession [of the emperor] absorbed into the ritual of the church", "rites of *consecratio*", "rites customary for an imperial accession" (MacCormack, *Art and Ceremony in Late Antiquity*, 6, 18, 78, 96, 127, 165, 237, 238, 244, 246, 253), but also for the "rituals of the Christian church", "Christian rites", "rites to honour a holy death", "ancient cult rituals", "funerary rites", and "ancient Roman agricultural rites" (MacCormack, *Art and Ceremony in Late Antiquity*, 9, 96, 132, 136, 145, 171, 246, 247).

   [97] For their religio-political use, cf C. Geertz 1980, 102 ('state ceremonies'), 104 ('state ceremonails'), 108 ('court ceremonials'), 114 ("kingdom-wide mass ceremonies held at the palace"), 117 (the cremation ceremony of a king as *karya ratu*, 'king's work', "a religious corvée in which service and worship come down to the same thing"), 120 ("the whole ceremony [of a king's cremation] was a giant demonstration [. . .] of the indestructibility of hierarchy"), 122, 129 ('state ceremony'), 130, 131, 216, 241, 249, 250 ('court ceremonies'), 133 ("the king's ritual deactivation [caused him to be] imprisoned in the ceremony of rule"), 233 ("cremation [and] obeisance ceremonies"). For their wider religious use, cf. Geertz (1982, 53, 76, 80, 81, 105, 129, 193, 194, 215) on the ceremonies in *subak* (irrigation society) and other Balinese temples.

   [98] Cf. also C. Geertz (1966, 28–29) on '*ritual*' as the '*ceremonial* form' in which "the moods and motivations which sacred symbols induce in men and the general conceptions of the order of existence which they formulate for men meet and reinforce one another". Some rituals, he said, were "more elaborate and usually more public"; and he added, "we may call these full-blown *ceremonies* 'cultural performances'" (*my emphases*).

   [99] C. Geertz (1980, 102, 104): "The state cult was not a cult of the state. It was an argument, made over and over again in the insistent vocabulary of ritual, that worldly status has a cosmic base, that hierarchy is the governing principle of the universe, and that arrangements of human life are but approximation, more close or less, to those of the divine. [. . .] The state ceremonials of classical Bali were metaphysical theatre, theatre designed to express a view of the ultimate nature of reality and, at the same time, to shape the existing conditions of life to be consonant with that reality; that is, theatre designed to present an ontology and, by presenting it, to make it happen—make it actual".

imperial ceremonies of Rome and Byzantium were performed in "an atmosphere of the supernatural penetrating into the natural order", said MacCormack.[100] Only the terms 'adoration', 'veneration', and 'worship' were mostly restricted by them to explicitly religious acts directed towards divine, or (postmortem) divinized or other meta-empirical beings.[101]

In that 'ecumenical' cluster of undefined terms, 'rite' and 'ritual', and 'ceremony' and 'ceremonial' were used quite evenly by Clifford Geertz. 'Rite' and 'ritual' appeared 158 times, and 'ceremony' and 'ceremonial' 111 times in his study of the 'theater state' of pre-colonial Bali. In addition, he used 'worship(ers)' 22 times, 'cult' 18 times, 'drama' 16 times, 'theatre (state)' 21 times, 'veneration' three times, and 'to adore' once. 'Ceremony' and 'ceremonial', however, were clearly MacCormack's favorite terms in her study of the ceremonies of the *adventus* (arrival of the emperor as *deus praesens*),[102] *consecratio* (divinization of the emperor after death by a vote of the Roman senate),[103] and accession of the emperor in Rome and Byzantium.[104] She used 'ceremonial' 306 times, and 'ceremony' 252 times, whereas 'rite' and 'ritual' appeared only 32 times, 'cult' 27 times, 'worship' 15 times, 'veneration' four times, and 'adoration' three times. Judging by the literature she quoted, her predilection for 'ceremonial' and 'ceremony' over 'ritual' and 'rite' seemed fairly common among her fellow scholars of Roman and early Christian religion. Which is to be expected in the study of the 'ceremonials' of the pre- and post-Constantine Roman empire, for in Latin *caeremonia* had an explicitly religious connotation (for instance, in the set expression *metus ac caeremonia deorum*, 'fear and worship of the gods'), much more so than *ritus, rite*, and *ritualis*, which merely connoted the proper order, or

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[100] MacCormack, *Art and Ceremony in Late Antiquity*, 24, 26, 28, 31, 135–136, 180. MacCormack rejected as 'unsatisfactory' the distinction between 'secular' and 'ecclesiastical' coronation ceremonies made by some other Byzantinologists, because "Church and state were not conceived of as distinct from each other". Therefore, "it is misleading to distinguish between the secular and the ecclesiastical spheres in early Byzantium, for the distinction cannot be firmly anchored in the evidence" (MacCormack, *Art and Ceremony in Late Antiquity*, 242, 244, 246).

[101] Cf. C. Geertz 1980, 51, 52, 53, 106, 115, 117, 155, 193, 221, 223, 235, 248, 263; MacCormack, *Art and Ceremony in Late Antiquity*, 25/286n52, 27/286n54, 67/304n268, 120, 135, 138, 140, 244, 286, 315, 316, 373.

[102] MacCormack, *Art and Ceremony in Late Antiquity*, 17–89.

[103] MacCormack, *Art and Ceremony in Late Antiquity*, 93–158.

[104] MacCormack, *Art and Ceremony in Late Antiquity*, 161–266.

'flow', of the *cultus deorum* and any other public religious action.[105] It is likely for this reason that MacCormack translates *hunc veterum primi ritum non rite colebant*[106] by 'this *ceremony* was not observed rightly by our earliest ancestors' (my emphasis).[107]

'Religious Studies'

The second development was the paradigm shift that occurred in the academic study of religions in faculties of theology and departments of religious studies in Western universities after 1970, when many of their scholars gradually exchanged the traditional liberal Christian foundation of their historical and comparative studies of religions and rituals for a methodologically agnostic, empirical, secular orientation. It coincided with the gradual de-institutionalization of the 'religionist' and 'positivist' approaches to religion, which had been securely linked with faculties of theology and faculties of the social sciences, respectively, until 1950.[108] All three positions—positivist, religionist, and methodologically agnostic—are found now in any institutional setting for the academic study of religions in The Netherlands,[109] and increasingly also in many other Western universities. Methodological agnosticism caused scholars to de-emphasize the doctrinal aspect of religions, to pay more attention to religious behavior than they used to do, and to study religions as thoroughly immersed in, and contextualized by, their societies, and especially, under the influence of Michel Foucault and Pierre Bourdieu, by the social history and political struggles in them. That is, to adopt an inclusive approach to ritual studies.

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[105] Cf. e.g. MacCormack, *Art and Ceremony in Late Antiquity*, 78: "In the late third and early fourth centuries, *adventus* was still basically [. . .], its precise ritual notwithstanding, a very loose ceremony".

[106] Flavius Cresconius Corippus (sixth century CE), *In laudem Iustini*, I, 338.

[107] MacCormack, *Art and Ceremony in Late Antiquity*, 80, 309.

[108] In the 1960s, some leading anthropologists such as Evans-Pritchard, Victor Turner, Robert Bellah, and Jan van Baal criticized the positivist ideology of the social sciences in part because of their personal religious beliefs, and in part on grounds of methodology, and either took agnostic or religionist positions in the anthropological study of religions.

[109] Cf. J.G. Platvoet, "Pillars, Pluralism and Secularisation. A Social History of Dutch Sciences of Religions", G. Wiegers (ed. in association with Jan Platvoet), *Modern Societies & The Science of Religions. Studies in Honour of Lammert Leertouwer* (Numen Book Series 95; Leiden, Boston, Köln, 2002), 82–148, here 131–136.

'Ritual Studies'

The third development was the emergence, from the late 1970s onwards, of a different 'ritual studies' from the study of rituals discussed so far. In such study, scholars of different disciplines had been studying rituals at first as unsympathetic outsiders, and more recently as mostly sympathetic observers. The new 'ritual studies', however, emerged within religious studies at the interface between liturgical studies in faculties of theology, anthropology of ritual in the vein of Victor and Edith Turner in the social sciences, and performance studies in departments of drama. It coordinated "the normative interests of theology and liturgics, the descriptive ones of the history and phenomenology of religions, and the analytical ones of anthropology".[110] It propagated an experiential approach to rituals and their 'indigenous exegesis' by researching them as insiders, against the so called 'objectivist' approach of the other disciplines. Its focus was not on theological reflection on them, nor on sociological analysis of their contexts, but on an 'actional' approach to the study of rituals by 'ritual experts'. The 'overt action', or performance, drama, or play, and the body with its capacity to embody and express social roles and transmit, wittingly and unwittingly, cultural meanings and values, were its 'central consideration'.[111]

These ritual experts therefore actively and creatively took part in rituals in order "to maintain a ritual tradition's cogency, relevance and legitimacy", and had normative, practical or other vested interests in them because of their backgrounds in liturgical theology and the performance of drama and dance. This 'ritual studies' acquired departments of its own in a few U.S. universities, and established its own *Journal of Ritual Studies* in 1987. Its advocates rejected the view that rituals are conservative, traditional, boring, and structural, but view them as subversive, creative, exciting, and processual. Victor Turner was their icon and ideologue, because he insisted that "real rituals effect transformation", and that 'liminal' and 'liminoid' rituals create *communitas*. Thereby, said Grimes, rituals become "a hotbed of cultural creativity" and transformation.[112]

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[110] Grimes, "Ritual Studies", 422.
[111] Grimes, "Ritual Studies", 422–423.
[112] R.L. Grimes, "Ritual", W. Braun and R.T. McCutcheon (eds), *Guide to the Study of Religion* (London, 2000), 259–270, here 262–266; Alexander, "Ceremony",

'Ritual studies' emerged roughly one century after the term 'ritual' began its triumphant march forward in the academic study of religious and other ceremonial behavior and in the languages of Western societies. Its approach to ritual represents a complete U-turn from the pagano-papist biases of earliest 'ritual studies' that nourished the dichotomies of 'us' as enlightened and civilized versus 'them' as primitive and in need of our schools, religion, and rule by denigrating ritual as superstitious, magical, childish, neurotic, stupid, and irrational. It also questioned the sacred-profane dichotomy underlying the exclusive definitions of 'ritual' as religious action, and of 'ceremony' as secular behavior. It followed Goffman in regarding 'ceremony' as a 'self-symbolizing', 'self-conscious', and 'self-reflective' mode, or layer, or sensibility of public behavior in the rituals of small-scale groups. But it also introduced a new dichotomy—that of 'ceremony' as conservative versus 'ritual' as innovative—by taking Victor Turner's position that 'ceremony' reinforces social structures, and that 'ritual' transforms them.[113]

But 'ritual studies' is not representative of modern research into ritual behavior. It is a reaction to the rapid secularization, massive religious de-affiliation, and wholesale dismissal of much traditional ritual behavior, religious and other, in Western societies after World War II, and the dire need for ritual creativity to fill those gaps.[114]

In the other disciplines engaged in ritual studies, however, traditional anti-ritual biases have also been toned-down considerably. On the one hand, because much traditional ritual, religious and other, disappeared rapidly by itself, without anti-papist polemics or insidious strategies. On the other, because even a- and anti-religious modern Westerners proved to be in need, as symbolic animals, of at least a modicum of ritual, old or new, and have become conscious through

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179–180. Cf. also V.W. Turner, "Variations on a Theme of Liminality", Moore and Myerhoff (eds), 1977, 36–52, here 45: "*Liminoid* phenomena [. . .] represent radical critiques of the central structures [of modern secular societies] and propose utopian alternative models"; and Bell (1997, 263) on Victor Turner as "the authority behind much American ritual invention".

[113] Cf. Alexander, "Ceremony", 179–180.

[114] Cf. Bell 1997, 263–265 on those gaps being filled on "the explicit authority vouchsafed to scholars of ritual" like Clifford Geertz and Victor Turner, whose unproven and contested theory about 'ritual' as a universal human process "empowers people to invent new ones".

ritual studies that they partake in a universal phenomenon.[115] As a result, sympathy for, and empathy with, ritual increased among scholars of ritual and resulted in more objective description and analysis. Their massive change-over from an exclusive to an inclusive definition of 'ritual' resulted, on the one hand, in better analytical comprehension of its complexity as dense symbolic behavior; on the other hand, it also laid bare its numerous latent strategic functions, such as those of hiding innovation, of super- and subordination, and of 'redemptive hegemony' by 'misrecognition'.[116] It also showed that there are many downright ugly rituals, such as those used for boundary maintenance and exclusion, especially in plural societies full of tensions and strife between 'communities',[117] and in the global violent clashes between radicalized Muslim 'terrorists' and U.S. hegemony. They are the violent rituals of war and confrontation for the explicit purpose of exploding instead of integrating society.[118]

The Pragmatics of Inclusion

Grimes, discussing the notion of ritual, was distressed by the "bedevilling problem of inclusion and exclusion", "linguistic confusion", and "the conundrum" which dictionary definition of 'ritual' he was to choose. There is, however, no bedeviling problem: there are merely options, each with its own advantages and disadvantages. For, as Grimes says correctly, "there is no end to the uses of ritual".[119] Below, I discuss first the advantages and disadvantages of an exclusive definition of 'ritual'; secondly, why an exclusive definition of ritual is neither feasible nor advisable; thirdly, that it is more advisable

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[115] Bell 1997, 264–265.

[116] Cf. Bell 1992, 74–110, 114–117, 141–142.

[117] Cf. J.G. Platvoet, "Ritual as Confrontation. The Ayodhya Conflict", Platvoet and Van der Toorn (eds) 1995, 187–226; Platvoet, "Ritual as War. On the Need to De-Westernise the Concept", J. Kreinath, C. Hartung, and A. Deschner (eds), *The Dynamics of Changing Rituals. The Transformation of Religious Rituals within their Social and Cultural Context* (New York etc., 2004), 243–266. On 'plural' and 'pluralist' societies, cf. J.G. Platvoet and K. van der Toorn, "Ritual Responses to Plurality and Pluralism", Platvoet and Van der Toorn (eds) 1995, 3–21, here 3n1.

[118] Cf. my 'anti-Durkheimian theses' (Platvoet 1995, 37–41, 213–221; Platvoet, "Pillars, Pluralism and Secularisation", 261–262).

[119] Grimes, "Ritual", 259, 260, 267.

to stay close to the pre-theoretical understanding of 'ritual'; and lastly, the advantages of an inclusive definition of 'ritual'.

Advantages of Exclusive Definition

The advantage of 'exclusive', or narrow, definitions of 'ritual'— whether they result from restricting it to 'religious' behavior or to some other trait deemed 'essential' (such as stereotypy, repetition, meaninglessness, theophany, or liminality)—is that they draw narrow boundaries around the kinds of behavior that may be included into the category of 'ritual', and so allow for an unambiguous stipulation of ritual, that is, of what it is thought and said to 'be'—or even what it ought to be.

The claim that scholars of ritual should establish a clear definition of it must not be dismissed offhand, for it honors a respectable tradition in Western scholarship, which has been cultivated extensively whenever a precise definition was feasible. That is especially the case in the natural sciences. The exact stipulation of their symbols has become not only traditional but even normative in them, for they analyze matter or processes into minute parts or aspects and must measure each exactly. As a result, their precisely stipulated symbols, standardized by international agreements, now constitute a global language by means of which scholars of the natural sciences transcend the idioms of their own languages and converse worldwide about research problems in formal, quantitative ways from which the biases and subjectivities inherent in their languages, cultures, and worldviews have been eliminated. In some disciplines, the precise stipulation of terms and symbols is therefore a common and important research instrument.

Its major disadvantage is that such a minutely defined set of symbols becomes the jargon of a highly specialized, 'esoteric' community with virtually no 'public intelligibility', which is highly impervious to the semantic changes in the 'ordinary' languages of daily speech. Despite this disadvantage, it must be admitted that if an 'exclusive', unambiguous definition of 'ritual' were feasible and advisable, it might be a very useful instrument of research, heuristically, analytically, comparatively, and theoretically.

Neither Feasible nor Advisable

There are, however, reasons for abandoning the search for an exclusive definition of 'ritual' as neither feasible nor advisable, and for settling pragmatically for either no definition of it at all or for numerous definitions of it. In the former case, one may be opting for an inclusive approach implicitly; in the latter case, one does so explicitly.

The main reason for abandoning the search for an exclusive definition of 'ritual' is that it is not feasible, because 'ritual' belongs to a group of terms, such as 'religion', 'culture', 'society', the human 'mind', 'symbol', and other key terms and concepts,[120] by means of which Western scholars indicate the extremely complex central research topics of the 'human sciences'. Research into them over the past century has proved the cultural phenomena to which these terms refer ever more varied, variable, complex, dense, and dynamic. Definitions of these terms, however useful for heuristic, analytical, comparative, and theoretical purposes, and however necessary for critical scholarly dialogue, can now be seen as referring to polysemic, polymorphic, and poly-functional phenomena of such vast cultural diversity and immense dispersion through time and space that it is illusory to expect that they will ever be defined in a manner that is acceptable to all (Western[ized])[121] scholars of rituals, religions, symbols, cultures, societies, etc. No definition is likely to be unambiguously acknowledged by them as definitive, exhaustive, and universally valid, even within a single discipline, that is to say, as establishing forever and for all cultures the trans-temporal nature or essence of 'ritual' (or 'religion', or 'symbol', etc.). Moreover, the definitions, as

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[120] Goody ("Against Ritual", 25) mentions totemism, taboo, mana, sorcery, magic, myth, "and above all ritual". He deems these terms "vagueness itself", "virtually useless for analytical purposes". In anthropology, "these terms often accept, implicitly or explicitly, a dichotomous view of the world", as expressed in the several we-they oppositions, such as 'civilized'-'savage', 'Christian religion'-'primitive magic', 'modern science'-'any religion', 'rational'-'irrational'. The list of these terms, as well as that of these dichotomies, can be considerably expanded. His other objection is that 'ritual', being all-embracing, "inhibits the study of both variation and association. There is nothing to demonstrate either way, nothing to prove or disprove, support or contradict; all is equally acceptable". The broadness of the category of ritual renders falsification of analyses of ritual impossible (Goody, "Against Ritual", 29–30).

[121] For the moment there are, and for the foreseeable future there will most likely be, no non-Western scholars who are not, as scholars, highly Westernized, precisely because of 'globalization'.

well as the phenomena to which they refer, are historically contingent and therefore arbitrary.[122]

An unambiguous definition of 'ritual', 'religion', etc., is in addition inadvisable, because the complexity and numerous functions of these crucial phenomena in the cultural histories of humankind, to which these terms refer, invite a multiplicity of disciplinary approaches, definitions, and theories rather than one unified, exclusive approach. Exclusive definitions of 'ritual' will necessarily study merely a part, or an aspect, of the wider and more complex phenomena to which the term 'ritual' has come to refer. Exclusive definitions of 'ritual' are merely legitimate, feasible, and useful if they are presented as operational or working definitions, that is, as provisional definitions designed to serve as an instrument for specific research into a particular part or aspect of the wide research area of 'ritual' without any claim to trans-historical and trans-cultural validity.[123] But as soon as their authors accept that their exclusive definitions are provisional working definitions only, they can no longer propose them as exclusive, but merely as one option among several other, equally legitimate, other definitions. The possibility of an exclusive, trans-temporal definition is precluded and vitiated, moreover, by the fact that not only rituals but also their definitions are historical and dynamic phenomena, subject to continual cultural, semantic, and terminological

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[122] I have proposed this argument also for the definition of 'religion' in J.G. Platvoet, "To Define or Not to Define. The Problem of the Definition of Religion", J.G. Platvoet and A.L. Molendijk (eds), *The Pragmatics of Defining Religion. Contexts, Concepts and Contests* (Numen Book Series 84; Leiden, Boston, Köln, 1999), 245–265. Cf. also the semantic history of the term 'religion' in J.G. Platvoet, "Contexts, Concepts, and Contests. Towards a Pragmatics of Defining Religion", Platvoet and Molendijk (eds), *The Pragmatics of Defining Religion*, 436–516. Other scholars have recently insisted that terms such as 'religion' are "imprecise, messy, everyday generalisations" (G. Harvey, "Introduction", G. Harvey, *Indigenous Religions. A Companion* (London etc., 2000), 1–19, here 10) that "can be defined, with greater or lesser success, in more than fifty ways" (Harvey, "Introduction", 7, quoting J.Z. Smith, "Religion, Religions, Religious", M.C. Taylor [ed.], *Critical Terms for Religious Studies* [Chicago, 1998], 284–298, here 282). However, though they constitute "imprecise tool[s], broad categor[ies] and wide, generic term[s]" (Harvey, "Introduction", 7) only and invite numerous definitions, they are, says J.Z. Smith ("Religion, Religions, Religious", 282) useful and valid, for they establish the horizons needed by the different academic disciplines.

[123] On operational definitions and their heuristic, analytic, and explanatory functions, cf. J.G. Platvoet, "The Definers Defined. Traditions in the Definition of Religion", *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion* 2 (1990), 180–212, here 181–183; Platvoet, "To Define or Not to Define", 255, 260–261.

change.[124] Their future developments—substantive, semantic, morphological, and functional—cannot therefore be predicted, and their developments in the past cannot be repeated. Theories about them can thus be only critically discussed. They cannot be proved valid by repetition and experiment.

The Pre-theoretical Use of 'Ritual'

Therefore, since no single definition will ever exhaust what ritual 'really' is and delimit (*de-finire*) it from anything that is 'not-ritual', scholars may also research rituals without explicitly defining 'ritual'. In that case, they organize their research on the basis of their own pre-reflective understanding of what 'ritual' denotes and connotes for them. They derive that meaning and set of associations from how 'ritual' is used in their own environment, scholarly and otherwise, in the daily language of conversation, newspapers, literature, classes, and seminars, and perhaps lexical dictionaries. That pre-theoretical use of the term 'ritual' usually poses problems only for colleagues eager to discuss and evaluate critically an author's descriptions, analyses, and theories of rituals in order to accept, modify, or reject them, for such unarticulated use of the term 'ritual' admits of much vagueness. Inarticulate use of 'ritual' may also give rise to special unexplained emphases and the use of quasi-technical terms. The reader must then grope laboriously for an understanding of their precise meaning from the hints strewn through the text or implied, often darkly, in the argumentation. Even so, non-defining scholars can be shown to have contributed considerably, or even crucially, to the body of present-day received knowledge on ritual and rituals.[125]

Pre-theoretical use of the term of 'ritual' will likely follow the vicissitudes of the semantic history of the term in the general linguistic community, or in one of its several (e.g. professional or scholarly) sub-communities. In either, its denotation may therefore be an exclusive or inclusive one, depending on the period or sub-community in which the term is used. Since 1950, however, the general drift of semantic change has been from exclusive to inclusive, as two dictionaries

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[124] Cf. Kreinath, Hartung and Deschner (eds) 2004.
[125] Bourdieu is a case in point. On his contribution to ritual studies, cf. Bell 1992, 97–99, 103–104, 112, 176; Bell 1997: 77–79.

published in 1951, and two more recent dictionaries document.[126] Further research will demonstrate that the pre-theoretical use of the term 'ritual' in the past five decades usually implied either an inclusive approach to the definition of 'ritual', or will show a shift from an exclusive to an inclusive definition.

Advantages of an Inclusive Approach

The same research will also show also that, over the past four decades, most explicit definitions of 'ritual' have followed the general semantic drift towards an inclusive and less biased definition of ritual. If their authors were methodologically reflexive,[127] they will also have followed that trend on the grounds that the inclusive approach has distinct advantages over the exclusive approach. One is its greater public intelligibility and therefore heuristic profitability. Another is that it holds greater analytic and theoretical promise, for it allows the comparative study of a much wider range of 'ritual' phenomena in more neutral and incisive ways, as the progress ritual studies have made since 1975 demonstrates.

Victor Turner's analysis of the transforming function of dense key symbols in the *limen* of rites of passage represented a major contribution to modern theory on ritual, as did his extension of the processual analysis of ritual liminality in 'tribal', religious societies to the

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[126] *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English* (1951⁴) and *Verklarend Handwoordenboek der Nederlandse Taal* (by M.J. Koenen & J. Endepols, 1951²³) both restrict 'ritual' to religious rites, their prescribed order, and books containing the prescriptions. Curiously, this *Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English* takes an inclusive approach to 'rite'. It defines 'rite' as "a religious or solemn ceremony or observance", and refers to "the rites of hospitality", i.e. to an instance without religious connotations, before presenting other examples which at the time usually had religious connotations ('burial rites', 'nuptial rites') or have a religious connotation only ('the rite of confirmation'; 'the Latin, Anglican rite'). The *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* (1978) and *Van Dale Groot Woordenboek der Nederlandse Taal* (1992¹²), however, both take an inclusive approach to 'rite' and 'ritual'. The first defines them as "behaviour with a fixed pattern, usually for a religious purpose", but cites first "the ritual of warming the teapot" before referring to "ritual killings", and "Christian ritual". The second privileges the religious connotations of *rite, rituale, rituaal,* and *ritueel*, but also includes its secular uses, as in "the ritual of cleansing one's spectacles".

[127] In the meaning of scholars 'bending back' upon themselves in order to discover the biases and constraints inherent in their culturally conditioned terms, concepts, and theories. Reflexivity is therefore a specific kind of reflection for methodological purposes.

historical sociology of 'liminoid' processes and states in 'post-tribal', secular societies. That is also true of his emphasis on the role of inventiveness and free play in the "orchestration of many genres, styles, moods, atmospheres, tempi" in longer rituals, by means of which rituals "master radical novelty".[128] By emphasizing dynamic change in ritual traditions, Turner modified earlier views of ritual as prescribed, formal, stereotyped action.

The major weakness in Victor Turner's theory, however, was that it also thrived on dichotomies, be they the reverse of those in early ritual studies. It opposed egalitarian communitas to hierarchic society, and the unstructured extra-mundane to the structured mundane. In "a wilful return to the well-known assumptions of primitivism",[129] Turner conceived primitive society romantically as unified and playful,[130] and viewed modern society as complex in desolate and alienating ways. Likewise, any religious 'liturgy' was viewed as holistic, for it united the gods and the people in their 'sacred work', whereas the profane ceremonies of secular society were considered to be drably functional mechanisms of status allocation, that is, of differentiation. Such a perspective does injury to both 'tribal' and 'post-tribal' societies, for it fails to acknowledge the ugly aspects of 'tribal' societies, and finds pleasure in modern societies mainly in leisure, that is, in the freedom to escape from its constraints.[131]

Following Foucault and Bourdieu, Bell has not only pointed to the dichotomous 'us'-versus-'them' function of many studies of ritual so far,[132] but also laid bare other crucial dichotomies underlying ritual studies. The 'thought'-'action' opposition is, she says, intrinsic to ritual studies and serves unconsciously to oppose students of rituals as perceptive, reflective, secular, modern intellectuals to the 'blind' participants in them. Modern ritual theoreticians have included secular rituals in their field of study, too, but like Tylor and Tiele they still regard ritual as action expressing thought, and themselves as perceptive. Whereas Foucault, Bourdieu, and Bell have laid bare

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[128] V.W. Turner, "Variations on a Theme of Liminality", 40.

[129] A.W. Geertz, "Can We Move Beyond Primitivism?", 54.

[130] This is quite ironic in view of his publications on Ndembu society, a highly unstable society full of 'cults of affliction'; cf., e.g., V.W. Turner 1967; V.W. Turner, *The Drums of Affliction*.

[131] Cf. V.W. Turner, "Variations on a Theme of Liminality", 39–48.

[132] E.g. Bell 1997, 262

ritual's hegemonic functions, Bell's book forces us also to understand that students of ritual are privileging themselves, as modern secular intellectuals, who think they have taken leave of 'ritual', over participants in rituals. The latter, it is implied, need to become as 'enlightened' as they think they are themselves.

Conclusion: Ritual as a Dense Symbol

Rituals are symbolic actions. Humans communicate messages to other 'persons', real or putative, human or animal, through numerous kinds of symbols as carriers of the messages they wish to transmit to others. One kind is linguistic. It includes the terms academic disciplines use to convey their concepts. Rituals and languages communicate by means of a wide variety of symbols, ranging from 'precise' to 'pregnant'. The sciences likewise range from those operating with exact symbols to those communicating through complex ones. The natural sciences operate virtually exclusively with precise conventions, or stipulations, because their kinds of research objects and methods allow them to analyze those objects into very minute parts or aspects and measure each exactly with the aid of the systems of precisely stipulated symbols that they have agreed to construct and use for that purpose. When the cultural sciences began their investigations of societies, cultures, religions, rituals, etc., the symbols 'society', 'culture', 'religion', 'ritual', etc. were at first perfectly clear and simple. Scholars intuitively understood the 'ordinary', prototypical, pre-reflective meaning that these terms had in their own daily languages. They needed to have only an approximate grasp of them for communicating their own approximate understanding of it.

Comparison with other societies and cultures and further research has gradually proved the phenomena studied by means of them ever more complex and diverse. As result, the term 'ritual' is now a dense, polysemous, key, and constraining symbol. By means of it, and under the sway of its virtually impenetrable terminological and conceptual hegemony, scholars of rituals communicate about the cultural phenomena they have included under 'ritual', blissfully unaware mostly of the several dichotomous strategies they employ under its 'redemptive', blinding rule. From Tylor to Turner to Bourdieu and Bell, the term and pregnant symbol of 'ritual', as well as the cultural phenomena indicated by it, have been, or may be shown to be, not

merely a heuristic, descriptive, analytical, and theoretical instrument, but also a political strategy for ordering human mental constructions, social, cultural, and conceptual, after the undeclared interests of the scholars of rituals.

This article being already overly long, I must conclude by urging much more reflection on the politics of ritual studies so that we may better understand how our unconscious biases and strategies continue to be part of our attempts to gain as objective an understanding as is possible of this fascinating part of humankind's diverse cultural histories. Since 'ritual' is a pregnant symbol, however, it is unlikely that its meaning will ever be exhausted, analytically and theoretically, regardless of whether as the symbol by which scholars of ritual communicate or as the cultural phenomena that are included under it. 'Ritual', says Bell, is resistant to reflection. It is a practice that does not see what it does; it is blind to what it produces; it is also mute: "it is designed to do what it does without bringing what it is doing across the threshold of discourse or systematic thinking".[133] That, I suggest, is true also, to some degree, of the term 'ritual'. Which is another reason for opting pragmatically for an inclusive approach to the study of rituals.

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[133] Bell 1992, 87, 93.

STRUCTURE, PROCESS, FORM

Terence Turner

Since the beginning of the modern era, ritual phenomena have posed a challenge to social thought, and above all to anthropology, as that variety of social theory that seeks to account for social and cultural forms most at variance with enlightened modern rationalism and empiricism. While modernist social thought sought to explain history in terms of progress toward secular, scientific rationalism, ritual behavior and its associated beliefs seemed to epitomize the antithesis of these values: atavistic, unscientific, counter-empirical irrationalism. This virtually ensured that as anthropology developed in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries, it fixated upon ritual phenomena as integrally identified with religion and primitive forms of society.

The accumulation of ethnographic knowledge, however, as well as the contributions of other disciplines such as psychoanalysis, linguistics, ethology, and ethnomethodology, to name only a few, have led anthropologists to broaden their thinking about ritual in an effort to encompass the full range of what is now known about ritual behavior and the issues it poses. Among the more important contributions that have come from these sources in recent decades have been the increased recognition of the importance and prevalence of secular rituals,[1] the fundamental role of objectification and framing in the pragmatics of everyday communicative practice and interaction,[2] and the ritual behaviors of non-human species.[3] These and other related developments have driven a steadily broadening attempt

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[1] Moore and Meyerhoff (eds) 1977. See also T.S. Turner, "Ritualized politics and politicized ritual among ourselves and the Kayapo of Brazil", A. Henn and P. Koepping (eds), *Rituals in an Unstable World. Contingency-Embodiment-Hybridity* (forthcoming).

[2] On framing, see G. Bateson, "A Theory of Play and Fantasy" (1955), G. Bateson, *Steps to an Ecology of Mind* (New York, 1972) 177–193, and Goffman 1974. On objectification in communicative practices, see W. Hanks, *Language and Communicative Practices* (Boulder (Co.), Oxford, 1996) 277–279, 299.

[3] On the ritual behavior of animals and birds, see Bateson, "A Theory of Play and Fantasy", and Eibl-Eibesfeldt 1979.

to identify the generic properties of ritual practices. A number of
new theoretical ideas and approaches, have been deployed that have
suggested emergent possibilities for rethinking and connecting received
anthropological concerns with ritual, such as the formal and struc-
tural properties of ritual action, the efficacy of ritual performance
and related issues of the dynamics of ritual processes, and the ele-
mentary units of ritual action (e.g., symbols, tropes). The new work
on the whole is less concerned with ritual as a religious phenome-
non affording insights into the nature of the sacred than with ritual
as a social process concerned with the production of social identi-
ties and powers. As Munn wrote in a prescient review of the litera-
ture in 1973:

> . . . ritual should be viewed as a societal control system, a generalized
> medium of social interaction, linking the individual to a community
> of significant others through the symbolic mobilization of shared life
> meanings.[4]

Along with the infusion of new ideas has been renewed critical atten-
tion paid by some scholars to earlier anthropological students and
theorists of ritual. The translations and reeditions of numerous ear-
lier texts have renewed and disseminated awareness of the insights
of earlier scholars into ritual forms and processes. Of particular rele-
vance for the understanding of the formal and structural aspects of
ritual has been the translation and critical reedition of works of
Durkheim, his students and collaborators, most of whom published
in the *Année Sociologique*. This body of work may thus serve as a con-
venient starting point for this essay.[5]

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[4] Munn 1973, 605.
[5] Among the more important works of this group that will be discussed in this
paper: É. Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life: A Study in Religious
Sociology* (1912), trans. J.W. Swain (London 1954); R. Hertz, *Death and the Right Hand*
(1907, 1909), trans. C. and R. Needham (Glencoe, Il., 1960); H. Hubert and
M. Mauss, *Sacrifice: Its Nature and Functions* (1899), trans. W.D. Halls (London, 1964);
M. Mauss, *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies* (1925), trans.
W.D. Halls (London, 1990).

Robertson Smith, Durkheim and the Année Sociologique:
Classification and ambiguity

Durkheim and his associates in the *Année Sociologique* represented the culmination of the French sociological tradition that was shaped by the conservative reaction to the French Revolution. A principal goal of sociology as they conceived it was to provide a scientific basis for social solidarity, which they felt had been shattered in France by the Revolution and its aftermath. The idea of society as a source of moral constraint led Durkheim to identify it as the real content of the sacred and the implicit object of religious practices. He accordingly conceived of ritual, which he saw as the elementary social form of religious practice, as the channel through which society shaped the moral conscience and cognitive consciousness of individuals. The Durkheimians also drew inspiration from British and French historians of the institutions and religions of ancient societies such as those of Greece, Rome, India and early Arabia. Fustel de Coulanges emphasized the role of ritual as the basis of the corporate entities (descent groups) which comprised the societies of archaic Greece and Rome.[6] His views in this respect were reinforced by the British scholars Maine and Robertson Smith, who stressed the primacy of ritual forms in the definition of the boundaries and corporate entities and the social categories they embodied.[7] Robertson Smith argued that ritual, as collective social action, was prior to religious beliefs or ideas, and as such constituted the original ground of social solidarity, which he conceived as deriving from communion feasts in which the totemic ancestor of the clan served as the *pièce de résistance.* Following Robertson Smith, Durkheim developed a theory of ritual as the normative vehicle of spontaneous social feeling or 'collective effervescence', that both expressed and reproduced the morally compelling quality of social solidarity.[8]

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[6] N.D. Fustel de Coulanges, *The Ancient City: An Anthropological View of Greece and Rome* (1865) (New York, 1956).

[7] H. Maine, *Ancient Law* (1861) (London, 1959); W. Robertson Smith, *Lectures on the Religion of the Semites: The Fundamental Institutions* (1888–1891) (New York, 1972).

[8] Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, xli–xlii, xliv–xlv, 218–220, 228, 424.

Following Robertson Smith, Durkheim conceived religion as founded on the ritual separation of sacred and profane things, in which the sacred, as the embodiment of the social collectivity, was insulated by ritual prohibitions from undue contact from the profane sphere of individual social activities, even though periodic access to its powers by means of collective ritual was essential for the continuation of social life. Robertson Smith explained the need for this ritually enforced separation by means of his concept of the 'ambiguity of the sacred'.[9] The sacred, in this view, constitutes the repository of the power of social reproduction. As such, it consists of a higher order of collective powers than those of the profane world of everyday social relations and individual persons. It therefore has to be set apart from contact with that world. The profane world and its individual members, however, periodically need to get access to the powers of the sacred to renew their lives, identities, and social institutions.

The Durkheimians conceived of collective rituals, or such ritualized processes of interaction as gift exchange, as instruments for accomplishing this positive social purpose. Durkheim attempted to reconcile Robertson Smith's ideas of ritual with the positivist epistemological principles of the French sociological tradition by means of his theory of ritual, based on his concept of 'collective effervescence'. This is the idea adumbrated by Durkheim in *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* that the intensified physical proximity of members of the gathering clan spontaneously gives rise to subjective excitement which manifests itself in ritual action. The effect of the ritual performance on the celebrants is to cause them to renew their moral commitment to social norms and therefore to reinstitute the institutional order of society.

The fundamental tenet of French sociological positivism, which Durkheim shared, was that society as a collective entity exerts an external constraining force on individuals. In the case of the collective effervescence, the physical proximity of fellow clansmen manifests this external constraining force of society. Durkheim, however, found that he needed to postulate that this external, objective force must become transformed into internalized affective dispositions or 'sentiments'. Only thus could he account for the subjective motivation of the members of society to follow its norms and celebrate the collective rituals necessary to reproduce it. The spontaneous affective

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[9] Robertson Smith, *The Religion of the Semites*, 150–164.

excitement induced by the sheer physical contiguity of fellow clans-
men that produced the 'effervescence' was the essential link in his
attempt to reconcile positivist theory of the social order as an exter-
nally compelling order acting on human beings 'like a thing' with
his recognition that conformity to social norms was the result of
internalized subjective dispositions. The material expression of this
collective effervescence, he theorized, was the celebration of totemic
ritual (Robertson Smith's conception of the most primitive form of
religion). Durkheim's theory of ritual thus led him into a contradic-
tion he was never able to solve: which came first, social-positivist
chicken of external social constraint or the psychological-idealist egg
of spontaneous subjective sentiment.

All the members of the *Année* circle were preoccupied with this
profane individual-sacred society conundrum. They understood them-
selves as positivist observers of social life, but at the same time they
wished to prescribe variants of the forms of moral solidarity they
claimed to find in simpler societies (above all, ritual and religious
practices) as remedies for the anomic social consciousness of post-
revolutionary France. They wished to restore the sentiments of social
solidarity that they felt had been ruptured by the revolution, and
looked to the way the ritualized social practices and representations
of simpler societies mediate and transcend ruptures in the categorical
order of social consciousness, and manage to transform contacts with
the sacred into forces for the repair and restoration of social order.
Perhaps ironically, it was a Belgian fellow-traveller of their school
who achieved the most dynamic formulation of their programme.

Van Gennep, V. Turner and the rites of passage:
Structure, transformation, and the hierarchy of operations

Arnold Van Gennep was not a student of Durkheim nor a mem-
ber of the *Année* circle, although he shared many of their ideas and
assumptions concerning ritual and the sacred. His work on *rites de
passage*, while consistent with their theories, constituted an advance
in that it was defined in abstract formal terms that made no intrin-
sic stipulations as to substantive content or religious character.[10] Rites

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[10] A. van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage* (1909), trans. Monika Vizedom and Gabrielle
Caffee (Chicago, 1960).

of passage, like analogous ritual phenomena studied by the contributors to the *Année Sociologique*, are devices for instigating and directing the periodic transformations of social status and space-time incidental to social and natural processes like bodily development and seasonal variation. They channel the transformative processes in ways that temporarily suspend, but do not permanently disrupt, normative classifications of social status or calendrical periods. The content of the rites comprising the successive stages was defined purely in functional terms. The first stage is that of separation from secular or profane social life, the second stage, which Van Gennep called the 'marginal' or liminal stage, marks the transition between the first and final stages, and the final stage consists of the rites of 'aggregation' or reincorporation into society, or in the case of calendrical rituals or ceremonies for war or peace, a transition to the next season or civil state. The middle or 'liminal' stage does not consist of rites of the same order as those comprising the initial and terminal, but is rather constituted by operations that transform the relations severed by the initial phase to the forms in which they can be reintegrated into profane society by the rites of the final stage.

Van Gennep presented his formal model as a linear series of moves or stages on the same level. As I have pointed out elsewhere, however, the process actually has the form of a vertical mediation between levels of operations of differing logical types. The transformational operations of the liminal phase constitute a higher, more powerful level than those of the the first and third stages.[11] The bizarre features of the rites constituting the liminal (middle) phase, and the ritual identities of those who pass through it as initiands, partners in marriage, or decaying corpses between the point of death ('separation') and the final 'aggregation' into the spirit world after secondary burial, as in Hertz's essay on the rituals of death, have been widely remarked, both by Van Gennep and others, such as Hertz and V. Turner.[12] These features typically comprise the juxtaposition of attributes that are contradictory, inverted, or free of the normative constraints of everyday social activity and status identity. Victor

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[11] T.S. Turner, "Transformation, Hierarchy and Transcendence: A Reformulation of VanGennep's Model of the Structure of *Rites de Passage*", Moore and Meyerhoff (eds) 1977, 53–70.

[12] Hertz, *Death and the Right Hand*; V.W. Turner 1969.

Turner considered that these features constituted a distinct level or domain of 'anti-structure', qualitatively distinct from, and opposed to 'structure', by which he understood profane social and political organization and its associated mores. On the basis of this distinction, he suggested a model of ritual process as a dialectical oscillation between structure and 'anti-structure'.[13] As I argued in the essay on the structure of rites of passage, just cited, however, V. Turner's characterization of the liminal stage of rites of passage mistakes what is really meta-structure for anti-structure. The dialectical relation between them is not an antithesis between structure and its absence but between two levels of structure which consist of operations of different orders of power.[14]

The 'passage' of the person, group or season undergoing the ritual, leading to his/her/its 'aggregation' to the new status or condition, consists in formal terms of transformations. As such, it comprises more powerful operations of a higher logical type than the simple negation or confirmation of the classificatory identities that comprise the initial and final phases of the ritual process. The transformational operations that comprise the liminal stage of the process are able to change members or entities of a category into elements of the opposite category, and are thus able to fulfill opposite functions— both destructive or disintegrative at the beginning of the process and productive or constructive at its end, when the entity or identity being transformed is integrated into its new status, condition or category. They thus combine functions that would be contradictory at the lower level of classifications and status identities upon which they operate. This ambiguous combination of destructive and constructive powers is the reason why the events and actions of the medial phase of rites of passage that embody these transformational

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[13] V.W. Turner 1969.

[14] T.S. Turner, "Transformation, Hierarchy and Transcendence", 69–70 n. 5. The idea of "levels" and different "orders of logical power" refers to the concept of the hierarchy of logical types, used by Bateson among others (see, e.g., Bateson, "A theory of play and fantasy"). In Bateson's use of the concept, a given operation, such as learning, might constitute one level of the hierarchy, and the reflexive application of that operation to itself, as in "learning to learn", would constitute a higher level, consisting of operations of greater logical power. In my usage, normative categories of status relations, such as "boy" or "man", comprise the base level of the hierarchy, and transformations of those statuses and relations, such as those comprising the middle phase of rites of passage, constitute a higher level of greater logical power.

operations must be kept separate from the normal statuses and classificatory identities of the profane world, except under carefully controlled conditions when they are needed to effect or confirm transformations in those statuses. In rituals of passage, the rites of separation and aggregation have this job of insulating the normative categories and relations that comprise the profane world from the liminal phase of the ritual in which the transformational operations are brought to bear and do their work. Between these two points, the initiands or other entities undergoing transitions or passages become identified with the transformational processes of the medial or liminal phase of the ritual. They therefore take on ambiguous, trickster-like attributes and modes of behavior, which typically combine seclusion and withdrawal from ordinary social life with anti-social behavior, including transgression of profane social norms, ordeals and states of spiritual danger and special vulnerability.

This juxtaposition of contradictory attributes and functions, I have argued, is itself a structural, or meta-structural, not an 'anti-structural' property. More specifically, it is a property of the relations between different levels of the same structural hierarchy of operations of differing logical types and powers. It is this juxtaposition of operations of differing levels of power, not merely intermediate position or transgressed boundaries with adjacent categories *per se*, that accounts for the special properties of the liminal rites. We are clearly dealing here with the same phenomenon that Robertson Smith recognized as the 'ambiguity of the sacred'.

From the standpoint of initiands undergoing the rites of the liminal phase, the normative statuses and relations of the profane world appear incompatible with the transformational powers and statuses of the liminal phase, and thus to pose an inverted form of the threat of dissolution and pollution posed by the ambiguity of the sacred to the profane. Van Gennep called this inversion the 'pivoting of the sacred'. The problem, however, is not only one of a change of subjective perspective but of the difference between the logical types of relations that constitute the two levels. The lower level consists of discrete classes of status or identity, such as 'uninitiated boy or girl', and 'initiated adult'. The transformational operations that are in play in the liminal stage, in contrast, cannot be formulated in the terms of the normative rules and classifications of the lower logical type that constitute the classifications of mutually exclusive social identities that comprise the profane social world. As I suggested in the essay to which I have alluded,

There is an analogy here to the principle embodied in Gödel's famous proof that any complex system of logical propositions is necessarily incapable of serving as the basis for deducing all of the axioms necessary to demonstrate its own logical consistency. It may be suggested that, in an analogous manner, social and cultural systems will have difficulty in formulating the basic (highest-level [transformational]) principles responsible for their own coherence and integration in terms of the principles and criteria applicable within the system (i.e., the principles of what I have termed the lower levels of the structure).[15]

Structuralism and Formalism: Lévi-Strauss and Staal, Operational structure and syntagmatic form

Claude Levi-Strauss made two contributions of great value to the understanding of ritual and other symbolic constructions such as myth and classification. The first was to introduce the model of operational structure (the 'group' of transformations regulated by a common principle of invariance) into anthropology. The second was to develop the analysis of patterns of relations among detailed features of the content of symbolic forms in ways that revealed previously unimagined levels of structural significance. Unfortunately, these innovations were couched in a confused and confusing theoretical system that does more to hinder than facilitate the analysis of cultural forms. This is true above all of ritual. To put Levi-Strauss's great insights to good use therefore requires care in extracting the rational kernel from the mystical shell, as Marx said of Hegel. A good place to begin such an effort is to clarify the relation between Levi-Strauss and his immediate predecessors, the thinkers associated with the Année Sociologique, with whom we have begun our discussion.

'Structuralism' (meaning, in this context, the work of Levi-Strauss and those who have attempted to follow his approach) is best understood as a reaction against the sociological tradition of Durkheim and the *Année*, in favor of a philosophical idealism, decked out now in psychological, now in linguistic theoretical terms. There is little continuity between the ideas of the *Année* as they have been summarized above and those of Levi-Strauss and his followers. This is

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[15] On Gödel, see E. Nagel and J. Newman, *Gödel's Proof* (New York, 1958); for the quoted passage, see T.S. Turner, "Transformation, Hierarchy and Transcendence", 69–70 n. 5.

true above all with regard to ritual, which as we have seen was a major focus of the work of the *Année* but has been neglected, if not avoided by the structuralists. There are several reasons for this. Most importantly, ritual consists of action, and structuralism does not deal with action. It has rather proceeded by abstracting from social action to the formal classificatory and semiotic relations that supposedly constitute its unconscious cultural, and ultimately cognitive-psychological code. In the second place, the structuralist attempt to locate the notion of structure in an abstract system of relations of identity and contrast between its constituent sign-elements, led structuralists to consign all aspects of sequential organization, including narrative, forms of discourse, and the temporal ordering of ritual activity to the residual category of the unstructured. Levi-Strauss derived these fundamental theoretical propositions from two main sources: the tradition of linguistic semiotics associated with Ferdinand de Saussure, and the positivist tradition of kinship theory in social anthropology identified above all with Radcliffe-Brown. I shall try to clarify this intellectual genealogy and some of its theoretical and analytical consequences in what follows.

Levi-Strauss's adoption of the theoretical ideas of Ferdinand de Saussure, the founder of structural linguistics, reinforced the influence of Radcliffe-Brown in leading him to limit his concept of structure to synchronic paradigmatic form to the exclusion of diachronic transformational processes.[16] Saussure founded his approach to linguistic structure on the distinction between 'language' (*langue*) and 'speech' (*parole*). The former he held to consist of the conceptual relations of contrast and identity among signs, which he defined as signifying

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[16] The terms, 'synchronic' and 'diachronic' refer to relations of logical identity and contrast abstracted from time, and thus 'timeless', on the one hand, and relations of succession in real time, on the other. The terms are widely misapplied in the Saussurean semiotic tradition, where the sequential ordering of grammatical parts of speech in the phrase structures of sentences are referred to as 'diachronic' because they involve sequential order despite their status as ideal synchronic constructs. 'Diachrony' properly applies to processes in real time involving variation and change in 'synchronic' structures. 'Paradigm' (or the 'paradigmatic') is the term used in the semiotic tradition for synchronic structures of relations among signs or sign elements. 'Syntagm' (or the 'syntagmatic'), in the same tradition, refers to sequentially ordered constructs such as those comprising linguistic syntax. For Saussure and his more orthodox followers, including in this respect Levi-Strauss, 'structure' is conceived as exclusively 'paradigmatic', and 'syntagmatic' phenomena, with a few trivial exceptions, are relegated to the residual category of the unstructured.

tokens (like the sound-forms or written forms of words) attached to concepts, or 'signifieds'. The internal relation between signifier and signified comprises the relation of 'signification'. Saussure, however, insisted that signification could not be understood as an internally determined property of individual signs. Rather, he argued that it derived from external relations of contrast among signs that shared a common identity in some other respect (or in Saussure's terms, belonged to the same 'order', such as the order of mammals, colors, or monetary denominations). Saussure thus formulated one of the more fundamental ideas of structuralism, namely that structurally significant contrasts must be bi-dimensional, combining a dimension of identity with one of contrast. This idea was further developed by Jakobson in his conception of 'binary opposition', defined as a combination of a foregrounded feature of contrast with a backgrounded dimension of identity which he elaborated as the basis of his componential analysis of phonemic systems.[17] This theoretical synthesis of Russian Formalist and Saussurean structuralist ideas is a fundamental theoretical and analytical tool, with applications to the anthropological analysis of symbolic forms far beyond Levi-Strauss's version of structuralism. Its influence on Levi-Strauss can be seen in the form of many of Levi-Strauss's models of the structure of kinship relations and cultural classification (e.g., the "culinary triangle").[18] It is also important to recognize that Saussure and the semiotic tradition based on his work are concerned only with 'signification' (the denotation of the ideational elements of signs by signifiers) to the exclusion of reference (the use of signs to indicate specific entities in the world) and meaning (which can be defined as signification plus reference and intention)[19] on the other. Both of the latter, along with

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[17] The terms 'foregrounding' and 'backgrounding' are taken from Russian Formalist poetic theory. The former refers to bringing a feature into salient focus by juxtaposing it against an unusual setting. The latter refers to features which are presupposed as forming the context of foregrounded features.

[18] C. Levi-Strauss, "Le Triangle culinaire", *L'Arc (Aix-en-Provence)* 26 (1965), 19–29.

[19] I use 'intention' in the sense of phenomenologists such as Ingarden and Schutz. The former used the concept to refer to the way signs, and by extension literary works of art, are intentional structures in the sense of being directed toward, or standing for objects (R. Ingarden, *The Cognition of the Literary Work of Art* (1973), trans. R.A. Crowley and K. Ingarden (Evanston, Il., 1973); R. Ingarden, *The Literary Work of Art: An Investigation on the Borderlines of Ontology, Logic and Theory of Literature* (1931), trans. G.G. Grabowicz (Evanston, Il. 1973)). The latter employed it to refer to the purposes of actors (A. Schutz, *The Phenomenology of the Social World* (1932) trans. G. Walsh and F. Lehnert (Evanston, Il., 1967); A. Schutz, *On Phenomenology and Social*

grammar and syntax, he relegated to the category of 'speech' (*parole*), which he regarded as essentially unstructured, on the ground that it involved variable combinations of linguistic elements in real time, in contrast to 'language' (*langue*), which he conceived as made up of synchronic paradigmatic relations. Levi-Strauss, and 'structuralism' as an anthropological movement based on his work, took on all of these Saussurean ideas.

Levi-Strauss's Saussurean orthodoxy appears, for example, in his definition of the 'structure' of myth in terms of synchronic, paradigmatic relations among sign-elements abstracted from their places in the narrative, which he dismisses as 'diachronic' and not part of 'structure'.[20] His version of structural analysis thus resulted in the theoretical destruction of its objects by the process of analysis itself. More than any other aspect of the theoretical heritage of structuralism, this unhappy synthesis disqualifies it as a useful approach to the analysis of ritual, which however else it may be described is clearly a syntagmatically organized diachronic activity. It would be difficult to conceive a more disastrous program for the analysis of ritual, considered as intentional activity. The sequential ordering of action, including ritual activity, is the essential dimension of intentionality, and thus of meaning, as distinct from the semiotic concept of signification as the coded semantic content of signs. Structuralism deals only with the latter, and not the former, and thus on this count as well disables itself as a theoretical approach to ritual. Structuralists' interest in ritual has accordingly been limited to its aspect as a specimen of cultural code, abstracted from all specifically ritual attributes, that can be mined for semiotic oppositions as elements of synchronic paradigms.

A third reason for the discontinuity between the ideas of the contributors to the Année Sociologique and Structuralism is Levi-Strauss's

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Relations (H.R. Wagner (ed.), Chicago, 1970). It is within both of these phenomenological senses of the word to say that rituals are constructed and performed with the tacit or explicit intention of having some effect on the world.

  [20] Levi-Strauss, "The structural study of myth", *Journal of American Folklore* 68:270 (1955), 428–444. This was Levi-Strauss's first statement of his approach to the structure of myth. There have been later developments, but no changes in the respects mentioned here. For an application of the model of operational structure to the analysis of the structure of myth taking the narrative sequence of episodes into account, see T.S. Turner, "Animal symbolism, totemism and the structure of myth", G. Urton (ed.), *Natural mythologies: Animal myths and metaphors in South America* (Salt Lake City, 1985) 49–106.

concept of structure as a 'group' of transformations. As he laid it out in his early essay, "The notion of structure in ethnology", he conceives of structure as a set of transformations belonging to the same group (i.e., constrained by a common limit or invariant principle). The structure consists of the relations among the transformations, or more specifically the relational principles common to all of them, the invariant constraints to which all the transformations must conform. In such a structure, the elements (the constituent transformations or 'variants') form a system so that a modification of one supposedly entails modifications of the others.[21] This concept of structure as a 'group', of transformations or 'variants' of a common invariant structure is inspired by mathematical group theory, although it has been applied to human psychological and social phenomena by, e.g., J. Piaget, in his concept of the operational structure of the intelligence.[22] It has nothing in common, however, with the concepts of classificatory structure employed by the Durkheimian contributors to the *Année Sociologique*. I shall refer to it for convenience in what follows as the concept of 'operational structure', employing Piaget's term for transformations as forms of actions, or schemas, organized in groups bounded by invariant constraints.

The crucial question that arises in applying a model of this type to social or cultural phenomena is what is to be taken as a 'variant' or transformation belonging to 'group'. Levi Strauss has generally attempted to treat social or cultural forms (e.g., kinship systems or myths) as wholes as the 'variants' or immediate constituents of his models of structural 'groups'. He has sought to define the invariants constraining such groups as universal psychological principles or "fundamental structures of the mind". Methodologically speaking, then, the 'structure' of kinship systems or myths is no longer conceived as accessible through the analysis of the individual myths, cultural classifications, or kinship systems which serve as 'variants', but rather through the analysis of the relations among all the 'variants' of the 'group' taken together (since it is only at the level of the whole 'group' of relations that the invariant constraints common to all

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[21] C. Levi-Strauss, "La Notion de structure en ethnologies", C. Levi-Strauss, *Anthropologies structurale* (Paris, 1958) 303–352, here 306.

[22] J. Piaget, *The psychology of intelligence* (Totowa, NJ, 1966), 32–50. See also J. Piaget, *Structuralism*, trans. and ed. Chaninah Maschler (New York, 1970), 3–36.

reveal themselves. The invariant "structures of the mind" that con-
strain the variations among members of the group so that they form
a 'system' conforming to the specifications of Levi-Strauss's definition
constitute the real 'structures' of the group. The nature of the 'struc-
ture' of the social or cultural phenomena in question thus emerges
from the analysis as different in kind from the phenomena them-
selves: psychological or mental rather than social or cultural.

This paradoxical result is a logical product of Levi-Strauss's con-
ception of structure as consisting of relations among social systems
or cultural forms as wholes. It becomes impossible to speak of the
structure of a single 'variant' on its own. If 'structure' is defined in
terms of the external relations among transformations, then the trans-
formational operations comprising the structure cannot be of the
same order as those that form part of the internal organization of
individual kinship systems, rituals, or mythical stories. Levi-Strauss's
model, in fact, tends to render such internal transformations struc-
turally invisible or irrelevant. It follows that 'structure' cannot con-
sist of the internal relations among the constituent elements of social
processes or their symbolic representations as they exist within any
real society, ritual or myth. At this point, as Levi-Strauss himself has
said, anthropology, as he defines it in terms of his own structuralist
theory, becomes 'entropology', and what begins as search for specifically
social and cultural structures becomes a quest for universal psycho-
logical principles.

As numerous social theorists from Marx to Bateson and Piaget
have demonstrated, the problem is not with the model itself, or its
inherent inapplicability to human phenomena. The real problem is
that Levi-Strauss tries to apply the right model at the wrong level
of analysis. This was in part the result of his adoption, as the model
for his conception of the units ('variants') of his transformational
structural models, of Radcliffe-Brown's pre-structuralist approach to
social and cultural structure, in which kinship systems and symbolic
classifications such as religious pantheons are treated as synchronic
'structural forms'. By treating whole kinship systems, cultural classi-
fications, or myths as unitary, internally homogeneous 'forms,' Levi-
Strauss ironically overlooked their own character as structures in the
sense of his own model of operational structure. Every kinship system,
myth or ritual is internally organized as a process consisting of trans-
formations, which can be analyzed as 'groups' of transformational
operations and invariant constraints, such as the family and domes-

tic group cycles at the core of kinship systems, the narrative sequences of myth or the sequential ordering of actions in ritual performance (I shall give examples of the analysis of individual rituals as operational structures later in this paper).

Levi-Strauss's models are thus best understood as hybrid constructs consisting of structuralist superstructures ('groups' of transformations) resting upon pre-structuralist infrastructures of Radcliffe-Brownian or structural forms or Saussurean paradigms. It is important to note, however, that in at least one context Levi Strauss explicitly contrasted his structuralist method to a 'formalis' approach. This came in his critique of Vladimir Propp's formalist analyses of Russian folk tales.[23] Propp's method consisted in abstracting from the specific contents of the stories to obtain sequential patterns of types of role-actors, which he called 'functions', and actions. These abstracted sequential patterns were formal models of the plots of the tales, with only the minimum necessary indication of the specific content of the stories. Lévi-Strauss contrasted this method of abstraction from content to form with his structuralist approach, which proceeded in the opposite manner by searching for relations of identity and contrast at the level of the specific content of the sign-elements of tales and (occasionally) rituals, often focusing on apparently trivial and apparently arbitrary details. In this respect, Levi-Strauss's handling of the structural implications of specific details owed much to Freudian analysis of symbols and the dream-work. In Levi-Strauss's analyses of myths, the structure thus emerges as an immanent pattern of associations and contrasts among concrete attributes of signs or symbolic aspects of actors' deeds and identities, rather than from abstracting generic 'functional' aspects from content, as with Propp. Of course, what Lévi-Strauss ended up with were equally one-sided abstractions of another sort, since unlike Propp, he abstracted from the sequential ordering of events and symbols in the narrative. Still, Levi-Strauss's bold synthesis of Freudian symbolic interpretation with the concept of structures of contrast and identity among signs taken from structural linguistics, as a universal key to a new and more powerful

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[23] V. Propp, "Morphology of the Folktale. Part III", *International Journal of American Linguistics* 24:4 (1958) x–134; C. Levi-Strauss, *La Structure et la Forme: Reflexions sur un ouvrage de Vladimir Propp* (Cahiers de l'Institut de science économique appliqué 9, Mars 1960 Serie M, no. 7. Paris) 3–36, republished in C. Levi-Strauss, *Anthropologie Structurale Deux* (Paris, 1973) 139–173.

level of structural analysis of cultural forms like myth and ritual, had the impact of a major discovery, that does not depend for its usefulness on other aspects of the theoretical apparatus of structural linguistics that Levi-Strauss also borrowed.

Lévi-Strauss's characterization of Propp's formalism as based on the abstraction of patterns of sequential relations from narratives rather than looking for synchronic relational patterns among features of the content of elements of the tales nevertheless has a wider relevance to ritual studies. F. Staal, for example, has proposed a formalist approach to ritual based on a radical separation of syntactic form from meaningful content. He is noted for his claim that ritual is 'meaningless', by which he essentially means that its symbols have no semantic reference and that ritual acts have no intentional direction beyond their own performance.[24] Staal models his approach on early Chomskian transformational grammar, in which syntactic structures were treated in isolation from "the semantic component" and conceived as hard-wired in the neurological structure of the brain in a dedicated linguistic faculty. A specific feature of early transformational grammar was its concern with recursive and iterative processes, in which a syntactic pattern could become recursively replicative and self-embedding. Staal has made similar claims about the formal structures of ritual, which he maintains have evolved with the species in effective independence from meaning and symbolism. The latter he considers irrelevant to ritual form. Since the early formulation of Chomsky's approach appeared in 1957 and 1965, transformational grammarians have struggled over the question of whether syntactic transformations are regulated by principles of conservation (one of the candidates being the conservation of meaning).[25] These debates have left no trace as far as I am aware on Staal's formalism, which thus makes no attempt to assume the character of a 'structuralism' in the specific sense of Levi-Strauss's critique of Propp.

Staal performs a useful service in stressing the distinction between the forms of ritual practice as patterned activity and the symbolic content of ritual acts, and emphasizing the priority of the former both in a phylogenetic and an analytical sense. This emphasis on the essential nature of ritual as action rather than as a collection of

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[24] Staal 1989.
[25] N. Chomsky, *Syntactic Structures* (The Hague, 1957), and *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax* (Cambridge, 1965).

symbols is a fundamental point. It is consistent with my emphasis on the role of framing and objectification as the basic properties of ritual action in the following discussion. The *form* in which Staal conceives action as the substance of ritual, however, is problematic. He conceives the forms of ritual activity as 'rules', on the model of linguistic syntax as formulated by transformationalist grammarians. Following recent work in the ethnography of ritual practice and important recent analyses of communicative practices by pragmatically oriented linguists, however, I would argue that they should be considered as schemas rather than rules. A schema, as contrasted to a rule, is a generalized form of activity built up from practice, that remains open to inductive inputs from the activities it guides. It thus contains a degree of indeterminacy, and remains capable of variation and improvisation. Even in the case of rigidly prescribed ritual practices, the forms of those practices, considered as schemas, retain the property of reflexively objectified forms of the activities they serve to regulate, rather than arbitrarily imposed rules.

Schemas also retain the quality of purposive activity, and thus carry, implicitly or explicitly, an intrinsically meaningful aspect. This means that a schema as a whole can have a meaning, not reducible to the sum of its symbolic constituents. An excellent example is Fajans' analysis of the construction of Baining ritual masks.[26] The masks are built up of numerous elements each of which have their own symbolic associations, but the overall activities of production and use of the masks in ritual performance follow basic Baining social schemas of 'work' and 'play', which confer general meanings on the ritual process in which the masks are employed. The schemas thus frame the symbolic elements, and thus affect the specific senses of the symbolic elements that form part of it. This is a key point. Staal, in his attempt to exclude meaning from ritual, does not consider that his 'rules' confer meaning on the symbolic elements or contents of ritual activity, unlike Fajans's schemas. As Penner has pointed out in an insightful critique, part of Staal's problem is that he considers only the referential meaning of symbolic elements or acts.[27] Penner points out that he thereby neglects the more general

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[26] J. Fajans, *They Make Themselves: Work and Play among the Baining of Papua New Guinea* (Chicago, 1997).

[27] H.H. Penner, "Language, Ritual, and Meaning", *Numen* 32 (1985), 1–16.

conceptual aspect of meaning that Frege and other philosophers have designated as 'sense' (*sinn*) in contrast to reference (*bedeutung*). To this I would add, following the above discussion, that by conceiving the formal patterns of ritual action as syntactic rules rather than as schemas, Staal also ignores the phenomenological aspect of intention, which as I have argued above is an intrinsic aspect of ritual as purposive action. Fajans' schemas are defined as intentionally directed units. B. Kapferer's study of Sinhalese curing ritual offers another example of the employment of a phenomenological approach to the interpretation of ritual action grounded in an interpretation of the intentional meaning of ritual acts.[28] I would argue that formalisms that attempt to conceptualize 'structure' in abstraction from content or meaning cannot account adequately even for the formal aspects of ritual considered as schematized activity. For example, although Staal's emphasis on recursive and self-embedding processes in ritual brings into focus an important aspect of ritual behavior that has been insufficiently appreciated by many analysts of ritual, I would insist that recursively organized ritual or social activity cannot be understood in abstraction from the intentions and values (i.e., meanings) attached to the actions in question. In sum Staal's attempt to base a theory of ritual on a concept of form as dissociated from meaning, intention or any object outside its own performance, is not only defective in terms of the theoretical concept of meaning on which he bases it, but obviously inconsistent with the ethnographic and historical record as well. The ritual activities of the Brahmins, on which he bases his arguments, may appear to them to be completely self-centered, but the rest of the population obviously feels that they serve some useful (and thus meaningful) purpose, else they would not continue to support the Brahmins to perform them.

British Neo-Durkheimianism and Anglo-structuralism

Although Lévi-Strauss and other French structuralists were with few exceptions more concerned to differentiate themselves from the sociologically oriented work of the *Année Sociologique* than to exploit its theoretical capital, a new generation of British anthropologists turned,

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[28] Kapferer 1997, 4–5, 33 n. 7, 194–95, 252–53.

in the 1960's and '70's, to a more intense engagement with the ideas of the *Année* and Van Gennep on ritual and symbolic classification. Mary Douglas, Rodney Needham, Edmund Leach, and somewhat more loosely, Victor Turner and Louis Dumont, to mention only the best-known members of the group, produced a series of influential works that attempted to synthesize the heritage of the *Année Sociologique* on ritual symbolism and classification (e.g., dual systems of classification such as the opposition of left and right, social and natural zones of space, anomalous or ambiguous elements in classification and ritual structures, such as the liminal stage in rites of passage) with ideas drawn from Lévi-Straussian structuralism (e.g., dualism, binary opposition, mediation, marriage exchange). Although the theoretical agendas of these authors differed in important respects, there was enough overlap among them to gain them recognition as a collective tendency, sometimes referred to (by non-members) as the Anglo-Structuralists.

The Anglo-Structuralists were not really structuralists in the French sense of the term. They did not share Lévi-Strauss's rejection of sociological positivism and functionalism, or his commitment to psychological associationism and "structures of the mind" in place of Durkheimian 'collective representations'. Their analyses remained for the most part grounded in ethnographic data on specific cases. One of their greatest theoretical contributions, consequently, was to explore the application of structuralist analysis to individual social systems and cultural constructs, including classifications, myths and rituals. V. Turner was an outspoken anti-structuralist in several senses of the term, explicitly declaring his suspicion of French tendencies to over-formalize mythical structures and cosmologies, and celebrating the escape from 'structure' he found in liminal rites of passage. As I have noted above, he developed these ideas into a general theory of ritual process as an alternation of 'structure' and 'anti-structure', in which the latter became reified as a substantive sphere of human freedom and spontaneous creativity.[29]

The Durkheimians tended to emphasize paired categorical oppositions (e.g., social—individual, sacred—profane, left—right) as the formal framework of ritual processes and symbolic classifications. One of these paired but opposing categories was typically identified, following Durkheimian theory, with the social or the sacred, while the

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[29] V.W. Turner 1969.

other was associated with natural, profane, individualistic, or other-
wise anti-social attributes. Needham, the most orthodox of the British
Neo-Durkheimians, followed this pattern, for example in his writing
on right-left oppositions, directly inspired by Hertz's essay on the
same subject.[30] Some members of the *Année* circle, notably Mauss
(on the gift and sacrifice), Hertz (on death and secondary burial),
and Van Gennep (a fellow traveler if not actually a member of the
group), however, were equally or more interested in anomalous cate-
gories that fell between the opposed polarities that formed the book-
ends of their conceptions of social classification.[31] Anglo-Structuralists
such as Douglas, Leach and V. Turner (to assimilate him, doubtless
under posthumous protest, with the group), developed this *Année*
line of interest. Their particular interest was in how these medial or
'liminal' elements, by transgressing the normative separation and
logical mutual exclusiveness of the categories of the framing binary
opposition, thereby become imbued with socially creative and/or
dangerous magical power. It will be recognized that this conception
is essentially an extrapolation of Robertson Smith's notion of the
ambiguity of the sacred.[32]

   This approach has the advantage of linking an account of the for-
mal aspects of ritual practices and the symbolic classifications which
serve as its conceptual framework with a theory of the macro-dynamics
of ritual process and the micro-dynamics and structure of individual
ritual symbols. The latter subject was importantly developed by
V. Turner in a series of studies of the dominant symbols of Ndembu
rituals, such as the 'milk tree' that serves as the focus of the girls'
initiation. Here as elsewhere, Turner's analysis is an ethnographic
tour de force, which describes in great detail how the cultural mean-
ings of such symbols are built up as complex combinations of symbolic
associations. He drew upon Freudian ideas of dream symbolism in
his account of the bipolar structure of such symbols, with an 'orectic'

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[30] Hertz, *Death and the Right Hand*; R. Needham, *Right and Left: Essays on Dual
Symbolic Classifications* (Chicago, 1973).

[31] Hertz, *Death and the Right Hand*; Mauss, *The Gift*; Van Gennep, *The rites of passage*.

[32] See, for example, E.R. Leach, "Two Essays Concerning the Symbolic Repre-
sentation of Time", E.R. Leach, *Rethinking Anthropology* (London, 1961), 124–136;
"Anthropological Aspects of Language: Animal Categories and Verbal Abuse",
E. Lenneberg (ed.), *New Directions in the Study of Language* (Cambridge, Ma, 1964),
23–63; and "Telstar et les aborigènes, ou 'La Pensée Sauvage'", *Annales: Économies,
Sociétés, Civilisations* 6 (Nov.–Dec. 1964), 1100–1116.

pole formed through the 'condensation' of affectively laden associations with milk, nurturance, motherhood, etc., and the opposite pole constructed of 'ideological' meanings denoting such normative social meanings as matriliny.[33]

The main critical drawbacks of the Anglo-structuralist approach remained those of the works of the *Année Sociologique* that inspired it. Firstly, in the absence of a more adequate theoretical account of the basis of classificatory structures, including binary ones, the focus on 'medial' entities and liminal categories with their special properties rested upon begged questions. The grounds on which some categories became counted as basic framing polarities while others were designated as anomalous or 'medial' elements, however intuitively convincing in particular cases, never received an adequate theoretical justification, particularly after the structuralists, both Franco- and Anglo-, jettisoned the Durkheimians' master opposition between society and the individual (along with its theoretical avatar, sacred and profane). Why should certain cases of interstitial position or anomalous classificatory status become sources of magical power or ritual danger? We have already addressed some of these issues in the preceding discussion of Van Gennep, and will return to them below. The point for present purposes is that the Anglo-structuralists, like their predecessors of the *Année*, made important contributions by identifying problematic phenomena, recognizing their importance, and formulating relevant hypotheses, although they did not provide satisfactory theoretical answers.

Another *leitmotiv* of Anglo-structuralist theory is the fundamental structural role of dual opposition (e.g. Needham on right and left, or Dumont on unequal contraries such as pure and impure, in which the dominant encompasses the subordinate).[34] This has been regarded as an instance of Anglo-Structuralism's use of Lévi-Straussian structuralist concepts, in this case the concept of binary opposition. As noted above, however, the structuralist concept of binary opposition is bi-dimensional, comprised of a dimension of identity between opposing terms juxtaposed with a dimension of contrast.[35] By this standard,

[33] V.W. Turner, "Symbols in Ndembu ritual", in V.W. Turner 1967, 19−47.

[34] Needham, *Right and Left*; L. Dumont, *Homo Hierarchicus: The Caste System and its Implications* (Chicago, 1966).

[35] R. Jakobson and M. Halle, *Fundamentals of Language* ('s-Gravenhage, 1956).

the paired contrasts of Needham, Dumont and other members of the
group are not 'structuralist' but formalist in Levi-Strauss's sense.[36] In
this respect they betray their authors' descent from Radcliffe-Brown
and the *Année*, rather than their imputed identity with structuralism.

The Anglo-Structuralists, like their predecessors in the Année, were
more interested in the classificatory structures that constituted the
architecture of ritual processes than with the structural mechanisms
of ritual effectiveness. By this I do not mean what Levi-Strauss, in
a pre-structuralist essay, called "symbolic efficacy", referring to the
supposed subjective impact of a shamanic song on a patient, or the
affective impression of ritual symbols and performance on partici-
pants and spectators, as ethnographically documented by V. Turner
and others.[37] Rather, I refer to the way aspects of the formal struc-
tures of rituals function to project the effectiveness of ritual action
from the frame of the ritual performance itself to achieve effects
beyond that frame. This is related to the intentional aspect of ritual
action, in the sense of the objectives toward which it is directed.
The mention of intention calls up the issue of meaning, of which it
is part. We are speaking, then of the relation between meaning and
structure. This relation, unfortunately, has been for the most part a
negative one in anthropological thinking: formalists and structural-
ists tend to confine their analyses to signification but dismiss or deny
the relevance of meaning, while interpretivists tend to pursue their
quest for meaning in disregard of formal and structural issues. If the
Durkheimians, Neo-Durkheimian Anglo-Structuralists, Structuralists
and Formalists exemplify one side of this problem, however, American
'symbolic anthropology', the anthropological approach that has focused
most explicitly on interpreting the meanings of ritual and other sym-
bolic forms, but has shunned structural and formal analysis, exemplifies
the other.

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[36] For a more extended critical discussion of this point, see T.S. Turner, "Dual
Opposition, Hierarchy and Value: Moiety Structure and Symbolic Polarity in Central
Brazil and Elsewhere", J.-C. Galey (ed.), *Differences, Valeurs, Hierarchies: Textes Offertes
a Louis Dumont et Reunis par Jean-Claude Galey* (Paris, 1984) 335–370.

[37] C. Levi-Strauss, "L'efficacité symbolique", C. Levi-Strauss, *Anthropologie struc-
turale* (Paris, 1958) 205–226.

American Cultural Idealism, 'Symbolic Anthropology' and "Interpretation"

In the USA, the idealist tendencies of Boasian cultural anthropology, supported by the rise of Parsons' Neo-Weberian theory in sociology, achieved hegemony, although far from unanimous assent, by the mid-Twentieth Century. The offspring of the uneasy alliance of these theoretical tendencies was the concept of culture as a 'system of ideas and symbols' that could be studied in abstraction from the social, economic and political sub-systems of the social totality. This at any rate became the mission allotted to anthropology in the institutional restructuring of the social sciences in the post-war American academy in the 1950s and 1960s. When the functionalist consensus on which this partition of intellectual tasks was based was shattered by the anti-systemic movements of the late 1960s and early 1970s, US anthropologists quietly dropped the notion of macroscopic cultural 'systems' and turned to a more microscopic focus on symbols and various forms of post-structuralism and deconstructionism. This refocusing was accompanied by an intensification of the idealist, cultural relativist and anti-structuralist tendencies of American cultural anthropology, sometimes in the guise of a turn toward the interpretation of symbols, narratives and ritual performances.

American symbolic anthropologists were impressed and inspired by the successes of French structuralism and Anglo-structuralism, and influence from these sources helped to catalyze the development of the new 'symbolic anthropology'. Symbolic anthropologists, however, have tended to be generally hostile to structuralism and theoretical formalisms of all kinds. Thus while they took inspiration from some ideas of the Anglo-structuralists, such as Douglas's, Leach's and V. Turner's analyses of anomalous or medial symbolic elements and the properties of liminal stages in rites of passage, they showed little interest in the formal models of classification and ritual process derived from the *Année Sociologique* and Van Gennep that constituted the original framework within which those concepts were developed. As a general rule, then, symbolic anthropologists tended to approach the analysis of ritual through the interpretation of symbolic elements and their meanings, with little attention to the formal properties or structures of rituals as wholes.

American anthropologists like N. Munn, F. Myers, S. Ortner, M. and R. Rosaldo, and C. Geertz, physically and to some extent

theoretically joined by V. Turner after 1965, also drew upon psy-
choanalytic ideas about symbolism (most importantly, Freud's concept
of 'condensation' symbols as mediated through the writings of Edward
Sapir and V. Turner), and in the influential case of Geertz, ideas
of textual interpretation borrowed from offshoots of the hermeneutic
tradition.

Geertz's move to an explicitly interpretive position, which dates
to his paper on the Balinese Cockfight published in 1973,[38] was made
by way of his adoption of Paul Ricoeur's 'textual' model of cultural
analysis.[39] 'Interpretation', for Geertz, has been the rubric under
which he shifted from his earlier, more abstract, Parsonian frame of
analysis, the 'cultural system', to a narrower focus on complex events,
and rituals such as cockfights, funerals, and state ceremonies. It could
be suggested, in fact, that the main function of the new theoretical
rhetoric of 'text' and 'interpretation' for Geertz has been to allow
him to shift from the macro-systemic perspective of the '50's and
'60's to the new anti-systemic micro-perspective of symbols, events,
and performances of the '70's and '80's. Shifting the focus of analy-
sis from 'systems' of symbols to individual symbols or symbolically
charged events, has been for Geertz and some other members of
this loosely related group a way of retaining the epistemological com-
mitment to the autonomy of the cultural sphere in relation to social
and psychological levels of analysis inherited from the Boasians and
Parsons.

Ricoeur's "model of the text" was essentially an attempt to gene-
ralize the hermeneutic ideas of Gadamer and Heidegger as the basis
of a general interpretive approach to social action. The basic idea
was to formulate a basis for defining actions (such as rituals) as texts,
so that they might be interpreted in a broadly Gadamerian way.
The essential feature of Ricoeur's concept of a 'text' is detachment
from any relation to its original social or cultural context, the inten-
tions of its author or the meanings imputed to it in its reception by
its original audience, so that it can circulate freely and be interpreted
by any 'reader' in any context in his or her own terms. To treat

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[38] C. Geertz, "Deep play: Notes on the Balinese cockfight", Geertz 1973, 412–454.
[39] P. Ricoeur, "The Model of the Text: Meaningful Action Considered as a
Text", *Social Research* 35 (1971), 529–536.

an action, such as a ritual or cockfight as a text within the terms of this conception means, in Ricoeur's phrase, to consider it to have an "inside but no outside". The implication of this approach is to elevate the importance of the creative interpreter over that of the author, culture, performer or social context of the 'text' as the determining source of its meaning. It is this aspect of Ricoeur's model which has been most important for Geertz.

The bearing of these theoretical qualifications on the anthropological interpretation of ritual may be suggested by a brief reinterpretation of the agonistic drama of the Balinese cockfight, with its central symbol, the cock. Geertz's paper on the cockfight, as I have noted, was the occasion of his introduction of Ricoeur's "model of the text" as the model for his own revised approach to symbolic anthropology as an interpretive enterprise. The paper offers a series of anecdotal accounts of aspects of the social context of cockfights but then proceeds to interpret the cocks and the cockfight itself as a psychological archetype of the anarchic aggressiveness Balinese men are said (by Geertz) to feel, and fear, in themselves as individuals. The interpretation proper, in other words, only begins when the 'outside' of the 'text' of the cockfight is left behind, and the symbolic drama comprising the 'inside' of the text is isolated as the object of interpretation. I argue that this results in a distortion of the meaning of the cocks and the cockfight, fails to give due interpretive weight to a number of symbolic details of the handling of the cocks and the social context of the fights, and ultimately gives a psychological reductionist cast to the whole analysis, despite Geertz's disclaimers that this is what he intends. Even a sketchy reconsideration of some of the neglected details of Geertz's account may suffice to indicate some of the ways in which these aspects of the 'outside' of the cockfight remain centrally relevant to an interpretation of the intentional meaning of the ritual action, informing the meaning of its 'inside' in crucial respects.

Cocks, Geertz suggests, appear to 'stand for' maleness and the penis, although he does does not attempt to specify precisely in what respects. A penis, after all, can mean many things. It is, among other things, an instrument of penetration, a mediator of the boundaries of personal space, and a potential provoker of social conflict. The manner in which Balinese men hold their cocks, against but facing away from their own bodies, suggests an association of the cocks and their aggressive qualities with the boundaries of the men's personal

space and their defense against unwarranted penetration. This is spec-
ulative, of course, but it is consistent with other aspects of the sym-
bolic role of cocks attested by Geertz. Take for instance the fact that
the Balinese feel cockfights to be essential concomitants of social occa-
sions in which members of separate but equal segmentary groups are
thrown together, such as markets and some temple ceremonies. Geertz
does not say why this should be so, or in his terms why 'sacrifices'
to the "demonic powers" of anarchy are felt to be necessary at such
times. It may be suggested, however, that such situations are felt to
be especially threatening by the Balinese because they potentially call
into play the dynamic of fission and fusion implicit in the segmen-
tary structure of their society. 'Sacrifices' which enact, in symbolic
microcosm, mortal conflicts between opposed segmentary groups (rep-
resented by the opposing birds, their owners and supporters) may be
felt to be especially appropriate on such occasions because at such
times the boundaries of such groups, and thus their relative hierar-
chical statuses, are most directly threatened, and the relative strengths
and conflicts of individuals' overlapping relations to them are most
unavoidably called into question.

The 'demons' appeased by the 'sacrifice' of the cocks, and metaphor-
ically the cocks themselves, may thus be interpreted as personifications
(sic) of threats to these social boundaries. The cocks themselves, as
the vicarious representatives of social units at the point where their
boundaries are most directly called in question, seem to embody the
same threat of uncontrolled violence breaking out at the boundary.
Like individual men holding their cocks against their bodies facing
outward, groups launch their cocks outward into the no-man's-land
of contested social space beyond their boundaries, as their response
to a symbolic challenge to those boundaries from without; the demons
are the personification of real threats from the same quarter. In the
cockfight, the members of such groups turn the latent possibility of
conflict with demonic Others into a form of symbolic play, in which
the sub-social savagery that might accompany a real disequilibration
of their balanced social opposition is vicariously released in the sym-
bolic form of the fight between the cocks. The fact that cocks are
made to do the actual fighting amounts to a pragmatic displacement
of such disruptive forces outside the sphere of human society, onto
animals that in their anarchic ferocity closely resemble demons. This
could be interpreted as a straightforward expression of a cultural
evaluation of overt combat as fit only for sub-human beings, and a

comfortable denial that the passions and acts of mortal conflict actually emanate from human society; or it may be interpretable as a horrified recognition by the Balinese of their own essentially animal nature as potential combatants. These are obviously not incompatible interpretations, but stand in a sort of glass-is-half-full/glass-is-half-empty complementarity (respectively). Geertz opts for the half empty view, and I have no basis for disputing him that some Balinese may in fact feel this way, but it seems to me that the half-full view is actually more directly consistent with the overt form of the text, and should at least be considered as a possible alternative.

In sum, from an anthropological point of view, it is crucial that Geertz and his followers took their ideas of 'interpretation' not from the central hermeneutic tradition of Schleiermacher, the von Humboldts and Dilthey, but from dissidents from that tradition, Ricoeur and his principal inspirations, Gadamer, Heidegger and Nietzsche.[40] Whereas the former group conceived of interpretation as an attempt to recover the meanings of texts and actions originally intended by their 'authors' (who might be conceived as individuals or collectivities, such as the cultures or historical periods in which the texts were produced), the latter took the contrary position that such intentions or meanings are unrecoverable, so interpretation should be reconceived as the creation of meaning by the interpreter or critic, using the objectified text as a point of departure rather than arrival. This approach obviously leaves the anthropological status of the 'meanings' produced by interpretations of rituals and other cultural forms carried out by adherents of this view uncertain, to say the least. The heart of the confusion is the uncertainty about whether the primary source or locus of the meaning at issue is the sensibility of the anthropological observer, the subjectivity of the individual ritual participant, or a publicly shared cultural 'system of symbols and meanings'.

The main reason these facets of meaning remain difficult to articulate with one another with more precision in symbolic and/or 'textual' analyses is the lack of any consistent attempt of those engaged in anthropological hermeneutics to articulate their interpretations either

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[40] For a useful overview of the hermeneutic tradition from its beginnings to the present, see K. Mueller-Vollmer, "Introduction: Language, Mind, and Artifact: An Outline of Hermeneutic Theory since the Enlightenment", K. Mueller-Vollmer, *The Hermeneutics Reader: Texts of the German Tradition from the Enlightenment to the Present* (New York, 1985), 1–53.

with analyses of the formal or structural properties of the rituals and other cultural phenomena they study, or of the social pragmatics of their construction, use and performance. These are interdependent, not separate issues. Meaning, structure and pragmatics are not mutually independent or irrelevant, and cannot be understood, or adequately interpreted, in abstraction from one another. In this respect, the Heideggerian-Ricoeurian project of interpreting rituals and other cultural constructs as 'texts' represents, not so much an approach to cultural meaning as a way of inadvertently obfuscating it.

At a more general level, Munn has aptly characterized the American culturalist approach to the analysis of ritual symbolism in abstraction from its social background as a form of reductionism that results in distortion of its essential properties as a sociocultural form:

> Indeed, if functional approaches have tended to absorb symbolic action into its social background, contemporary concerns with cosmology and cultural classification have tended to reduce it to its cultural background: i.e., to treat ritual as part of the evidence for classifications in the cultural code . . . Ritual may, of course, be examined from either perspective, but the nature and function of ritual as a particular kind of sociocultural form cannot be adequately grasped in these reductionist terms.[41]

What Munn says here about the effects of the older American symbolic anthropological approach, with its interest in classificatory 'systems', is equally relevant to its more recent Geertzian avatar as an interpretation of 'texts'. It is not only the specific meanings of ritual acts that are obscured or lost by their reduction to 'evidence for classifications in the cultural code', or to the status of Ricoeurian 'texts' with "insides but no outsides", but even more, the specific structural aspects of ritual practices and the dynamics of ritual processes that tend to be lost sight of altogether. To bring together these social, structural and processual aspects in a non-reductionist approach to interpretative meaning requires reconsidering the distinctive features of ritual as a specific type of activity. Here we shall find that some of the findings of microsociological studies of interaction ritual and anthropological formulations of the pragmatics of communicative practices have useful insights to offer.

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[41] Munn 1973, 606.

Framing and Objectification: The Pragmatics of Ritual as Symbolic Activity

The concept of 'framing' was originally formulated by the anthropologist Gregory Bateson and further developed by the sociologist Erving Goffman.[42] Bateson applied the concept to animal as well as human behavior in his studies of play behavior. When a dog strikes a certain pose that signals that it wishes to play at fighting with another dog, it is framing its mock-aggressive actions so that the other dog will not interpret them as real hostility. The 'frame' defined and conveyed by the stylized posture is a schema signifying that actions performed within the limits of the frame are to be interpreted as a certain type of activity (play), that must therefore be interpreted in a different way than the same actions performed without the frame. A frame, in other words, is a schema of activity that also serves as a schema for the interpretation of that activity in a certain way. Such a framing schema is a type or class construct, of a higher logical level than the instances of behavior it typifies or to which it applies. Goffman's concept of frames is essentially similar, without Bateson's formal emphasis on the hierarchy of logical types.

Ritual is activity that frames itself as ritual. The framing is conveyed by signs or patterns of behavior, usually but not necessarily repetitive and commonly recognized (e.g., specified places and times of performance, specific role-actors, clothing, speech patterns, music etc.). In framing itself as ritual, ritual objectifies itself in a certain way. This is true of all framed activity, of course, much of which is not normally regarded as ritual. The distinctive attribute of ritual action is that it objectifies itself in a way intended to produce an effect beyond the limited frame of the ritual action as such. Ritual performance, as action involving the effective use of bodily strength and skills, as well as, often if not always, the organization and coordination of the actions of multiple persons, necessarily involves forms of effectiveness in its own performance. It also frequently if not always involves the use of symbols, tropes and stereotypic gestures which prefigure the kind of effect the performance is intended to produce. Whatever the specific nature of its object and intended effect, ritual thus sets itself apart from ordinary activity as a form of action that reflexively draws upon its effectiveness within the frame of its own

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[42] Bateson, "A Theory of Play and Fantasy", 177–193; Goffman 1974.

performance to produce effects beyond that frame, in space, time, or both. Ritual thus involves objectification in a second sense, as action directed at objects or objectified effects outside itself (that is, beyond its own frame). Ritual action thus intrinsically involves a transformative relation between frames.

Objectification and the Projection of Efficacy

The question is, how is this accomplished? How, in other words, is the power and control exercised in the performance of ritual converted into a power capable of controlling or affecting ritual-external phenomena? In seeking to answer this question, let us start by recognizing that ritual performance has the character of meta-action. The ritual act, in other words, includes the framing of itself as a ritual act. It thus becomes the object of its own performance.

This is one aspect of ritual objectification: the act becomes its own object. A second aspect is that the objectified action becomes separated from its performers and takes on the character of a self-existing schema. My use of 'objectification' draws upon the work of William Hanks, in particular his formulation of the fundamental role of objectification as a condition of the possibility of linguistic reference in what he calls 'communicative practice'.[43] As Hanks explains,

> As surely as it corresponds to the world, speech helps to create it through objectification . . . in the properly analytic sense, every time language stands for something, it stands for it *as its object*. To put it strongly, we *always* objectify, without which we could not make reference.[44]

For the purposes of the present discussion, the word 'action' could be substituted for 'speech' and 'language' in this passage, if by 'standing for something' we understand, in the case of ritual action, being directed toward something as an intentional object. Ritual action, however, differs from ordinary action by virtue of its reflexive focus on the process of objectification. Ritual consists in general terms in framing the process of objectification so that it becomes foregrounded as itself the object of control in the ritual performance. The performance of the ritual thus becomes a self-objectifying process, which

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[43] Hanks, *Language and Communicative Practices*, 121, 277–278, 295–296, 299.
[44] Hanks, *Language and Communicative Practices*, 121. Italics in original.

means that it implicitly becomes a force for 'creating the world' (in Hanks's terms), or at least that part of it which it purports to affect.[45] This is tantamount to raising the operations of ritual to a higher logical level. By objectifying the effectiveness of the operations constituting the performance of ritual acts so that it becomes a detached power capable of projection beyond the frame of the ritual act, ritual attempts to constitute those acts as a higher level of transformational operations analogous to those comprising the medial stage of rites of passage. Frames are categories in the double Kantian sense of classes and schemas. Projecting effects from one frame to another involves transformational operations of a higher level of logical power than those comprising either frame or category in itself. The "play of frames" involved in the ritual process can thus be understood in terms of the model of operational structure adumbrated in the preceding discussion of Van Gennep's model of rites of passage.

A critical step in this process is the symbolic embodiment of this reflexively objectifying process and its intended effects in one or more symbolic acts of constructs that can then serve as 'pivots' for transmitting the internal force of the ritual performance to the external frame of object relations (or conversely, conveying the force of some aspect of the external field to the participants in the ritual performance). Examples of this are resolutions or petitions collectively signed and sent by the participants in a rally to a political leader; figures of saints paraded through the streets of a city on the saint's day, the evergreen trees brought into homes as the focal objects of Christmas celebrations, or the 'milk tree' that serves as the focus of Ndembu girls' initiation.[46]

The 'pivoting' effected by such objects or acts[47] implies an extension of the ritual frame, through the projection of the effect of the ritual action beyond its original limits to encompass the projection

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[45] A powerful use of the concept of objectification is to be found in N.D. Munn, "The Transformation of Subjects into Objects in Walbiri and Pitjantjatjara Myth", R.M. Berndt (ed.), *Australian Aboriginal Anthropology* (Nedlands, 1970) 141–163. Sangren has employed the concept in a Marxian sense in a series of penetrating studies of Chinese ritual, e.g.: P.S. Sangren, "Dialectics of Alienation: Individuals and Collectivities in Chinese Religion", *Man* 26 (1991), 67–86.

[46] V.W. Turner, "Symbols in Ndembu ritual".

[47] I borrow the term from Van Gennep and his notion of the "pivoting of the sacred", although I use it in a different context. See Van Gennep, *The rites of passage*, 18.

of its efficacy. The pivotal element (the symbol or symbolic act) which encodes or implicates this effect acts as the pragmatic conductor of this projection and thus constitutes the vehicle for the extension of the frame. This projection or mediation of the effectiveness of ritual action beyond the frame of the ritual act itself is the principal function of pivotal ritual symbols like the Ndembu milk tree. The analysis of ritual symbols and tropes is inseparable from the theoretical understanding of ritual structure and efficacy as a "play of frames". This play of frames, mediated by the pivoting of symbols, through which the power generated by the reflexive projection of the effectiveness of ritual action within the ritual frame is projected beyond that frame, is the essential form and dynamic of the ritual process.

Play of Frames, Play of Tropes

Tropes such as metaphor, metonymy, and synecdoche play a fundamental role in articulating the clusters of conceptual and affective associations constituting complex ritual symbols, and at higher levels of complexity, in mediating the relations of symbols, frames, and ritual acts to one another. Tropes function as connectors between elements and between levels of structure by virtue of their construction as modes of identity and contrast between entities, rather than as individual units like symbols. Tropes can be understood as patterns of activity (in other words, schemas), that bring into association or transform relations among the elements of ritual action. Tropes may also interact with other tropes: a trope (for example, a metonymic association) may become an element in a different trope (for instance, a metaphor), and thus undergo a transformation of its tropic identity. Such a transformation may involve a shift in frames and/or levels or logical types of structural relations. J.W. Fernandez has called such processes of shifting tropic identities "the play of tropes".[48] The process of projection or transference of meaning and performative force from one frame to another that we have called the

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[48] D. Durham and J.W. Fernandez, "Tropical Dominions: The Figurative Struggle over Domains of Belonging and Apartness in Africa", J.W. Fernandez (ed.), *Beyond Metaphor: The Theory of Tropes in Anthropology* (Stanford, 1991) 190–212.

"play of frames", as I shall argue, may be understood as grounded, in many cases at least, in a play of tropes.

An example of how the play of tropes can serve as a framework for the construction of ritual symbols and the ritual process in which they are used is afforded by ritual performances of the Kayapo and Bororo Indians of Brazil in which the performers are said to "become parrots". I have analyzed these performances in a paper on uses of tropes in ritual and cosmological symbolism.[49] In the performances in question, the dancers decorate themselves with parrot feathers. The feathers and the dancers become metonymically associated parts of the new whole constituted by the dancer in his regalia. Parrot feathers are metonymically associated with the power of flight. The Kayapo term for ritual dancing means 'flying', and flying is metaphorically associated with the power to transcend the level, or frame, of human social existence by getting outside and above it. The Kayapo speak, and sing, of birds as having the power to perch on the sun's rays and gaze over the whole world; for similar reasons, the Bororo associate parrot feathers of the type used in ritual costume with 'lightness', which is also associated with transcendental power or 'spirit'.

To become a flying being, a parrot, thus metaphorically implies the power to separate oneself from everyday social existence and to transcend, or assume an external relationship to, the frame of society as a whole. This power is also metaphorically figured by the character of the parrots as natural beings, from a frame external to the social order. The parrot-dancers, by transcending the distinction between social and natural frames, as well as between terrestrial and celestial levels, gain access to form-transcending and form changing power. This power is directed to the intentional effect of the ritual, the transformation of social identity (the rituals in question are rites of passage, in the Kayapo case involving the bestowal of names and other attributes of social identity on children, and in the Bororo case, a boys' initiation). The effects produced by the ritual performance, the transformed social identities of the initiands/baptisands, thus combine the metonymic and metaphoric powers of parrots and those of the performance of the composite dancer-parrot beings. At each step

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[49] T.S. Turner, "We Are Parrots, Twins are Birds: Play of Tropes as Operational Structure", J.W. Fernandez (ed.), *Beyond Metaphor: The Theory of Tropes in Anthropology* (Stanford, 1991) 121–158.

in the ritual process, tropic elements have been combined, as parts, to construct more inclusive wholes that partake of the character of the parts. What has been produced, in other words, is a series of synechdoches (complex tropes in which the parts and wholes replicate each other's properties). The "play of tropes" has constructed a series of transformations from metonymy to metaphor to synechdoche. This series of transformations, however, could equally well be described as a series of shifts from less inclusive to more inclusive frames, or a set of transformational operations that conserve an invariant form through the synechdochic identity of part and whole at each stage of the process (for this reason, the subtitle of my article on the Kayapo and Bororo rituals is "play of tropes as operational structure"). Three mutually independent lines of analysis, with their central concepts—structure, frames, and tropes—thus converge.

Structure, Conservation, and Power in the Ritual Process

Frames are objectified types of actions: in other words, schemas of a certain kind. If objects must be cognitively constructed as structures, and rituals consist of objectified schemas, it follows that rituals must take on the properties of structures in the same sense. Ritual processes, in other words, must be constructed as schemas of transformation that conserve their unity as objects. They acquire the character of self-regulating unities, which maintain themselves by constraining their constituent actions to operate in a way that preserves the invariant form of relations among them. When ritual action rearranges or transforms this concerted pattern of operations, for example by the separation of an element of one of its component schemas and its attachment to another, the formal principle of conservation of the unity of the original structure will tend to assert itself either as a pressure for the return or replacement of the missing element or some counterbalancing transformation or reordering of the original pattern of relations. The former effect is exemplified by Mauss's conception of the dynamics of gift exchange, where the gift begins as an integral part of the person of the giver, so that its alienation gives rise to a need for the return or reciprocation of the gift such that the original unity is conserved.[50] The second kind of effect is

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[50] Mauss, *The Gift.*

exemplified by the following example of bifurcating ritual offerings into opposing sets that balance each other. In such a case the total ritual process assumes the form of sets of opposing transformations, which by neutralizing or counterbalancing each other preserve the unity of the originally given structure of relations, now acting as a principle of conservation that constrains the transformations of each set to be offset by a complementary transformation in the opposing set.

Objectification and Structure in Schemas of Ritual Action:
Sherpa Offerings to Divinities and Demons

An analysis of a common Nepalese Sherpa ritual of sacrifice described by Ortner may serve to illustrate these abstract principles. I select it partly because it is drawn from the work of an eminent symbolic anthropologist who has made the most principled attempt to give coherent theoretical form to the Geertzian approach to ritual symbols, and who has also produced excellent ethnographic documentation of ritual practices and beliefs.[51] My purpose is to demonstrate that an analysis of Sherpa ritual based on Ortner's descriptions, employing the concepts of framing, objectification, operational structure, the role of pivotal ritual symbols and the analysis of meaning developed in this essay, can generate fresh insights into the relation between forms of ritual practice, structure, process, efficacy and meaning. While the analysis I shall present manifestly diverges from the ideas of the *Année Sociologique*, Levi-Straussian structuralists and Anglo-Structuralists discussed in the first part of this paper, and in its structural approach also diverges from Ortner's own symbolic analysis, it nevertheless makes use of important concepts and insights drawn from each.

It is common for Sherpa offerings to divinities to consist of shaped cones of dough called *torma*. These are placed in the center of a square of cloth, and the divinity in question is invited to come and partake of the food. He does so by temporarily inhabiting the *torma* as his bodily substance. Before this can happen, however, another

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[51] Ortner 1975 and Ortner 1978. On *tormas,* I gratefully acknowledge the ethnographic advice of David Holmberg and Catherine March.

torma, equal in size to the first, is broken into fragments and scattered outside the ritual space centered on the cloth on which the intact *torma* is placed. Sometimes this second *torma* may be smashed on a crossroads or its pieces thrown into a river at some distance from the cloth with the first *torma*. This second *torma* is for the demons, the anti-divinities who are thus scattered away from the central offering in a disunited mob, leaving the beneficent deity to join and bless his human hosts at the central point of the ritual space.[52]

The structure of this simple ritual schema can be concisely represented in the accompanying diagram. The basic dimension of the ritual action is the relation between, on the one hand, the human actors attempting to enter into communication with the divinity and, on the other, the supernatural beings, the divinity in question and the demons, with which they interact in the ritual. This dimension, then, consists of an opposition between profane humans and sacred supernaturals. It is represented by the vertical axis in the diagram. The second dimension of contrast is that between the bad supernaturals (demons) and the good divinity for whom the central *torma* offering is intended. This dimension is represented by the horizontal axis in the diagram. The action of the ritual consists of pairs of opposing transformations. The *torma* offerings draw the supernaturals, who are initially separated from earthly humans, down to the human level. This vertical conjunction, however, is achieved only as a corollary of the horizontal polarization of the supernatural category into opposite forms: the beneficent deity and the malevolent demons—a polarization effected by the opposite forms and treatment of the *torma* offerings (whole and centrally placed for the former, scattered in pieces on the periphery for the latter). These opposite forms of mediating offerings bring about opposite relations between the two categories of supernaturals and humans: centripetal union between beneficent deity and human sacrificers, on the one hand, and centrifugal scattering of the evil demons away from the central space of mutually rewarding social transaction between humans and the good supernatural.

The differentiation of the supernatural category into opposite negatively and positively valued types is thus achieved through com-

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[52] Ortner 1975.

plementary sets of opposite transformations of relations in ritual space (center versus periphery, inside versus outside), and opposite treatments of the mediating offerings (left in one piece and scattered, respectively). Each of the sets of transformations depends upon the other, and each, by its paired opposing actions, neutralizes the total effect of the displacements of the initial relation between supernaturals and humans, thus conserving the unity of the original schema of relations between humans and supernaturals. The resulting ritual performance thus satisfies the criteria of structure offered above.

$$
\begin{array}{c}
\text{Supernaturals} \\
(-/+) \\
y
\end{array}
$$

scattered   integral
(−)   (+)

Broken torma   Whole torma
(−)_____x_____(+)
y'' <------(−)-------------x----------(+)--------> y'
Demons Humans   Gods
Outside   Inside
Peripheral   Central
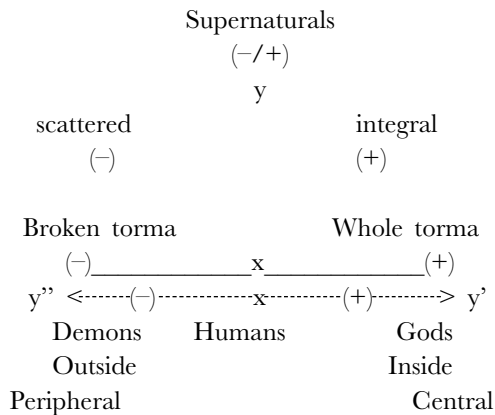
The transformations of the opposing categories of supernaturals are thus defined in terms of the constituent features of the schema as the opposites of each other but nevertheless as interdependent. The divinities will not come to claim their offering if the demons have not been deflected by the scattering of the equivalent offering dedicated to them. This coordination of the two sets of opposite transformations manifests the unity of the ritual schema as a whole. This unity or principle of conservation thus appears as an effective force, compelling the complementary actions of divinities and demons in response to the opposing gestures of the human performers of the offering ritual. The actions of the human performers and their offerings, the polarization of the category of supernaturals into divinities and demons that they bring about, and the opposite spatial and social relations these differentiated categories of supernaturals assume towards humans induced by the iconically corresponding treatments of the two *torma* offerings, constitute a system in which each transformation is offset by its opposite. The result is a structure that conserves

the unity of the initial human-supernatural relationship by balancing each transformation of that relation by another which is its negation. The conservation of the unity of the structure of relations thus expresses itself as a constraining force that compels the transformations of its component relations to assume complementary opposing forms. The frame created by the ritual space centered upon the *torma* for the beneficent divinity enables the objectification of the process of accessing benevolent supernatural power through the manufacture and ritual treatment of the *torma*. The torma, in turn, acts as a pivotal focus for the projection of the efficacy of the human activities of creating the ritual space beyond the spatio-temporal frame of the ritual performance itself. It does this by literally becoming the incarnation of the deity within the space-time frame of the ritual. It thus serves as the pivot that draws the supernaturals into temporary contact with humans within the ritual frame. This set of transformations, in turn, is made possible by the destruction and scattering away from the ritual frame of the torma that becomes inhabited by the demons, who are thus driven away from the ritual space, whereby their disruptive powers are neutralized.

In terms of Ricoeur's 'model of the text', these complementary transformational processes would be called the 'inside' of the *torma* sacrifice ritual as 'text'. In contradiction to the Ricoeurian—Geertzian uses of this 'model', however, the 'pivotal' functions of the *torma* and their ritual manipulation systematically connect the 'inside' of the ritual 'text' to its 'outside' of social meanings and relations. The form of the ceremony as an act of hospitality that promotes solidarity of guests with hosts and simultaneously dispels fissive tensions among them has its reference and counterpart in secular Sherpa forms of visiting and hospitality. As Ortner describes, moreover, the *tso* or *torma* offering rituals are performed at regular intervals in the ritual calendar, to enlist divine aid for the general well-being of the human world and the proper ordering of the cosmos. The operations and meanings comprising the 'inside' of the ritual thus have an 'outside', consisting of its intended effects on the secular life-world, and its symbolic references to social practices 'outside' of the ritual frame. These 'external' aspects are integral to any anthropologically adequate 'interpretation' of the ritual.

The construction and use of the *torma* offerings in the Sherpa ritual exemplify common structural properties of ritual symbols and their roles in the transformative process of objectification. The con-

struction of symbolic objects, and their manipulation in successive acts and contexts, is central to many rituals, and the Sherpa offering ritual we have been discussing is no exception. The preparation of the *torma* offerings to the supernaturals in the Sherpa ritual is an integral part of the ritual process. The substance, shape, color and decoration of the *torma* are all significant. *Torma* are made of cooked edible dough, shaped into a cone, with modifications and decorations identified with the particular deity who will inhabit the *torma* as his or her body. The *torma* destined for the demons, however, is broken into fragments, thus destroying its distinctive shape, the feature directly associated with divine status. The construction and contrasting treatments of the two *torma* take the form of parallel but inverse plays of tropes. Taken together, the *torma* offerings metaphorically embody the opposing characteristics of the respective supernaturals to whom they will be offered: the beneficent divinity as a whole, perfect being, and the demons as chaotic, disintegrative forces destructive of unity and order. This metaphoric contrast, however, is superimposed on a common substance, the cooked dough, to which the differential properties of the divine and demonic offerings are added or attached as parts (i.e., by metonymic association). The ritual offering of the *torma* by the human performers enacts the metaphorical program embodied in the forms of the offerings, rejecting and scattering the demons and attracting the divinity to accept their hospitality by partaking of the meal they have offered in the central place of honor. Their performance thus metaphorically replicates the pattern of the symbolic elements, the *torma*, it metonymically subsumes as parts. The whole performance thus assumes the character of its parts, as in synecdoche, in which the parts of the whole replicate its structure (and vice versa). In the present context, the 'play of tropes' in question equally implies a 'play of frames' that is also a 'play of levels', in the sense of a hierarchy of logical types of operations, since the culminating synthetic moment of synechdoche becomes the encompassing frame (the level of totality) that includes and integrates the distinct metonymic and metaphoric aspects of the ritual performance it encompasses.

Although the Sherpa ritual of *torma* sacrifice is different in *form* from rites of passage such as those discussed in the first part of the paper, their *structures* are thus essentially analogous. In both cases, a level of normative classifications is alternately disrupted and reconstituted by transformational operations of a higher logical type or

level. These transformations, in turn, are coordinated by invariant constraints that maintain the unity of the structure. In both cases, the effectiveness of the performance of activities within the ritual frame is projected beyond the frame in the form of effects on the profane world; and in both cases, this projection is achieved through the mediation of pivotal symbols and symbolic actions. When rituals are understood primarily as action, and thus as consisting at the most fundamental level of schemas of objectification and framing, the schemas can be seen to arrange themselves as operational structures. This will in turn tend to bring into focus the pivotal role of symbols and symbolic acts, and thus point the way toward integrating the formal structure with meaning in its intentional, referential and significational aspects.

The analyses of the examples offered in this essay have sought to show that ritual structure and process are two sides of the same coin: the structure *is* the form of the process and the process directly consists of the structure. They have likewise sought to demonstrate that the macrostructure of systems of ritual practices and relational categories as wholes, while they cannot be reduced to the microstructure of their symbolic elements, such as individual pivotal symbols or acts, are nonetheless integrally related to them. The symbols function as key elements of the structures, and their meanings cannot be understood in isolation from them. Whether or not the participants in a ritual are conscious of the signification or meaning of ritual symbols or acts, performances of rituals considered as 'total social facts' invariably carry social and cultural meaning, particularly as they embody intentional orientations toward the world beyond them. These intentional meanings are inseparable from the structure of the rituals, because they constitute the focus of the operations embodied by the actions and transformations that constitute that structure. Approached in this totalizing perspective, analyses of structure and the pragmatics of process become the complements of interpretations of meaning, rather than mutually exclusive exercises.

RITUAL AND MEANING[1]

Axel Michaels

People get initiated, married, and buried. They sacrifice, organize religious services, and sing liturgical songs. They celebrate birthdays, jubilees, and the passing of examinations; they consecrate priests, houses, and ships. Can all this be without meaning? Le rituel pour le rituel? Difficult as it may be to believe, such theories are sometimes proposed.

A first indication of the meaninglessness of rituals is a certain similarity between human ritual actions and animal behavior. Because animals repeat certain actions stereotypically—that is, without consciously knowing what they are doing—some forms of human action were also considered to be more-or-less genetically or evolutionary fixed.[2] Moreover, because ethologists—scientists studying animal behavior— were more-or-less prevented from raising questions of meaning by their biological and evolutionary paradigm, those who extended those paradigms to the analysis of human rituals were often also unable to address the issue of cultural meaning in ritual, to say nothing of the even more complicated question of cultural variability and historical change in the meaning of rituals. In short, ethological theories of ritual generally fail to explain the cultural differences in rituals.

Despite such objections, Frits Staal proclaimed "The Meaninglessness of Ritual", in his famous article of that title, published in 1979 in *Numen*. And in 1994 Caroline Humphrey and James Laidlaw, in their widely-discussed[3] book *The Archetypal Actions of Ritual. A Theory of Ritual Illustrated by the Jain Rite of Worship*, promoted a theory of the non-intentionality of ritual action. Staal, Humphrey, and Laidlaw develop their ideas using Indian material—Staal documenting and analyzing the vedic ritual of piling the fire altar (*agnicayana*), Humphrey and

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[1] I am grateful to Srilata Raman Müller and William Sax for their comments on earlier versions of this article.

[2] Huxley (ed.) 1966; D'Aquili and Laughlin 1975; D'Aquili, Laughlin, and McManus (eds) 1979.

[3] See J.W. Boyd and R.G. Williams, "Review Essay" [of Humphrey and Laidlaw 1994], *Journal of Ritual Studies* 10 (1996), 135–138.

Laidlaw analyzing the Jain *pūjā*, a kind of religious service. Thus, both as an Indologist and scholar of religious studies, I feel entitled to offer my contribution to this ongoing discussion. I would modify the theories developed, since I hold the view that, while rituals can indeed not be reduced to any specific meaning, this fact in itself is not meaningless.

Function as Meaning

Prima facie theories of the meaninglessness of rituals seem to be absurd given the fact that hundreds of studies on ritual demonstrate the social, communicative, or performative meaning of such events. However, such studies usually understand meaning in the sense of function, purpose, or goal. Basically, these studies use biological, functionalist, or religionist (confessional) arguments.

Thus ethological-psychological, socio-biological, and socio-ecological theories[4] regard rituals as a mechanism of biological selection (survival of the fittest) or social regulation.[5] The functionalists say: Rituals are used for this or that individual or social purpose; rituals are, for instance, power games, more-or-less useful or relevant in helping to overcome a crisis or creating and maintaining power relations within society. The confessionalists, on the other hand, say: Rituals are needed in order to encounter or realize supernatural power or a certain world view; for them rituals are sometimes a sort of hierophany or a means to communicate with superhuman beings. Let us take a closer look at these two groups: Functionalist theories are psychological or sociological. Psychological theories[6] emphasize, for example, the cathartic and fear-reducing aspects of rituals. Victor Turner

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[4] D'Aquili 1983; D'Aquili, Laughlin, and McManus (eds) 1979; Burkert 1996; W. Burkert, "Fitness oder Opium? Die Fragestellung der Soziobiologie im Bereich alter Religionen", F. Stolz (ed.), *Homo naturaliter Religiosus* (Bern, 1997), 13–38; Rappaport 1999; see also the papers by Baudy: "Ethology" and Rao: "Ritual and Society" in this volume.

[5] Rappaport 1999.

[6] E.g. B. Malinoswki, *Magic, Science, and Religion, and Other Essays* (1925) (London, 1974) or S. Freud, "Zwangshandlungen und Religionsübungen" (1907), *Gesammelte Werke* VII, 130 f. (= *Studienausgabe* VII, 14; English translation: "Obsessive and Religious Practices", James Strachey (ed), *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, London, 115–127).

also suggested in his last articles that rituals might lead to a reduction of ergotropic or trophotropic stimulations.[7] And even Humphrey and Laidlaw[8] are of the opinion that the cathartic effect (though not the meaning) of some rituals is one of the reasons for their performance. Freud, however, did not ascribe any positive value to rituals. He analyzed obsessive actions and ritualizations in everyday life as a semi-religious ceremony. Such psychological theories are still favored by many scholars of ritual. They help to explain why in periods of crisis rituals are apparently more often practiced than in calm periods. Mary Douglas[9] even tried to relate the frequency and intensity of rituals to types of societies. Thus ritual is often considered as a form of therapy for individuals or societies. The danger generated in the life-crises calls for means to overcome them, for counter-responses or tests of courage. However, a number of counterexamples have cast doubt on such theories of the fear-reducing function of rituals. Thus, when Bronislaw Malinowski wrote in 1925 that the presumably easy and risk-free fishing in the lagoons of the Trobriands did not require rituals, whereas the dangerous deep-sea fishing was full of rituals, it seemed to be evident that these rituals had a fear-reducing function. However, already Alfred Reginald Radcliffe-Brown[10] constructed the counter-argument that fishing in the lagoons was also regarded as dangerous, based on the same data.

Sociological theories[11] often emphasize notions of solidarity, control, hierarchy, order, or rebellion. The ceremonies are then seen as a form of strengthening societies or social groups in order to subordinate or integrate individuals. Confessional (or theological) theories[12] emphasize the transcendent and religious aspects of rituals. According to these theories, rituals are mythical celebrations separating the

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[7] V.W. Turner, "Body, Brain and Culture" and "The New Neurosociology", V.W. and E.L.B. Turner (eds), *On the Edge of the Bush. Anthropology as Experience* (Tucson, 1985), 249–274 and 275–290, respectively.

[8] Humphrey and Laidlaw 1994, 99.

[9] Douglas 1966.

[10] A.R. Radcliffe-Brown, "Religion and Society", *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 75 (1945), 33–43.

[11] E.g. É. Durkheim, *Les Formes élementaires de la vie religieuse. Le système totémique en Australie* (Paris, 1912) or Radcliffe-Brown, "Religion and Society". Cf. Bird 1980.

[12] E.g. M. Eliade, *Das Heilige und das Profane. Vom Wesen des Religiösen* (Reinbek, 1957) and M. Eliade, *Naissances mystiques. Essai sur quelques types d'initiation* (Paris, 1959; English edition: *Birth and Rebirth*, New York, 1958).

sacred from the profane, creating a sphere in which contact with gods or another reality is possible. Thus the great majority of theories on ritual do attribute meaning (in the sense of function) to rituals, even if many theories (also) concentrate on more-or-less formal aspects, such as language and codification,[13] symbols,[14] communication,[15] or performance and dramaturgy.[16]

Reference as Meaning

Theories of the meaninglessness of rituals maintain the idea that rituals are not only formal actions, but that the forms of actions are basically independent and that the symbols in rituals do not refer to anything; rather, they are context-independent and thus meaningless. It was Staal[17] who most radically proposed such a theory of the meaninglessness of rituals and criticized most of the functional theories mentioned above. For him rituals are "primary" and "pure activity . . . without function, aim or goal".[18] Staal regards them as a closed, "useless institution" that "can only be abandoned or preserved".[19] He denies that rituals are structured by a tripartite model,[20] that they are translations of myths or stories into acts (the myth-and-ritual school), or that they reflect social structures.[21] He is especially opposed to the "meaning-under-every-rock symbolic analysis" of Victor Turner and Clifford Geertz, and to such ideas as that rituals transform cultural values or that they are communicative or symbolic activity. For him orthopraxis, not orthodoxy, is characteristic of rituals.

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[13] E.g. Staal 1979, Staal 1989, Werlen 1984, Tambiah 1981.

[14] V.W. Turner 1967, A.E. Jensen, *Myth and Cult among Primitive Peoples* (1951), trans. M.T. Choldin and W. Weissleder (Chicago, 1963).

[15] E.g. Leach 1976, Douglas 1966.

[16] E.g. V.W. Turner 1974a, V.W. Turner 1982a, Tambiah 1981, Schechner and Schuman (eds) 1976, Schechner 1977, and R. Schechner, *Theater-Anthropologie. Spiel und Ritual im Kulturvergleich* (Reinbek, 1990).

[17] See Staal 1979 (a revised version in F. Staal, "Agni 1990 (April 28–May 9)", unpublished mimeographed report, 1990).

[18] Staal 1989, 131; also: "ritual has no meaning, goal or aim" (Staal 1979, 8).

[19] Staal 1979, 14.

[20] Compare A. van Gennep, *Les rites de passage. Étude systématique des rites* (1909), (Paris, 1981), English translation: *The Rites of Passage* (London, 1960), and V.W. Turner 1969.

[21] Cf. Malinoswki, *Magic, Science, and Religion*; Radcliffe-Brown, "Religion and Society".

Staal based his conclusions on a thorough study[22] of the ancient Vedic fire ritual (*agnicayana*) as it was performed in 1975[23] in Kerala (Southwestern India) and as it is recorded in several ritual texts (*Śrautasūtras*) and manuals. The *Agnicayana* developed between the 8th and 4th centuries B.C.E., but is now only rarely performed. The core of the elaborate ritual, in which for eleven days up to seventeen priests and many other participants are involved, is piling a large bird-shaped altar in five layers with bricks and a great number of other ritual items. Especially important are three ritual fires in the ritual enclosure. Almost every ritual act is accompanied with the utterance of Vedic Mantras.

Staal explains the existence of rituals phylogenetically: "Human ritualization often follows animal ritualization rather closely".[24] He holds that human rituals are structurally similar to ritualized animal behavior and that language developed after ritual. Staal compares rituals with birds' songs,[25] which cannot be clearly identified from various situations or times of the day as calls, warnings, or courtship displays. New ornithological observations have shown that birds mostly twitter without any reason, and not in order to warn or to court. Likewise, *mantras* (and *stobhas*) are recited and sung at various occasions, but without any obvious purpose. However, people preserve their forms and transfer them, and these transferred mantras cross all sorts of religious social, geographic, and linguistic borders. Meaningless sounds do not change. They can only be remembered or forgotten.[26] Mantras are thus neither speech acts nor language nor signs.

According to Staal, the same holds true for ritual. Staal quotes van Gennep's observation that "the same rite, remaining absolutely the same, can change its meaning depending on the position it is given in a ceremony, or on whether it is part of one ceremony or another. The aspersion rite . . . is a fecundity rite in marriage

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[22] F. Staal (with R. Gardner), *Altar of Fire* (film) (Berkeley, 1976) and F. Staal, *AGNI. The Vedic Ritual of Fire Altar* (Berkeley, 1983).

[23] In 1990 Staal observed another Agnicayana performance of which he has written an unpublished (mimeographed) report: Staal, "Agni 1990 (April 28–May 9)".

[24] Staal 1989, 136.

[25] For Staal's argument concerning birdsong see F. Staal, *Jouer avec le feu. Pratique et théorie du rituel Védique* (Publications de l'Institute de Civilisation Indienne, 8–57; Paris, 1990) (review by A. Michaels in *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 145 (1995), 195–196).

[26] Staal 1979, 12.

ceremonies, but an expulsion rite in separation ceremonies".[27] Staal
concludes that "it is only a small step from 'changing meaning' to:
'no intrinsic meaning' and 'structural meaning', and from there to:
'no meaning'".[28] For him ritual activity takes place in a clearly demar-
cated area or time, reduces contingency, and avoids risks by which
ordinary activity is always endangered.

Staal does not deny that rituals can have more-or-less "useful side-
effects".[29] They can publicly express the decision to marry or give
pleasure in participation, but these side effects should not be mis-
taken as the functions or aims of rituals.[30] Thus in rituals means are
not clearly related to ends. If rituals were to have a specific pur-
pose, other means could also—and sometimes better—fulfill the same
purpose. A ritual lighting of a candle in a church is different from
a technological lighting of the candle (e.g. with a cigarette lighter).
Thus no ritual is limited to just one such function since then one
could use other means that also would fulfill the desired purpose.
However, rituals are rather inflexible regarding their means. They
cannot always be adapted to new methods and purposes. Since rit-
uals are in this sense meaningless, many meanings can be attached
to them: "The meaninglessness of it explains the variety of mean-
ing attached to it."[31]

According to Staal, it was religion that added meaning to pri-
mordial utterances such as mantras, and it was religion that created
language. Thus for Staal religion is ritual plus meaning: "The chief
provider of meaning being religion, ritual became involved with reli-
gion and through this association, meaningful".[32] Staal understands
ritual, however, as anti-religion. It is not a sub-dimension of religion
or society but an autonomous practice with its own rules. Thus rit-
ual should not be studied as religion but as syntax without seman-
tics or semiotics. Consequently, and following Lévi-Strauss,[33] Staal

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[27] Staal 1989, 128.
[28] Staal 1989, 134.
[29] Staal 1989, 134.
[30] Staal 1979, 11. Or as Jack Goody ("Religion and ritual: the definitional prob-
lem", *British Journal of Sociology* 12 (1961), 142–164, here 159) would have it: "By
ritual we refer to a category of standardized behavior (custom) in which the relationship
between means and ends is not 'intrinsic', i.e. either irrational or non-rational".
[31] Staal 1979, 12.
[32] Staal 1989, 137.
[33] C. Lévi-Strauss, *L'Homme nu. Mythologiques IV* (Paris, 1971), 598: "one should . . . first

proposes to study ritual "in itself and for itself"[34] and as 'syntax' without reference to semantics. He thereby opposes the idea that rituals (or words) are symbolic signs that refer to something external, whether in 'reality' or as something transcendental. Staal demonstrates the syntax of rituals using *Agnicayana* material, but also examples from music. By dividing complex rituals into sequences of smaller units (A, B, C, . . .), he discovers certain structures, such as embedding (B → ABA) that, when applied recursively, generates such structures as AABAA, AAABAAA, etc. Thus the construction of a layer of the *Agnicayana* altar (A) is surrounded by two ritual sequences called *pravargya* (offering of hot milk to the *Aśvins* deities = B) and *upasad* (a ritual fight against demons = C). A common unit then is BCABC, but since BC also forms a unit, the basic structure would in this case be BAB. However, the ritual elements can also appear in other sequences, for instance, *pravargya—(upasad—*layer*—upasad)—pravargya* (BCACB); here CAC would build one unit so that the structure could again be reduced to BAB. Staal, for whom the complexity of Vedic ritual is indefinite,[35] presents also other "syntactical" structures, for instance, inversion (ABA → BAB), inserting (BC → BAC), mirroring (ABC → CBA), and serialization ($A_1A_2A_3$ . . .).

Staal has been heavily criticized.[36] Many of his critics[37] did not follow his narrow ideas of what religion is all about, and which neglect emic ideas as well as mythological or social explanation.[38] He was also criticized for failing to acknowledge that he had more-or-less 'staged' the entire *Agnicayana* ritual and had subsequently denied

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strip it [the ritual] of all the implicit mythology which adheres to the ritual without really forming a part of it, in other words, beliefs and representations that are rooted in a natural philosophy in the same way as myths".

[34] Lévi-Strauss, *L'Homme nu. Mythologiques IV*, 598

[35] Staal 1989, 91.

[36] See esp. *Religion* 21 (1991), including a reply by Staal to his critics (Staal 1991).

[37] Lawson and McCauley 1990; A.G. Grappard, "Rule-governed Activity vs. Rule-creating Activity", *Religion* 21 (1991), 207–212; Penner 1985; B.L. Mack, "Staal's Gauntlet and the Queen", *Religion* 21 (1991), 213–218; Strenski 1991; Harris 1997; G. Thompson, "On Mantras and Frits Staal", *Journal of Ritual Studies* 9 (1997), 23–44; G. Thompson, "On Truth-acts in Vedic", *Indo-Iranian Journal* 41 (1998), 125–153; Houseman and Severi 1998, 186–188.

[38] See, e.g., H. Scharfe, "The Great Rituals—Were They Really Meaningless?", B.K. Matilal and P. Billimoria (eds), *Sanskrit and Related Studies* (Shri Garibdas Oriental Series; Poona, 1990), 89–98; or M. Witzel, "Meaningful Ritual. Vedic, Medieval and Contemporary Concepts of the Nepalese Agnihotra Ritual", A.W. v.d. Hoek, D.H.A. Kolff and M.S. Oort (eds), *Ritual, State and History in South Asia. Essays in Honour of J.C. Heesterman* (Leiden, 1992), 774–827.

the importance of attending to the pragmatics and agents of rituals.[39] However, Staal was mainly criticized for his two, interlinked theories: the evolution and the meaninglessness of rituals. The first was regarded as highly speculative without even a shred of evidence;[40] the second was said to be "simply wrong".[41]

Staal's theory of the phylogenetic development of ritual is difficult to prove, but it can be linked to socio-biological arguments[42] according to which rituals serve biological functions and must be explained by the principles of natural selection.[43] For some of these scholars, ritual actions are not only psychomotoric abreactions but also obsolete survivals of a past. A number of specialists in ritual studies[44] have assumed the primacy of ritual over myth. For them action comes before meaning. Rituals of hunting survived in sacrifices even in modern societies since they had had phylogenetic benefits, such as the generation of fitness. They neither follow belief nor create belief. They are transmitted independently of belief. Similarly, Jensen[45] saw blood sacrifices as "survivals bereft of content". Houseman and Severi, who regard Staal's theory "basically a theory of recitation",[46] have rightly criticized Staal's biological reductionism, evolutionary speculations about the animal origins of language, and "atomised view of ceremonial behaviour",[47] in which the sum and arrangements of supposedly meaningless ritual elements do not count at all.

Staal's meaninglessness theory is *inter alia* based on transformational generative linguistics. He rightly shows that a simple referen-

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[39] See R. Schechner, "Wrestling against Time. The Performance Aspects of Agni", *Journal of Asian Studies* 45 (1986), 359–363; R. Schechner, "A 'Vedic Ritual' in Quotation Marks", *Journal of Asian Studies* 46 (1987), 108–110 and R. Schechner, *Theater-Anthropologie. Spiel und Ritual im Kulturvergleich*, as well as Staal's replies ("Professor Schechner's Passion for Goats", *Journal of Asian Studies* 46 (1987), 105–108; Staal 1991 and "From Meaning to Trees", *Journal of Ritual Studies* 7 (1993), 11–32).

[40] Mack, "Staal's Gauntlet and the Queen", 217 f.

[41] Penner 1985, 11.

[42] E. Wilson, *Sociobiology* (Cambridge, 1975); Burkert 1996.

[43] See Lawson and McCauley 1990, 167; cf. also A. Michaels, "Religionen und der neurobiologische Primat der Angst", F. Stolz (ed.), *Homo naturaliter Religiosus* (Bern, 1997), 91–136.

[44] E.g., W. Robertson Smith, *Lectures on the Religion of the Semites* (London, 1889); E. Cassirer, *Philosophie der symbolischen Formen. 2. Teil: Das mythische Denken* (1924), (Darmstadt, 1973); Burkert 1996.

[45] Jensen, *Myth and Cult among Primitive Peoples*.

[46] Houseman and Severi 1998, 186.

[47] Houseman and Severi 1998, 187

tial theory of meaning is as inadequate in ritual as it is in language. Rituals do not mirror or express a certain meaning or sense (one could also say: idea, belief, worldview) as signs (e.g. words) do not simply mirror reality. Hans H. Penner[48] has aptly shown that Staal is mistaken in his understanding of language and, consequently, ritual.[49] Following Benveniste, Penner argues that "language as we all know is composed of signs, and all linguistic signs have phonological, syntactic and semantic components".[50] Thus, if rituals have a syntax, they must have semantics, or meaning, for they cannot be separated. Syntax means the combination of signs, and signs always refer to something (which is their meaning). In other words, there cannot be a syntax without signs, and there cannot be signs without meaning. Thus syntax is always combined with meaning. "Staal . . . does not argue that rituals are not semiological systems. On the contrary, he argues that rituals have a syntax, but they are meaningless. Given the . . . evidence from linguistics, Staal's position is simply wrong".[51]

Staal has rightly argued against the functionalist interpretation of rituals, for ritual "far exceeds the sociological and affect-related functions that may be assigned to it. Conversely, the meanings that may be attached to aspects of the rite far exceed the limits of the rituals itself."[52] Paradoxically, Staal, opposing the reductionism implied in functionalist theories, is himself a reductionist insofar as he neglects all meaningful aspects that people attribute to ritual. He is also a reductionist because he denies that the fact that people are involved in seemingly meaningless action means something itself.

Intention as Meaning

Humphrey and Laidlaw also separate ritual activity from meaning.[53] For them rituals do not have any discursive meaning or hidden message which must be decoded by the ritual specialist. According to

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[48] Penner 1985.
[49] See also W.T. Wheelock, "The Problem of Ritual Language. From Information to Situation", *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 50 (1982), 49–71.
[50] Penner 1985, 9.
[51] Penner 1985, 11.
[52] Houseman and Severi 1998, 167.
[53] See also their contribution to this volume.

these authors, rituals are predominantly a different mode of action.[54] As any object can have different colors, a ritual action can be performed with or without meaning and a certain intention (though all rituals require the intention to perform it, that is to say, the ritual stance):

> Perhaps some of the things we have tried to show in this book—that people may have a similar attitude to ritual acts as they have to natural kinds, thus endowing them with a strange facticity; that they learn how to perform ritual acts and have them inscribed in their bodies separately from the prototypical ideas they may come to have of them; and the fact that people can have such prototypes without knowing what the acts they represent 'really' are—perhaps all this is the beginning of a psychological explanation of Wittgenstein's 'an experience in ourselves'.[55]

Humphrey and Laidlaw's starting point is the actor's ritual "commitment, a particular stance with respect to his or her actions".[56] Asking what differentiates acting in a ritualized way from acting in an unritualized way, they answer that ritual actions are a distinctive way of "going on" characterized by four aspects:

> (1) Ritualized action is non-intentional, in the sense that while people performing ritual acts do have intentions (thus the actions are not unintentional), the *identity* of a ritualized act does not depend, as is the case with normal action, on the agent's intention in acting. (2) Ritualized action is stipulated, in the sense that the constitution of separate acts out of the continuous flow of a person's action is not accomplished, as is the case with normal action, by processes of intentional understanding, but rather by constitutive rules which establish an ontology of ritual acts. . . . (3) Such acts are perceived as discrete, named entities, with their own characters and histories, and it is for this reason that we call them elemental and archetypal. (4) Because ritualized acts are felt, by those who perform them, to be external, they are also 'apprehensible'.[57]

Thus Humphrey and Laidlaw speak of rituals as always being non-intentional but not necessarily unintentional. They can be performed with a variety of motives, but whatever they are, these wishes or

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[54] Humphrey and Laidlaw 1994, 267.
[55] Humphrey and Laidlaw 1994, 266 ff.
[56] Humphrey and Laidlaw 1994, 88.
[57] Humphrey and Laidlaw 1994, 89.

motives do not change the ritual acts and, more importantly, they are not at all necessary for recognizing ritual acts as such. Whereas in the case of normal actions the intention is necessary to distinguish them from other actions or to perceive them as such, ritualized actions are not characterized by the intentions accompanying them.

A *saṃkalpa*, the Sanskrit *intentio solemnis* to perform a ritual,[58] cannot be considered as a communicative or informative act because its purpose is neither to communicate nor to inform anyone about the motives to perform the ritual. It simply signals that from that point in time on the sphere of existence has changed. Being principally a performative utterance in Austin's sense, that is, a promise or vow, it indicates, so to speak, a change of program, a shift to the level of ritualization, so that all actions that are framed by the *saṃkalpa* and *visarjana*—the ritual dissolution—may be considered as of a special (often sacred) nature, similar to plays in the theater—where one can be sure that Othello will not really murder Desdemona. This is what Humphrey and Laidlaw call 'ritual commitment'. Thus "in ritual you both are and are not the author of your acts".[59]

Humphrey and Laidlaw develop their theory concentrating on liturgical rituals that involve a high number of prescribed acts. They claim that performance rituals, such as healing ceremonies, are less or more weakly ritualized. They do not completely deny the intentional aspect of rituals, granting them thereby some sort of meaning. But following Staal, they rightly do not accept that rituals can be reduced to one particular meaning or intention. However, they also fail to explain why rituals are performed or practiced non-intentionally.

Meaning and Consciousness

To be sure, not all participants in rituals must agree with or know about their theological (or mythological, ideological, religious) implications. Not every girl or boy being baptized believes in God. For some people the 'Sacred Thread' of Hindu initiation ritual 'means'

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[58] See A. Michaels, "Saṃkalpa. The Beginnings of a Ritual", J. Gengnagel, U. Hüsken, and S. Raman Müller (eds), *Ritual in South Asia. Text and Context* (Wiesbaden, 2004, forthcoming).

[59] Humphrey and Laidlaw 1994, 99.

a change in status; for others it is a sign of social conformity or simply fashion. The girdling itself is an empty box that can be filled with all sorts of meanings: it can mean the initiation of a boy into a social group, clan, or family; the ordination of priests and ascetics; or merely the decoration (with a sash). In the Indian context, the sacred thread can be used with almost opposite meanings, for instance, in the ordination ritual of sects that deny the doctrine of the 'Twice-born' symbolized in the sacred thread.[60] Seen from this standpoint, girdling is girdling, pure activity. However, in none of the given examples *is* girdling 'pure activity'. Rather, it is an action that is interpreted differently (in other words, it has different meanings), depending on the context and the interpreter.

Given the many more-or-less explicit reasons for the performance of rituals, given the magnitude of exegetical literature on rituals, theories that claim that rituals are meaningless are indeed difficult to accept—for both practitioners and scholars of rituals. It seems evident that rituals are performed or celebrated because they do have meanings, and many theologians or priests keep pointing out that the practitioners of rituals have to be aware of the 'real' meaning of what they are doing in order to gain the merit of it. In other words, they should consciously perform the action (which implies that rituals can also be performed without such a consciousness). The conflict between those practitioners (i.e. priests), who claim that a certain understanding of the ritual is essential for the performer of the ritual, and those who regard such a consciousness unnecessary also resulted in religious conflicts and even wars, for instance, the Christian debate over the question of whether innocent, unaware children could be baptized or not. It is significant that religious criticism of rituals especially stresses the inner awareness of the meaning of ritual action.

The Indologist Alexis Sanderson[61] has given a detailed example of a similar argument. He first mentions that in Kashmirian Śaivism rituals are performed in explicit opposition to the Vedic descriptions of the meaning of these rituals. He then presents several examples from the Śaiva texts in which the aims of certain rituals are more-or-less explicit: liberation (*mokṣa*) from the bondage of transmigration

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[60] See A. Michaels, "Die heilige Schnur und 'hinduistische' Askese", *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 144 (1994), 330–344.
[61] See, e.g., A. Sanderson, "Meaning in Tantric Ritual", A.-M. Blondeau and K. Schipper (eds), *Essais sur le rituel III: Colloque du centenaire* (Louvain, Paris, 1995).

(*saṃsāra*) or desire for supernatural powers and effects (*siddhi*) to enjoy rewards (*bhoga*) in this world or after death. For the seekers of rewards, called *sādhakas* ('masters [of powers]'), the rituals had concrete objectives: the killing of enemies (*māraṇa*), the subjugation of desired women (*vaśīkaraṇa*), or the quelling of dangerous powers (*śānti*). For the seekers of liberation, however, another problem of purpose and meaning arose: if rituals were performed in order to reach a liberated state, why then should these rituals continue to be performed after reaching liberation? If all the impurity (*mala*) of the soul has been destroyed, rituals having the function of destroying impurity would seem to be obsolete. The answer given to this problem by the so-called left-hand Tantrism is consistent: rituals must continue to be carried out because the bondage of *māyā* (illusion) remains, but one should no longer attach any 'meaning' to them. Thus perfect knowledge, which no longer has any object, itself becomes ritualized, losing all meaning. Such examples illustrate that the meaning of rituals is more often regarded to be hidden (unconscious) or esoteric than self-evident— even for insiders. Rituals must be performed consciously, and at the same time the consciousness of what happens should not affect the rituals too much.

The Meaning of the Meaninglessness

Given these arguments, theories of the meaninglessness of rituals are not simply misleading but help to understand why any teleological interpretation of ritual action is contradicted by its required formality. If rituals are preserved even when religion changes, if they are transmitted from one religion (culture, region, or period) to another along with change(s) in meaning, then particular meanings cannot be the only reason for practicing them. Moreover, the fact that rituals are widely practiced without knowledge of their theologically ascribed meaning (e.g. Easter celebrations), that they are practiced even when one is consciously opposed to them, and that they are performed with a variety of intentions, clearly shows that particular meanings are not essential attributes of rituals.

   However, the theory that ritual actions are completely devoid of meaning and function cannot consistently be proposed. For the next question would be: Why are rituals without meaning? The answer to this question would provide the meaning (in the sense of significance)

of rituals. I shall try to solve this conundrum by proposing the middle way: rituals are indeed without meaning, but this is a very meaningful (significant) fact. My argument[62] is supported by three points:

First, it seems plausible that many ritual actions arose from actions for which good reasons must have existed to repeat them mimetically and to transmit them as cultural or habitual patterns. In many cases great problems or conflicts may have stood at the origin of rituals. It was necessary—individually or collectively—to solve these existential problems. Birth, for example, is not ritualized among animals, but human beings apparently needed such rituals perhaps after the consciousness of death arose and the existence of life had to be explained. The first time therefore became an extremely important focal point for rituals that are often treated as unchangeable. In myths, rituals often refer to these archetypal, idealized, or sacralized origins when nothing had to be changed because everything was in a perfect state or golden age. It seems to me that rituals, especially religious rituals, are intrinsically bound up with this notion of changelessness. Rituals are regarded as rigid, stereotypical, and unchangeable because they are *per definitionem* difficult to change. This does not mean that rituals are unchangeable. On the contrary, they are altered without giving up the claim of being invariable.

Secondly, there were good reasons for societies to refer to this claim of invariability: phylogenetically, people learned to preserve and memorize cultural values and techniques over centuries without activating them again and again by rational choice; psychologically, not all activity had to be cognitively burdened; socially, not every position or status had to be legitimized; religiously, the tension between change and continuity could be borne.

Thirdly, if people identify themselves in rituals with invariability and timelessness (in Vedic rituals, for instance, with the timeless Veda and the sacrifice), they resist the uncertainty of past and future, life and death. In rituals they become 'eternal', related to something that has always been there, never changed and detached from everyday

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[62] See also A. Michaels, "«Le rituel pour le rituel?» oder Wie sinnlos sind Rituale?" C. Carduff and J. Pfaff-Czarnecka (eds), *Rituale heute* (Berlin, 1999), 23–48; A. Michaels, "Ex opere operato: Zur Intentionalität promissorischer Akte in Ritualen", K.P. Köpping and U. Rao (eds), *Im Rausch des Rituals. Gestaltung und Transformation der Wirklichkeit in körperlicher Performanz* (Münster, 2000), 104–123; A. Michaels, *Hinduism. Past and Present* (Princeton, 2003), 233–235.

life and profanity. Thus rituals are staged productions of timeless-
ness, the effort to oppose change, which implies finality (and, ultimately,
death).

In short, the meaninglessness of rituals only concerns the invari-
ability of prescribed actions and the polysemy of rituals (that is, the
multiplicity of meanings). Apart from that, rituals have a great variety
of meanings and functions. The tradition of commentaries demon-
strates the history of the meaning that was attached to rituals.
Moreover, the persistence of rituals requires that they serve some
(adaptive) functions. If they were entirely without function, it would
be unnecessary to transmit them.[63] My point is that the significance
of rituals lies in the fact that they often create an auratic sphere or
arena of timelessness and immortality—at least in religious or semi-
religious contexts. Seen from this perspective, rituals can indeed do
without any specific meaning, but this in itself is not meaningless,
that is, without significance.

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[63] Lawson and McCauley 1990, 169.

THEORETICAL APPROACHES

ACTION

James Laidlaw & Caroline Humphrey

Not much about ritual is incontrovertible, but that rituals are composed of actions is surely not open to doubt. To view ritual as action might therefore seem to be an obvious and a reasonably promising starting point for analysis, but it has been a comparatively rare one both among general theorists and among anthropologists and historians who have sought to understand and interpret specific rituals.

   The most important reason for this is probably the distinctive inflection given to the sociological traditions descended from Émile Durkheim, by the central but problematical place of ritual in his mature writings. The awkward duality, which Durkheim's polemical critique of utilitarianism created for him, between hedonistic individual inclinations on the one hand and social facts on the other, was addressed in *The Elementary Forms* by a theory of the supposedly social genesis of values in ritual.[1] This polemical context is reflected in the fact that he views ritual, in its role as the paradigm and the practical origin of the social, as the direct antithesis of a utilitarian understanding of action.[2] Thus, as action, it is symbolic *rather than* rational, expressive *rather than* effective. It may be something that people do, but its theoretical importance lies in what 'it', and 'society' through it, does to those people. In this sense it is a kind of anti-action. Its ostensible subjects are in fact its objects, since through it 'society' acts upon them.

   Durkheim's account of just how this was supposed to happen was remarkably slight and unpersuasive, but insofar as succeeding generations of social scientists have shared his holistic and collectivist starting-point, they have also been faced with the conceptual gap he used ritual to fill. They have accordingly followed his lead in regarding ritual as the medium through which 'society' somehow or other

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[1] See É. Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (1912), trans. J.W. Swain (London, 1915).

[2] See H. Joas, *The Creativity of Action* (Oxford, 1996), 40–42.

speaks to the individuals who make it up, and does so in a uniquely authoritative voice. Thus consideration of the characteristics of ritual as action has often been eclipsed by a view of ritual as essentially a means of communication, in which participants are more or less unwitting transmitters and ultra-receptive receivers. The full logical development of this approach occurs where it is observed that this communicative function is not restricted to ritual actions. Analytical primacy is therefore given instead to a wider category of all public events that can be interpreted functionally in this way, and 'ritual' is assimilated to that.[3]

This essay will describe some recent attempts to theorise the distinctive or specific characteristics of ritual as action, attempts that depart from the Durkheimian view of ritual as communication. But first it is worth considering the characterisations of ritual action that emerged from within that paradigm.

Ritual Action as Coercive Communication

When ritual has been viewed as communication, attention has been concentrated either on the *content* of the message, to be arrived at through hermeneutic interpretation or structural decoding, or on the *effect* of the message being received and/or resisted by the participants, as revealed in functional analysis (this includes Marxist and neo-Foucauldian functionalisms). These two strategies have between them permitted anthropologists and others to use rituals as keys to understanding the societies in which they are performed, often to brilliant and illuminating effect. But they involve a projection onto participants of the analyst's own stance and interests, as if the rituals were performed *so that* the analyst could interpret them.[4] And they have proved much less productive of theoretical understanding of ritual, since the class of events they give rise to is hopelessly capacious and ill-defined.[5] So one alternative strategy has been to define ritual not as a putatively separate class of actions but as an aspect—the expressive or communicative aspect—of all actions. This was

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[3] See Handelman 1990.
[4] Humphrey and Laidlaw 1994, 261–264. See also Bell 1992.
[5] See Humphrey and Laidlaw 1994, 64–72. See also Goody 1977; Needham 1985.

most famously argued by Edmund Leach.[6] On this view the fact
that Europeans greet by shaking hands and Japanese do so by bow-
ing is in both cases the 'ritual aspect' of greeting. Similarly it is a
'ritual aspect' of eating that Europeans use knives and forks and
Japanese use chopsticks. The aspects of an action that are arbitrary
with respect to practical instrumentality are 'expressive', and what
they express is aspects of the social order.

If the consensus on seeing ritual as communication substantially
eclipsed, it did not entirely preclude, attention to the characteristics
of ritual as action. But as Michael Houseman and Carlo Severi have
observed,[7] such attention as authors writing within these traditions
gave to the distinguishing characteristics of ritual action tended to
be restricted either to an exceedingly generalising or to a radically
particularising level. In the first case, they proposed overarching
schemas to which all or very large categories of rituals allegedly con-
form, certain meanings they all share or effects they all bring about.
In the second, they enumerated the features of ritual action that, it
was argued, explain the power these actions have, which ordinary
actions do not, to be so efficacious.

The most influential theories of the first type have been direct
descendants of Arnold van Gennep's three-stage analysis of rites of
passage.[8] These include Victor Turner's contention that the middle
stages of such rites promote a condition of 'anti-structure' as a rem-
edy for the ills of formality and hierarchy;[9] and Maurice Bloch's pro-
posal that ideologies of timeless order emerge from symbolic structures
of 'rebounding violence'.[10] Bloch explicates what he means by 'rebound-
ing violence' with reference first to male initiation rites among the
Orokaiva in Papua New Guinea. The boys are first identified with
pigs and symbolically killed. The time-bound, reproductive, biologi-
cal aspects of their being having been destroyed, they become, like
the ancestors, transcendent and immortal spirits. These spirits then
return from the timeless realm of the ancestors and conquer and
consume biological life (again represented by pigs). The process as

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[6] See S. Hugh-Jones and J. Laidlaw (eds), *The Essential Edmund Leach. Volume 1: Anthropology and Society* (New Haven, 2000), 149–209.

[7] Houseman and Severi 1998, 165–202.

[8] See A. van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage* (1909), trans. M.B. Vizedom and G.L. Caffe (Chicago, 1960).

[9] See V.W. Turner 1969.

[10] See Bloch 1992.

a whole establishes the transcendence and domination of legitimate (male) authority over (female) native vitality. And just as Turner's original schema was later found by Turner himself and his followers to be embodied not only in ritual but in almost every social process they cared to analyse,[11] so Bloch's rebounding violence, which begins ambitiously enough as the "irreducible core of the ritual process",[12] turns out to be the underlying logic of the whole field of religion, and indeed also of marriage and the state.[13]

Attempts to characterise how it is that meanings contained in ritual come to be compelling (thus 'social' for Durkheimians, 'cultural' for Geertzians, 'ideological' for Marxists, and 'discursive' or 'hegemonic' for various kinds of neo-Marxists) have for the most part used one or more of three analogies. Ritual is like a written text, which people in the culture read, so that it is more persuasive for them than the ephemeral speech of everyday action.[14] Or it is like theatrical performance: the colour, drama, comedy, music, and dance persuade and move in the way that a powerful piece of theatre does.[15] They thus "can transform the world of experience and action in accordance with their illusory and mystifying potential".[16] (Analogies with carnival are a sub-category here). Or it is like performative utterances: those speech acts that can bring about changes in status, obligations, and social relations ("I now pronounce you", "I sentence you", "I name this ship", "I promise", "Be warned", etc.). The theatrical and performative analogies especially have led to quite detailed considerations of the specific techniques by which rituals may be said to have their persuasive effects. The last has particularly been used to interpret magical rites in such a way as to acquit those who practise and believe in them of apparent irrationality, and to suggest how, through ultra-effective persuasion, even organic effects of healing rituals might be brought about.[17]

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[11] See V.W. Turner 1974a; MacAloon (ed.) 1984.

[12] Bloch 1992, 1.

[13] See Bloch 1992, chs. 4 & 5.

[14] See Geertz 1973. See also P. Ricoeur, "The Model of the Text. Meaningful Action considered as a Text", *Social Research* 38 (1971), 529–62.

[15] See V.W. Turner 1982a; V.W. Turner and Bruner (eds) 1986; Kapferer 1983; R. Schechner, *Between Theatre and Anthropology* (Philadelphia, 1985); M.E. Combs-Schilling, *Sacred Performances. Islam, Sexuality, and Sacrifice* (New York, 1989); Schechner and Appel (eds) 1990.

[16] Kapferer 1983, 5.

[17] See Finnegan 1969; Ahern 1979; Tambiah 1968; Tambiah 1973; Tambiah 1981; Rappaport 1999. For a perceptive critique see Gardner 1983.

An unusually comprehensive and multi-dimensional attempt to explain the compulsive persuasiveness of ritual is to be found in some of the work of Maurice Bloch.[18] In a separate series of publications from his theory of 'rebounding violence' (indeed the possible connection between the two is an intriguing matter), Bloch argues that the various kinds of formalisation of language in ritual—speech-making, chanting, singing—reduce semantic content, because possibilities of alternative utterances are closed off, and at the same time increase the illocutionary force of those utterances. This combination creates an unusual kind of communication, where content is reduced almost to zero, but persuasiveness is maximised. It therefore becomes difficult for participants to resist authoritative utterances made in ritual contexts by any means other than repudiation of the whole ritual order. No rebellion, only revolution is possible. Thus ritual is an extreme form, indeed it is the most important legitimating device, of what Max Weber called traditional authority. In this work Bloch draws extensively on speech act theory. But insights from the philosophy of language and pragmatics are also integrated in his work, along with extensive ethnographical and historical contextualisation, as in his demonstration (1986) of the way, over time, the same Merina circumcision ritual has been authoritative legitimation for diametrically opposed meanings.[19]

Formal Features

Several authors have attempted to characterise the distinctiveness of ritual action by developing catalogues of features in terms of which it is, to some degree, marked out from non-ritual action, features such as formalism, invariance, and so on.[20] Rodney Needham has very cogently pointed out how attempts at this kind of definition, aiming at a list of necessary and sufficient features, are bound to founder on the variations and combinations in which these features are in fact found.[21] In this vein Catherine Bell emphasises the fact that not all of her own catalogue of features are found in all

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[18] See Bloch 1986; Bloch 1989.
[19] See Bloch 1986.
[20] For example Tambiah 1981.
[21] See Needham 1985.

rituals,[22] in support of her contention that the category of 'ritual is anyway an artificial and largely academic category, imposed on variable practice.[23]

Roy Rappaport, by contrast, seeks to argue that the features he identifies coalesce into a universal 'ritual form'. He defines ritual as "the performance of more or less invariant sequences of formal acts and utterances not entirely encoded by the performers".[24] He describes how the fact of ritual being inherited, its formality, invariance, the fact that it is performance, and the fact that it may not have direct physical effects, all are open to considerable variation. In the case of formality, for instance, he recognises that it is very difficult to say anything substantive about what this consists in.[25] But he argues that nevertheless this 'form' is distinguishable from whatever overtly symbolic meanings might be found in particular rituals. The form of ritual action itself has definite characteristics and effects. It transmits its own messages. These are of two kinds. Self-referential messages communicate to participants about their own social status. Canonical messages refer to the fundamental commitments of the social order, and the important thing about these, for Rappaport, is that participants in ritual are inescapably bound, by the fact of participation, to accept these commitments. He points out that in order to regard ritual as communication, one has to accept that the distinction between transmitter and receiver does not apply. While others have concluded from this fact that the language of communication is inappropriate and unenlightening in this context,[26] Rappaport prefers to press ahead with communication language and to note a further conflation: "transmitters-receivers become fused with the messages they are transmitting and receiving".[27] It is this general collapse of distinctions that Rappaport sees as responsible for the compulsory quality of ritual action. He continues, "for performers to reject liturgical orders being realized by their own participation in them as they are participating in them is self-contradictory, and thus impossible". This 'acceptance' occurs irrespective of the private state of belief of the participant

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[22] See Bell 1997.
[23] See Bell 1992.
[24] Rappaport 1999, 24.
[25] Rappaport 1999, 33–36.
[26] Humphrey and Laidlaw 1994, ch. 3.
[27] Rappaport 1999, 119.

and irrespective of whether he or she goes on to abide by the commitment, though Rappaport thinks that participation does make this more likely. What is created in ritual is obligation. This Rappaport describes as the 'fundamental office' of ritual, and it is the starting point for the distinctive characteristics of humanity: convention, morality, and the sacred.

Beyond the Communication Pradigm

Unlike Rappaport, most recent authors who have attempted to analyse the distinctive formal characteristics of ritual action have departed from the Durkheimian view of ritual as representation or as a means of communication. Claude Lévi-Strauss,[28] for instance, criticises Turner and others for confusing the aim of understanding ritual 'in itself and for itself' with the interpretation of mythology, fragments of which are often found in ritual, but which can only properly be understood in the context of the whole corpus from which it comes. In order to understand ritual, on the other hand, this fragmentary and often implicit mythology must be stripped away and attention must be devoted instead to the formal procedures of ritual and the effects these bring about. Lévi-Strauss identifies two such formal procedures, repetition and parcelling out, by the latter of which he means the breaking down of action sequences into constituent fragments. But he offers no sustained analysis of how these two processes operate in specific rituals and points instead to a single function they are deemed always to fulfil. By the untiring repetition of disconnected fragments of action, ritual, he claims, creates a kind of imperfect illusion of continuity. It seems to overcome the clear conceptual distinctions established in mythological thought, making possible the comforting illusion that the logically opposed are instead continuous, an effect which is interestingly not so very dissimilar to Turner's notion of anti-structural liminality.

Detailed exploration of the formal features of ritual action, which Lévi-Strauss seems to suggest but does not pursue, is to be found in the work of Frits Staal.[29] Drawing as he does on structural linguistics

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[28] See Lévi-Strauss 1990.
[29] See Staal 1979; F. Staal, *Agni. The Vedic Ritual of the Fire Altar* (Berkeley, 1983); F. Staal, "The Sound of Religion", *Numen* 33 (1986) 33–64, 185–224; Staal 1989.

and analogies between ritual and music, Staal's intellectual resources indeed overlap with those of Lévi-Strauss, but his most important source is detailed study of the traditions of Brahmanical ritualism in India. Staal argues that while meaningful symbols are employed in ritual, what is distinctive about ritual action is that it is organised according to purely formal rules. Semantics are incidental, and insofar as they are present at all are systematically undermined by purely formal syntactic rules. Ritual is "pure activity, without meaning or goal",[30] structured by rules that call for the breaking down of sequences, the repetition of elements, the embedding of one sequence in another, and similar formal operations performed, recursively, on the higher-order sequences formed by the application of those rules. Thus, as with phrase structure rules in linguistics, infinite variation can be generated from the repeated application of relatively simple rules. Staal's analysis is undoubtedly enlightening, as in his study of the Indian *agnicayana* ritual,[31] and draws attention to aspects of ritual that are routinely ignored in much symbolic analysis.

Lawson & McCauley

Thomas Lawson and Robert McCauley, whose approach also draws directly on generative linguistics, point out that Staal's analysis of these sequencing rules includes nothing about the basic constituent acts to which they are applied.[32] They argue that the internal structures of religious ritual acts are also amenable to formal analysis, and that indeed these internal structures explain some of the most important constraints on ritual sequences. They refer to their own approach as 'cognitive' and as a 'competence model', since it seeks to explain observable features of rituals with reference to participants' implicit knowledge and intuitions about which rituals are and are not well-formed and thus permissible. They claim that these intuitions derive from participants' 'action representation system' and that this system applies to all action, ritual and non-ritual alike. Indeed, Lawson & McCauley have in effect no definition or char-

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[30] Staal 1979, 9.
[31] Staal, *Agni*. See also Humphrey and Laidlaw 1994, 103–105.
[32] See Lawson and McCauley 1990, 59. See also E.T. Lawson's chapter in this volume.

acterisation of ritual action as such. They refer always to 'religious ritual actions' and this is because ritual is for them a derivative term. It is action that is predominantly 'religious', which in turn means action in which the agency of gods—'culturally postulated superhuman agents' or CPS-agents—is of significance. According to what they refer to as their 'postulate of superhuman agency', only the input of these CPS-agents distinguishes ritual from other action. This is why they maintain, against Staal, that what they call the 'internal structure' of ritual actions is so important. They do not seriously consider the possibility of secular ritual, or whether anything other than the 'religious' postulate of superhuman agents distinguishes ritual from other modes of action.

Lawson & McCauley distinguish two basic structures internal to ritual action, depending on how directly the CPS-agent appears in the representation of a ritual. If the effective agent who makes the religious event happen is a CPS-agent (a shamanic séance for example, or the 'hypothetical' ritual in which Christ founded the Church), we have what they call a 'special-agent ritual'. Derivatively, any ritual that requires the agency of a specially sanctified participant (a priest etc.) is also a special-agent ritual, since the 'special-agent' is always postulated to have been qualified ultimately by the agency of a CPS-agent (at the ordination of the priest who ordained the priest . . . etc.). Special-agent rituals are always central to any ritual system, compared with the second kind of rituals, where either the person on whom the ritual is performed, or some object employed, is more directly connected than the ostensible agent of the ritual to the gods. These latter are referred to respectively as special-patient and special-instrument rituals. Thus Lawson & McCauley arrive at a second and overriding 'postulate', that of 'superhuman immediacy'. Special-agent rituals will always be more central to a religious ritual system than special-patient or special-instrument rituals, irrespective of the ostensible purposes or meanings of the rituals. And they put forward a number of hypotheses about properties of rituals in all religions, such as that special-agent rituals, unlike special-patient and special-instrument rituals, do not need to be repeated, and that special-agents cannot be substituted for. These predictable regularities are to be explained by the internal structure or form of the actions (whether they are special-agent or special-patient/instrument rituals) and not by symbolic meanings: "We think that the religious ritual form and the properties of rituals it explains and predicts are

overwhelmingly independent of attributed meanings".[33] And ritual form also explains widespread patterns of the distribution and transmission of rituals: why some are more emotionally arousing and less often repeated than others.[34]

Humphrey & Laidlaw

Our own work on ritual,[35] like that of Staal and Lawson & McCauley, departs from the widespread assumption that ritual is fundamentally a system of communication in which participants receive pre-existing meanings and messages. Instead, we argue that the attribution of meanings is a *response* to ritual, which is called for and developed to different degrees in different cultural settings and religious traditions at different times. Thus meaning is at best a derivative feature of ritual—highly variable and indeed sometimes effectively absent. This is of course a fact that many practitioners of ritual have themselves often observed. They might condemn this as 'empty ritual' or venerate it as evidence of the agency of God. These variable reactions to the perception that ritual can be 'meaningless' play a part in our analysis.

We provide a detailed case study of the rite of temple worship (*puja*) among the Jains of India. We describe how the rite is performed today, and also the history of controversy about it, various interpretations of it, and in particular the simultaneous presence of the widespread idea that ritual somehow has automatic effects, and the equally widespread ethical and spiritual objections among religious practitioners to just this possibility. Concerns that ritual, and enjoying the benefits of ritual, are somehow ethically or religiously illegitimate, have given rise in Jain thinking to doctrinal insistence that participants should know and, as they perform it, should actually *mean* certain propositional meanings for the actions of which the *puja* is composed. Comparable, but in detail crucially variable complex reactions are found in other religious traditions. These are the contexts in which the 'meanings' ethnographers and historians report

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[33] McCauley and Lawson 2002, 10.
[34] See McCauley and Lawson 2002 arguing against the alternative hypotheses in H. Whitehouse, *Arguments and Icons: Divergent Modes of Religiosity* (Oxford, 2000).
[35] See Humphrey and Laidlaw 1994.

for rituals must be understood, rather than being regarded as potential solutions in themselves to the riddle of what a ritual is or 'means'.

We also argue that it is not analytically productive to attempt to define rituals as a class of events, since such an attempt brings with it a series of familiar but unproductive questions about whether for example football matches or student demonstrations are or are not 'rituals'. It seems obvious that in some cultural practices almost everything that happens is highly ritualized, in others ritualization may be less complete and may vary from occasion to occasion; and it seems obvious that whatever it is that makes these events notable can also happen in a more fragmentary way, as a small part of other activities, and even individually. Something remarkably like it can even occur as part of individual psychopathology.[36] Which of these events one calls 'a ritual' is not analytically significant. In all these cases at least some of what is going on departs in recognisable ways from normal human action. The challenge is to describe and account for this transformation, where it occurs.

We emphasise the fact that rituals are composed of many actions that can and frequently are often done in non-ritualized ways in other contexts. Thus an adequate analysis of ritual must provide an answer to the question of what is the difference between an action performed so to speak 'normally' and the same action when it is ritualized. Drawing on an avowedly eclectic range of ideas from the philosophy of action and language, phenomenology, and cognitive science, we argue that the distinctive quality of action we recognise as ritualization can happen in a number of ways, some of which we illustrate in some detail, but that in each case it involves a specific modification in the intentionality of human action. Ritual is action in which intentionality is in a certain way displaced so that, as we summarise the matter, human agents both are and are not the authors of their ritual actions.

Normal human action is intrinsically intentional. In order correctly to identify what kind of action certain behaviour counts as (Is that man waving to me or practising his tennis serve? Is he giving or lending me that? Why is she telling me this?), an interlocutor or

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[36] See A.P. Fiske and N. Haslam, "Is Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder a Pathology of the Human Disposition to Perform Socially Meaningful Rituals? Evidence of Similar Content", *Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease* 185 (1997), 211–222. See also the discussion in P. Boyer, *Religion Explained* (New York, 2001).

observer needs correctly to identify the intention that is directing the action: not a prior intention or purpose, but the intentionality that animates the action. This is sometimes called the 'intention-in-action' and, for linguistic examples, it is also sometimes referred to as the 'illocutionary force' or 'point' of the utterance. It is the aspect of the utterance that makes it an action, and it is crucial to establishing the identity of the action—what kind of action it is. So, to use a standard example, a policeman who calls out to an ice-skater on a frozen pond saying 'the ice is thin over there' will have failed in his purpose if the other man does not apprehend that his point in say-ing this is not idly to convey information, or to strike up an acquain-tance, but to warn him not to go 'over there'. It is the policeman's intention-in-action that makes his utterance a warning. (Much else is needed, of course, to make it a successful one, but that is a different point).

To grasp the intentions-in-action (or, as we more often say in our book, 'intentional meanings') of a person's activity is not an optional extra in human interaction. It is how we understand what they do as the actions of an intentional agent, and the only grounds we have for distinguishing nameable and comprehensible 'actions' within the continuous flow of their outwardly observable movements. If we do not attribute intentionality to each other in this way, if we do not see others' activity as embodying intentions, then we have no more grounds for understanding what they are doing than a hearer of an unknown language has for distinguishing words and sentences. So in order correctly to understand the actions of a human agent we nor-mally have to be able to discern what their intention-in-action is: how they themselves would identify what it is they are doing. Of course, we normally do not need to wonder very hard, and there is often not much room for doubt. We generally and routinely do this correctly without even being conscious of the question.

For ritualized action, we argue, this is not so. First, the identity of the person's actions may not be at all intelligible on the basis of observing what they do. A Jain woman in a temple, performing *puja*, stands before an idol, takes a small oil lamp in her right hand, lifts it up and holds it towards the statue. Is she shedding light on the idol? Is she offering the lamp to it? Or is she shedding light on her-self? Is she representing the 'light' of Jain religious teaching and saying non-verbally that this derives from the teacher whose statue is before her? If we imagine her doing something of this kind in a

'normal' action context then any of these might be the case, and which of them is the case would be a matter of what her intentions actually were. We would look to how she did what she did, with a view to working out what this was. In the ritual context, however, there is only one answer to the question. So long as we are sure that she is in the temple to perform this ritual (she has not wandered in by accident and she is not just 'playing along'), we know that what her action may count as must be one of the known constituent acts of which this ritual is composed. In this case it is the *dip-puja*, or lamp-worship. Now there is not just one simple list of these actions, and there are some varying views within the Jain community about what these are and how they are related. But nevertheless, insofar as this is a ritual action it remains the case that where we have to look in order to be able to name and identify her action is not to the woman herself, her thoughts and feelings, or to the nuances of her comportment that might give us access to these, but to the shared public knowledge that precedes her performance and that stipulates what kinds of actions this ritual is made up from and therefore what her activity as part of it ever could be.

This then is the sense in which ritual action is non-intentional. This is not to say that it is unintentional. This woman is conscious and aware of what she is doing. It is non-intentional in the specific sense that the *identity* of her action is fixed by prior stipulation, where normally, in unritualized contexts, it would be a matter of her intentions-in-action.

The second aspect of the ritualization of action, in our analysis, is therefore this feature of stipulation. Ritual, as many analysts have observed, is governed by rules that tell performers what they may and may not do, in which order, and so on. But more fundamental than these regulative rules are constitutive rules that stipulate what is to count as an instance of the restricted set of possible actions of which any ritual is composed. (Constitutive rules also occur in games: a 'serve' in tennis is when you . . .). In performing an action as ritual one accepts these constitutive rules, and it is these rather than the normal "steady buzz of intentional activity"[37] that are constitutive of the identity of one's action. As a result—this is the third feature—ritual actions appear to those who perform them as somehow

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[37] S. Hampshire, *Thought and Action* (London, 1959), 97.

pre-existing and coming from outside themselves, so that they inherit or receive them and have to aim at achieving or accomplishing them, at making their activity count as one of them. This we refer to as the elemental or archetypal quality of ritualized action: the fact that to those who perform them these actions can seem not to be the outcome of what they do so much as a pre-existing, indeed often eternal and archetypal entity, which they somehow aim at replicating, or achieving, or entering into.

Drawing on recent work in cognitive psychology, we suggest that the representations celebrants hold of ritual actions may therefore be different from those they hold of other actions. Psychologists have shown that even very young children represent the categories of natural kinds (animal and plant species, naturally occurring substances, etc.) differently from how they represent artefacts or the products of human convention. So for instance, children understand intuitively that a badger cannot 'become' a skunk, even if it were to be surgically altered to that in all respects it resembled one. Equally, they understand that a chair that had its back removed and its legs extended could become a stool. Natural kinds are represented mentally as if their identity depended on an unseen 'essential' quality rather than observable features. ('Fools' gold' is not gold, however much it resembles it). Our suggestion is that a similar difference to that between natural kind and artefactual terms underlies the representation of ritualized and unritualized actions.[38]

So the ritualization of action, we have argued, consists in it becoming non-intentional, stipulated, and elemental or archetypal. At this point in the argument, we need to remind ourselves of an observation we made at the beginning. Human action is intrinsically intentional and reflexive. It is constituted, in part, by the conscious ideas that agents have of what they are doing. So their own self-descriptions are an intrinsic and constitutive part of their activity.[39] This fact has two consequences for the ritualization of action. The first is that, to a person acting ritually, the fact that they are acting ritually is available to them to be apprehended, and may become the subject of conscious reflection. The second, which follows from this, is that the way and the attitude with which they respond to this apprehension

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[38] Humphrey and Laidlaw 1994, 133–166.
[39] See C. Taylor, *Human Agency and Language* (Cambridge, 1985).

of their own action as ritualized will constitutively affect that action. People generally know and indeed intend that, in ritual, they are acting differently from normal. Terminology varies cross-culturally, of course, but this does not show, as anthropologists have often mistakenly thought, that there is not a universal perception that is shared.[40] What is profoundly variable, however, is the reaction to this and the different ways agents go about apprehending and appropriating the ritual actions they perform.

For the Jain case, we describe the way worshippers seek to 'apprehend' their own ritual actions by learning and rehearsing certain propositional meanings that they attach to each named action; and how some, answering injunctions from religious teachers, seek through prayer, or song, or meditational techniques to experience such meanings emotionally as the acts are performed. This we refer to as 'meaning to mean', and we note that it is a widespread reaction in many religious traditions, especially their 'protestant' variants. We also describe how some worshipers apprehend their ritual actions without recourse to explicit, propositional, or symbolic meanings but through a direct engagement with the physicality of certain ritual acts, and in this way achieve emotional or dissociated states. This is marginal to Jain religiosity, but central, of course, to many other traditions.

So the fact that the agent performing ritual remains conscious and reflective is intrinsic to our account of ritualization. It is important not to describe ritual as if the person performing it becomes an automaton or unaware. We know this is generally not so: spirit possession and ecstatic trances may occur in ritual, as a result of versions of the last of the strategies of 'apprehension' we have just described, but they are not necessary to it. Persons in ritual remain human agents. It is most obviously the quality of *inter*-action that is affected by ritualization. When we take part in ritual, we do not seek to understand each other's actions in the same way as we do normally, for we know that it is to the stipulated order of possible consituent acts, and not directly to the intentions-in-action of those we interact with, that we must refer to understand what it is they are doing.

This is the sense then in which, in ritual, an agent both is and is not the author of his or her acts. It is his or her doing that the

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[40] M. Bloch, *How We Think They Think* (Boulder, 1998).

action is performed 'as ritual', as are whatever symbolic or emotional identifications he or she makes, but the fact that the actions are non-intentional, that their identity comes from a stipulated ontology, means that in another sense they are not the agent's own. Bloch has recently taken up this point,[41] and developed the arguments he made in earlier work about ritual as traditional authority.[42] He argues that it explains the 'deference' intrinsic to ritual as well as the fact, which we also stress, that the attribution of meaning to ritual is always uncertain and never final. Bloch also agrees with us, and with Houseman & Severi,[43] that ritual is not a medium for the communication of meaning, although this does not mean that meanings are not attributed to it. It is a mistake to see ritual action as merely the means of illustrating or displaying pre-existing religious ideas, although this is often how religious authorities prefer to see things. Rather, ritual action is itself a distinctive medium of religious tradition.

In a perceptive discussion,[44] Michael Houseman and Carlo Severi make the point that there is an equivocation in our book about how our theory applies to what we call, following Jane Atkinson,[45] 'performance-centred rituals'. These are rites, paradigmatically shamanic seances and exorcism rites, in which some kind of dramatic performance, such as of the unseen actions of gods or spirits that are believed really to be occurring, is central. At one point we describe these as being more 'weakly ritualized' than liturgy-centred rituals, such as the *puja*.[46] We consciously set out to correct the relative neglect in anthropological theorising of ritual of the comparatively undramatic rites that are central to liturgical practice in all the great religions.[47] But elsewhere (in our discussion of the Indian festival of *holi*), we suggest that performance-centred rites may differ from the

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[41] M. Bloch, "Ritual and Deference", H. Whitehouse and J. Laidlaw (eds), *Ritual and Memory. Toward a Comparative Anthropology of Religion* (Walnut Creek, 2004), 65–78. See also Bloch's chapter in this volume.

[42] See Bloch 1989, 19–45.

[43] Houseman and Severi 1998.

[44] Houseman and Severi 1998, 231–232.

[45] J.M. Atkinson, *The Art and Politics of Wana Shamanship* (Berkeley, 1989).

[46] See Humphrey and Laidlaw 1994, 8.

[47] On this see also J.R. Bowen, "*Salat* in Indonesia: The Social Meanings of an Islamic Ritual", *Man* (n.s.) 24 (1989), 600–619; J.R. Bowen, "Imputations of Faith and Allegiance. Islamic Prayer and Indonesian Politics Outside the Mosque", D. Parkin and S. Headley (eds), *Islamic Prayer across the Indian Ocean* (London, 2000).

liturgical not in being less ritualized but in ritualization applying at a more inclusive and higher-order level, to larger and more encompassing actions.[48] Houseman and Severi themselves take up the latter suggestion, a choice we concur with as we now agree that this is the correct way to try to see the relationship between liturgical and performance-centred ritual. The notion that performance-centred ritual is 'weakly ritualized' is, we now think, misleading. Houseman and Severi also suggest that our characterisation of ritual action as non-intentional, being a contrast with normal action, is negative and residual. There is some truth in this, although our account of the ontological stipulation provided by constitutive rules is the positive and substantive other side of this coin. But the more substantive point is that our account is designed to accommodate the dual fact, as we see it, that ritual does differ from normal action in certain invariant respects, yet that just how ritual is reflexively constituted and apprehended is variable. Hence our account of the different modes through which Jains constitute their action as ritualized, such as 'meaning to mean'.

Houseman & Severi

Houseman and Severi's book, like ours, is an attempt to theorise ritual as a 'mode of action' through detailed interpretation of a single ethnographic case. The case they choose is not one they themselves have studied directly, but the *naven* ceremonies of the Iatmul people of Papua New Guinea, which have been documented several times since Gregory Bateson's path-braking ethnography.[49] The *naven* is a much more performance-centred and also more labile ritual than the *puja*. A variety of different episodes of behaviour, between persons in certain kinship relations, count as *naven*. Yet still all acts of *naven* have a discernible 'ritual form' when taken as a whole. All count as instances of *naven* insofar as the performers realise this form, which because it is a more encompassing action, includes additional elements to those found in elemental liturgical acts such as those in the Jain *puja*. So in addition to reproducing certain definite—transvestite—behaviours in a certain distinct—caricaturing—style,

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[48] See Humphrey and Laidlaw 1994, 120–121.
[49] See G. Bateson, *Naven*. 2nd ed. (Stanford, 1958 [1st ed. 1936]).

naven creates distinct relational contexts. It is performed between definite pairs of classificatory kin, and the behaviour always identifies one party with another kin category. So for instance a mother's brother (*wau*) behaves towards his sister's son (*laua*) in a way that also identifies him with the latter's mother, which is to say his own sister. This process, which Houseman and Severi call 'ritual condensation', creates simultaneous but contradictory relationships. It is important to emphasise that their argument is not that these relationships are represented, symbolised, or communicated in the ritual. They do not exist independently outside of it and so are not there to be represented. Rather the ritual creates a new relational context by associating in the same sequence of action modes of relationship which, outside the ritual, are mutually exclusive.[50] Houseman and Severi argue that these features of the ritual form of *naven* action are "constitutive properties of ritualization in general".[51] They end their book[52] with brief discussions of some other 'performance-centred' rituals from other parts of the world: American Indian shamanism, which Severi has studied ethnographically, and African male initiation rites, on which Houseman has conducted his own ethnographical research.[53]

The main and most interesting difference between Houseman and Severi's account of ritual and our own, we think, derives from the fact that unlike the Jain *puja*, *naven* is intrinsically interactive. This means, as we would see it, that it shows more clearly some of the consequences for interaction of the non-intentionality of ritual action than are evident in the Jain case, and we would see some of the features they identify, such as 'ritual condensation', in this light.

Recent attempts to theorise ritual action have drawn on a number of different theoretical resources. The philosophy of language and the study of pragmatics remain important, especially so-called 'speech act theory' (important for Bloch and Humphrey and Laidlaw); and generative linguistics has influenced Lévi-Strauss, Staal, and Lawson and McCauley. Phenomenology, especially the phenomenological understanding of action, is important for Humphrey and Laidlaw and Houseman and Severi. But in addition cognitive science

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[50] Houseman and Severi 1998, 207.
[51] Houseman and Severi 1998, 264.
[52] Houseman and Severi 1998, 271–85.
[53] See Severi 1993b; Houseman 1993.

has been important, influencing as it has in different ways Bloch, Lawson and McCauley, Humphrey and Laidlaw, and Houseman and Severi. Dan Sperber's radical reinterpretation of symbolism away from a straightforwardly communicative model has for instance been seminal.[54]

Concluding Questions

There is considerable overlap between many of these theories, as well as clear points of convergence and disagreement. It would be an advance if clarification could be achieved about the latter. Is Rappaport's explication of the commitment intrinsic to ritual participation bound conceptually to his view of ritual as communication, or can it be detached from this (we think it probably can) and reconciled with our own and Bloch's accounts of commitment and deference in ritual? Are Lawson & McCauley's hypotheses about the effects of religious postulates on ritual form compatible with characterisations of ritual, such ours or Houseman and Severi's, that begin by defining ritual in terms of mode of action rather than with reference to religious representations? We can see no compelling reasons why they should not. Can Lawson and McCauley's ideas be adapted or interpreted so as to cope with secular ritual? The centrality to their thinking of CPS-agents makes this appear intractable. Are our own and Houseman and Severi's characterisations of ritual form complementary, one applying better to liturgical and the other to performance-centred rituals? And does this distinction coincide with that drawn by Lawson & McCauley between special-patient and special-instrument rituals on the one hand and special-agent rituals on the other? If so, what then becomes of the broader category of ritual?

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[54] D. Sperber, *Rethinking Symbolism* (Cambridge, 1975).

AESTHETICS

Ron G. Williams & James W. Boyd

This essay illustrates the relevance and importance of using philosophical aesthetic theories in the study of ritual. The application of aesthetic theories to particular rituals provides a better understanding of the powers of artful rituals, while helping to address important issues in the field of ritual studies. The discussion that follows includes the rationale for such an approach and brief descriptions of several different applications of the method.[1]

I. *Aesthetics, Ritual Studies, and the Powers of Art*

A. *Methodological Reflections*

The following argument expresses the rationale for the study of ritual via perspectives borrowed from aesthetic theory. It rests on the assumption that philosophical attention to ritual practices can contribute to ritual studies and related disciplines in important ways.[2]

   i. Very often rituals employ artful means.

   ii. It is by means of aesthetic theories that one delineates the nature and powers of art from a philosophical point of view.

      Therefore, a fully adequate philosophical analysis of an artful ritual practice will require the employment of aesthetic theories.[3]

The first premise derives from the observation that, along with non-aesthetic features, many rituals assemble elements and dimensions that are typically viewed as aesthetic. A Shrine Shinto morning ritual

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[1] The authors have applied these techniques to rituals and festivals in two quite different religious traditions: Zoroastrianism and Shinto. Other students of ritual who concentrate on the artful aspects of ritual have produced a wide range of analyses of other ritual traditions.

[2] It also assumes, of course, that aesthetic theory is a branch of philosophy.

[3] The imagined fully adequate philosophical analysis will require other approaches as well, such as action theory, epistemology, and philosophy of language.

provides an example in this regard. Its artful means include beautiful priestly robes, a scored drum solo, the subtle architecture of the shrine, sonorous chants, deliberate, formal gestures, and the theatricality of the whole.

'Aesthetic theory' in the second premise refers to philosophical theories about the nature and powers of art in general, as well as more specific theories about the individual arts such as music and theatre. It also includes speculation about human aesthetic responses to life and nature.[4]

The rationale also suggests a method for the analysis of ritual practices. To the extent that a particular rite is like an ordinary artwork or employs artful means like music, visual arts and drama, and to the extent that such artful elements have certain characteristics and capacities revealed by aesthetic theories, we can expect that the rite will display qualities and capacities similar to the artwork. Therefore aesthetic theories can contribute to understanding the rite and how it does what it does.

We need to add one proviso to our rationale before furnishing some examples of what aesthetic theories say about art's essence and art's significant powers. One might agree that rituals often employ artful means, while believing that the contribution of the arts to ritual is merely decorative, or that art just adds emotive force to theological propositions, or that the same effects could be achieved by non-aesthetic means. In contrast, we take art's role in ritual practices to be irreplaceable and to exhibit more important powers than those mentioned, at least in some cases.

B. *Aesthetic Theories and the Powers of Art*

Traditionally aesthetic theories propose definitions of the essence of art—either of art in general or of particular art forms. Among them

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[4] Aesthetic theory roughly coincides with 'philosophy of art', the cousin, for example, of philosophy of science and philosophy of law. It is mutually relevant to, but distinguishable from, art criticism, art history, and the discussions among artists of aesthetic techniques. Theatre studies have been deftly applied to ritual studies by several contemporary scholars; however, aesthetic theories of the other arts have been largely ignored. Modern attempts to isolate the realm of the aesthetic, beginning more or less with Kant, are not at issue here. We intend 'aesthetic theory' to refer to classical as well as modern and contemporary views about art and responses to beauty in nature.

are the following types: representational, expressive, formalist and instrumental. *Representational* theories focus on the capacity of art to mirror, re-present, or model the appearances of things or to imitate nature in its mode of operation. Plato, for example, characterized art as imitation and explored the powers and limits of art so conceived.[5] The painter Robert Rauschenberg developed a new collage painting style, a grammar fit for the representation of the modern urban environment; and the composer John Cage introduced random elements in his music to mirror the role of chance in nature.

Other aesthetic theories focus on art's *expressive* powers. Together these views explore the roles of the artist, the work, and the audience. For instance, Collingwood maintained that the arts allow the artist to discover and clarify her own feelings.[6] Tolstoy argued that the arts can communicate the artist's emotion.[7] Rasa theory, the dominant aesthetic of the classical art of India, focuses on the levels of emotional response among audience members—from specific emotions to a general over-all feeling of aesthetic rapture.

In the Twentieth Century, these expressive and representational aspects are sometimes explained in terms of the unique language-like characteristics of the arts.[8] According to Susanne Langer, expressive art provides non-discursive sign systems which express and structure our inner, feeling life just as natural languages structure our experiences.[9] That art has a 'grammar' is an insight linked as well to recognition of art's formal structures.

Formalist theories insist that art's primary function is the discovery and presentation of 'significant forms' that give rise to aesthetic emotions and define the autonomous realm of the aesthetic.[10] In the case of painting, for example, formal features are such qualities as texture, shape, scale, line and color, and the aesthetic experience can be one of pure delight in pattern and design.

Art can also have any number of *instrumental* functions. Artworks are said to unify, heal, entertain, transform, inform, record, condition,

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[5] Plato, *The Republic*, trans. B. Jowett (London, 1892), Chapter X.

[6] R.G. Collingwood, *The Principles of Art* (Oxford, 1938).

[7] L. Tolstoy, *What is Art?* translated by A. Maude (Indianapolis, 1969 [1898]).

[8] N. Goodman, *Languages of Art* (Indianapolis, 1976).

[9] S. Langer, *Feeling and Form* (New York, 1953).

[10] Art's quest for autonomy begins with Kant who distinguished the arts in terms of the special mode of judgment appropriate to them. On formalism, see C. Bell, *Art* (London, 1914).

and induce non-standard states of consciousness. Aesthetic theories typically derive such instrumental functions from claims about art's essential nature. For example, Tolstoy claimed that art *essentially* involves communication of feeling and therefore *instrumentally* serves to unify the community via the shared experience of common human feelings.

Though the above provides only a brief sample of theories, it serves to indicate that an aesthetic approach makes available the rich history of aesthetic insights for the analysis of ritual practices.[11] We wish further to emphasize four basic characteristics of the arts not tied to any specific aesthetic theory. They are clarified by the philosopher Gilles Deleuze.[12]

Art Contributes Uniquely: The arts do what only they can do; i.e., their role is irreplaceable. Deleuze, in his works on the theory of the cinema, for example, claims that the images unique to cinema show us something about space and time that cannot be shown in any other way (e.g., by philosophy or science) or even by the other arts.[13] The other arts, of course, have their own unique capacities.

Production: Closely related is another feature of art. Deleuze argues that art is a 'creative enterprise of thought'. If cinema, for example, can show something unique about space and time, then it is productive of knowledge in the broad sense. Or to take an example from literature: the novelist, Milan Kundera emphasizes both art's uniqueness and the production of knowledge: "The novel discovers what only it can discover."[14]

Art's Contributions Can Be Non-trivial: Arguably, whatever is productive, unique, and irreplaceable is also potentially significant. Deleuze insists that art's contributions are co-equal with the sciences and philosophy, but their object is to create sensible aggregates rather than

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[11] Aesthetic theories are typically viewed by their proponents as revealing *the* essence of art and are defended by criticizing alternative views. Looking at the history of such views, however, it is plausible that they reveal different aspects of the arts as they develop over time. See A. Danto, "The Artworld", *The Journal of Philosophy* 61 (1964), 571–584.

[12] G. Deleuze, *Essays Critical and Clinical* (1993), trans. D.W. Smith and M.A. Greco (Minneapolis, 1997), xii.

[13] G. Deleuze, *Cinema I. The Movement-Image* (1983), trans. H. Tomlinson and B. Haberjam (Minneapolis, 1986); *Cinema II. The Time-Image* (1985), trans. H. Tomlinson and B. Haberjam (Minneapolis, 1989 [1985]).

[14] M. Kundera, *The Art of the Novel* (1986), trans. L. Asher (New York, 1989), 4. Kundera attributes this claim to Hermann Broch.

concepts. Painters, for example, "think in the medium of lines and colors, just as musicians think in sounds [and] filmmakers think in image . . . Neither activity has any privilege over the other."[15]

Complexity: One other important characteristic of art worth emphasizing derives from Deleuze's view of artworks as complex assemblages. As we will illustrate, the arts evidently play diverse roles involving diverse aims and employing different methods, signs, and media. This is in part because they are themselves multi-dimensional assemblages, collections of heterogeneous elements.[16] In Camus' words: "What then is art? Nothing simple, that is certain!"[17]

The defense of these claims about art's non-trivial capacities involves argumentation beyond the scope of this essay. However, their plausibility will be illustrated by the examples to follow.

C. *A Complex 'Conversation'*

Finally, the domains of both the arts and ritual practices are so vast and various, aesthetic theories so numerous, and specific artworks and rites so complex internally, it seems unlikely that a universal method defining *the* aesthetic approach could be devised and applied to a single set of data. Instead, it may be appropriate to view the present state of aesthetic and ritual research as a complex conversation among diverse participants involving ritual practices and traditions, ritual studies, and art theory. Such an investigation requires a mind well stocked with aesthetic theories and the ability to diagnose ritual practices and traditions with a view to discovering significant and well-formed questions (a problematic) based on close observation of practices. The final challenge is the selection of appropriate insights from aesthetics relevant to finding solutions to those questions.[18]

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[15] Daniel Smith's introduction in Deleuze, *Essays Critical and Clinical*, xii. Smith adds: "Creating a concept is neither more difficult nor more abstract than creating new visual, sonorous, or verbal combinations; conversely, it is no easier to read an image, painting, or novel than it is to comprehend a concept." See also A. Danto, *Embodied Meanings* (New York, 1994, 376–387).

[16] The phrase Smith uses in the passage under discussion in Delezue's *Essays Critical and Clinical*, xii is "sensible aggregates." See also M. Delanda, *Intensive Science, Virtual Philosophy* (London, 2002), Ch. 1 and 143.

[17] A. Camus, *Resistance, Rebellion and Death* (1948), trans. J. O'Brien (New York, 1960), 264.

[18] On the challenge to ask the right questions, see F. Cioffi, "Wittgenstein and the Fire Festivals", I. Block (ed.), *Perspectives on the Philosophy of Wittgenstein* (Cambridge,

II. *Aesthetic Theory Applied*

A. *Ritual Liminality and the Virtual in Art*

Since rituals are often dramatic performances sharing many of the qualities of theatre, it is not surprising that there have been fruitful applications of theater studies to ritual studies.[19] Particularly relevant to the present essay is Bruce Kapferer's impressive study of Sri Lankan exorcist rituals, because he brings together two salient concepts, one from ritual studies and the other from aesthetic theory: *liminality* and *virtuality*.[20] That is, he employs insights from an aesthetic theory to deepen our understanding of the well-known concept of liminality developed by Arnold van Gennep and Victor Turner.[21]

In these rituals, dance and drama combine into "a marvelous spectacle which engages all the senses".[22] The ritual participants are embraced by the immediate impact of the rite's music, dance and comic drama, a process that structures their perceptions and works outside the rules of reason—in the realm Turner describes as *liminal*, the fluid phase of rituals discontinuous from everyday life and conducive to transformation.[23]

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1981), 238–40. He criticizes Frazer's explaining a present ritual in terms of its purported ancient origins as a ritual human sacrifice when what is needed is an explanation of its present effects on us. That is, he accused Frazer of trying to answer the wrong question. On the generation of significant questions, note Tim Conley's discussion of the benefits of living intimately with Bacon's works over a considerable period in order to extract their full significance. This suggests the question whether contact with an artful ritual practice over time is *necessary* in order to gain knowledge (or some other benefit) from the practice. See G. Deleuze, *Francis Bacon. The Logic of Sensation* (1981), trans. D.W. Smith (Minneapolis, 2003 [1981]), 132. See further, Williams and Boyd 1993, 114 ff.

[19] See, e.g., Grimes 1982; Schechner and Appel 1990; Turner 1979; V.W. Turner 1982a; Kapferer 1983; Kapferer 1997.

[20] Kapferer's extensive treatment of Sri Lankan exorcist rituals employs several kinds of analyses including a phenomenological description focusing on the ritual spaces and the placement of exorcist, patient and audience (1983). The concepts of liminality and virtuality are linked again in Kapferer 1997, but with a different meaning of 'virtual'.

[21] A. van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage* (1909), trans. M. Vizedom and G.L. Caffee (1960); V.W. Turner 1969.

[22] Kapferer 1983, 243, 256.

[23] Thus disassociated from the grid of social categories, the participant is in Turner's phrase, "betwixt and between" socially assigned positions. There is an implicit view of change at work here: one cannot be transformed from x to y with-

The next step in Kapferer's argument is to account for the power of these liminal states in terms of the *virtual* features of the arts employed in the ritual process.[24] Virtuality is central to the aesthetic theory developed by Susanne Langer as part of her analysis of the power of abstract expressionist visual artworks. What is virtually x is x in effect but not actually so. Her initial examples are visual illusions like rainbows and mirror images. In the arts, for example, a musical structure can appear separate from the distortions of a recording of it, and a flat painting can appear deep. Visual virtual space is perhaps most simply indicated by the following experiment: if on a uniformly white sheet of paper one draws only the corners of a square (four 90 degree angles), the suggested square contained by those corners will appear *perfectly* square, *whiter* than the surrounding paper, and will *come forward* off the page.[25] This virtual characteristic of the arts is more profound than may first appear. Langer says,

> Every real work of art has a tendency to appear thus dissociated from its mundane environment. The most immediate impression it creates is one of 'otherness' from reality—the impression of an illusion enfolding the thing, action, statement, or flow of sound. . . . An image is indeed a purely virtual object . . . . its visual character is its entire being.[26]

Similarly, Kapferer maintains that a fundamental feature of art is that it can provoke "the living of the reality it creates. . . ."

> Engaged in music [for example], a listening subject is opened up to the experiential possibility internal to its structure, its duration, change and movement through successive and repeated nows, and to a sonorous past continuous with the present and moving to its future.[27]

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out passing through a middle phase in which he ceases to be x and is not yet y. In the exorcist rituals, the transformation is intended to be from the possessed state to a healthy state.

[24] Note that *liminality* can be defined without reference to the arts and the causes of liminal experience are many (including traumas, meditative practices, etc.). The concept of virtuality is tied to a different historical trajectory deriving from Tolstoy's view that the arts provide language-like devices fit for the expression of human feeling. Beginning with this, Langer discusses the 'non-discursive' languages of the arts in terms of the special images they employ and the capacities of these images in terms of their virtual status.

[25] Williams and Boyd 1993, 21.

[26] Langer, *Feeling and Form*, 45, 48.

[27] Kapferer 1983, 258.

Hence, the virtual capacity of the arts enhances the efficacy of ritual liminal phases to produce an alternate environment, a vision or 'phantasm' that re-structures the world of the patient/participant creating a different world in which the causes of the disease may be identified and removed.[28]

B. *Artful Integration and Ritual Contextualization*

Repetitive ritual practices are also praised (and criticized) for maintaining social cohesion and re-enforcing social norms. These effects include establishing shared social/religious contexts and unifying the community.[29] With respect to the religious context, for example, it is basic to the Zoroastrian tradition that all the creatures of the good creation (including human beings) must *cooperate* in the struggle against evil. And central to the Shinto tradition is the concept of *musubi*, the principle of unfolding Great Nature, which emphasizes both the diversity and *connectedness* of all things.[30]

It is arguable that ritual's capacity to unify is significantly related to the role of the arts in ritual practice, for art is both essentially and contingently an instrument of unification.[31] Even a brief survey of aesthetic theories reveals that the arts achieve these ends in a number of different ways. First, rituals are themselves integrated combinations of artful means typically involving music, chanting, dance, gesture, and staging.[32] Second, given the discussion of virtuality in the arts (above II.A), it should be apparent that artworks are also integrated wholes comprising virtual, physical and symbolic dimen-

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[28] In the terminology of these exorcist rituals, a different world is created in which the demons may be identified, ridiculed, and driven off.

[29] See Tambiah 1968, 175–208, for the claim that rituals are effective means for establishing integrative contexts. Building on Malinowski's analysis of Trobriand Island rituals, Tambiah insists that far from being magical rites, the rituals were designed to put in context everyday activities such as gardening and canoe building. See Williams and Boyd 1993, 52, for a generalization of this view: the rituals place everyday activities in a larger moral, technically comprehensible, aesthetic and religious context. Negatively, of course, ritual tradition may help maintain oppressive contexts and rigid stability.

[30] One can note further, along with Tolstoy, that Christianity stresses our oneness under God.

[31] Of course this is not all it is. The arts are connected as well to diversity and individual, unique expression.

[32] See Schechner 1987, 13: "Many rituals integrate music, dance, and theater. . . ."

sions.[33] Third, Tolstoy's influential expressionist aesthetic theory mentioned above is one of several that claim art's primary function is to unify.[34] Fourth, the arts share a capacity to absorb and even celebrate contradiction, paradox and tension. Virtual features are a case in point. The white square discussed above is both one with the paper and above it.[35] And finally, according to some aesthetic theories, the arts speak to levels of consciousness, affect, and sensation that are pre-subjective, pre-personal, and pre-social and thus unite the audience at a deeper level.[36]

The demonstration that these aspects of the arts are effective in producing ritual unity lies in the close analysis of actual rituals in order to display the function of their artful dimensions and how those promote the context-setting and unifying goals of the ritual activity.[37] In the daily high liturgy of the Zoroastrian tradition, for example, each implement, gesture, and intoned chant is itself a unified complex of physical and virtual features together with its symbolic, representational or expressive references. The operative elements include connecting gestures by the priests, the integrating effect of the continuous chant, and the virtual space created by the ritual setting and the composition of implements. What counts here are the details of how the different ritual elements with their three spaces interact to create a heightened sense of connection. The result is that the heterogeneous set of spaces, gestures, sounds, and objects strongly, redundantly, and uniquely convey a sense of integration; the ritual establishes a context relying on a multitude of voices all whispering connectedness.[38]

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[33] The idea that a painting, for example, is a physical object that produces a purely visual (virtual) image and at the same time represents, denotes, or otherwise symbolizes, is an extension of the work of Langer, *Feeling and Form*, and Goodman, *Languages of Art*.

[34] See Tolstoy, *What is Art?* Since it is contradictory to communicate feelings of universal oneness to a narrow elite, Tolstoy maintains that artists should discover ways to communicate both broadly and profoundly.

[35] That is, art typically ignores Aristotle's law of non-contradiction striving instead to encompass and reconcile or harmonize contradictory forces.

[36] See Deleuze, *Cinema* I and *Cinema II*; Deleuze, *Francis Bacon*; G. Deleuze, *Pure Immanence. Essays on a Life* (1995), trans. A. Boyman (New York, 2001), and III.B, below.

[37] What's needed, in part, is aesthetic analyses of ritual performances which are akin to the analysis of a Bach fugue—i.e., that responds to the details of both the artwork and the theory.

[38] The aesthetic impact is subtle: ". . . the ritual area presents itself as a unified

C. *Ritual Knowledge and the Concept of Masterpiece*

The application of aesthetic theory to ritual studies can be more than a matter of analysis of specific rites. It can be also a method for addressing key, recurring issues in the field of ritual studies itself. A case in point is the important debate in ritual studies centering on the question whether rituals can be a means to the acquisition of knowledge new to the tradition.[39] One can offer arguments to support the claim of the noetic function of ritual from at least two different perspectives.

Theodore Jennings, in his provocative essay "On Ritual Knowledge", persuasively employs analogies from philosophy of science and the arts to argue not only that rituals are a means to new knowledge, but that this acquisition of knowledge requires continually changing rituals (just as science changes when knowledge grows).[40] He claims that new knowledge is to be distinguished from knowledge 'gained elsewhere and otherwise' in that it is gained 'by and through the body.'[41] Just as one learns to dance by going through the bodily motions, in similar fashion ritual knowledge is gained by participation and then extended by analogy to other aspects of one's life.

The second perspective argues, contrary to Jennings' thesis, that it is possible to gain knowledge new to the tradition by means of a ritual practice that remains relatively unchanging. One way in which this might occur, consonant with an emphasis on aesthetic analysis, is that a specific ritual could act as an artistic 'masterpiece'. In other words, the practitioner's gain in knowledge could be the result of his continual exposure to the ritual, viewed as akin to an unchanging artwork exhibiting aesthetic necessity like a compelling painting, opera or musical recording. For example, in the Zoroastrian Afrinagan ceremony there is an exchange of flowers between two priests, repeated

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structure, as an abstract Persian composition in which each object is internally related. Compositionally, the area becomes an indivisible whole, a model of the interconnectedness of things" (Williams and Boyd 1993, 57).

[39] In reference to the previous Zoroastrian illustration, it could be argued, for example, that if some rites establish integrative contexts via aesthetic means and aesthetic means are unique, it may be that ritual practitioners "come to *know* that they are engaged with the creatures of the good creation—in ways not reducible to propositions" (Williams and Boyd 1993, 57).

[40] See Jennings 1982. Jennings goes on to assert that such knowledge is amenable to test and he invokes both correspondence and coherence theories of truth to explicate this position.

[41] Jennings 1982.

three times. These highly articulated and simple gestural images act as visual metaphors. Consequently they can be analyzed in terms of philosophical theories of metaphor that help identify some of their capacities.[42] The repeated images can attract the viewer or participant by their beauty, *conveying* an image of abundance and thus *luring* one to further, sometimes *opposing* interpretations; its repetitious enactment *focuses* one's attention and has the *potentiating* power of being an inexhaustible source of meaning.

Given these capacities of the image, the ritual can plausibly act as a subtle instrument for the exploration of those central concerns that the practitioner brings to his practice. The repeated ritual enactment becomes, in effect, a 'companionable form' confirming and challenging, say, the moral precepts and uncertainties of the practitioner and indirectly accelerating a growth in wisdom.[43] The result can plausibly be the acquisition of knowledge not only "gained by and through the body", but a "knowledge of righteous living" new to the tradition.[44]

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[42] In Williams and Boyd 1993, two competing theories of metaphor were employed to identify five 'powers' of metaphorical phrases and images (briefly enumerated above). See D. Davidson, "What Metaphors Mean", *Critical Inquiry: Special Issue on Metaphor*, 5 (1978), 31–47; R. Bly, "What the Image Can Do", D. Hall (ed.), *Claims for Poetry* (Ann Arbor, 1971), 31–47.

[43] The summary here presented omits the details of the argument that also involves reference to J.P. Sartre's musings on music in *Nausea* (1938), trans. L. Alexander (New York, 1964 [1938]) and Langer's theory of the virtual aspects of the arts in *Feeling and Form*.

[44] To counter the claim that it is impossible to gain knowledge via a ritual without its changing, one needs only to show that it *is* possible, which requires a plausibility argument rather than a positive proof. In addition to this issue of the noetic function of ritual and the role aesthetic analysis can play in the discussion, there is also the matter of how ritual should be defined. The classic definition of ritual insists that rituals are relatively unchanging performances following established patterns "not encoded by the performers;" Rappaport 1979, 175. The second perspective mentioned above regarding new knowledge of righteous living can also be understood as at least a partial defense of this classic definition, with the difference that instead of asserting that rituals do not change, it is the practitioner's *intention* to perform the ritual unchanged that supports the definition. Though our more recent stance toward ritual emphasizes process and change rather than stability, the position taken in the book *Ritual Art and Knowledge* (Williams and Boyd 1993) is important, we believe. To miss this possibility—of knowledge gain resulting in changes in the practitioner rather than in the ritual—is to miss an important link between Zoroastrian ritual practice and the Zoroastrian world view. The latter postulates an unchanging, transcendent ultimate reality that is to be honored. This is a position based on humility in light of rituals divinely ordained, not on human intervention in rituals to acquire new knowledge. Jennings' view emphasizes human creativity of the sort found in experimental dance.

The point of these comments is not that they are the final pro-
nouncement on the stability of ritual or ritual's noetic function, but
that they are examples of a strategy that employs results from philoso-
phies of art to address questions central to ritual studies. In this case,
several theories from the different arts were relevant.[45]

D. *Pure Form and Ritual Purity*

In addition to the virtual, existential realities that the arts create, the
formal features of art are also fundamental to what rituals can do.
Consider the high liturgies celebrated in various religious traditions,
such as a Roman Catholic Mass or a Shinto New Year's ceremony.
The viewer/participant will likely perceive the event as a highly for-
malized, elegant performance with a variety of aesthetic dimensions,
such as the dance-like processional movements of the priests. One
can imagine diagramming and scoring these elements, and in so
doing, the aesthetic distinction between ideal form (the score) and
actual performance (the event) becomes operative.

The modern aesthetic theory that highlights this distinction between
form and instance (or content) is called *formalism*. Claimed by its
adherents to reveal a universal, timeless dimension of the arts, for-
malism argues that to perceive an artwork (e.g., a painting) *aesthetic-
ally* is to attend to its *formal qualities*. For example, the well-known
Chinese brush painting by Mu-ch'i of six persimmons (casually
arranged within an otherwise empty space) is justly famous because
of the texture and line of the six images and their composition, not
because persimmons are an inherently compelling subject. Formalism
says, in effect, that what is aesthetically important about art is not
its content but its grammar (i.e., formal elements). These features
may not be consciously apprehended by the viewer, but they are
nevertheless a source of the artwork's power. In this context, it is
possible to speak of a distinction between *pure* form and the content
that expresses it, and to speak of the *pure*, detached attention required
of the audience in order to fully apprehend it.

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[45] Missing from this summary are other necessary components of the argument,
particularly the extensive fieldwork interviews and detailed analyses of the rites cen-
tral to the Zoroastrian tradition and the roles played in them by gesture, *manthra*,
and the artfully created and presented ritual implements.

It follows that the artful elements employed in a religious ceremony, insofar as they are formally compelling, may be particularly fit to express purity as it is understood within that tradition. Because formalism celebrates the possibility that even an imperfect performance can reveal the pure form that is the aesthetically relevant feature of the work, one can contrast the perfect musical form with the possibly flawed performance, the divine 'uselesness' of art with the utilitarian concerns of mundane living, and the formal ritual sequences with their actual, perhaps imperfect instantiation. This allows the patterned ritual sequences of the Shinto purification rite, for example, to reinforce the distinction between that which is pure and that which is impure, because this tradition understands the pure as basic and primary to humans and nature, and the impure as an accretion or blemish that constitutes a defect that is in principle removable.[46]

The point is that distinctions borrowed from aesthetic theory, having to do with very fundamental features of art, can illuminate how purification rites effectively mirror or 'image' the concept of purity in a given tradition. Whether this also allows such rituals to *produce* purity is a matter to be taken up in what follows.

III. *An Alternative Analysis*

A. *The Historical and Metaphysical Context of Aesthetic Theory*

Even the small set of examples surveyed here illustrate the diversity of aesthetic theories that can be applied to ritual analyses and issues in ritual studies. Let us say that these were applications of theory as narrowly conceived, since the theory in question, delineating something of the essence and function of art, was applied without special

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[46] The concept of purity in Shinto has three logical features: (a) it establishes a distinction between the pure and the impure; (b) there is a difference of value between the two—purity is better; and (c) the two contrasting states are related in a specific way. Compared with the pure, the impure has accretions or blemishes that are in principle removable. See J.W. Boyd and R.G. Williams, "Artful Means. An Aesthetic View of Shinto Purification Ritual", *Journal of Ritual Studies* 13 (1999), 37–52. There are two additional aesthetic distinctions that share the isomorphism with the Shinto contrast between pure and impure. These are the differences between the virtual appearance of a work and its material structure and between liminal and mundane experience.

regard to its historical origin or the metaphysical context (or world view) in which it was initially embedded. For example, Bruce Kapferer fruitfully applied Langer's contemporary view of the virtual features of the arts to the ancient tradition of Sri Lankan exorcism, even though the aesthetic theory is formulated in the context of recent linguistic philosophy and phenomenology. In part this is possible because, though the aesthetic theory arises in modern era, it identifies a common or essential feature of the arts which has application to the past.[47]

Besides differences in historical origin between the aesthetic theory and the rituals analyzed, the question arises whether or not there is metaphysical correlation between the two. That is, the metaphysical assumptions governing the aesthetic theory and those governing the ritual may or may not be mutually compatible. Raising such an issue requires a much more broadly conceived approach to the study of art and ritual. A metaphysical compatibility occurred, for example, in the notion of artistic masterpiece appealed to above in the analysis of the Zoroastrian Afrinagan. The concept of masterpiece suggests that there are artworks which transcend time and culture and speak to us of higher permanent values. Such a view is compatible with the Zoroastrian vision of an infinite, transcendent and superior order from which the finite world is derived.

However, the case cited above which used a formalist aesthetic theory to show how Shinto ritual expresses purity is an example of an application of a theory which is 'incompatible' with the metaphysics of the ritual. Insofar as formalism trails clouds of Platonic transcendence and pre-existing formal possibilities, it is incompatible with the Shinto world view—arguably a religion of immanence celebrating the processively unfolding sublimity of the phenomenal world rather than the stable and prior perfection of a transcendent realm. Further, a formalist approach to Shinto purification rites characterizes the rite as *imaging* purity rather than *producing* it, since the ritual's formality imitates (represents) the purity/impurity distinction.[48]

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[47] That is, once formalism discovered the role of form in art, formal features could be noticed in ancient works as well as in contemporary ones. Arguably formalist doctrine also makes possible certain contemporary innovations in the arts.

[48] Formalist doctrine also seeks to remove art from any instrumental value; what counts aesthetically is not what the artwork effects but its formal features. There is one effect, however, that some versions of formalism emphasize: artworks that possess significant form arouse in the sensitive spectator a special aesthetic emotion.

It tends as well to treat the ritual as an integrated whole, like a formal artwork and thus places the burden of the ritual analysis entirely on the artwork, rather than on how the aesthetic elements interact with other, non-aesthetic elements of the ritual.

These characteristics of formalism do not vitiate the formalist analysis of purity (II.D), but they may cover over other important features or otherwise distort the ritual tradition. Such shortcomings suggest the desirability of exploring a different mode of analysis broadly conceived in order to provide a more complete account. For the last example, therefore, we turn to the aesthetic theory of Gilles Deleuze which, though recent, is importantly compatible with the Shinto view of an immanent unfolding universe.

B. *From Integrated Artworks to Complex Multiplicities*

Aesthetic approaches to ritual analyses based on the post-structuralist philosophy of Gilles Deleuze bring alternative concepts to bear on quite different dimensions of ritual practice. His view can be suggested in terms of the following simplified comparison with Platonism. Plato maintained that although the constantly changing natural world is intelligible, it is only fully explicable in terms of ideas or forms that are themselves unchanging and perfect (e.g., concepts of mathematics). Or put in theological terminology, God's thoughts establish the basic, unchanging principles and values that govern the world; the word (*logos*) becomes flesh. Such views privilege stability over change, make meaning prior to creation, and moreover, they postulate a reality that transcends the material world.[49]

In contrast, Deleuze insists on a world in which everything is immanent, meaning emerges from prior events, and time, change, and novelty are privileged over stability. His is a process philosophy that requires thinking through an entirely different metaphysical view expressed in an alternative set of concepts.[50] In Deleuze's metaphysics,

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[49] Thus the world conforms to a 'story told in advance', and real novelty is de-emphasized.

[50] To situate Deleuze's thought in relation to the Western classical tradition in philosophy, one can say that he relied on and developed: 1) Nietzsche's project of 'reversing' the Platonic tradition, by denying transcendent forms in favor of forces operating within nature and history; 2) Hume's radical empiricism which denied the existence of a prior self that transcends one's experience in favor of a self that emerges from pre-personal, immanent 'experience'; 3) Bergson's process philosophy

objects are events, and the world is a collection of productive processes viewed as bundles of interactive forces. As an illustration, consider the corner stone in a courthouse wall. To view it as an event rather than an object requires that we trace it back to the formation of a river and the sediments deposited in it, sediments that under the pressure of more sedimentation are ultimately compressed into rigid stone and quarried. Deleuze calls such productive events 'multiplicities'. The 'stone's' boundaries are not definite, and as an event it is multidimensional and heterogeneous, open to chance encounters, involving incommensurable elements such as river currents, winds, temperature and pressure gradients, stone masons and architectural plans, not to mention governments. Furthermore, the corner stone is only individuated and 'actualized' when other forces intervene, i.e., when the quarry cutter arrives to cut the formation into blocks. Deleuze poetically characterizes such event-complexes as lines of force converging, diverging, and resonating.

This limited example hints at the extent to which the modern re-conception of the world in terms of immanence and process introduces new perspectives, concepts and principles at every level. The question for aesthetics and ritual studies is this: what aesthetic theory is consonant with Deleuze's vision and what new questions or approaches might it suggest for ritual studies? Only the briefest hints can be developed here.

To begin, artworks and ritual events are also 'multiplicities' (or 'complex assemblages'). Some artful rituals are multiplicities *par excellence* since they often involve multiple media and tend to have a long history. As open processes extended in time, they are neither integrated wholes nor bounded objects nor totalities. Consider, for example, an artwork such as a painting. Does it begin with the first application of paint or with the stretching of the canvas or the cutting of the tree to make the frame, or the artist's training? How does its meaning vary as the result of interpretation, encounters, historical forces? The moral for the study of ritual is that rituals must be reconceived as multiplicities with all that that entails and the the-

which privileges time over space and analyzes objects as events; and 4) Darwin's vision of the evolution of the new in which species arise from processes immanent in nature, a combination of general tendencies and chance events. Each species can be considered a 'solution' to the 'problems' set by current conditions and fairly stable but changing probabilities and statistical laws.

orist must make choices about which elements of the multiplicity are relevant to analysis.[51]

The classical tradition in philosophy, as previously noted, privileges meaning; the Platonic forms guarantee the intelligible structure of the world. The aesthetic theories cited so far are reflections of this vision to the extent that they emphasize the symbolic role of the arts, the formal structures of artworks, and the language-like nature of the arts (e.g., representing, denoting, or imaging). Recalling again the analysis of the Shinto purification ritual, the question there was how the ritual images purity. But as we have suggested, Deleuze shifts the center of gravity of philosophical analysis away from meaning toward events, forces, and processes of production. This shift is captured in his injunction, "Don't ask what it means, ask what it can do!" A similar move characterizes his aesthetic theory, and it is coupled with the claim that the arts do what only they can do (I.B). So as a first approximation of the method of analysis, we should focus on what art as multiplicity can do, its effects on persons, rather than what art can represent, instantiate, or mirror.

To investigate the effects of art on persons in this way assumes the view that both artworks and persons are multiplicities. Persons are thus heterogeneous bundles of forces moving toward organic individuation while at the same time exhibiting those features associated with self, reason, language, and social integration. These latter capacities, on this view, must emerge from prior processes. That is, the synthesis of a self as a reasoning social being possessing well-ordered perceptions and manipulating signs is the result of prior sensations, intensive forces and underlying rhythms—layers of the living creature that are pre-personal, pre-social, and not yet fully individuated and organized. It is precisely these deeper aspects of the person that art has a unique capacity to effect. Speaking of the figural forms in the paintings of Francis Bacon, for example, Deleuze claims that they are connected to the more fundamental level of *sensation*, that they convey sensations "directly to the nervous system."[52] So among its powers, art has the capacity to both engage us and transform us at the level of sensation and the underlying flows that operate beneath the level of personal identity. Aesthetic theory on this model will analyze such features (among others).

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[51] See Deleuze, *Francis Bacon*, for an example of such choices.
[52] Deleuze, *Francis Bacon*, xiii.

A promising subject in this regard is the Shinto/Buddhist rite, the Saika Gyō Hō, which displays features that may be amenable to both the more traditional modes of ritual aesthetic analysis described earlier and a contemporary, processive approach. During this midnight ceremony, participant prayers are written on rectangular sticks that are ceremoniously arranged as a tower and burned. The *kami* (unusual, superior presences) are called down to receive these purified prayers. The tempo of the chants gradually increases, the tower of wood collapses in the intensity of the fire, the *kami* ascend to the accompaniment of rising voices, and the rite is concluded. As a dramatization of *kami* assistance in realizing personal goals, the ritual has those elements of action, tension and climactic resolution that invite traditional dramatic and narrative analysis.

This rite can also be analyzed, however, in a way more compatible with the deeper metaphysical context common to both Deleuzian philosophy and the world view of Shinto. A processive approach would understand the rite first as an evolving energetic/material event conceived as interacting lines of force. Among these lines of force are the growing intensity of the fire, the ultimate destruction of the prayer sticks, the inexorable acceleration of the chanting, together with the rhythms and resulting counter-rhythms produced as these diverse processes interact.

These two forms of analysis promise to demonstrate first that the ritual functions on the level of social organization, focusing participants on the dramatic narrative related to achieving legitimate pragmatic goals. The ritual as energetic event, however, may effect individuals by powerfully impacting them at the level of sensation and revealing pre-personal, pre-social possibilities of experience. The enhanced capacity to attend to the underlying flow of life is one of the gifts of art.

IV. *Authors' Reflections*

In addition to suggesting the importance of using philosophical aesthetic theories in the study of ritual, this essay also chronicles a shift in our approach. We have moved from using classical and modern aesthetic theories to a contemporary metaphysics emphasizing immanent processes and entailing a different theory of the arts. This change does not undermine the earlier work; rather it relocates those ideas

within a different, more diverse context embedded in a radically different metaphysics. The Deleuzian vision is not only more compatible with the Shinto world view, it also promises to be a metaphysical frame for studying rituals in general by seeing them as complex assemblages, material/energetic processes, and intensive forces. Moreover, this move opens the possibility of interaction between the two families of approaches, as mentioned in the above brief discussion of the Saika Gyō Hō.

Further, it is important to note that the descriptions of the examples surveyed in the essay remain within the limits set by our beginning argument (I.A). The first premise of that rationale is that rituals often employ artful means. Though true, the claim leaves open important, arguably deeper, questions. For example, what is it about ritual practices and the arts that explains why they so often intersect?[53]

Given the diversity of ritual practices, there may be no universal answer to this question. But in the spirit of speculation, one might begin to indicate why rituals so readily involve the arts by remaining with the assumption that governs many discussions of ritual and art: rituals are goal-oriented activities and the ritual arts are instrumentally employed to achieve those ends. An often remarked goal of ritual practice, for example, is to further and to maintain the construction of self and a shared sense of collective identity. Victor Turner's theory of liminality is a fitting example of the view that ritual practice is aimed at personal transformation and social cohesion. Here the liminal phases of rituals are in the service of social stability. It is striking, nevertheless, that this concentration on the social sphere leads to the postulation of liminal experience ('anti-structure') which itself temporarily suspends the social. But perhaps this should not surprise us. To the extent that personal and social selves are emergent—the product of pre-personal intensities and external forces—concentration on the socially constructive side of ritual is likely to be incomplete by itself, leading ultimately to the recognition

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[53] It is sometimes pointed out that rituals can be ugly as well as beautiful, but both these appraisals remain within the realm of aesthetic criticism. More interesting is that some rituals seem to ignore artful means altogether—and here we are taking the position that what counts as art is delineated by paradigm cases (such as music, painting, and drama). An alternative position, that all ritual is a creative response to life, entails that ritual is itself an art whether or not it employs 'the arts', i.e., on this broad view there would be no non-artful rituals.

of prior processes and 'anti-structure'. That is, it would not be surprising if ritual responds to the whole of a human life, not just to the individuated self as socially structured.[54]

This suggests that what is needed is a view of anti-structure which is a necessary characteristic of human life rather than a ritual phase acting as means for transformations within the limits of the social grid. One such vision is provided by Georges Bataille in his theory of ritual sacrifice.[55] Taking the duality between the construction of the self and its dissolution as a defining characteristic of human life, Bataille argues that we are creatures with a foot in each of two worlds. On the one hand, we function pragmatically as individuals in a discontinuous world of things, carrying out human projects that include the construction of personal and social identities. In contrast, we also experience the relatively undifferentiated 'immanent immensity'—at the level of pre-personal and pre-social existence. It is an 'experience' poetically conceptualized by Bataille as having "the passion of an absence of individuality, the imperceptible sonority of a river, the empty limpidity of the sky."[56] To be deprived of such experience is to be "deprived of the marvelous", yet to live in this state is to "fall back into animal slumber".[57] On this view, we are fated to exist as a mystery to ourselves. Our dual nature is the fundamental paradox of being human. For Bataille, ritual need not have a simple social goal, but marks a response to a fundamental human paradox—our simultaneous position within and outside of the social sphere.

With this idea in mind—that some rituals are responses to deep paradox—we can return to the initial question: why do ritual practice and artful expression so often coincide? As previously mentioned (II.B), the arts are particularly suited to tolerate irreconcilable oppositions. Art allows us to remain with paradox rather than trying to resolve or avoid or remove it.[58] This is in contrast to science, which seeks to eliminate contradiction, and to philosophy, which aims at

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[54] Deleuze, *Pure Immanence*, 25–33.

[55] G. Bataille, *Theory of Religion* (1973), trans. R. Hurley (New York, 1992 [1973]).

[56] Bataille, *Theory of Religion*, 50–51.

[57] Bataille, *Theory of Religion*, 50, 53; G. Bataille, *Inner Experience* (1954), trans. L.A. Boldt (New York, 1988), 95.

[58] Nietzsche knew this and he claimed the Greeks knew it. The two gods of the arts—two forces in nature, Apollo and Dionysus—roughly coincide with the realm of project and the immanent immensity.

reasoned solutions to paradoxes. Such ritual processes, let us say, assemble artful aggregates, involving percepts and affects rather than concepts, and promote sustained interaction with the paradoxical aspects of human experience.[59]

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[59] A related question is: why do rituals not always employ artful means? Here, our speculative answer is a general one. Since we have characterized the role of art in ritual as that of a means, then it follows that other means may function as well. To continue with Bataille: if the end of rituals is the exploration of basic human paradoxes, means other than art may also serve this end. Indeed, Bataille focuses on live human and animal sacrificial rituals as the primary means of engaging the immanent immensity. One can easily imagine others: meditative practices, ascetic practices, festival excesses, or intoxication.

COGNITION

E. Thomas Lawson

The cognitive revolution in the 1950's not only introduced new modes of thought into our intellectual lives but forced scholars in the social sciences and the humanities to rethink their approaches to the study of cultural forms. It also established new kinds of connections to the natural sciences and the human sciences. As Steven Pinker has argued, it formed a bridge between biology and culture by developing a new science of mind.[1] It claimed persuasively that minds could not be conceived of as blank slates. It showed how an infinite range of behavior could be generated by a limited set of principles. It demonstrated that universal mental mechanisms can underlie superficial variations across cultures, and it also disclosed that the mind is a complex system of many interacting parts. Theorizing about various cultural forms such as rituals soon began to appear in scholarly journals and finally in books and monographs. This trend is accelerating rapidly.[2] In this article I focus specifically on the contribution that cognitive science can make to our understanding of the structure and dynamics of religious rituals.[3]

Cognitive Resources and Ritual Arrangements

Fundamental to a cognitive approach to religious rituals is the presumption that ritual representations employ the same cognitive

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[1] See S. Pinker, *The Blank Slate. The Modern Denial of Human Nature* (London, 2002).

[2] Journals such as *Theory and Method in the Study of Religion*, and *The Journal of Cognition and Culture*, books such as I. Pyysiäinen, *How Religion Works. Towards a New Cognitive Science of Religion* (Cognition and Culture Book Series 1; Leiden, 2001), P. Boyer, *Religion Explained. The Evolutionary Origins of Religious Thought* (New York, 2001) and D.J. Slone, *Theological Incorrectness. Why Religious People Believe What They Shouldn't* (Oxford, 2004) are typical.

[3] It is clear that there is a significant level of systematicity at the level of religious rituals that makes them a suitable subject for theoretical and empirical investigation. Whether ritual, generally, is equally suitable for such inquiry remains to be demonstrated.

resources that human beings employ in their representations of ordinary actions. People drinking wine and ritually qualified people ritually drinking ritually sanctioned wine have very similar if not identical cognitive representations. This idea about the structural similarity between the representation of action and the representation of religious ritual action was first presented in Lawson and McCauley's *Rethinking Religion: Connecting Cognition and Culture*[4] and further developed in McCauley and Lawson's *Bringing Ritual to Mind: Psychological Foundations of Cultural Forms*.[5] This theme has since been widely adopted by various scholars committed to developing a cognitive science of religion.[6]

Competence Theories

The inspiration for this idea emerged from the realization that competence theories about cultural forms such as language provided important insights about how the human mind represents things and events. Competence theories (which in turn lead to interesting hypotheses about matters of performance) are, by now, standard fare in the psychological sciences.[7] In fact the mind/brain seems to consist of a bundle of individually structured competencies that constrain the form that its various products assume. These cognitive capacities that human beings possess enable them not only to conceive of the kinds of things that there are in the world but also to act in the world in which they live. Of particular importance are the constraints that these capacities exert on the specific forms of behavior that human beings engage in. This is a situation in which not anything goes. All of the available evidence shows that these cognitive capacities are sensitive to particular domains of information.[8]

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[4] Lawson and McCauley 1990.
[5] McCauley and Lawson 2002.
[6] See Boyer 1994; Boyer, *Religion Explained*; Pyysiäinen, *How Religion Works*; S. Atran, *In Gods we Trust. The Evolutionary Landscape of Religion* (Oxford, New York, 2002); Slone, *Theological Incorrectness*.
[7] The competence/performance distinction was introduced by Noam Chomsky; see, for example, *Aspects of a Theory of Syntax* (Cambrige, 1965), 4.
[8] See L.A. Hirschfeld and S.A. Gelman, *Mapping the Mind. Domain Specifity in Cognition and Culture* (Cambridge, 1994); Pinker, *The Blank Slate*.

Competence theories are supported by crucial experimental evidence.[9] For the purpose of theorizing about religious ritual form, of particular interest are those theories that lead us to a deeper understanding of how human minds represent action. Without understanding how actions are represented we will fail to understand how *religious ritual* actions are represented and miss some of their most interesting properties. I shall first, therefore, present a description of such action representations and then allude to the evidence which supports their description.[10]

Representation of Ritual Action

At the most general level of description, all cognitive representations of action involve either someone doing something or someone doing something to something. Representations of action, therefore, come in two forms: actions that take patients (i.e. recipients of an action) as their objects and those that do not. For example representations of running, walking, singing, and dancing are actions performed by people without having to include in their description any object on which the action is performed. Someone, a person, is doing something called 'running'. It is sufficient to represent such an action by thinking of it as an activity of a certain sort without having to represent it as an action with a logical object or recipient.

Human minds also have the capacity for representing actions which take a patient (the recipient of the action) as an object: someone doing something to something. For example, an action representation system can produce a structural description of the action of 'the man kills a goat, the woman drinks wine, the official signs the document'— *where these are representations of actions and not just sentences in a language.* It is not only possible to represent the differences between these two types of action cognitively, but to express them in *any* human language with the appropriate predicates. There is a fundamental

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[9] One recent example is the study of religious ritual intuitions by J.L. Barrett and E.T. Lawson, "Ritual Intuitions. Cognitive Contributions to Judgements of Ritual Efficacy", *Journal of Cognition and Culture* 1 (2000), 183–201.

[10] For a full discussion of the action representation system see Lawson and McCauley 1990, 84–95.

distinction, linguistically, between transitive and intransitive verbs and this distinction mirrors our representations of actions.

In religious ritual representations only actions which take an object (patient) are relevant because in religious ritual systems *things get done to things*. Priests baptize the unbaptized, ritual practitioners offer sacrifices to the gods, the initiated initiate initiands, diviners cast divining instruments. This, of course, means that some actions that occur in religious ritual contexts do not count as ritual actions although they may be features within religious ritual ceremonies. This is important because many activities that take place in religious ritual contexts are irrelevant for an understanding of what is going on ritually, although they might very well be relevant to the larger picture ("They sing in their church but we do not in ours"). Unfortunately much discussion about the features of ritual fail to make such a distinction and, therefore, end up with a very confusing picture of the structure of ritual because too many irrelevant features which lack systematic connections to ritual action are included in the analysis.

There are important theoretical benefits for placing this restriction on the representations of ritual form, which have to do with discovering what is important in the ritual, which ritual act assumes prior ritual acts, who is acting as the agent of the ritual, who or what is acting as the patient, what instruments are involved, which rituals get repeated and which do not, which rituals permit substitutions and which do not, which rituals can have their effects reversed and which cannot, which rituals are more susceptible to change and which not, and so on.

The Role of Agency in Action Descriptions

Essential to any action description (whether or not this action is a ritual) is the key notion of *agency*. There are no actions of either of the kinds mentioned above without agents. This is why the human cognitive system distinguishes between actions and events. While all actions are represented as events, not all events are represented as actions. Human beings have the capacity to distinguish between those types of (intentional) activities which involve agents and those which do not. A rock rolling down a hill after an earth tremor (an event)

differs from a rock thrown by a person at a target (an action). Intentionality makes the difference.

Actions are intentional. Intentionality in this context involves an agent acting upon a patient with goals or purposes, typically, but not always, by means of an instrument. So, the action of 'the boy throwing a rock at the rabbit' is represented as an agent (the boy) acting (throwing) upon a patient (the rabbit) by means of an instrument (the rock). It is intentional in the sense that the boy intends to frighten (or annoy or hurt or kill) the rabbit with a thrown rock. It is an activity with a goal or purpose capable of being cognitively represented as such.

It is the human ability to represent these actions which take objects (which can, of course be other agents) that provide the cognitive resources for the representation of religious ritual actions. Depending upon the specific religious ritual context in which the ritual act occurs, any action of this sort has the potential for achieving a description as a religious ritual act. For example, take a situation in which we observe a man pouring water on the head of a child. This is a perfectly ordinary description of an action by an agent on a patient by means of an instrument and we need no more than our ordinary cognitive resources to represent it as such. But in a specific religious ritual context this same action can be represented as the baptism of a child by a priest. The representation of the agent, the action, the instrument and the patient remains the same. There is just someone doing something to someone by means of an instrument. Only the *properties of the participants* in the action need a minor re-description from ordinary to special. In the case at hand, all that needs to be added is that the man is ordained (and therefore qualified) to do the pouring, and the child as yet unbaptized is ready to be subjected to the action of baptism by means of the instrument of water (which itself was ritually treated in a prior ritual).

With such special qualifications we have an initial description of a religious ritual act. Of course the story becomes interesting when we ask the question about what qualifies the man to pour the water on the child in this ritual context. In the particular context in which this action occurs it seems that the man is qualified to do the pouring of the water because he went through a prior ritual which qualified him to engage in this action. It does not take too long to discover that there is a succession of ordinations ending with a

superhuman agent initiating the concatenation of actions. In other words, such special qualifications ultimately involve agents with counter-intuitive properties.[11] McCauley and I have typically referred to such agents as culturally postulated superhuman agents,[12] but it is simpler to describe the presupposed agents that initiate the process of qualifying the immediate agents engaged in the observed action as agents with counter-intuitive qualities.

Form and Content

It is as if the structural descriptions that the human mind was processing were a system with empty slots or envelopes just waiting to be filled with specific contents.[13] The slots are Agent—Act (by means of instrument)—Patient. In order for this system to accommodate a religious ritual representation of action all we need to do is add a special marker 'CI' (for counterintuitive) to the entity occupying one or more of the slots.

These CI agents differ from ordinary agents in significant ways. Although many of their properties dovetail with the properties of ordinary agents, there is something about how they are conceived in various religious systems that also sets them apart. That is to say, the particular conceptual scheme that gives content to the action representation system describes these various CI agents in various ways. For example, some live for ever, some live a long time and then die, some get resurrected or reborn, some possess strategic knowledge that no human at the particular moment possesses, some have powers that no human is capable of possessing, and so on. But the properties that set them apart from ordinary agents typically involve minor violations of the default assumptions of our basic ontological categories.[14] For example, human persons are regarded as having partial access to relevant information, but CI agents are regarded as having fuller but not necessarily complete access to relevant strategic information.[15] I make this point because not all CI

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[11] See Boyer 1994; Boyer, *Religion Explained*; Pyysiäinen, *How Religion Works.*

[12] Lawson and McCauley 1990, 5; McCauley and Lawson 2002, 8.

[13] McCauley and Lawson 2002, 27.

[14] See Boyer, *Religion Explained*, 64.

[15] For a full discussion of this notion see Boyer, *Religion Explained*, 150–155.

agents are conceived of as being omniscient;[16] they are typically represented as having the kind of information that makes a difference and exceeds the kind of information characteristically available to human beings. For example, I might not know what my neighbors are thinking but my god does.

Variations in Conceptual Schemes

How CI agents are represented, therefore, will obviously vary in the conceptual schemes characteristic of religious systems and this information will provide the specific content that fills the slots available for the specification of these qualities in the action representation system. There will always be some difference in the representation of CI agents and ordinary agents.

Why go to the bother of developing such a system for the representation of religious ritual actions when we could instead focus on their dramatic qualities, their potential for profound meanings, their sociological significance in the conduct of life, their appeal to our emotions, their potential for symbolizing neurotic behavior? Because when combined with a limited set of principles such a device discloses important, surprising and barely recognized facts about religious rituals. It also lends precision to the description of important relationships among the elements of a ritual action, and between various levels of ritual representation, particularly between a particular ritual being performed and the prior rituals this performance presupposes. And it even leads to important discoveries about various types of rituals. Rituals differ from each other in theoretically significant ways. Finally, it gives us important clues about the processes that lead to the differential transmission of cultural forms.[17]

The Principles of Superhuman Agency and Superhuman Immediacy

Given such a mode of ritual description, it is important to recognize that our theory identifies two principles for organizing the information about the effect that CI agents have on religious ritual form. These are the Principle of Superhuman Agency and the Principle of Superhuman Immediacy.

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[16] See Boyer, *Religion Explained*, 282–283.
[17] McCauley and Lawson 2002, 38–39.

The Principle of Superhuman Agency states that a CI agent is involved somewhere in a ritual. It specifies that CI agents are connected either with the agent of the ritual or with the instrument or patient of the ritual. If the CI agent is connected, however indirectly, to the agent of the ritual action we shall call this a special agent ritual. (Here the gods or their representatives are the actors in the ritual drama). If the CI agent is connected to one of the other slots (instrument, patient) it should be viewed as either a special patient or a special instrument ritual. (Here the humans are the chief actors and the gods are the recipients of the actions.)

The distinction between special agent and these other types of rituals is important because it involves many important properties of ritual actions such as repeatability, substitutability, and reversibility. In other words, whether a ritual is performed on a ritual patient only once or many times, whether a ritual will permit the substitution of one instrument for another, whether a ritual may have its effects reversed or not, depends on where the CI agent appears in the structural description of the ritual. If the ritual agent performing a ritual act on the ritual patient is connected to the gods (the CI agents) then such special agent rituals are non-repeatable rituals, for example, initiations, funerals, circumcisions. If the CI agent is connected to the act by means of the instrument or to the patient then the rituals will be repeatable (for example, divinations, sacrifices, offerings, blessings). The most important thing to remember about the principle of Superhuman Agency is that it specifies that in order for an action to count as a religious ritual action, a CI agent must be involved at some level of the ritual's description. Because the representation of a CI agent can occur in more than one place in the structural description of a ritual it is important to know which appearance of the CI agent is the initial or crucial one, which aspect of the ritual has the most direct connection to the CI agent.

The Principle of Superhuman Immediacy (PSI) states that the number of enabling rituals required to connect some element in the current ritual with an entry for a [CI] agent determines the entry's proximity to the current ritual. Specifically, the initial appearance of a [CI] agent in a rituals' full structural description is the entry whose connection with some element in the current ritual involves the fewest enabling rituals. For example, in a Christian baptism at least the priest (the agent) and the water (the instrument) have ritually mediated connections with God. The priest's connection is more direct,

however, since it is mediated by fewer enabling rituals. The water involves at least one additional level of ritual mediation in order to achieve its special status, which arises after all, because it was a *priest* who consecrated it. So, according to the PSI, since the priest who is the *agent* who performs the baptism, has a more direct ritual connection with God [the CI agent] than the water with which he carries out this ritual, baptism is a special agent ritual.[18]

Now, all of this simply shows that if the human mind/brain has the capacity to represent action, and if human beings in religious ritual contexts employ this capacity to represent religious ritual acts, then this latter capacity is dependent upon the former one. Nothing in such a theory of ritual competence justifies us in arguing that such a capacity is a special property of the human mind/brain. But it does show how easy it is for the human capacity or competence to represent agents and actions to be subtly altered to serve religious purposes. Considerable work in the cognitive, developmental, social and evolutionary psychological disciplines has demonstrated how fundamental these capacities are for matters of performance.[19] Very early in human development, in some cases from the moment of birth, humans show the ability to distinguish between agents and everything else in the world. In fact the evidence from social psychology also shows that humans have a tendency to attribute agency even when it is not required.[20] There are good evolutionary reasons for possessing the capacity to detect agents and for attributing agency even when it is not called for.

Actions and Events

Humans also very early have the capacity to distinguish between actions and events. The evidence shows that under certain conditions human beings, because of their intense interest in agency,

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[18] McCauley and Lawson 2002, 27–28.
[19] See for example J. Lbarkow, J.L. Cosmides and J. Tooby (eds), *The Adapted Mind. Evolutionary Psychology and the Generation of Culture* (New York, 1992); S. Baron-Cohen, *Mindblindness. An Essay on Autism and Theory of Mind* (Cambridge, 1995); A. Leslie, "Pretense and Representation. The Origins of 'Theory of Mind'", *Psychological Review* 94 (1987), 412–426; R.G. Burton (ed.), *Natural and Artificial Minds* (Albany, 1993); P. Carruthers and P. Smith, *Theories of Theories of Mind* (Cambridge, 1996).
[20] L.D. Ross, "The Intuitive Psychologist and His Shortcomings: Distortions in the Attribution Process", *Advances In Experimental Social Psychology* 10 (1977), 173–220.

attribute even to events the properties of action when they are not required to do so. There are, in other words, false positives. But it seems that such over-attribution is quickly recognized as such and, therefore, requires special appeals that transcend our ordinary representations of the kinds of things that happen in the world in order to make such representations stick. For example, a person descends a staircase in the dark at night and, after hearing a noise, bumps into an object such as a coat rack which was moved to a new place at the foot of the stairs. Not expecting the coat rack to be in this new place the person is startled and, for the moment thinks that he has bumped into a burglar. But turning on the lights rapidly reduces the startlement. It was a false positive. It would require a special appeal to hidden agents to be convinced that a ghost moved the hat rack there. But if the house has a history of ghost accounts handed down from previous owners and its occupants had more than once heard 'unexplained' sounds there would be a tendency to have the plausibility of the ghost stories reinforced. Sometimes this is referred to as gullibility. It can also be understood as: "Better safe than sorry."

Experimental Evidence

In experimental work, Barrett and Lawson have demonstrated that the Lawson and McCauley claim that non-cultural regularities in how actions are represented inform and constrain religious ritual participants understanding of religious ritual form generates certain predictions which can be tested.[21] The predictions are that 1) people with little or no knowledge of any given ritual system will have intuitions about the potential effectiveness of a ritual given minimal information about the structure of ritual, 2) the representations of superhuman agency in the action structure will be considered the most important fact contributing to the ritual's effectiveness, and 3) having an appropriate intentional agent initiate the action will be considered relatively more important than any specific action performed. What the experiments showed was that people's expectations regarding ordinary social actions also applied to religious ritual actions.

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[21] Barrett and Lawson, "Ritual Intuitions".

The fact that human beings are sensitive not only to the form of action but to ritual form by virtue of its dependence upon the former is significant for understanding a number of features about cultural transmission. Standard models of cultural transmission emphasize the causal role of cultural forces such as instruction. The problem is that people's judgments about the structure and efficacy of cultural form is underdetermined by such putative forces. People seem to know more than they ought to know if only cultural variables are taken into consideration. This is true for a number of cultural systems such as language, customary behavior, and moral behavior. It appears, therefore, that an important aspect of human knowledge is intuitive in the sense that it is present without having been taught.

The Frequency and Ritual Form Hypotheses

The proof of the existence of such intuitive knowledge is the ability of people to make judgments not only about features of actual ritual systems but even imaginary ones. This has led some scholars in the cognitive science of religion to postulate the kinds of cognitive variables that need to be taken into consideration in order to account for the memorability of ritual knowledge. One proposal is the frequency hypothesis which claims that memory for ritual knowledge arises from one of two factors. The more frequent a ritual is performed the less it needs to rely on sensory pageantry in order to be remembered and, therefore transmitted. The less frequent a ritual is performed the more it needs to rely on those features of sensory pageantry that will reinforce its memorability and, therefore, transmissibility. High frequency and low sensory pageantry lead to what Whitehouse has called the tedium effect.[22] Simply put, ritual acts performed over and over and over become dull or boring and are in danger, therefore, of disappearing from ritual practice. On the other hand, low frequency and high sensory pageantry lead to excitement. Most ritual systems contain both kinds of rituals, those that are continuously repeated in the life of an individual and those that are one-off rituals. What we need to understand is why it is that some rituals require more emotional stimulation than others.

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[22] See H. Whitehouse, *Arguments and Icons. Divergent Modes of Religiosity* (Oxford, 2000).

While such frequency effects help explain some features of the memorability and therefore transmissibility of ritual knowledge and the practices it informs, they are hardly sufficient to explain what actually happens on the level of performance in specific ethnographically described or historical situations. In other words, the emotional stimulation that sensory pageantry contributes is not only important for explaining why some features of ritual are memorable, but also why that fact increases the probability of their transmission. Sensory pageantry increases motivation. People not only remember rituals but *want* to participate in them and want to tell others to perform them too. McCauley and I have, therefore proposed the ritual form hypothesis. In other words there is another (and more fundamental) variable than the factors pointed to by the frequency hypothesis which helps us explain why it is that there are different *types* of rituals and what the factors are that are involved in their cultural transmission.

We argue that religious ritual systems evolve toward greater memorability, and therefore, tranmissibility, by exploiting features of what Brown and Kulik have called 'flashbulb' memory.[23] Much important work has been done on memory dynamics. Notoriously, flashbulb memories deliver vivid mnemonic accounts of extraordinary events. Research, however, has demonstrated that vividness and accuracy of memory for extraordinary events are not synonymous. We have introduced the cognitive alarm hypothesis to show that under certain circumstances accuracy of memory can occur in cultural transmission.[24]

Future Directions of Research

Further empirical research is now underway about the predictions that McCauley and I made in *Rethinking Religion*. Malley and Barrett have tested some of our predictions in systematic interviews of participants in Hindu, Jewish and Islamic traditions and many of our predictions about the judgments which participants would make about

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[23] See R. Brown and J. Kulik, "Flashbulb Memories", *Cognition* 5 (1977), 73–99 [reprinted in U. Neisser (ed.), *Memory Observed. Remembering in Natural Contexts* (New York, 1982), 23–40].

[24] See McCauley and Lawson 2002, 48.

repeatability, reversibility and relative sensory pageantry associated with religious rituals were strongly supported in their study.[25] In the future we expect many more such studies to be developed by the new generation of scholars who are now committing themselves to the emerging cognitive science of religion.

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[25] B. Malley and J. Barrett, "Can Ritual Form be Predicted from Religious Beliefs? A Test of the Lawson-McCauley Hypothesis", *Journal of Ritual Studies* 17 (2003), 1–14.

COMMUNICATION

Günter Thomas

1. *Introduction*

To talk about ritual in terms of communication seems to be, at first sight, rather trivial and self-evident. It is common sense that communication takes place in rituals. And yet we leave this common-sense view behind as soon as we ask: What is specific about 'the ritual way of communicating'? Or: If 'the ritual way of communicating' is a solution that is still culturally prominent, what is the underlying problem? This perspective on ritual is adopted here against the backdrop of an important shift in late-modern social theory: Communication became the basic concept for describing the most elementary units of social life.[1]

The aim of this chapter is to consider ritual using communication theory as a 'conceptual lens' and to provide a 'thick theoretical description'. This approach does not exclude other perspectives, but aims to highlight aspects of ritual not clearly seen in other theoretical endeavors.

To provide some general orientation at the outset, I want to sketch a range of approaches, all of which are in some way related to communication (§ 2). After that, I shall introduce the concept of communication as developed by the sociologist Niklas Luhmann. At first glance, his theory of communication may seem needlessly abstract and disconnected from ritual. However, the theory provides a valuable and powerful tool for illuminating the inner workings of ritual. Based on this short introduction, that tool is used to show how ritual addresses the multiple risks inherent in communication (§ 3). In the final part of the article, I sketch further insights into the risk of ritual failure (§ 4), consider polycontextual aspects and the notion of interrituality (§ 5), and address the issue of the place of meaning in ritual (§ 6).

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[1] See N. Luhmann, *Die Gesellschaft der Gesellschaft* (Frankfurt, 1997).

Before undertaking the framing elaborations, I would like to present a general thesis. This should help the reader to keep in view the central insight that orients the presentation in this article:

Ritual is a complex, highly plastic, and amazingly evolutionary 'successful' *form* of communication that addresses essential and inescapable problems and paradoxes of communication processes in social life. As a consequence, rituals are still present today in all societal subsystems, ranging from religion to law, education, sport, the arts, science, and economics.[2] Seen in the light of communication theory, ritual as a *form* of communication serves to serves to deal with the inherent risks of communication.[3] And yet, since ritual manages the risks of communication within the medium of communication, it always is in danger of creating the problems it attempts to solve: the 'ritual way of communicating' can fail.[4] Dealing with the risks of communication, ritual itself is not without risks.

Yet before developing this thesis, it might be helpful to provide an initial sketch of approaches in ritual theory that are somehow connected to communication.

2. *Ritual and Communication: The Central Approaches*

In light of the well-documented linguistic turn in twentieth-century philosophy and given the prevalent broad notion of communication, it is not surprising that both the term 'communication' and the problem of communication arises in many ways in numerous contributions to ritual theory. Instead of reconstructing the individual contributions of key figures in the field or providing a historical description of theoretical developments, I would like to suggest a

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[2] See, e.g., Grimes 1996.

[3] This implies that, with all its specifics, ritual is a mechanism that connects the autopoietical processes, i.e., the ongoing processes of autonomous self-reproduction, of various psychic and social systems. In this sense, ritual always takes into account the structures of psychic systems—or the mind—without simply following "the cognitive architecture of *Homo religious*", so McCauley and Lawson 2002, 8; along similar lines, see Lawson and McCauley 1990, 84–136; R.N. McCauley, "Philosophical Naturalism and the Cognitive Approach to Ritual", Schilbrack (ed.) 2004, 148–171.

[4] As for definitional strategies for 'ritual', I advocate a polythetic concept of ritual (Needham 1985, 70; Grimes 1990, 13–15; Rappaport 1979, 175–179; Snoek 1987). See also the chapter by Snoek in this volume.

typology that can provide some basic orientation, while acknowledging that any typology has inherent limitations due to its selectivity and cannot do justice to every position. There are at least six ways in which the concept of communication can play a role in ritual theory. In some cases, the contributions discussed will fit into more than one group.

2.1. *Verbal Communication in Ritual*

Approaches emphasizing the performative quality of ritual acts often focus their analysis on the use of verbal language in ritual. This focus can lead to the investigation of the content of verbal utterances or to the analysis of the performative aspects of such acts.[5] The key link between natural language and communication in ritual is the analogy between performative utterances (J.L. Austin) and ritual acts that are supposed not only to say something but also to bring something about.[6] While any rigid concentration on performative utterances in ritual overlooks the nonlinguistic (pictorial, spatial, bodily, etc.) aspects of ritual, two important insights are provided by this line of inquiry: First, performative utterances present at least one clearly conceptualized bridge between communication and action in a field characterized by rather loose associations. Second, these approaches have drawn attention to the overall performative quality of ritual itself, and thereby moved beyond views that are too static.[7]

2.2. *Ritual as Communication of Symbols*

Most ritual theories concentrating on the nature of ritual symbols and the intricate ways in which they are communicated presuppose verbal and nonverbal communication processes that occur in the performance of the ritual. Since rituals are supposed to say something by means of symbols, a semantic theory of meaning is often associated with contributions from this group.[8] All approaches that conceptualize

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[5] Paul 1990; Werlen 1984; Wheelock 1982; Ahern 1979; Severi 2002.
[6] Tambiah 1968; Tambiah 1973; Tambiah 1981; Ray 1973; Finnegan 1969; partially Rappaport 1974.
[7] This shift can be observed in Fernandez 1972; Fernandez 1974; Fernandez 1977.
[8] See, e.g., Jens Kreinath's chapter in this volume.

culture with the help of the metaphor of text construct ritual as an
important instance of reading and/or writing this text.[9] It should be
noted, however, that among this group there is no general agree-
ment on what the hidden yet real theme and content of ritual com-
munication by means of symbols is: social structure, the community
as a whole, social values, the relationship to the natural environ-
ment, a range of social possibilities, some ultimate and real reality,
superhuman agents, etc.[10] Two limitations and two strengths of this
approach should be mentioned: The diverse and varied contexts of
rituals render simply untenable the oft raised claim that a ritual has
one definite theme. In addition, the peculiar modes and processual
techniques of ritual communication are often insufficiently explored.[11]
Despite these shortcomings, the complexity of inter-symbolic net-
works and modes of symbolic expression is often investigated with
great sophistication. In addition, the shift of scholarly attention to
the variety of symbols has enabled the recognition of the many modes
of nonverbal communication involved in ritual, which make ritual a
multimedia event.

2.3. *Ritual as Communication with a Grammar*

For this line of argumentation, ritual is mainly a form of nonverbal
communication about the most basic conceptual ordering systems
and categories of the respective social entity. But of greatest inter-
est here are the ways in which the communication is structured by
a deep-seated logic that is operative in the cultural language and
employed in ritual. The analysis of the syntax and the grammatical
forms in such verbal and nonverbal communication follows the pat-
terns of linguistic communication.[12] Hence, ritual analysis can delve
into the more unconscious infrastructure of this language and search
for either culture-bound or more universal rules. Ritual does not just
reflect the social structure, but is part of a communication process

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[9] The idea of a text ready to be read can be found in Geertz 1966.

[10] The key figure in this group is V.W. Turner. See Turner 1967; Turner 1969;
Turner 1974a.

[11] However, it is worth mentioning here that Turner's work is an exception. He
clearly emphasizes the processual nature of ritual symbols and sees their openness
to multiple readings.

[12] Leach 1976 is influenced by Roland Barthes. Bloch 1974 links power and the
rigidity of grammar.

in which the culture addresses itself. Yet the real meaning of this communication process does not lie on the surface but is hidden in the message communicated by the 'unobservable' structural patterns. This can be the medium of any hidden authority.[13] Ritual can be a 'machine' suited for intellectual operation by the use, for example, of metaphorical or metonymical relationships or on the basis of a deep grammar.[14] The danger inherent in the approaches in this group is twofold: Due to the formality of grammatical analyses, they can easily lose sight of the performative, processual, and contingent aspects of ritual communication, to say nothing of the evolutionary aspect in the development of ritual. Despite these limitations, they provide valuable insights into structural similarities among verbal and nonverbal languages.

2.4. *Ritual as Grammar without Communication*

Ritual can be seen as a specific event of non-communication, as a paradoxical form of communication that avoids communication. As this group shows rather clearly, the link between communication and ritual can be counterintuitive. The starting points of the main argument are: a) the observation that ritual is strictly rule governed and b) the fact that quite often even practitioners cannot give a reasonable account of the meaning of their acts. Researchers taking this view suggest that, in all their formality, rituals do operate on the basis of syntactical rules but display just these rules, without saying anything, such that no communication takes place and the analogy between language/communication and ritual based on ruled-governed behavior is eventually superseded. In a syntax without semantics, no meaning can be communicated. For this reason, this strand of ritual theory is associated with the 'meaninglessness of ritual'.[15] Ritual is pure action without intrinsic meaning. Again, there are strengths and weaknesses in this way of dealing with ritual grammar. The more-or-less explicit rejection of a consideration of the social

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[13] See Bloch 1974.

[14] Lawson and McCauley 1990 develop the analogy of a generative grammar. Informative is the shift from Lawson 1976 to Lawson 1993.

[15] Staal 1979; Staal 1989; Humphrey and Laidlaw 1994; see the discussion in Michaels 1999 and the chapter by Michaels in this volume.

context of ritual in favor of the search for eternal grammatical and
formal structures seems to point to a highly culture-bound, bad meta-
physics, which searches for the eternal and unchanging. Nevertheless,
by decontextualizing ritual, these contributions rightly raise three
pressing questions: Where is the meaning in ritual communication
located? Are there definite contexts attached to ritual or is it a poly-
contextual form? How individual can the meaning of a specific
ritual be?

2.5. *Ritual Communication within the Ensemble of Social Communications*

Only a few researchers, most of whom analyze modern cultures,
locate ritual communication within the overall economy of commu-
nication in modern societies. Where anthropologists or ethnologists
working on ritual concentrate on so-called undifferentiated, small-
scale, remote, or primarily pre-modern societies, ritual is almost mat-
ter-of-factly given a prominent place in the overall communication
economy. Since this changed dramatically in the course of moder-
nity, a specific ritual nostalgia has tended to blur their view of con-
temporary societies. Modern society seems to be deprived of 'real
rituals'. Despite the limitations they place on themselves, contribu-
tions from this fifth group place ritual in the context of a society's
multiple forms of communication and seek analogies to ritual, trans-
formations of ritual forms, radical alternatives, and blended or cross-
over forms. They also seek to account for the survival of ritual under
the conditions of pluriform communication in late modernity. Without
doubt, the specific temptation of this comparative view is to discover
ritual almost 'everywhere'. Be that as it may, the positive side of this
quest for ritual under the conditions of media-saturated societies is
the discovery of 'ritual aspects' in many communication processes
and the uncovering of those aspects of ritual that have 'survived'
under these conditions or are even flourishing in unexpected ways.[16]

2.6. *Ritual as Multidimensional and Polycontextual Form of Communication*

This sixth group is the one in which the considerations of the pre-
sent article are situated. The theories belonging to this group try to

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[16] Rothenbuhler 1998; D. Dayan and E. Katz, *Media Events. The Live Broadcasting of History* (Cambridge, 1992); Thomas 1998, 353–458.

take account of the strengths and weaknesses of the aforementioned ways of connecting communication and ritual. Some of the approaches explicitly take up the multidimensional nature of ritual.[17] But even more important here is that they place the concept of communication at the center of inquiry and employ it in a detailed, thoroughgoing analysis of ritual. If ritual is an *instance* and *form* of communication, it addresses basic problems and issues of communication that emerge in the diverse social contexts in which communication takes place.[18] But to unfold the specifics and inner workings of ritual, the insights of the first (performative utterance/performance) and the third (grammar of communication) groups provide crucial orientation. The most elaborate ritual theory developed in this spirit has been advanced by Roy A. Rappaport.[19] The following suggestions are informed by Rappaport's theory. However, in order to seek interfaces with contemporary social theory and theory of communication, the subsequent suggestions are worked out from a different theoretical perspective, namely that of Niklas Luhmann's theory of communication—without following his views on ritual.

2.7. *Open Questions*

The foregoing, brief categorization of research literature that uses the concept of communication in theorizing ritual leads to the formulation of five critical issues that need to be addressed in further investigations and will be taken up in the following analysis, if only briefly:

1. What are the specific *features of communication* that make ritual a stable yet flexible and adaptive *form* that 'survived' so many thresholds of sociocultural evolution? If ritual is the answer, what are the seemingly inescapable questions?
2. How can the *psychological* and the *social aspects* of ritual communication be related and distinguished?

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[17] Kapferer 1983 (in terms of aesthetics); see also Tambiah 1981; Munn 1973 (for the polycontextual nature of rituals). Turner's work belongs also to this group.

[18] For the metacommunicative aspects in ritual, see Bateson 1974.

[19] Rappaport 1974, 3–69; Rappaport 1989; Rappaport 1999. For a cybernetic and system-theoretical approach, see also Handelmann 1977 and Handelman 1990 (²1998).

3. Where is *meaning* located in processes of ritual communication—in the self-understanding of participants, within the public symbols, or in the very sequence of a ritual performance?
4. How does ritual relate to its *multiple environments and contexts*, giving rise to dynamic relations between them?
5. What is the relation between *communication* and *action* in ritual? Are actions a specific subtype of communication or can any communication be viewed as action?

3. *Riskfull Communication and Ritual's Risk Management*

3.1. *Basic Concepts: Communication and Perception*

Niklas Luhmann has developed a subtle, general theory of communication, which I would like to sketch here very briefly.[20] Even though this theory is at first sight counterintuitive, it can serve as a helpful lens through which to examine ritual in order to discover and perceive the intricate modes of ritual communication.

Two of the central concepts of this theory are crucial for the analysis of ritual: *communication* and *perception. Communication* is not a transmission of units of information but the *emergent unity* of three selections: 1) *information* as a selection of meaning from an initial horizon of meaning ("repertoire of possibilities") within a psychic or social system; 2) the act of *utterance* as a selection of this information effected by this first psychic or social system, using some *medium* of commu-

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[20] N. Luhmann, *Social Systems* (1984), trans. J. Bednarz, Jr., with D. Baecker (Stanford, 1995), 137–175 (= chap. 4); N. Luhmann, *Ecological Communication* (1986), trans. J. Bednarz, Jr., (Chicago, 1989), 28–31; N. Luhmann, *Essays on Self-Reference* (New York, 1990), 86–98 ("The Improbability of Communication"); N. Luhmann, "On the Scientific Context of the Concept of Communication", *Social Science Information* 35 (1996 = special issue *Collected Papers on Niklas Luhmann*), 257–267. Luhmann's communication theory is embedded in his theory of social evolution. His explicit statements on ritual occur within the context of his early sociology of religion and are rather sketchy and negative in tone. See N. Luhmann, *Funktion der Religion* (Frankfurt, 1977). He himself never undertook a full analysis of ritual in light of his own communication theory. Helpful introductions to Luhmann's theory can also be found in *MLN* 111.3 (1996 = special issue *Observation, Difference, Form. Literary Studies and Second-Order Cybernetics*). In his theory of society, the following concept of communication is not restricted to verbal and nonverbal communication in interaction but is also applicable to systemic communication, that is, legal, economic, aesthetic, religious, political, scientific, and educational communication.

nication; and 3) *understanding* as subsequent selection from a *second* horizon of meaning—a selection 'triggered' by the first and second ones. This understanding is based on the perceived *difference* between information and utterance and takes place within another psychic or social system. In the emergent unity of all three selections, all the psychic or social systems involved are not mutually transparent to one another. As a consequence, no single consciousness can capture or 'see' all three selections. Since the two horizons of meaning are never identical, neither will the first and third selection ever be identical.[21] The only confirmation of understanding is the continuation of the communication process, in which every further utterance relates to the previous one. What is socially 'visible' is only the emerging 'chain of utterances'. Since no single person, no single psychic or social system involved can really observe the emergent and processual *unity* of the three types of selections, Luhmann can provocatively state: "Not persons, only communication can communicate".[22]

What is perception, given this concept of communication? *Perception* as a process within a psychic or social system is not passive since it analyzes and synthesizes a whole array of impressions (various senses, perceived forms and patterns, changes in size, etc.) into a rather compact perceptual unity. To be involved in communication, the perceiving system has to detect within the ongoing stream of perception units in its environment that carry the *difference* between information and utterance. This difference is the marker of a selectivity attributable to another self-referential entity, another psychic or social system.[23] When we detect the difference between information and utterance, we 'almost automatically' attribute it to another social or conscious system.[24] Most of the time, human consciousness is a

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[21] According to this approach, any notion of total understanding or mutual transparency has to be rejected as an illusion. Again, it should be evident that on this model of communication no information is transmitted. Instead, selections trigger further selections: The first selection triggers the one embedded in the utterance, which triggers a third selection within another psychic system.

[22] "It is not human beings who communicate, rather, only communication can communicate" (Luhmann, "On the Scientific Context of the Concept of Communication", 267).

[23] To use a famous example within anthropology: Perception has to differentiate between the blink of an eye as a mere physiological activity, on the one hand, and a wink as an utterance related to some meaning aimed at being understood, on the other hand.

[24] To give an example: while one can sit spellbound before a beautiful sunset,

perceiving consciousness, and any communication process can only take place against the backdrop of mere perception. Without perception, no communication can take place. The seemingly small difference between perception and communication has far-reaching consequences for the setup and the analysis of the form ritual:

1. *Speed*: Perception is much faster than communication, since it allows a high degree of complexity in the processing of information *without* great depth of analysis. It achieves near simultaneity in processing information.
2. *Temporalized ontology*: Perception creates 'presence', while communication can also move into the past and the future, can differentiate the multiple modalities (actual, possible, etc.). What is perceived simultaneously exists in 'actuality'. For this reason, indexical symbols are tools for the creation of 'presence'. Therefore, shared perception leads to synchronization of consciousness and environment and is, in principle, undeniable or unarguable.[25] If contingent communicative utterances are (willingly and temporarily) taken as 'natural perceptions', a 'map' can become 'territory' for at least some short-lived dwelling.[26] In this case, ritual can create 'virtual realities' or, seen from a different perspective, make present 'the really real'.
3. *Non-discursiveness*: The synchronization and high speed of perception erode the ability to negotiate and ponder the contingency of the perceived. They suspend the need to account for the perceived.[27] Compared to perception, communication is not just more time-consuming and highly selective, but also more strenuous.

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it can also be an utterance communicating the benevolence of a loving (self-referential) creator. In the first case, the sun is just a pleasing and beautiful object of perception; in the second, a perceived utterance selected by someone in order to communicate.

[25] And yet in ritual metacommunicatively framed perceptions can open up 'other realities' that are intensively experienced. In these cases, an external observer can see avenues to virtuality. See Bruce Kapferer's chapter on virtuality in this volume.

[26] The long story of theoretical ways of dealing with this phenomenon is told by J.Z. Smith in "I Am a Parrot (Red)", J.Z. Smith, *Map Is Not Territory* (Chicago, London, 1993 [1978]), 265–288.

[27] Therefore, one has to bear in mind that cultural distinctions that differentiate reality from deception or fiction are not available in the process of perception. They require meta-communicative markers or frames.

Given these three obvious differences between perception and communication, two important types of 'misuse' or 'deviance' in dealing with both perception and communicative utterances should be mentioned. Both take place frequently in ritual. To indicate these deviances, we posit an observer (A) of a person (B) perceiving or communicating with another one (C). A can engage in 'second-order observation' and might thus be able to see two possible deviations on B's side. First, A can be convinced that B is (falsely) treating mere perceptions of bodily states as communicative utterances of C. On the other hand, A can assume that B (falsely) considers communicative utterances of C to be just mere perceptions of bodily states.[28] Both types of 'deviance' play a prominent role in the way in which ritual addresses the intrinsic risks of communicating.

How is the communication process just sketched out full of risks—and why is this process closely related to ritual? The answer is: because communication is intimately connected with improbability—hence intrinsically risky and ritual is one important cultural tool for addressing this problem of improbability. "Communication is improbable, despite the fact that we exercise and practice it every day of our lives and would not exist without it."[29] Three specific types of risk need to be distinguished: 1) The emergence of the unity of information, utterance, and understanding is unlikely (§ 3.2). 2) In communication processes that transcend face-to-face contact, communication has to reach its recipients (§ 3.3). 3) Since successful understanding can also be the premise of disagreement, reaching the recipients is not sufficient. Therefore, societies have had to develop means of enhancing the acceptance of communication in terms of its content (§ 3.4).

All three risks or improbabilities of communication are somehow surmounted and changed into probabilities by the form of ritual, even though ritual is not the sole form.[30] In the following subsections,

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[28] Two examples: First, a Western researcher observes a religious person taking a tree as being an utterance (a revelation) from a deity. Second, a ritual garment that is part of a complex nonverbal communication system is taken to be just a beautiful dress. But the culturally dominant practice of taking selectively constructed utterances as mere perception is the reception of audiovisual communication with moving pictures: cinema and television.

[29] Luhmann, "The Improbability of Communication", 87.

[30] However, all three types of risks are mutually reinforcing and cannot be dealt with in succession, because the *solution* to one problem *intensifies* the other problem.

I shall combine the description of these risks in the communication process and the application of these insights to the analysis of ritual.

3.2. *Ritual's Way of Addressing the Risk of the Emerging Process*

Given the separateness and individuality of human consciousness, it is by no means self-evident that one person understands what another person means. Each of the three selections within the emerging unity of communication is improbable and poses its own risk for the process as a whole.

a) *Risk in the Selection of Information*

There is without doubt risk in the initial selection of information. It has to be related to the other perceiving psychic system in such a way that communication continues. Any selection from a horizon of meaning is contingent. Might not another word or other topics be more appropriate on the given occasion? If the perceived selectivity of the information increases, understanding becomes less likely. Surprise might become bewilderment or even confusion. The evolutionary success of languages, which consists in their capacity for limitless combination, has its downside. At this point, the form of ritual does not reject communication but partially withdraws, limits, and transforms it on several levels. The contingency of the selectivity is reduced by thematic restrictions, repetitions, and talking in set phrases. The givenness of the theme in ritual shifts the contingency of what is said to the occurrence of the ritual itself. For instance, the death of a person might be contingent, but *not* what is said and done in the funeral ritual.

b) *Risk in the Selection of an Utterance*

Fortunately, not all that people have in mind is uttered publicly. Social life is possible because human minds are not mutually transparent. Nevertheless, this rather trivial insight points to a serious problem. Since any actual utterance is a manifestation of a contingent selection, one can always ask for motives, intentions, relevance, and goals that lie 'behind' it. The selectivity of the utterance has at least two aspects: the bare fact of occurrence and the chosen medium of communication. The contingency of the utterance is highlighted even more in situations of precarious transition. In the case of non-cyclical rituals, the contingency of the utterance is nearly eliminated

by the fixed connection between ritual and the contingent event or occasion. The extra-ritual event incites the ritual utterance. However, the most frequent way of dealing with the risk of utterance is to connect the utterance with natural or cultural cycles, which are reinforced in turn by the ritual cycle itself. The security of expectation generated by the rhythms, repetitions, and cycles relieves the person making the utterance of having to justify his or her selection.

c) *Risk of Misunderstanding*

The process of understanding becomes highly problematic if a larger group is addressed and if *coordinated* understandings have to be achieved in order to avoid interrupting the process itself. Any discursive solution to this problem would be endlessly time-consuming because it would open up an apparently never-ending communication process. The form of ritual deploys another strategy: Preformed and more-or-less fixed sequences of utterances eliminate the contingency of the selection in understanding and thereby the *contingency of the next utterance*. No misunderstanding can disturb the proceedings. No individual misunderstanding can stop the ritual. Formalized ritual sequences present a form of *'frozen' autopoiesis* of communication in processual form.[31] Rituals risk individual misunderstanding in order to combine social inclusion with uninterrupted communication. Yet this chain of utterances still presupposes not only individual understanding but also coordinated understanding—and leaves it *unchecked*.[32] This technique is the basis of various phenomena: Actual individual consciousness can be modified by being 'hooked up' to the prefigured

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[31] Depending on the temporal structures of society and the social subsystem in which the ritual takes place, the very act of freezing can have taken place 'in primordial time' or after long negotiations just a few days before the performance. What matters is that communication is 'frozen', that is to say, not contingent, fluid, and open to debate at the time of the performance. In many cases—even in late modernity—the power of the performance can absorb the knowledge of all contingent selections.

[32] For good reasons, the performance of ritual is compared to music based on a full orchestra score, see Leach 1976, 44; Scheffler 1997, 133; N. Goodman, *Languages of Art* (Indianapolis, 1976), 127; for different reasons: F. Staal, "The Search for Meaning. Mathematics, Music, and Ritual", *American Journal of Semiotics* 2 (1984), 1–57. Seen from another perspective, this pressure to adjust to the preformed stream of utterances can be criticized as being an exercise of power (Bloch 1974, 55–81). The complex 'ritual score' lies at the base of ritual replicability (Smith 1987a, 74–95).

stream of utterances. Accordingly, ritual does not require 'faith' but merely participation.[33] However, by not controlling understanding, ritual also opens up spaces for a variety of understandings und gives one the freedom to understand differently.[34]

The problem of understanding is addressed also by the repetitive character of ritual performances. It allows a temporalization of understanding: what cannot be understood now might be understood next time or even years later. But one of the most prominent ritual strategies employed to counter the risk of understanding is the simultaneous employment of multiple communication media for the utterance. By employing many modes of communication at the same time, 'diachronic repetition' is supplemented by 'synchronic repetition'. In this regard, many rituals are much more complex 'multimedia events' than any contemporary multimedia device could achieve.

Yet the use of non-linguistic communication media has advantages, as well as disadvantages. Architectural, visual, tactile, olfactory, acoustically overwhelming communication media have the advantage that they lead to hardly deniable objects of sensory perception.[35] In addition, due to the sensory quality, the selection of the material substance in the specific medium of communication can be intimately (self-referentially) related to the uttered information.[36] However, because these utterances are embedded in less arbitrary communication media than language, they do not force a distinction between utterance and information, and no one can control

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[33] Rappaport 1979, 194–197.

[34] Specialized 'holy languages' likewise address the risk inherent in understanding. Not only do they carve out a very specific horizon of meaning, but they can (if they are mastered *only* by experts) also reduce the risk of misunderstanding to zero by making understanding impossible while still presupposing it: The actual fact of a difference between information and utterance is well known, *and* for most people (having not mastered the language) no understanding can take place. The rejection of Latin by the Protestant Reformation documents the willingness to face a higher risk in religious communication: What can be understood can be more easily rejected. In a similar vein, the changes in the Roman Catholic liturgy in the wake of the second Vatican Council document the fact that under the conditions of modernity the Catholic strategy of risk-avoidance itself became too risky: Its acceptance deteriorated, so religious communication in native languages might be more successful—even though it is easier to reject it.

[35] There is no way to escape the smell of joss sticks or the sound of an organ—unless, of course, one leaves the ritual space.

[36] This is intensively elaborated in various theories of ritual symbols. See the article on semiotics in this volume. What Rappaport termed 'indexical information' is an instance of such an utterance.

what actually takes place.[37] They do not provoke the differentiation from a field of perception, even though they are 'marked' by a framing meta-communication.[38]

3.3. *The Risk of Reaching Recipients*

Communicative utterances need to reach their intended recipients. It is well known from media studies that the invention of writing is the technique that, in combination with mobile messengers, made it possible to reach distant recipients and thus to build large empires. This picture, however, requires revision.

As a matter of fact, ritual is an early yet effective form of communication for addressing the risk of reaching a recipient. Even though, sociologically speaking, ritual is interaction-based, it is a powerful form of mass communication characterized by two mutually supplementing features: attraction and replicability.[39] Ritual is an *inverse* as well as *direct* form of *mass communication*. Ritual attracts its participants and *draws* the people *to* the message, instead of 'bringing' the utterance to the dispersed people. By activating, focusing, and steering the perception of many people, ritual is one of the most widespread and elementary mechanisms for the management of orchestrated public attention.[40] Unlike modern audiovisual media, ritual *contracts* space and time into a shared field of perception based on shared space and a momentary synchronization of time.[41] Due

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[37] The persistence of mantras over thousands of years points to the exceptional possibility that even in *linguistic* expressions understanding can opt for the *material side* of the sound of an utterance. Mantras are, for this very reason, *not* meaningless. Quite the contrary, they literally *force* the individual invention and ascription of meaning in understanding—at the same time calling into question any notion of inherent meaning.

[38] Evidently, the medium of communication also restricts what can be said, that is, the medium operates selectively on what information can be uttered. Nonlinguistic media of communication undoubtedly create a sense of presence, yet face difficulties in transcending the present into the future, in pondering the possible or non-existent, displaying abstract entities, or using logical negation.

[39] Rumor is a social communication technique that can affect large social bodies very quickly. But rumor systematically leaves open who has 'got the message'.

[40] Ritual is, first and foremost, a mode of paying attention (Smith 1987a, 103). Sociologically speaking, rituals are effective tools for public attention management.

[41] Modern so-called media rituals present a case in which the *contraction* takes place simultaneously with the *transcendence*. However, this notion of transcendence should not be confused with religiously used transcendence. A much more fitting term would be 'virtual expansion'.

to reciprocal perception, there is an inbuilt control-mechanism for reaching the recipients. The very participation of people makes it publicly indisputable that the communication has reached its recipients.

Contrary to conventional scholarly wisdom, it is not writing but ritual that should be regarded as the first medium of direct mass communication. Even without a written manual or script, the *form* of a peculiar ritual can be endlessly replicated at different times and in different places, spread over large political and geographic spaces. Because of ritual's ability to inscribe its score into both bodies and memories by means of a '*frozen*' autopoiesis of communication, it can be replicated and endlessly duplicated—without retaining the distinction between original and copy.[42] As a consequence, ritual is itself the (meta)medium for the transcendence of a given space and time by ritualized communication.[43]

If a ritual did spread *across space*, real simultaneity could still be accomplished by strict temporal coordination (calendars, cosmic constellations, etc.). When spread *across time*, ritual can create temporal orders[44] and replicate in designated spaces peculiar temporal events. When such a spreading across time is fictitious, ritual contributes to the invention of tradition.[45]

3.4. *The Improbability of Acceptance*

If communication can surmount the improbability of reaching the recipients *and* understanding takes place, then new problems emerge: Understanding does not imply acceptance, which means (a) acting in accordance with corresponding directives but also (b) processing experiences, thoughts, and other perceptions on the assumption that a certain piece of information or selection is correct.[46] The better

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[42] Without doubt, many copied rituals do not have originals or only fictitious originals and every copy presents some transformation.

[43] Various emperor cults in ancient times illustrate this fact: Rituals were the media by which a center communicated to illiterate masses all over the political space up to the periphery hundreds or even thousands of miles away. Concerning replicability, see Smith 1987a, 74–95.

[44] Rappaport 1999, 169–235.

[45] See, e.g., E. Hobsbawm and T. Ranger (eds), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge, 1983). Ritual is both a medium for memorizing and a medium for constructing and inventing the past.

[46] Luhmann, "The Improbability of Communication", 88.

one understands something, the better one is equipped to disagree with it. How does the form of ritual increase the probability of the acceptance of communication? Four strategies of ritual risk management are prominent in this regard.

a) *Naturalization of Utterances for the Creation of Spaces of Perception*

Rituals often 'take place' in highly artificial settings, in which every item is both the result of careful selection and contingent utterance: objects, arrangements in space, timing, positioning of participants, details of architecture, etc. And yet human attention is a limited and time-bound resource. Consequently, ritual spaces pressure their (non-professional) participants to treat a large amount of objects of utterance (symbols) as objects of mere, that is to say, 'natural' perception. As a result, rituals can create artificial worlds, which—at least during the ritual's performance—are 'self-ontologizing'. At least for the time during which the ritual takes place, this is the world as it happens to be. In this situation, an observer is inclined to see symbolic 'maps' mistakenly as having become real 'territories'.[47]

b) *Self-Referential Utterances*

Utterances as selections in a rather sensory, nonverbal medium of communication can relate information and utterance in such a way that the very materiality of the medium of the utterance suggests the acceptance of what can be understood. As a consequence, attention clings primarily to the material side of the utterance. As Victor Turner has observed, the perceptible materiality of ritual objects can resonate with the communication of abstract entities, such as justice, power, faithfulness, love.[48] The relation can be one of testifying exemplification or one of representation, in which the medium substitutes the information that is made sensorially present.[49]

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[47] G. Bateson, *Steps to an Ecology of Mind* (New York, 1972), 177–193.
[48] Turner 1967, 54.
[49] See J. Skorupski, *Symbol and Theory. A Philosophical Study of Theories of Religion in Social Anthropology* (Cambridge etc., 1976), 116–124. For a topological set of ritual references, see Scheffler 1997, chap. 10. For an illuminating application and development of the work of Nelson Goodman, see Williams and Boyd 1993.

c) *Bodies as Media of Communication*

As interaction-based communication, rituals involve bodies. When bodies are moved, cleaned, polluted, inscribed, decorated, etc., they become a medium of communication through which the participants communicate to themselves and to others. For the experiencing person, the utterance in the bodily medium is evident and undeniable; thus understanding and acceptance is in one way or another virtually unavoidable: To reject a self-embodied communication amounts to rejecting one's own body. In this regard, the use of the body as medium of communication is a very effective functional equivalent to complicated discursive controls on understanding. Anyone who uses the body as a medium does not need to check whether the message is understood by checking the recipient's 'insights'.[50] In using the body as medium, the influence on one's mind takes place through 'the body in the mind'.[51] In such rituals, anyone who doubts can find physical evidence for casting doubt on one's doubt.

d) *Public Linguistic Self-descriptions*

Oaths, pledges, confessions, promises, or public swearings are all instances of visible, public acts of the self-attribution of a verbal ritual utterance, which takes the form of a linguistic self-description that refers to present as well as future actions. What happens in these cases is something quite visible in ritual questioning or confessions: There is a public and bodily exclusion of the *logically possible 'no'* by the explicit or *performed 'yes'*.[52]

4. *The Risk of Ritual Risk Management: Boredom and Aesthetic Distance*

As mentioned in the introduction, there is no way to address the risks built into the communication process without producing new

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[50] To be sociologically more precise: ritual is a very elementary functional equivalent of symbolically generalized media of exchange that support the acceptance of communication in the various social systems. See Luhmann, *Die Gesellschaft der Gesellschaft*, 316–396.

[51] M. Johnson, *The Body in the Mind. The Bodily Basis of Meaning, Imagination, and Reason* (Chicago, London, 1978).

[52] For instance, no Christian wedding liturgy prepares the priest or minister for the logically possible 'no' before the altar.

risks. In ritual, repetition, the fixed flow of utterances, and growing familiarity with the themes and tropes are just a few of the factors that lead to unabsorbed, free attention on the part of the participants, because not enough *surprising* difference between information and utterance attracts the consciousness. The perceptual density of the ritual environment might provide 'mild distractions' that can absorb some of this free-floating attention. If the free attention of participants cannot be bound, the communication process of ritual is experienced as boring, and ritual becomes the victim of its own success.[53] Sooner or later, the participants 'drop out' of the communication process, though there are obviously great cultural and individual variations at work.

Yet there is another borderline case. Free-floating attention can be reinvested in the observation of the communication process, concentrating on those contingencies that are 'appresented' for those really immersed in the process. The participants might not 'drop out' totally, but instead engage in playful and entertaining forms of involvement. Such aesthetic modes might always accompany the ritual process as long as they do not dominate it. But again, there can certainly be a great variety of intensities and degrees of distance therein. Both borderline cases—boredom and aesthetic distance—refer back to an issue already touched upon: ritual techniques of absorbing free-floating attention often make use of the body.[54]

5. *Carved Out and Connected by Communication: Ritual as a Knot in Multiple Networks*

Ritual communication refers not only to many sociocultural realities outside the ritual event. It is also self-referential insofar as ritual utterances are connected to other ritual utterances. A peculiar type of reference can be found in elements of communication that are

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[53] The successive shortening of the Christian worship service in the Western world over the last 500 years might provide evidence that ritual attention management cannot be detached from the larger economy of social and psychological attention.

[54] With the beat of twenty drums vibrating in the pit of one's stomach, there is no free attention left to get entangled in second-order observations or to think about the meaning of the event. In some Christian worship services, the organ has the power to bring back the attention to the liturgy that was going astray during the sermon.

meta-communicative self-descriptions. Such elements can be called frames that allow one to describe the ritual in contrast/contradistinction to its multiple environments. Metacommunicative utterances—or elements made of stone, sound, light, smell, or linguistic formulae— extricate the ritual event from the ordinary world, a process in which the describing 'self' comes into 'existence' through the very act of self-description.[55] These spatial, temporal, and social markers help the reality of ritual to come into being, to support the auto-ontologizing of an emerging world. The frames can be dynamic like a moebius strip, in which the outside is in and the inside is out.[56]

Even though the degree of references to extra-ritual worlds may vary, any ritual somehow refers to its environments. The world of a concrete ritual can be a more-or-less entangled, but never a totally disentangled world. As an emerging reality, ritual is thoroughly poly-contextual in referring to a variety of contexts. In simultaneously addressing the psychic system of participants and the social system in which it takes place, ritual is a key interface between psychic real-ities and multiple social spheres or systems. The fact that ritual com-munication can simultaneously address multiple social systems can be seen in many traditional wedding rituals: they operate as inter-faces between legal, religious, artistic, economic, intimate, and famil-ial communication. Correspondingly, ritual utterances are a privileged place for polysemic symbols. It should be emphasized, however, that the polycontextual nature of ritual communication does not imply that all contexts are brought into harmonious relation. On the con-trary, the same ritual can heighten solidarity in one context while reinforcing conflict in relation to another context.[57]

A specific type of a diachronic and synchronic polycontextuality is what I would like to call *processual interrituality*: rituals refer to other rituals and reflect this connectivity in their own actual communica-tion. Quite often rituals as a whole are an utterance in a larger com-

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[55] See Handelmann 1990 (²1998).
[56] E.g., in German Protestant churches it is hotly debated whether the ringing of the bell is an external marker before the worship service practically indicating that one should now leave the house the walk to the church (so-called 'ringing in advance') or whether it is part of the worship itself and provides time for medita-tion and for inner preparation (so-called 'after-ringing').
[57] Lukes 1975; Rappaport 1979, 187–188.

munication process of liturgical orders.[58] Such liturgical orders consisting of many rituals can embody a whole array of relations: successions, preconditions, spiral-like repetitions, alternatives, etc.

The polycontextual nature of ritual communication confirms an observation made by Roy A. Rappaport: In theorizing about ritual communication, the very *uniqueness* of the form and the *widespread occurrence* of ritual forces one to draw a distinction between *formal* and *final* functions of ritual.[59] As such, the form 'ritual' itself can function as risk management. Most of what has been described so far concerns this *formal* function. The *final* functions of ritual are always connected with a specific ritual in a given social, temporal, and spatial setting and tend to differ according to times, social subsystems, sociocultural places etc.[60] And still, due to the polycontextual nature of any given ritual, the multiple final functions may vary. Moreover, the final functions of a given ritual may often be highly contingent of minor adjustments within the ritual communication and eventually completely out of the control of the participants. What a given ritual 'is' for its sociocultural environments depends heavily on the way a ritual is built into their distinct worlds.[61]

6. *Action, Communication, and the Place of Meaning in Ritual*

Most theories of ritual take actions to be the basic units, which poses the question: How are actions related to communication? According to the approach suggested in this chapter, communication is the elementary unit of *self-constitution*, and action is the elementary unit

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[58] Rappaport 1979, 192–193; Rappaport 1999, 169–170; implicitly, Leach 1976, 2. In analogy to intertextuality, Burkhard Gladigow uses the term 'interrituality': Gladigow 2004.

[59] Rappaport 1979, 43–5, esp. 74–78; Rappaport 1999, 27–28.

[60] Not to differentiate the formal and final functions in theorizing ritual is one of the key reasons for rather confusing and contradictory attributions of the function of ritual. Any attempt to name just *one* final function (i.e. conservative affirmation, rebellion, etc.) must be futile.

[61] The following example might illustrate this point: During Apartheid in South Africa, the celebration of the Lord's Supper in racially segregated churches religiously confirmed the political system. The very same ritual celebrated in the very same situation but celebrated with the inclusion of all 'colored' people in nonsegregated churches became a powerful religious critique of the dominant political system, something that was astutely observed by the political class.

of *self-observation* and *self-description* for these social and psychic systems. Hence, contrary to most scholarly commonsense intuitions, communication—not action—is the basic building-block of social life. An action is the result of a description or self-description in which a specific attribution of an utterance to an actor takes place. Communication in specific social contexts constructs actors and their actions insofar as actors or 'persons' are 'addressees' of these attributions. The attribution of utterances as actions to actors is bound up with the ascription of motives and intentions, even though the latter are necessarily 'invisible'. Yet the underlying motives for actions used in self-descriptions are more likely to be derived from the situation than the 'self'.

Seen in this way, positions that reject the idea that ritual is essentially a kind of communication make a valid observation, while drawing the wrong conclusion and thereby ending in theoretical confusion.[62] They rightly observe that ritual does not operate on the basis of intentions rooted in psychic systems and that participants are not the creative 'authors' of the actions ascribed to them. Therefore, ritual cannot be understood within the framework of rational choice theory. These approaches also correctly note that the uncontrolled processes of understanding actually attract *variable* meanings (socially and temporally) of what takes place. Asking for the meaning of a specific ritual, any observer can hear a great variety of interpretations from the participants. Yet on a very basic level, the 'chain of ritual utterances', that is, the 'frozen' autopoiesis of ritual, presupposes only *some* kind understanding on the participants' part—without controlling it and without necessarily unifying the ascriptions of meaning. 'Meaninglessness' as the absence of pragmatics is still an ascribed meaning, attributed by the researcher as participant-observer.[63] Without the operative presupposition of any kind of understanding, ritual would produce merely senseless noise for all participants. And yet as long as ritual communication goes on *and* attracts participants, 'only communication can communicate' and—as a consequence— every participant asked by an anthropologist can still report his or her own understanding and different attributions of meaning.

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[62] Humphrey and Laidlaw 1994, 68.
[63] Michaels 1999, 23–47.

Within the theoretical framework of the theory of communication proposed here, the issue of the meaning of a specific ritual reappears at another place: If we take one specific ritual as one compact utterance, the meaning of this ritual is not disclosed by the participants' intentions or the ritual seen in itself. Instead, it is the difference this ritual makes in all the subsequent communication processes in which the participants are involved.

7. *Concluding Remarks*

Society is a complex and recursive network of communication. In these processes not only do irritations, fractures, ruptures, and the unexpected emerge but also forms that address some of these problems. Ritual is not the golden key to a proper understanding of communication, but its persistence in almost all forms of societal development and stages of social differentiation suggests that it is of vital importance. The 'frozen' autopoiesis of communication presented within ritual demonstrates that communication is not only dependent upon 'subjects' but also on 'forms'. Given the long and diverse histories of ritual and viewed from an ethical and 'democratic' perspective, ritual—despite all its stability—appears to be a precarious and ethically unstable form: Despite its formal function of addressing the inherent risks of communication, in its final functions it can be utilized for good and for bad, for the destruction but also for the enrichment of human and social life.

ETHOLOGY

Dorothea Baudy

What does a turning point in the history of ritual studies look like? Imagine a young scholar spending his spare time on the banks of some reservoirs near London, watching water birds. A self-made wooden construction enables him to look through a telescope and to take notes at the same time. His name is Julian Huxley. He will read the paper revealing the results of this strenuous fortnight at Tring during the spring of 1912 two years later at the Royal Zoological Society.[1] But why should this paper one day be called "the famous grebe paper"?[2] Why should historians of religion be interested in the "Courtship Habits of the Great Crested Grebe"? The first question can be answered in Huxley's own words: his paper "made field natural history scientifically respectable", as he wrote proudly in his *Memories*.[3] This does not only mean that he undertook and described his field observations with methodological rigor, but also that he did his work in a theoretical context. Looking at animal behavior meant asking questions about its history and discussing it in the light of Darwinian evolution theory.[4] That is why the paper "proved to be a turning point in the scientific study [. . .] of vertebrate ethology."[5] Implicitly, this was an important contribution to anthropological research, because men are vertebrates, too. From the beginnings of

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[1] J. Huxley, "The Courtship Habits of the Great Crested Grebe (Podiceps cristatus); with an Addition to the Theory of Sexual Selection", *Proceedings of the Zoological Society of London* 35 (1914), 491–562. The paper was read to the Zoological Society on April 21, 1914.

[2] So Desmond Morris in his foreword to the abridged version of J. Huxley, *The Courtship Habits of the Great Crested Grebe* (London, 1968).

[3] J. Huxley, *Memories* (London, 1970), 85.

[4] The biological theory of evolution is not to be mistaken for evolutionism in the realm of cultural sciences. There is a historical but no necessary relation between the two approaches. For a clarifying perspective, see G. Schlatter, "Evolutionismus", *Handbuch religionswissenschaftlicher Grundbegriffe* 2 (1990), 385–393.

[5] Huxley, *Memories*, 89. See I. Eibl-Eibesfeldt, *Grundriß der vergleichenden Verhaltensforschung. Ethologie* (München, 1967; 7th rev. and enlarged ed., 1987) and R.A. Hinde, *Ethology. Its Nature and Relations with Other Sciences* (New York, Oxford 1982).

ethology there was great scientific interest in comparing human behavior to that of related animals.[6] But beyond this general importance for the human sciences, there is a special one for ritual studies. With that we approach the second question. To answer it will be our task in what follows.

The Ethological Theory of Ritualization

Huxley's research shed new light on animal behavior because of his discovery that there are also other action patterns than those that directly serve a particular purpose. It is easy to understand that certain routines of food acquisition, fight or flight, procreation or child rearing are rooted in genetic dispositions. In critical situations it may be of great advantage just to execute an innate program. Successful action patterns will consequently be transmitted to the next generation. But what about movements that look like a dance and seem to be useless? To cite once more Huxley's own words describing the grebe's courtship habits:

> The displays were many and various. There was the common one of head-shaking, with necks erect and ruffs fanned out. There was the threat attitude with ruff spread and neck forwardly directed. There was an astonishing display when one bird dived, to emerge vertically before the other, which had its ruff opened and wings spread out to show the flashing white patches. And, even more extraordinary, a ceremony that I christened the 'penguin dance'. This occurred rarely, always after a very prolonged bout of headshaking. First one bird dived, then the other; they emerged, with some of the water-weed used for nest-building in their beaks, and swam straight at each other. Just when a collision seemed inevitable, they leapt up and met breast to breast, slowly sinking down, dropping the weed, and ending with a further short bout of head-shaking.[7]

The decisive feature of all this theatrical choreography was—and here we arrive at the real "turning point" for ritual studies—that the birds' performance showed such a high degree of formalization

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[6] See C. Darwin, *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (1872), corrected Third Edition. With an Introduction, Afterword and Commentaries by P. Ekman (London, 1998).

[7] Huxley, *Memories*, 89; for the scientific documentation and analysis see "Courtship Habits".

that Huxley called it a ritual[8] or ceremony. Theorizing the rituals of the great crested grebe, which he had observed so meticulously, he developed the ethological theory of ritualization.[9]

Of course, at first sight the biologist just borrowed a notion from the human sphere to denote some puzzling behavior of the water birds he was watching all day long. He could do so because he was convinced that comparison between different sorts of vertebrates is possible. In this regard no distinction is to be drawn between human beings and other animals. Methodologically controlled comparison therefore is apt to enlarge the understanding of phenomena otherwise obscure.[10] Huxley's brave step was the beginning of a long history of success, because in the long run the notion 'ritualization' proved to be useful for the explanation of animal behavior in general and human behavior in particular. It is worth noting that at this stage we are still talking about rituals—not yet about religion. The term could be used at that time (as in ours, too) in a secular sense to denote what Erving Goffman would refer to as 'interaction ritual' some fifty years later.[11]

In a biological context the term 'ritualization' has a clear-cut definition: it denotes the evolution of behavioral patterns and accompanying physical features which do not serve any immediate purpose but exist for the sake of communication. The ethological theory of ritualization deals with the development of signals and symbolic actions. The primary concern of biological research initially was to explain the phylogenetic development of rites, but from the beginning there was a parallel interest in individually acquired behavior that was combined with the innate patterns. Over the years, there resulted from the latter area of interest a theory of cultural ritualization.[12]

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[8] See "Courtship Habits", esp. 506–507.

[9] This is well explained by Eibl-Eibesfeldt 1979.

[10] For a discussion of the possibilities of comparison in the science of religion, see Baudy 1998, 5 (with further references).

[11] Goffman 1967. Huxley used the term 'ritual' in that general sense, whereas the terms 'rite', 'ceremony', and 'custom' are used interchangeably (see also Leach 1968, 520–521); see Baudy 1998, 22; B. Lang, "Ritual/Ritus", *Handbuch religionswissenschaftlicher Grundbegriffe* 4 (1998), 442–458. B. Gladigow, "Religion im Rahmen der theoretischen Biologie", B. Gladigow and H.G. Kippenberg (eds), *Neue Ansätze in der Religionswissenschaft* (Forum Religionswissenschaft 4; München, 1983), 97–112, here 98, takes the use of the term 'ritual' in Huxley's paper in the religious sense, which seems to me not to be adequate.

[12] The pioneering works are K. Lorenz, *Das sogenannte Böse. Zur Naturgeschichte der*

The Evolution of Communication

In a narrow biological sense the main question was which selection
pressure could there be for the evolution of non-useful behavior. It
was to be answered by verifying the thesis that the improvement of
communication abilities—and thus interaction—may be a decisive
advantage for surviving and procreating. To communicate means to
be able to coordinate flight or group wanderings, defense or hunt-
ing, it makes it possible to tone down conflicts by hierarchy or ter-
ritory marking, it improves mating and child rearing. Moreover,
survival in a dangerous situation can depend on the capacity to com-
municate and to interact with others.

All behavior has its inner and its outer side.[13] Even if it is difficult
or even impossible to know the 'real' emotions of another person or
an animal, we are able to draw some conclusions from the percep-
tible side of his behavior. Intentional or unintentional expressions
of emotions give some indications about his mood, and by exten-
sion what he possibly will do next. In all situations where the sup-
posed intentions are not only of theoretical interest, a transmission
of mood can take place: perceiving the fear of somebody else, I can
get anxious, too, even if I cannot realize what the person is worry-
ing about. The invention of thrillers relies on this. In real life, some-
body who shows his fear expects me to do something appropriate
to the situation. He wants me to run away together with him, to
help him, or perhaps to tell him that there is no danger at all. Our
social life depends completely on our ability to communicate—and
sometimes dissimulate—emotions, but in any case to evoke the will-

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Aggression (1963; 21st ed., München, 1998); English translation: *On Aggression.* With
a foreword by J. Huxley, trans. M. Latzke (London, 2002), chapter 5 (see also
below, n. 26 for further elaboration); O. Koenig, *Kultur und Verhaltensforschung. Einführung
in die Kulturethologie* (München, 1970).

   [13] Darwin was already interested in the "expression of emotions" (see above, n. 6).
Heini Hediger and Rudolf Bilz linked 'behavior research' ('Verhaltensforschung' =
ethology) and 'animal psychology' ("Tierpsychologie"); see H. Hediger, *Tiere verste-
hen. Erkenntnisse eines Tierpsychologen* (München, 1980); R. Bilz, *Die unbewältigte Vergangenheit
des Menschengeschlechts. Beiträge zu einer Paläoanthropologie* (Frankfurt, 1967); *Wie frei ist
der Mensch?* (Frankfurt, 1971); *Studien über Angst und Schmerz* (Frankfurt, 1971). For an
elaboration of this approach into a theory of religion, see G. Baudy, "Religion als
'szenische Ergänzung'. Paläoanthropologische Grundlagen religiöser Erfahrung",
F. Stolz (ed.), *Homo naturaliter religiosus: Gehört Religion notwendig zum Mensch-Sein?* (Studia
Religiosa Helvetica 3; Bern, 1997), 65–90.

ingness of an interaction partner to act in a parallel or comple-
mentary manner.

Seen from an ethological point of view, all sorts of communica-
tive behavior result from some ritualization process.[14] The biological
term covers a far wider range of phenomena than the colloquial
one, which is a common source of misunderstanding.[15] Besides the
transformation of an everyday activity into a ritual, the biological
term may denote the stylization of any perceptible element of animal
shape and behavior under the selection pressure of communication.
The result of a ritualization process may be a single sign—visible,
audible, or in any other way perceptible. It may be a movement,
eventually enforced by some sound or something that catches one's
eye, or an even more complex activity, for example, a gesture to be
perceived synesthetically or an action pattern. Last but not least,
there can be a whole ritual composed of a series of such elements.
Crucial for the biological understanding of ritualization is the trans-
formation process itself.[16] If any new perceptible feature of bodily
equipment or movement, especially (but not necessarily) any sort of
utterance or expression of emotion, will prove more apt to provoke
a desirable reaction than a previous one, this will be an advantage
to the signaling individual. It may provide him with better chances
of procreation and thereby of the genetic transmission of the improved
form of signaling itself. Although this is a process of mutation and
selection rather than of teleology, a tendency of signaling improve-
ment can often be seen that follows some formal principles. Com-
municative acts can function only on the condition that they fulfill
two fundamental criteria: The addressee must be able both to rec-
ognize them and to distinguish one signal from the other. When,
for example, somebody raises his hand in greeting, the social inter-
action will only be free of stress if I recognize the gesture as a greet-
ing and not a menacing one. Competence is necessary on both sides:
articulation and interpretation of signals have to go together. Helpful
for the recognition of signals is their rather simple and unambigu-
ous structure. Movements, colors, forms, or sounds must be easily

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[14] See, e.g., W.J. Smith, "Ritual and the Ethology of Communicating", D'Aquili,
Laughlin Jr. and McManus 1979, 51–79.
[15] For two prominent examples of non-biological theories of ritualization, see Bell
1992, 88–91; Humphrey and Laidlaw 1994, passim.
[16] For more details (and references) see Baudy 1998, 72–85.

identifiable as a signal if it is to provoke, when repeated, every time the same reaction. For that reason it must be sure that it does not 'fade' into the background. Well perceptible are signals when it is improbable that they occur in the given surrounding by accident. That is why they often have regular forms: spectral colors, clear sounds, symmetry, and rhythmically repeated movements are the favorite strategies. There is a tendency to formalization: a ritualized cry must not be louder than another one, but it will normally have a fixed form. Another mechanism of ritualization should also be mentioned here, because it is often seen in cultural contexts. It is the principle of exaggeration. To make sure that the signal arrives at its destination, it is styled in a more impressive manner than the expression of an emotion itself would normally require. Bodily features like raised hair or accentuated movement patterns follow this way.

Because biology deals with innate behavior patterns, another kind of misunderstanding often occurs. Many of those who are interested in some cultural form of ritualization reject the ethological view, arguing that there is an unbridgeable gap between animal behavior patterns (all of which are supposedly rigid and innate) and humans' ability to elaborate their rituals in a playful, inventive way.[17] This dichotomy is wrong for two reasons: Neither were Huxley's water birds behaving like machines nor are humans totally lacking in innate patterns. These are not restricted to the realm of necessary or useful bodily actions, but are the 'basics' of human communicative and social abilities as well.[18] No child can easily survive without crying and smiling.[19] Like our relatives, the grebes, we develop, in addition, our private rituals.[20] And we are not the only vertebrates who are heirs of a cultural tradition.[21] Just this crossover of behavior patterns owed to phylogeny, ontogeny, or cultural transmission is very

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[17] E.g., Werlen 1984, 70–72; Dartiguenave 2001.

[18] For a more detailed discussion see D. Baudy, "Biologie der Religion? Riten-bildung zwischen 'Natur' und 'Kultur'", B. Kleeberg, S. Metzger, W. Rapp, and T. Walter (eds), *Die List der Gene. Strategeme eines neuen Menschen* (Literatur und Anthropologie 11; Tübingen, 2001), 189–203.

[19] See I. Eibl-Eibesfeldt, *Die Biologie des menschlichen Verhaltens. Grundriß der Humanethologie* (München, 1984; 3rd rev. and enlarged ed., reprinted 1997), 260–279.

[20] For individual variations in behavior see Huxley, *Courtship Habits* (above, n. 1), passim.

[21] See, e.g., F. de Waal, *The Ape and the Sushi Master. Cultural Reflections by a Primatologist* (New York, 2001).

interesting for many ethologists.[22] It is also worth being studied from the perspective of such cultural sciences as the science of religion.[23]

"A Discussion on Ritualization of Behavior in Animals and Man"

After some fifty years of ethological research that had led to fascinating results, it was once more Julian Huxley who achieved a turning point in the study of behavior. He organized an international conference in London, the contributions to which were published in 1966 under the title "A discussion on ritualization of behavior in animals and man".[24] Here we can name but a few of the most important participants: Ethologists such as Robert A. Hinde, Konrad Lorenz, or Desmond Morris took part as well as psychologists, for example Erik H. Erikson and Ronald D. Laing, the art historian Ernst H. Gombrich, or cultural anthropologists such as Edmund R. Leach, Meyer Fortes, and Victor W. Turner. The latter two were among those who discussed religious rituals.

The range of subjects was correspondingly widespread: social communication in Rhesus monkeys, the traditions of bird song, the ontogeny of ritualization in mother-child-relationships, the body-symbolism in the ritual of voodoo, dance, drama, play, ritualizations in industrial societies or international relations—just to give a few keywords. Maybe there has never been a discussion like this, stimulating the cooperation between so many different disciplines, transcending the common gap between 'natural' and 'cultural' sciences. Some of the subjects discussed have had a long career and still influence research in our day.

One of them was the fact that genetically founded bonding rituals may be replenished by other rituals that are developed between interaction partners during their lifetime. Such 'ontogenetic ritualization'[25] follows the same principles as the phylogenetic ritualization

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[22] Modern ethologists such as D. Morris, I. Eibl-Eibesfeldt, and W. Schiefenhövel do field research in different regions in the same way as cultural anthropologists do, but with an additional interest in universal behavior patterns.

[23] For ethological research with an ecological base see the works of Rappaport, esp. 1999. A first extensive example of an 'ethology of religion' is Burkert 1996; see also Grimes 1982, 36–39, and Driver 1991, 12–31.

[24] See Huxley (ed.) 1966.

[25] See Erikson 1977; see also Baudy 1998, 85–90 (with further references).

with one important difference: there is no genetic fixation. Everybody knows the little rituals practiced between parents and children, but also between adults. Part of them result from a private process, formalizing bonding acts to repetitive interactive behavior. The greater part of such rituals, however, is not the result of individual invention but belongs to the cultural heir. The preponderance of this aspect of human behavior is evident. It was the ethologist Konrad Lorenz who first compared in a convincing manner the "evolution of ritualization in the biological and cultural spheres".[26] There is a clear analogy between both processes. The formal development is just the same. Cultural ritualization follows principles that correspond to biological ritualization. The manner of formalization and the 'selection pressure' of communication are the same. But cultural change deals with the ontogenetic acquisition of behavior patterns and their transmission from one generation to the next not by genetic heredity but by socialization.

Classics and Biology

Within the cultural sciences, the concept of ritualization was first used in an extensive way by the classicist Walter Burkert.[27] He was influenced by the theories of Konrad Lorenz.[28] From the beginnings of his trans-disciplinary work in the fields of classics and biology, he was interested in mythology as well as in rituals. Using the ethological notion of ritualization, he analyzed from the 1970s onwards the transformations of certain literary and ritual patterns, including more recently still other biological disciplines, especially sociobiology. His book *Creation of the Sacred* from 1996 deals, as the subtitle indicates, with the *Tracks of Biology in Early Religions*[29] and can be read

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[26] This was the title of his contribution to the "Discussionon on ritualization" (= Huxley 1966, 273–284). See already Lorenz, *Das sogenannte Böse* (see above, n. 12), chapter 5, and, in particular, his *Die Rückseite des Spiegels. Versuch einer Naturgeschichte menschlichen Erkennens* (1973; München, 1977); English translation: *Behind the Mirror: A Search for a Natural History of Human Knowledge* (London, 1977), chapters X 5 and X 6. For more details see Baudy 1998, 90–92.

[27] See Burkert 1972, 31–38.

[28] See Burkert 2002, 6–7.

[29] See above, n. 23.

as a contribution to an ethology of religion. As a classicist, Burkert
begins his research by examining mostly literary sources. Looking
for inter-textual relations, he arrives next at the oriental surround-
ings of his academic mainland, which is Ancient Greece. But there
are patterns that are far more widespread, rituals as well as tales.
They stimulated Burkert's special interest. To explain them, he devel-
oped his ethologically rooted concept of 'action programs'.[30] It is not
intended to grasp rituals and myths as 'natural' products. Burkert
takes them clearly as cultural creations. But he examines how bio-
logical dispositions on the one hand and the acquisition of behavior
patterns by individual learning or social tradition on the other are
interwoven. Rituals and myths use our phylogenetically acquired
behavior patterns as building blocks. That is why we are able to
deduce gestures, images, and action patterns ethologically. At the
same time, they are strategies to manage problems resulting from
the 'facts of life'.[31] Insofar as the *condicio humana* is the same for all
human beings, there are comparable problems all over the world,
which is one reason for a structural similarity of action patterns,
tales, and religious institutions in spite of obvious cultural differences.
That leads Burkert finally to the question of how to explain the evi-
dent ubiquity of religion in a biological framework. But to discuss
that would go far beyond our current topic.[32]

Ritual as Interaction and Communication

To come back to the ethological theorizing of rituals in a narrower
sense, we could ask ourselves what we will gain if we follow the sug-
gestions from the extraordinary conference in London fifty years ago
and do research at the point where biology and cultural sciences
meet at the core of human studies. As an immediate result of the
ethological concept of ritualization, we first get a clarification of the
term 'ritual' which might be helpful in a situation where 'definitions'
are proliferating to such an extent that many scholars prefer to ignore

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[30] Burkert 1996, 63–67 with references to his earlier works.
[31] Burkert 1996, 75.
[32] Burkert 2002, 9, states: "in letzter Konsequenz steht eine evolutionäre Anthro-
pologie ins Haus."

what has already been advanced and invent their own definition instead. If we take ritual as a sort of more or less formalized repetitive behavior, possessing communicative (and we could add: interactive and performative) meaning, we are able to make a distinction between this and standardized useful actions (that is, habits or routines) on the one hand and pathological stereotypes (such as repetition compulsion) on the other.

So far it is still irrelevant whether we are talking about the grebe's courtship ceremonies or a holy wedding.[33] Rituals are per se interaction rituals, to which sometimes a religious dimension is added. To give an example: Kissing is an everyday bonding ritual, used at certain occasions like greeting between relatives, friends, and in some traditions also between politicians. It may be more or less formalized, and if you come to a foreign country where you do not know the rules, you can get into trouble. What is the right way to do it? Kissing the lips, the cheeks? Which cheek first, twice, or thrice? The situation changes once more if you are visiting a Christian church at Easter. The formalized fraternal kiss, exchanged between the participants of the service, is invested with meaning that goes far beyond the significance of the everyday ritual. It is laden with many features that derive from the ongoing ritual context and the accompanying mythology. Besides such ritualized social gestures, many religious rituals include stylized useful actions. If somebody is planting rice, for example, he will probably repeat this act always in the same way. Many working gestures are even formalized to a certain degree, eventually done in a rhythmic way. But nevertheless we should call them not rituals but routines as long as they are done for a certain practical purpose. But if—to follow our example—the Japanese emperor is planting rice during the ceremonies of his inauguration, this act is embedded in a polyvalent meaning structure. Ritualizing an everyday action often implies formal changes in the way described above: stylization and exaggeration, perhaps accompanied by some sort of adornment, help to mark the difference between usual and symbolic action. Accompanying prayer and myth-telling invest the gestures with additional meanings. The different levels of communication mutually open a wide range of interpretations.[34]

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[33] See Stolz 1997.

[34] See F. Stolz, "Hierarchien der Darstellungsebenen religiöser Botschaft", H. Zinser (ed.), *Religionswissenschaft. Eine Einführung* (Berlin, 1988), 55–72. F. Stolz, "Effekt und

To stress once more the formal aspects: What makes the etho-
logical definition of ritualization a working definition for ritual studies
is its complexity. From its beginnings it includes movement patterns
as well as vocal utterances, bodily features, and all sorts of acces-
sories. We find them in a religious ritual as well as in others: colors,
sounds, smells, the whole activity pattern itself, accompanying speech
acts, the furnishing of the cultic room, and the vesting of the par-
ticipants. Every ritual is a multi-media performance. In analyzing
this, ethology meets—besides the historical and philological disciplines
dealing with the special cultural tradition in question—semiotics[35]
and religious aesthetics.[36]

The biological view is a genetic one. To analyze the actual appear-
ance of a ritual means to examine how it could come into being.
How did the gesture in question or any other feature look before?
Which existing phenomenon was formalized, stylized, exaggerated in
order to achieve the given results? Many symbols that at first sight
seem rather bizarre may be analyzed as developments from a pre-
vious form, whether they be more refined or more frightening or in
any other way more impressive.

In a religious context we often find requisites belonging to older
technologies, which are no longer in use in 'normal' life: for exam-
ple, bronze knives in Roman cults. Such 'curious' things happen in
genetic ritualizations, too. This is one more hint that the symbolic
meaning of things that play a role in a ritual is more important than
their utility value.

Performativity

The notion of communication used by ethologists (and myself) is a
rather general one. It is not restricted to speech, but includes all
sorts of non-verbal communication.[37] It contains several aspects, not

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Kommunikation. Handlung im Verhältnis zu anderen Kodierungsformen von
Religion", H. Tyrell, V. Krech, and H. Knoblauch (eds), *Religion als Kommunikation*
(Würzburg, 1998), 301–322.
    [35] See T.A. Sebeok and J. Hoffmeyer (eds), *Biosemiotica* (Semiotica 127; Berlin
1999). See also Wiedenmann 1991.
    [36] See H. Cancik and H. Mohr, "Religionsästhetik", *Handbuch religionswissenschaftlicher
Grundbegriffe* 1 (1988), 121–156.
    [37] See J.W. Bradbury and S.L. Vehrencamp, *Principles of Animal Communication*

only the transmission of information. Admittedly, every act or expression of social beings can tell us something about their actual state and what they supposedly will do next. The act may imply some teaching through the ritual insofar as it stages stories about the beginning of the world or the invention of the celebrated institution, but this is not necessarily so. That performativity is at least an implicit feature of ritual behavior has been seen since Huxley's earliest research. From Wittgenstein's later years on, it came to be a subject of analytical philosophy just about the time of Huxley's symposium. Austin's well-known work "How to do things with words"[38] aimed at explaining speech acts: If I answer, for example, the priest's question in a wedding ceremony affirmatively, I do not only inform him and my partner and all spectators that I want to marry this person named in the priest's question, but I change my status—on the condition that the corresponding performative speech acts during the ceremony are suitable. Insofar as ritual is usually interactive,[39] ritual communication has nearly always a performative sense. This idea, which is so important for the current academic discussion, was developed by Victor W. Turner just after he had encountered the concept of ritualization. Unlike some actual theorists, I would never use the terms 'communication' and 'performance' as opposites; instead, I understand by the former a more general term in which the latter may be—and in ritual very often is—included.[40]

Participants and Addressees

A communication process in a religious ritual proceeds on several levels at the same time: first, there is some interaction between those who are immediately concerned, for example, the wedding couple or those who perform a ritual play. There are relations between the persons attending the cult among themselves and at the same time

(Sunderland, 1998). The fascinating book by S.F. Sager, *Verbales Verhalten. Eine semiotische Studie zur linguistischen Ethologie* (Probleme der Semiotik 17; Tübingen, 1995) provides an ethological view on human speech.

[38] J.L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (Oxford, 1962). See Hollywood 2002, 101–110.

[39] Intellectual rituals—as treated in B. Lang (ed.), *Das tanzende Wort. Intellektuelle Rituale im Religionsvergleich* (München, 1984)—presuppose at least an imaginative interaction partner.

[40] See V.W. Turner 1975 and, more recently, Bird 1995.

between them and the professionals, for example, the priests. There may also be a differentiation—which may nevertheless imply some cooperation—between participants and any sort of public. That is not only a common feature of modern folklore, where local religious events are staged so as to entertain tourists.[41] Since ancient times, rituals may be directed towards neighbors or enemies who are meant to be frightened, impressed, appeased, or otherwise affected.[42]

Typically, religious rituals deal even with virtual addressees: gods, demons, spirits of the dead, and other types of imaginary interaction partners. Human beings deal with them by means of a wide range of interaction strategies they have at their disposal. The problem is that virtual beings do not react correspondingly. If somebody asks God for something, how can he be sure that his spiritual partner hears him? A special praying posture, formalized speaking, a certain dress, and similar measures may help to solve the problem insofar as their correct observance strengthens the confidence of the faithful. Will God accept the sacrifice? The priest tries to read it in the intestines or by interpretation of the fire's smoke, which has eventually been intensified by the addition of fragrances. More than any others, religious rituals tend to be repeated, formalized, stylized, adorned, and sometimes to such a degree that observers could ask themselves whether they are perhaps meaningless. But these features are understandable if we take into account the peculiar difficulties of communication just mentioned. Religious behavior is an attempt to produce a stable social bond between human beings and their imagined interaction partners by practicing rituals. Their elaboration and luxurious equipment are important for the image of the religious community, but even more so in order to convince the believers that they reach their addressees, even if there is no 'real' answer.

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[41] See H. Moser, "Vom Folklorismus in unserer Zeit", *Zeitschrift für Volkskunde* 58 (1962), 177–209. C. Calame, "Une danse sacrée balinaise entre deux référents culturels", *Scritti in memoria di Angelo Brelich* (Religioni e civiltà 3; Bari, 1982), 71–85.

[42] For the ancient practice see I.C. Rutherford, "Theoria", *Der Neue Pauly* 12/1 (2002), 398–400. For an interesting investigation of the situation in a modern plural society see Baumann 1992.

Towards an Ethological 'Grammar' of Religious Behavior

Every gesture has meanings and intentions that it intends to pro-
voke in the addressees—the fellow celebrants as well as the gods—
corresponding moods and dispositions for acting. Each of the typical
elements of ritual sequences normally carries a certain signal value.
An ethological dictionary of human social behavior could enable us
to deduce them partly phylogenetically, partly ontogenetically.[43] These
'lexemes of acting' consist of many different gestures signaling social
basics like greeting, submission, and threat, but also elementary forms
of care or nursing, for example, washing or feeding of religious
images. The way in which somebody bows before an altar, raises
his hands for prayer, anoints a boundary stone, varies not only from
culture to culture but also from group to group. Nevertheless, the
gestures of expression used in specific situations often, and even nor-
mally, have a common anthropological basis. Without this it would
be much more difficult to compare different phenomena with a view
to analyzing historical developments or regional variations.

These ritual elements, which I call 'lexemes', are mostly consti-
tuents of a greater action pattern that is itself included as a part of
a more complex entity. These patterns in turn are to be deduced
from certain functional structures. They derive, for example, from
hierarchy, care of the brood, or territory behavior. In complex rituals[44]
they are normally combined. To give an example: Initiation rituals
deal with the disbanding of the parent-child-relationship and at the
same time with the youth's entrance into the hierarchical system of
society. Correspondingly, they use different patterns. But that is by
far not everything: Ritualized scenes from working life, which is
affected by status change, are integrated as well as replenished by
anticipating symbolizations of sexuality, birth, and child-rearing.

Such an ethological 'grammar' of religious behavior could provide
a foundation for attempts by folklorists or anthropologists to classify
ritual patterns. This could provide the starting point for the devel-
opment of a religious ethology: intercultural comparison shows that
there are more or less universal ritual structures. Gift exchange,

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[43] D. Morris, *Gestures. Their Origins and Distribution* (New York, 1979) and *Bodywatching.
A Field Guide to the Human Species* (London, 1985).
[44] B. Gladigow, "Ritual, komplexes", *Handbuch religionswissenschaftlicher Grundbegriffe*
4 (1998), 458–460.

sacrifice, demanding, and the like, circambulation of a certain object
(be this a field, a temple, or a bride) are some of them. The inves-
tigation of the prevailing local and historical ritualization processes
enables us to explain both: the anthropologically rooted basic pat-
tern and the actual shape owed to tradition. To avoid misunder-
standings: to be interested in common ritual structures does not
exclude other perspectives, for example, the playful elements that
belong to so many complex rituals.

   All over the world human beings give a ritually defined structure
to their habitat, be that their village or the cosmos as a whole. They
are creating time insofar as they mark ruptures (and cope with them)
by annual calendarical festivities or life-crisis rituals. Cultic structures
constitute social organizations. One single academic discipline will
never be able to analyze the fact that and the ways in which human
beings do this. To proceed with ritual studies means to do it in a
combined way, historically as well as systematically, which is quite
impossible without theorizing. An ethological basis could help to clar-
ify and to achieve an integration of the different perspectives. Every
effort in this direction makes strides in diminishing the prejudices on
both sides, so that one day 'religion', far off though it may be, will
no longer be regarded as an explosive issue by biologists and 'nature'
as a horrific scene by cultural scientists.

GENDER

Rosalind C. Morris

Occult Questions: Origins of a Problematic

Bronislaw Malinowski famously described magic as the trinity of spell, rite, and the condition of the performer. By spell, he meant the verbalized formula comprised of sound elements, commands, and mythical allusions. Rite, in his analysis, indicated the technique—mimetic, contagious, prognosticating, or merely expressive—by which the spell was delivered. Deeply influenced by the rise of psychoanalysis, Malinowski privileged the question of expression. Yet, despite emphasizing the affective state of the sorcerer, and the expressive function of ritual (especially when compared to religion, which he defined in relatively functional terms), Malinowski ultimately gave the spell pride of place in his definition. The "feature in common" to be discerned in every magical rite was, for him, "the force of magic, its virtue, [which] must always be conveyed to the charmed objects." Such a force was "the power contained in the spell . . . that part of magic which is occult, handed over in magical filiation, known only to the practitioner." This force, binding human and object, was "the core of the magical performance".[1]

Malinowski's reading of the necessarily secretive nature of magical practice, a reading that resonates strongly with much contemporary anthropological theory on the topic, nonetheless recognized a dialectical relation between secrecy and publicity. It was, indeed, on the ground of that dialectic that an analogous dialectic between individual and society could be staged, in his analysis. Writing that "publicity is the indispensable technique of religious revelation in primitive communities", Malinowski suggested that "a public *mise en scène* of dogma and collective enunciation" was necessary for both the collectivity or sociality of action and belief, and the historical

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[1] B. Malinowski, "Magic, Science and Religion" (1925), *Magic, Science and Religion and Other Essays* (New York, 1948), 17–92, here 73.

transmissibility of sacred knowledges[2]—and hence of all magico-religious phenomena. However, insofar as the authenticity and continuity of traditions and knowledges are always vulnerable to forgetting or disruption, the task of preservation is often delegated to special institutions and communities, many of which safeguard public knowledges precisely by secreting them. Thus, the relationship between ritual and religion turned, for Malinowski, on the reversible relationship between secrecy and publicity, this latter opposition corresponding to a difference between the arts of memory (recitation) and the practices of reading (interpretation).

It is not incidental that Malinowski's first and perhaps most compelling attempt to exemplify the theory of a tripartite division between magic, science, and religion, led him to contemplate rites of initiation. In the influential essay, "Magic, Science and Religion", he remarks that such rites serve to publicize the biological transformation of an individual, thereby rendering it social, and, on the basis of such publicization, to make it available for other, often metaphysical signification. Hence for Malinowski, the rite is the "consummation of the act", but it is also its own apotheosis: the form by which individuals are inserted into a transcendental order.[3] In its strongest formulation, Malinowski's argument implies that ritual is the means by which the material fact of biological difference is organized into limited categories, and also by which individuals are made to feel those categories as material realities. It thereby establishes ritual as a foundational means for producing gender, for gender is the structuring principle by which physiological difference is categorized and rendered socially significant.

It is therefore somewhat ironic that Malinowski's theoretical description of the initiation in this essay remains gender-neutral—despite the fact that much of his ethnographic writing about Trobriand Island society was devoted to a consideration of sexuality. In its opening theoretical reflections, there is no substantial effort to distinguish the functions of ritual for girls or boys, women or men—despite the fact that initiation ceremonies are generically associated by anthropologists with sexual differentiation, and with the rendering of subjects available for marriage. Indeed, Malinowiski's writings are symptomatic of a general tension within theories of ritual, which

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[2] Malinowski, "Magic, Science and Religion", 66–67.
[3] Malinowski, "Magic, Science and Religion", 40.

invariably make recourse to initiation rites when attempting to comprehend the relationship between ritual and gender, but which frequently evacuate references to gender or sexual difference when the initiation rite is being read abstractly, as the exemplification of all life-cycle ritual.

Such was the case with Arnold van Gennep's famously structural formulation of 'rites de passage', those rites marking the transition in a person's social status. Van Gennep described such rites in architectonic metaphors as a kind of movement from one state to another, via the traversal of a threshold. In this analysis, ritual both constitutes that threshold and assumes it, acting as a transformative conveyer and a switch point between planes of the cultural universe: childhood and adulthood, boyhood and manhood, or girlhood and womanhood, unmarried and married, sick and well, living and dead, etc. Van Gennep's insight was to recognize that the conveyance is doubled. It entails the death of the individual in and for the first state of being, and the birth of the individual in and for a new state of being. Thus, for example, a child does not merely become an adult; life-cycle rites require that he or she die as a child and subsequently be born as an adult. They are dramatic, publicly oriented events that mark time in meaningful ways. It was this emphasis on drama, or the theatricality of ritual, that attracted the attention of Victor Turner.

Turner questioned not merely the function of ritual in organizing and facilitating social change within a relatively stable social structure, but he also questioned the role of each moment in the dramaturgy of ritual. And, although his orientation retained a strong normative drive, he also attempted to understand how and to what extent ritual is associated with forms of alternative sociality, or even 'anti-structure'. In readings of van Gennep's theory based on his own experience and observations of initiation and healing rites among the Ndembu, in Zambia, Victor Turner was moved to elaborate the notion of the threshold and to posit it as a state unto itself. He shared van Gennep's scheme for describing this processual structure: a) separation (*séparation*), b) transition (*marge*), and c) incorporation (*agrégation*). However, he drew considerably more attention to the marginal or liminal state, which was, in Turner's analysis, an ambiguous one, full of dangers but also fecund with possibility. Observing Ndembu practice, Turner noted that one of the definitive attributes of liminality is the attenuation or denegration of hierarchy: "liminality

is frequently likened to death, to being in the womb, to invisibility, to darkness, to bisexuality, to the wilderness, and to an eclipse of the sun or moon"[4] by Ndembu subjects. Rites requiring the submersion of individuals in such a state are often occasions on which power is actually assigned to the weak, or at least to the value of non-hierarchy.

In an ironic echoing of nineteenth century social theory, and especially Durkheim's theory of religion—which read religion as the projection of social order—Turner saw in the Ndembu ceremonies a recognition of the abstract power of the social in its purest form: that of the *communitas*. At the same time, he posited that the ritualization of this force was inversely linked to the formalization of hierarchy in everyday life. The society with the most elaborated performances of what he termed liminal "anti-structure" was, for him, possibly also the most anti-individualist society in other contexts.[5] In fact, at the end of his classic lecture on "Liminality and Communitas"[6] he raises the specter of a context in which class and gender equality is ritualized only to be repudiated later by a generalized despotism.

Theme and Structure: The Double Burden of Sex

One ought not overlook the (logical) categorical irregularity of the list that Turner conjures to describe liminality. For, of all the terms he uses, only one—sexuality—refers to a dimension of lived social experience. The other terms refer to extra-social phenomena at the absolute limit of human existence: eclipses, death, wilderness. In contrast, bisexuality, or sexual ambiguity, in this lexicon, designates something radically uncommon (but not unknown), and the ritual requirements of liminality—either sexual continence or sexual community—are, in Turner's reading, the liquidations of normative sexual relations between adult individuals, namely marital relations. They are, thus, the sign of anti-sociality rather than extra-sociality: of connection without relation, of contact without intimacy—but not absolute isolation.

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[4] Turner 1969, 95.
[5] Turner 1969, 128–130.
[6] Turner 1969, 94–130.

Turner's work in many ways exemplifies a habit in anthropological theories of ritual, one that feminists have often observed as a certain doubling of the discourses about gender and ritual. Not only is life-cycle ritual theorized in the generalized image of the initiation ceremony, which can be summarized as the crossing of a boundary, but the narration of both male and female sexualization in the mythic traditions of the West—whence comes anthropology—requires that the threshold itself be represented as feminine. As Teresa de Lauretis describes it, in her rereading of the myth complexes derived from the 'Enigma of the Sphynx', this figured femininity must be traversed, 'crossed' or 'passed through' in order for sexual difference to be fully achieved in an adult mode.[7] Indeed, initiation rites in which the production of adult masculinity requires more than mere maturation and its public recognition are ubiquitous phenomena. Often, they require the absolute stripping of maleness, and, occasionally, the assumption of sexual attributes more frequently associated with femininity, before the assumption of mature male identity and its prerogatives can be achieved. In circumstances as distant as the novitiate of Thai Theravada Buddhists,[8] or the initiation of Samba male youths, transformation can be seen to entail radical effeminization as part of the production of mature masculinity. Turner described this temporary effeminate state as anti-structural, but he does not reflect on the structuralist presuppositions that make this equation possible, namely those in which femininity is itself being construed as the other of cultured masculine maturity. Indeed, many structuralists have hypothesized that femininity is universally (albeit culturally) aligned with nature in opposition to masculinity, and also that rites of initiation are the theatrical forms through which that opposition is remarked for and by individuals.

It is, of course, not a foregone conclusion that the threshold or transition in life-cycle ritual will be represented as feminine in all cultural contexts or all languages. Nor is it true that all people imagine and mark the transformations accompanying physical maturity as those that are constitutive of sexual difference. In some contexts,

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[7] T. de Lauretis, "Desire in Narrative", *Alice Doesn't: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema* (Bloomington, 1984), 103–157, here 118–119.

[8] See Ch.F. Keyes, "Ambiguous Gender. Male Initiation in a Northern Thai Buddhist Society", C. Walker Bynum, S. Harrell and P. Richman (eds), *Gender and Religion. On the Complexity of Symbols* (Boston, 1986), 66–96.

gender is assigned at birth. In others, it is assumed gradually. In some contexts, sexual identity and gendered roles are always corre-late. In others, the two are distinct—individuals thought to be boys or girls can perform the roles of either gender, or are required to play feminine roles for particular periods of time. Some societies require particular sexual behavior from people of different genders; in others, this behavior is more variable or contingent upon age and social status. And to make matters more complex yet, not all behav-iors always signify the same way.

Indeed, much recent work in the anthropological study of ritual has rejected a simple emphasis on life-cycle events in the theoriza-tion of ritual, and many have suggested that the very notion of rit-ual needs to be rethought. For our purposes, we might distinguish three distinct and dominant threads among contemporary theoreti-cal approaches to ritual, all of them deeply concerned to understand how this category might be involved in the production and distrib-ution of social power. The first concerns the everyday constitution of gender as sexual difference, and the naturalization of the former in the language of the latter. Influenced by linguistic pragmatics, this approach focuses on the sense of repetition and citation that is secreted within the English term, ritual, and extends the concept of ritual to include not only formally theatricalized rites, in Malinowski's sense, but also daily practices (*sans* spell) that are constitutive of social identity—such as dress, comportment, somatic orientation, and the like. These are practices in which formal continuity is marked but also naturalized to the extent that only departures from normative practice, or failures, are noticeable to participants and other mem-bers of the community.

The second line of thought emphasizes a resistant potential within both formally public and more private daily ritualizations. Although its contemporary proponents owe much to the radical political phi-losophy of Antonio Gramsci, anticipations of this approach can be discerned in Victor Turner's work on pilgrimage,[9] and even in the writings of Émile Durkheim, who attributed to religion, and espe-cially totemic religion, an imaginative dimension that "lends itself . . . to

[9] See V.W. Turner and E.L.B. Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture. Anthropological Perspectives* (New York, 1978).

the free creations of the mind".[10] Here, particular salience is attached to questions of interpretive authority and the possibility that all signs can bear a multiplicity of interpretations: hence, that all rites (as those events which are defined by a limited number of signs, as Marcel Mauss suggested of all magic)[11] can generate a multiplicity of effects, some of which will be differently legible according to the position one occupied in the social (and thus, gendered) universe.

The third and final trajectory within recent anthropological thought on ritual is broadly historicist. Its advocates typically trace both the appearance and the politically motivated deployments of the category, 'ritual', across time. Analyses framed from within this perspective are particularly attentive to the question of translation and are often based on research in colonial archives. They also tend to highlight the ways in which nativist or culturalist movements often work to restore or, indeed, to establish new forms of patriarchal authority and gender asymmetry in the name of tradition. In their most radical enunciations, such analyses demand an ethicized and politicized reflection upon the possible forms of complicity between anthropology and newly culturalized kinds of authoritarianism.

Rituals of Sexualization and the Dailiness of Gender

Van Gennep made the brilliant observation that initiation rites work by overcoming the enormous chasm between biological puberty and what he termed 'social puberty'. In some instances, he observed, social puberty precedes biological puberty, in other cases it follows it.[12] He also believed that maleness was more difficult to assert than femaleness because the signs of maturation were not as visible on the male body as on the female. Accordingly, he suggested, the relative severity and complexity of rites associated with an emergent manhood (whether among the Nuer in the Sudan or the Arunta in

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[10] É. Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (1912), trans. J.W. Swain (New York, 1965), 426.

[11] See M. Mauss, *A General Theory of Magic* (1902–1903), trans. R. Brain (New York, 1972).

[12] A. van Gennep, *Rites of Passage* (1909), trans. M.B. Vizedom and G.L. Caffee (Chicago, 1960), 66.

Australia) constitutes an exemplary compensation for the paucity of biological markers. Ritual was, thus, almost supplementary in status, a belated corrective to an absence in nature, and not a mere representation of what is already given. But van Gennep also made a more radical assertion, namely that these rites do not so much mark puberty as they produce sexuality, removing people from an asexual state and birthing them as either male or female sexual subjects, who can then enter into legitimate sexual and especially reproductive relations with other adults. In this respect, his work was significantly at odds with the dominant thought of the time, whether psychoanalytic or anthropological. Yet, in retrospect, van Gennep's argument can be seen to anticipate many, if not all of those discussions which take as their starting point the distinction between physiological difference and social status, sex and gender.

Many contemporary scholars have taken this fundamental insight and elaborated it by examining the range of repetitive acts and gestures by which the difference between sex and gender is produced and reproduced in given societies. They attend not only to the theatrical moments of initiation rites, but also to processes of 'ritualization' by which bodies and persons are cultivated so as to become recognizably encoded as (socially) gendered.[13] Some of these efforts draw on Marcel Mauss's early work and his notion of 'techniques of the body' (i.e., those largely unremarked gestures whose interruption is felt as disorienting)[14] but many of them also rely on more recent versions of what Sherry Ortner, following Pierre Bourdieu, terms practice theory.[15]

In his monumental study of Kabyle life, Bourdieu noted the relationship between domestic architectures, styles of ritual, forms of bodily comportment, and social order, arguing that social and personal identities are produced through gestures and practices which are habitual—and unconscious—and externally objectified in the built forms of the environment.[16] These practical knowledges of how to

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[13] Bell 1992.

[14] M. Mauss, "Techniques of the Body" (1936), trans. B. Brewster, *Economy and Society* 2 (1973), 70–88.

[15] S.B. Ortner, "Theory in Anthropology since the Sixties", *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 26 (1984), 126–166.

[16] P. Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (1972), trans. R. Nice (Cambridge Studies in Social Anthropology 16; Cambridge, 1977).

perform even the most mundane tasks, such as sitting in a manner that is deemed normatively masculine or feminine, are, in Bourdieu's analysis, the foundation of complex social identities. Moreover, they achieve their unconscious status, becoming akin to 'second nature', through constant and un-remarked repetition. In fact, Bourdieu's notion of *habitus*, the environmental schema by which persons are brought into their identities, cannot become subject to reflection without being distorted. Indeed, he suggests that reflection on habitual knowledge makes that knowledge virtually unusable, and similarly, truly habitual knowledge remains inarticulate, unable to speak itself even to the inquisitive anthropologist.

Two aspects of Bourdieu's theory are important for any analysis of gender. The first has to do with the seeming opposition between rite and ritualized knowledge in his schema, the former being elaborately self-conscious even when private, the latter being unconscious but publicly observable. Although 'rite' in this binary analysis presumes a relative stability in the identity of persons (according to their status as boys or girls, men or women), and although 'ritualization' suggests the necessity for a constant production of that same identity, there are interesting overlaps. In both cases, a normative force is presumed, one that becomes most visible in moments of failure: when a rite fails to achieve its desired ends or someone performs it incorrectly, and when someone behaves in a way that appears either overly self-conscious or simply unexpected. Moreover, successful performance, in both cases, tends to entail the re-production of apparently traditional forms, even when it allows for variation. However, the second aspect of Bourdieu's theory to merit consideration is the degree to which it assumes a homology between space and being, one that is largely reflective of those social organizations in which there is a strong division of space and social labor between the genders.

Critics of Bourdieu have accused him of positing a merely tautological relationship between space and being. People act in ways that produce objective schemas, and then those schemas cultivate people who act in ways that objectify and reproduce those self-same schemas. For those attentive to the problem of history, (at least) two question assert themselves: How shall we understand the fact that change occurs, and that many people can and do act in ways that do not fully conform to local ideals? And, how can we understand those contexts in which there is a relative demand made upon women or

men to conform to gender ideals (i.e., there are contexts where failure to perform ideal femininity is a graver social sin than is a failure to enact ideal masculinity, and vice versa)? Such questions are significant in all those contexts where the relative status of men and women has changed, as well as in those instances where the assignment of gendered identity is called into question.

As already suggested, Victor Turner imagined that rites themselves can be sources of creativity and change, by virtue of the fact that, in liminal moments, when hierarchies have been overturned and the roles of the social game suspended, an 'imaginative recombination of elements [or signs]' from the field of ideas becomes possible. Thus, paupers who have become kings in carnivals may recall the thrill of their empowerment, and seek it later in non-ritual environments. Similarly, men or women who have momentarily assumed the roles of another gender may discover and carry forward new forms of bodily self-knowledge, new sexual desires, or new aspirations to gender equality or power long after the rite has terminated. More recently, anthropological theorists have turned their attention to the question of what propels individuals to attempt to enact ideals, and what possibilities lie in the gap between practice and ideal in the daily dramas by which people try, and fail, and try again, to achieve them.

In this context, the impact of performance theory and linguistic pragmatics on anthropological theories of ritual has been profound. In the shadow of Judith Butler's magisterial effort to rethink J.L. Austin's theory of performative speech acts (those forms of speech that actually bring about transformations in the world),[17] anthropologists have focused attention on the ways in which ritual acts of naming and name-calling produce different kinds of subjects, not simply because the institutionally authorized naming has identified them as of the 'female sex', as 'daughters of so-and-so', as 'brides' or as 'widows', for example, but because all performances fall short of the ideal. Hence, people must repeat, rehearse and enact their identities with some reference to a more perfect performance. They are, in short, required to constantly *become what they are* and to live with the knowledge of an existential inadequacy.

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[17] J. Butler, *Bodies that Matter. On the Discursive Limits of 'Sex'* (New York, 1993); J.L. Austin, *How to do Things With Words* (Cambridge, 1975). For a summary treatment of anthropological work undertaken with reference to performance theory, see R.C. Morris, "All Made Up: Performance Theory and the New Anthropology of Sex and Gender", *Annual Review of Anthropology* 24 (1995), 567–592.

This is true of all kinds of identities, but a special force attaches to this logic when gender is at issue. This is because gender usually constitutes the most primary form of non-reciprocal difference in a society, and hence the most primary structure of hierarchy. As the primary structure, it is also often accorded the status of nature, and hence, departures from its norms may be interpreted as threats to the very order of being. Rites may be (and often are) deployed to rectify perceived departures, or to stave off interruptions of the culturally natural order. They may also be mechanisms for isolating non-normative performances while extracting the potency of difference, and many writers have suggested that the relative predominance of sexually ambiguous individuals among the ranks of shamans, mediums and sorcerers (whether among Native North American groups or in Southeast Asian societies) is to be construed in this light. It should be noted here that gender is not always binary, and considerable anthropological research has recently been devoted to the delineation and understanding of those societies in which more than two genders seem to be operative. Arguments have been made for three, four and five genders in various contexts, a fact that demonstrates just how far van Gennep's insight about the difference between biological and social identities has come. In any case, both rites and ritualizations of gendered difference are often mechanisms by which hierarchy is produced or sustained.

Ritual and the Techniques of Resistance

It was the melancholic conclusion of much feminist anthropology in the seventies that, in all societies, the status of women is lower than that of men, despite enormous relative differences between those societies. Having said as much, the recognition of a universally, if relatively, low status for women was accompanied by a demand for new ways of thinking about women's possible power, especially in its relatively invisible manifestations, and attention was directed to the non-formal and especially domestic arenas in which women so often exercise influence, or control decision-making.[18] Not incidentally, such work frequently entailed the analysis of those very rites which had

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[18] See, e.g., R.R. Reiter (ed.), *Toward an Anthropology of Women* (New York, 1975); M.Z. Rosaldo and L. Lamphere (eds), *Women, Culture, and Society* (Stanford, 1974).

been associated with the production of gender hierarchy, especially those associated with female sexuality. Nonetheless, two distinct approaches can be discerned even within this relatively distinct body of literature. On the one hand are theorists who argue that the signs, practices and cultural norms adumbrated in ritual can be and are read contrarily by individuals, and particularly those in marginal or disempowered positions. On the other hand are those who see the rites themselves as theatrical forms for resisting other kinds of juridical and political orthodoxy, especially that embedded in the institutions of church and state in complex modern societies. And of course, there is considerable overlap between the two.

The first of these two trajectories is anchored in both Foucauldian and Gramscian philosophical principles, and emphasizes the fact that power saturates the entire social field and is embedded at the most fundamental level in language and the very constitution of reality. Hence, to the extent that there are competing interpretations of and explanations for a particular structure of power (such as that which underwrites the apartheid state and the dislocating economy of migrant labor in South Africa,[19] or that which requires women to be infibulated in order to maintain a constantly renewable virginal purity as the condition of their value in northern Sudan),[20] there is always the possibility for resistance. This resistance can only be materialized through the creative appropriation of signifying possibilities, and, in some readings at least, such possibilities are made exceptionally available during those rites which stage the dissolution of order. Zionist rites of the Tshidi, and possession rites among the Yoruba for example,[21] stage the eruption of a desexualized or polymorphously sexual potency, and if they ultimately appear to restore order through the invocation of masculine authority, they also constantly risk something else: a transformation or overturning of powers, which may support or sustain resistances implicit in other forms of bodily resistance, including those that entail the ritual 'terrorization' of colonial authorities through sexual display or the withholding of labor.[22]

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[19] See J. Comaroff, *Body of Power, Spirit of Resistance. The Culture and History of a South African People* (Chicago, 1985).

[20] See J. Boddy, *Wombs and Alien Spirits. Women, Men and the Ẓâr Cult in Northern Sudan* (Madison, 1989).

[21] See J.L. Matory, *Sex and the Empire that is no more. Gender and the Politics of Metaphor in Oyo Yoruba Religion* (Minneapolis, 1994).

[22] See Comaroff, *Body of Power, Spirit of Resistance*, 231–233.

If, however, the opposition between orthodox performance and doxic practice has as its analogue an opposition between power and resistance, the idea of ritual *as* resistance has yet to be considered. This notion is perhaps best understood in terms of its typical object, namely forms of religious practice which are represented by canonical and orthodox institutions as being relatively feminine, relatively unorthodox, and relatively ritualistic. Here, one finds examples of female spirit mediumship in contexts where it has been banned or disavowed,[23] or the kinds of ecstasy and therapeutic practice associated with women in milieux where religious authority is or has become the prerogative of men,[24] and a variety of anti-modern technologies of the occult, which subvert or interrupt the seemingly more rationalized economies of capitalist production.[25] In each of these instances, ritual has emerged as a field of discursive practice and as an idea arranged in counter-position to another mode of discursive practice. In all of these instances—whether of poor women claiming to be possessed by the spirits of Buddhist saints in a context that prohibits the ordination of women, or of young female factory workers overtaken by ecstasy and unable to work in a context that repudiates female sexuality and demands constant productivity—ritual is a category of accusation, rather than a locus of publicly legitimated authority and knowledge, as it was imagined to be for so many early theorists of ritual. In his *General Theory of Magic*, Marcel Mauss had, himself, argued that men claim magic but women are accused of it. His insight was not yet a historicized one, but its relevance for historical considerations is profound, and we will want to conclude with a brief reflection on how the question of ritual and gender is transformed when ritual itself is recognized not merely as a category of comparative religions or anthropology, but as a term in the arsenal of domination's language.

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[23] See I.M Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion. An Anthropological Study of Spirit Possession and Shamanis* (1971; Harmondsworth, 1989); A.L. Tsing, *In the Realm of the Diamond Queen. Marginality in an out-of-the-way Place* (Princeton, 1993); R.C. Morris, *In the Place of Origins. Modernity and its Mediums in Northern Thailand* (Durham, 2000); J.T. Siegel, "Curing Rights, Dreams, and Domestic Politics in a Sumatran Society", *Glyph* 3 (1978), 18–31.

[24] See Tsing, *In the Realm of the Diamond Queen.*

[25] See J. Comaroff and J.L. Comaroff, "Occult Economies and the Violence of Abstraction. Notes form the South African Postcolony", *American Ethnologist* 26 (1999), 279–303; H.L. Moore, *Magical Interpretations, Material Realities. Modernity, Witchcraft and the Occult in Postcolonial Africa* (New York, 2001); A. Ong, *Spirits of Resistance and Capitalist Discipline. Factory Women in Malaysia* (Albany, 1987).

Metatheories of Ritual, or The Violence of Language

In the end, the category of ritual remains almost as enigmatic as does that of gender. Like all anthropological categories, ritual is an analytic abstraction, one whose translation between languages and whose application across historical eras, demands scrutiny. In many languages there is no single term for ritual, and in many where it does exist it is never used except in a specified form. For example, where there are rites-for-bringing-rain, rites-for-remarking-the-birth-of-a-child, rites-for-removing-the-topknot-from-the-head-of-the-royal-infant, rites-to-seal-the-bond-of-husband-and-wife, or rites-for-allaying-the-souls-of-the-war-dead—there is no theory of ritual or ritualization. The use of the term in its generalized form is, in fact, largely an accomplishment of the post-Enlightenment disciplines and the colonial bureaucratic apparati by which European nations typologized non-Western social practices, and sought to identify those which needed reform or whose presence authorized the application of new regulatory and penal technologies. There is ample reason to believe that, within both Protestant traditions, such as those which guided English, Dutch and German colonialism, and Catholic traditions, such as those informing Spanish, Portuguese and French colonialism, ritual often functioned as the sign of an illegitimate excess. It became a term which named a formalism ungrounded in proper belief, but more importantly, it identified a completely obligatory structure. Insofar as post-Englightenment Christianity emphasized the virtue of voluntary belief, and insofar as freedom was the foundation for both faith (in both Catholic and Protestant traditions) and capitalist production, ritual signaled a limit and an obstacle.[26] Often, 'ritual' was construed and defined simply as mindlessly repetitive and hence meaningless (because intentionless) acts. This connotation not only continues to exercise a residual influence in colloquial English usages, but it has deeply affected anthropological theorizations.

Because the self-representations of capitalist-colonizers assumed that the economic and cultural logic of capital was one of utility and rationality, 'excess' of all sorts came under suspicion. The discourse

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[26] See T. Asad, "Anthropological Conceptions of Religion. Reflections on Geertz", *Man* 18 (1983), 237–259.

of ritual was often used as an alibi to criminalize local practices, severing some of them from the sphere of custom or tradition, even as it suggested that ritual was integrally linked to custom as its purveyor and, indeed, its most exalted theater. In fact, indigenous practices became subject to colonial law through a process that codified rites as mere instances of a general type: ritual. The colonial archives everywhere are full of elaborate compendia of ritual codes, many of them containing knowledges which had previously been the sacred property of specialists. Thus codified, ritual also became the sign of tradition, and in contexts where colonialism had effected a rupture in the being of local communities, proper enactment of rites increasingly came to require reference to these self-same colonial archives. The effect was self-reproducing. 'Ritual' thus severed became even more deeply associated with the values of historical continuity and even of authenticity. No longer subject to individual appropriation or the gradual modifications that emerge when techniques are transmitted between generations, codified rites of various sorts became ossified as ritual, and with the disappearance of hierarchies among rites, ritual acquired a generic and abstract (which is to say commodified) value.

The consequences of this practice have been profoundly ambivalent. In many places, revivalists could and did turn to both colonial documents and anthropological texts to find templates for practices which had otherwise been dessicated by the experience of colonization. Sometimes, the rote and alienated enactments of once common rites become the ground for fertile nativist movements that inaugurate new and vibrant or revivified traditions. In other cases, shorn of the daily ritualizations (habits) that constituted the fabric of mundane cultural existence, these theatricalized events impose extreme and historically disjunctive demands upon newly modern subjects. Sometimes ritual revival is the idiom within which the relative gender equality of previous eras is reasserted, while in other instances, such movements authorize the establishment or restoration of violent patriarchal hierarchies. In some parts of southern Africa, for example, ritualized witch-finding and accusations of improper occult practice is directed mainly at women and even more specifically at elderly women whose productivity has been called into question. In this case the demand for total productivity as well as new disparaties in wealth that are the direct consequence of a migrant labor economy

are enmeshed with the resentment which young men may feel in the face of their radical disempowerment.[27] More recently, the demand for a re-establishment of male initiation rites and the ritualized performance of virginity by females has emerged in some southern African ethnic groups as a partial response to an AIDS panic.

There is, then, no a priori tendency within ritual toward structural integration or social stability. Catherine Bell's argument for the distinction between 'ritual' and 'ritualization'[28] has the merit of permitting a recognition of the ways in which the category of ritual, itself an historical fabrication, can be deployed in a variety of ways, in tandem with various local and translocal formations of power, in favor or in opposition to a particular ordering of gender. It permits, for example, the recognition that a woman's act of sati in late colonial India can be referred to as either crime or as ritual,[29] but that the designation of that act as ritual does not immunize her against charges of criminality, for the English colonial apparatus could barely distinguish the two, and indeed, the discourse of ritual was one of the most powerful ways for asserting the virtue of English domination.[30] Her distinction also allows us to recognize that the turn to 'ritual' in postcolonial Java may be less a mechanism for invoking the authenticity of a pre-colonial past, than a means for ensuring the hegemony of those few who usurped without universalizing the power of colonial authorities.[31] If this relativity applies to the category of ritual, then perhaps, suggests Elizabeth Povinelli, it also applies to the term of sex, and especially to that of 'ritual sex'. In her rereading of Spencer and Gillen's classic accounts of Australian aboriginal initiation rites, Povinelli argues that the use of the term ritual was a means for fastening the term 'sex' to activities which signified very differently for the people performing them. Such activities were not merely about the production of sexuality, or desire, as van Gennep would have argued, but were about the very constitution of viable

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[27] See M. Auslander, "Open the Wombs. The Symbolic Politics of Modern Ngoni Witchfinding", J. Comaroff and J.L. Comaroff (eds), *Modernity and its Malcontents* (Chicago, 1993), 167–192.

[28] Bell 1992.

[29] G.C. Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak", C. Nelson and L. Grossberg (eds), *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* (Urbana, 1988), 271–313.

[30] See N.B. Dirks, *The Hollow Crown. Ethnohistory of an Indian Kingdom* (Cambridge, 1987).

[31] J. Pemberton, *On the Subject of 'Java'* (Ithaca, 1994); J.T. Siegel, *Fetish, Recognition, Revolution* (Princeton, 1997).

social subjects, subjects who would occupy various roles for the com-
munity and for themselves—some of which would be sexual, some
not. The effectivity of what appeared to be 'ritual sex' was not, in
Povinelli's reading, limited to the production of sexuality any more
than sexual relations could be contained in and by 'ritual'. In any
case, the Aboriginal people with whom Spencer and Gillen spoke,
had no words for either 'ritual' or 'ritual sex'.[32]

How then, shall we understand the force of ritual, both in actu-
ality and in the discourses wherein history and anthropological knowl-
edge production are entwined? To understand how a term of language
can function in these ways, one needs, ultimately, to understand how
talk about (a) ritual produces its effects. The model for such an under-
standing might well come from the canon of anthropological writings
on ritual itself. In his famous accounts of shamanic curing in "The
Sorcerer and his Magic", and "The Effectiveness of Symbols",[33] Claude
Lévi-Strauss describes the case of a Zuni woman whose illness dis-
appears following the confession of a supposed sorcerer, and the con-
quest of a Nambiquari woman's difficulties in child birth by a shaman
who narrates a myth of reconciliation as part of his treatment. In
both cases, says Lévi-Strauss, the cures work by providing a semiotic
resolution. Speech materializes language, which then materializes the
logic of the social.[34] Thus, language in its manifest state reconciles
the elements whose disorder is experienced as pain or discomfort,
and illness is dissipated through the verbal invocation of society's
ideal order. Both Michael Taussig and James Siegel have noted that,
in these essays, Lévi-Strauss neglects the radical discontinuity between
speech and meaning, passing over the fact that the cured patient
did not even know the language of her therapy. Taussig focuses on
the bodily experience of the patient to suggest the incommensura-
bility between the experience of illness and its representation in Lévi's-
Strauss's explanation of cure; Siegel focuses on the acts of speaking
themselves, and the gradual empowerment of the speaker rather than
the patient.[35] Siegel has argued further, that in the case of the Zuni

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[32] See E.A. Povinelli, *The Cunning of Recognition* (Durham, 2002).

[33] Both are in C. Lévi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology* (1958), trans. C. Jacobsen
and B.G. Schoepf (New York, 1963).

[34] Lévi-Strauss 1990, 674.

[35] M. Taussig, "Reification and the Consciousness of the Patient", *The Nervous
System* (New York, 1992), 83–109; J.T. Siegel, "The Truth of Sorcery", *Cultural
Anthropology* 18 (2003), 135–155.

woman's ensorcelment, the cure long post-dates the acts of speaking to which Lévi-Strauss attributes such therapeutic power. In the process he notes a quality that is conveyed in virtually all of the ethnographic accounts of ritual speech, namely a certain excitement and power attaching to the use of language and to the one who gets to speak. The young man accused of witchcraft by the Zuni is amazed by his emergent story-telling ability, and his accusers are so rapt by his narration that they "seemed entirely to have forgotten" the fact of the boy's possible culpability.[36]

In such rites, it is the force of language, says Siegel (and here he is close to Malinowski who attributed force to the spell), that enables the empowerment of the young man, not so much to effect order, but to attract desire. We can note here that both of Lévi-Strauss's examples entail the illness and healing of women (and we are reminded again of de Lauretis's insight about the double burden that befalls femininity). It is around their possible disorder that language is brought to bear, and it is less to heal them than to produce an aura of power and masculine authority which will be recognized by others with power and authority that the speaker speaks—over the body of a woman. Language does not cure here, it makes powerful. Moreover, because language is the instrument for representing difference, it is implicated in the gendered organization of that empowerment. And in Lévi-Strauss's tale, as in so many ethnographic accounts, power accrues to those masculine subjects who claim language and who are authorized to do so by those other masculine subjects who attribute meaning to their words. Here, then, in seemingly transparent stories about healing rites, we see also how a discourse of ritual might work by redoubling the capacity of those with language, those who are authorized to speak, to acquire power—as ritual specialists, and the bearers of secret wisdom. For critically minded social theorists, the next step must entail an interrogation of the processes by which language and the prerogatives of speaking are distributed in and through other verbal and non-verbal practices of sexualization and gendering. It must explain how ritualization and ritual work, in part by virtue of the power that attaches to the always gendered talk about ritual.

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[36] Lévi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology*, 173. Lévi-Strauss is here citing M.C. Stevenson, *The Zuni Indians* (23rd Annual Report of the American Bureau of Ethnology; Washington, 1905), 401.

PERFORMANCE[1]

Ronald L. Grimes

To theorize is to look at something in a special way, one that achieves its perspective by distancing or by probing beneath a surface. Well executed, either theoretical tactic should enable scholars to notice previously unnoticed dimensions of their objects of study. A major role of performance theories has been that of helping scholars to see the performative dimensions of ritual and the ritual dimensions of performance.

Every religion depends on performativity generally, perhaps even on what we in the West call 'the performing arts', more specifically. Although practitioners may not label what they do as either art or performance, they attend to the how, the art or technique, of their activities. Wherever ritual leaders gather, there is talk about matters of form and effectiveness: How did you do that? Where did you learn that? Why didn't that work?

Performance theories can especially incisive when applied to events in religious settings, since religious leaders sometimes deny or even cover up performative aspects of their rites. *Rites* are enactments rendered special by virtue of their condensation, elevation, or stylization.[2] They are not necessarily religious, but since religious rites often determines how practitioners and theorists alike conceptualize other kinds of ritual, it is crucial to study them.

Any label—'ritual', 'liturgy', 'art', 'dance', 'music', 'religion', or 'drama'—used without qualification to describe a traditional activity would likely be misleading, since the term would segregate a

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[1] Portions of this chapter are based on R.L. Grimes, "Performance Theory and the Study of Ritual", P. Antes, A.W. Geertz, and R.R. Warne (eds), *New Approaches to the Study of Religion. Volume 2: Textual, Comparative, Sociological, and Cognitive Approaches* (Religion and Reason 42; Berlin, New York, 2005), 109–138; R.L. Grimes, "Ritual and Performance", G. Laderman and L. León (eds), *Encyclopedia of Religion and American Cultures* (Santa Barbara, 2002), vol. 2, 515–528.

[2] R.L. Grimes, "Forum on American Spirituality", *Religion in American Culture* 9 (1999), 145–52. The words 'liturgy', 'rite', 'ritual', 'ritualizing', 'ritualization', 'ritualist', and several other related terms are discussed in Grimes 1990.

phenomenon that many intend to be deliberately integrative. So if we are to talk about religious activities as rites or performances, our definitions must be broad and provisional rather than restricted to what we in the West usually label 'religion' or 'theater'.

Whenever ritualists ('people who engage in ritual') enact ('put into force'), they also perform ('show what they are doing'). Even if the explicit aim of a rite is something other than display, it is difficult for ritualists to avoid being on display. Whether they believe they should or not, religious leaders notice whether they are being noticed. In this respect, they are performers whether or not they call themselves that. As well, rites are subject to criticism, whether or not such criticism is invited or made public.

Performance is all but inevitable, even in groups that deny its presence. In religious traditions such as evangelical Protestantism and Shiite Islam, where art in the form of sacred icons ('graven images') is suspect and dance is expressly forbidden, performance happens anyway. However much Appalachian preaching is about delivering the word of God and however little a sermon may be rehearsed, it nevertheless depends on oratory, gesture, posture, cadence, and eye contact. However much the study of the Koran depends on quiet meditation or solitary learning, in Iran and central Asia knowledge of the Koran makes its way to the people through storytelling genres laced with movement and histrionics.

If one turns from traditions that minimize the performing arts to those that maximize them, the list is long. Among the more obviously performative religio-artistic traditions are: Hindu dance drama (such as *Kathakali* and *Bharatanatyam*), traditional Japanese theater (especially *No*, but also *Kabuki*, *Gigaku*, and *Bunraku*), the Zuni *Shalako*, Hopi *Kachina* dances, Kwakiutl masked dance drama, the Ojibwa *Midewiwin* initiatory drama, the Yaqui Deer Dance, the Tibetan Dance of the Dakinis ('Sky Dancing'), Balinese dance drama, Javanese shadow puppet theater (*Wayang*) and dance drama (*Topeng*, and *Gambuh*), the ancient Egyptian Rameseum coronation drama, ancient Greek ritual theater, the masked Buddhist dance of Korea (*Giak*), the New Mexico Penitente Easter reenactment, !Kung trance dance, Yoruba masquerade, medieval Christian mystery plays, and the danced, masked dramas of the Mukanda rite in Zaire and elsewhere in Africa. The list could be extended considerably. A major motive for constructing performance-oriented theories of ritual has been to enable the study of such phenomena.

Not only is performance an inescapable fact of religious life, it is an especially fruitful theoretical notion. Not only does the word 'performance' now regularly appear in book titles—*Sacred Performance: Islam, Sexuality and Sacrifice; Affecting Performance: Meaning, Movement, and Experience in Okiek Women's Initiation*; and *Ritual, Performance, Media*—the term is utilized as a formative category in several major academic disciplines.[3]

In ordinary parlance the term 'performance' has multiple connotations. (1) Etymologically, the word is derived from two Latin terms: *per*, meaning 'through', and *forma*, meaning 'form'. According to this broad etymological usage, ritual, then, would count as performance insofar as it is *formal* behavior. (2) 'Performance' also implies role-playing before an audience. To perform is to play out a part in the presence of spectating others, and that role is not believed in; it is fictive. (3) And finally, 'to perform' also means 'to achieve'. When a new employee asks about the performance indicators for a job, the question is about criteria for evaluation, not about playing dramatic roles.

The first connotation is invoked when we speak of ritual performance; the second, when we talk about theatrical performance; and the third, when we refer to athletic performance.

Because the Euro-American West tends to segregate the religious from the artistic, it also is prone to separate ritual from performance. Ritual, construed as essentially religious, is considered distinct not only from performance but from everyday life; ritual is special, whereas everyday life is ordinary. In the quotidian view, whatever else ritual *is*, it is *not* performative, and it is *not* ordinary.

Despite this persistent predilection for cordoning off ritual from performance, participants in rites often comment on the dramatic qualities of ritual. Similarly, performers in artistic events sometimes speak of their craft in ritualistic, even religious, terms. So the definitional segregation of ritual and performance serves scholars poorly, since it obscures connections between the two cultural domains.

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[3] See for example: M.E. Combs-Schilling, *Sacred Performances. Islam, Sexuality, Sacrifice* (New York, 1989); C.A. Kratz, *Affecting Performance. Meaning, Movement, and Experience in Okiek Women's Initiation* (Washington, 1994); Hughes-Freeland (ed.) 1998; Bell 1998. Other relevant works include: B.C. Alexander, *Televangelism Reconsidered. Ritual in the Search for Human Community* (Atlanta, 1994); Alexander 1997; Drewal 1992; Driver 1991; Fernandez 1972; Fernandez 1977; Hughes-Freeland and Crain 1998; C. Laderman and M. Roseman (eds), *The Performance of Healing* (New York, 1996); Lewis 1980; Rappaport 1999; Schieffelin 1985; Tambiah 1981.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, scholarly attempts were made to connect the domains. The so-called Cambridge school speculated that religion and theater shared a common, ancient origin. However, historians of religion no longer have confidence that they can know the prehistoric origins of either religion or theater. So a theory built on the assumption of a primordial, or 'ur', activity, out of which ritual enactment and theatrical performance gradually differentiated themselves, is no longer viable except as an exercise in historical imagination.[4]

Dramatistic Metaphor

An alternative to speculation about origins is the invocation of dramatistic metaphors. One hears reference made to "the drama of" just about everything: the weather, wars of independence, student revolts, kings, languages, history, groups, and, of course, ritual. Ritual participants are 'actors'; sanctuaries are 'stages'; ritual texts are 'scripts', and so on.

In Euro-American scholarship the dramatistic analogy is by no means the primary one. The dominant usage treats ritual as a 'structure' and does so without reflecting on the implications of the metaphor. The image of ritual as a structure lends ritual a sense of immovability, strength, and permanence. The temptation is to literalize the metaphor of structure, forgetting that its primary domain is that of architecture. When a metaphor drops below awareness, those who employ it begin missing some of its implications. They cease to notice, for example, that ritual activities are sometimes improvised or that rites undergo change. So in ritual studies as well as performance studies the more processual dramatistic metaphors are often invoked as ways of countering the effect of structural metaphors.

In humanities and arts disciplines, theories seldom enable scholars to predict. Prediction is not the main function of theory. Instead, theories help achieve an interpretive perspective. A theory's ability to generate perspective often hinges on a generative metaphor, for example, the threshold (*limen*) metaphor so thoroughly constitutive of

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[4] One of the most recent attempts to develop this line of argument is E.T. Kirby, *Ur Drama. The Origins of Theatre* (New York, 1975).

the theories of ritual formulated by Arnold van Gennep and Victor Witter Turner.[5]

Dramatistic metaphors appear in literary and dramatic sources— as a cosmology in the plays of Spanish playwright Pedro Calderon de la Barca (1600–1681), an epistemology in the writings of French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre, and a lifeline plot in the plays of William Shakespeare.[6]

In addition, dramatistic metaphor is also used as a method in literary criticism, sociology, religious studies, and anthropology. When drama supplies the determinative images for a scholarly approach, we tag this usage 'dramatism'. In a dramatistic view the social world is not like an architectural structure (with joints buttressed by symbols) but like a play (in which the symbols are 'actors'). Dramatism apprehends the world as an event or action rather than as a thing, machine, or text—three metaphors that suffuse Western cosmologies and theories.

Webster's *Third New International Dictionary* pays formal homage to Kenneth Burke by recognizing his use of the term dramatism and defining it as "a technique of analysis of language and thought as basically modes of action rather than as means of conveying information".[7] Burke recognizes that the "-ism" opens the possibility of using the metaphor to understand not only language and thought but also human relations especially insofar as they are conflict-laden, filled with victimage, and prone to create and destroy scapegoats.

The inverse of Burke's view of language as action is the widely held notion that action is also a kind of language. This linguistic (as opposed to the dramatistic) metaphor leads one to assume that actions have 'meanings', consequently a 'grammar'. The dramatistic metaphor (word as deed) and the linguistic one (deed as word) vie with one another, although the linguistic one, along with the structural one, has been dominant in the history of Western thought and theory.

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[5] For a discussion and critique of the metaphor and its resulting model, see R.L. Grimes, *Deeply into the Bone. Re-Inventing Rites of Passage* (Berkeley, 2000), 103–5.

[6] In Calderon's play *El Gran Teatro del Mundo* ("The Great Theater of the World") God, the producer, designs the cosmos as if it were a fiesta. Sartre treats reading and writing as ritual; see J.-P. Sartre, *Saint Genet. Actor and Martyr* (1952), trans. B. Frechtman (New York, 1963), 49. Regarding Shakespeare's usage, see his *As You Like It*, 2.7: 139–165.

[7] K. Burke, *Language as Symbolic Action: Essays on Life, Literature, and Method* (Berkeley, 1968), 54.

The split between doing and speaking, however, need not be absolute. Burke knows that words mean as well as do, so his dramatistic metaphors never become polar opposites of linguistic ones. For him, language is rhetorical; people are moved by it. Language does not merely reflect, mirror, or inform; it also deflects, selects, and even creates reality. Language is an actor in its own right; words constitute "vocal gestures".[8]

Kenneth Burke's dramatism is not thoroughgoing. It does not systematically exploit the basic principles of theater by applying terms such as 'role', 'director', or 'stage' to social behavior. Furthermore, the term 'actor' (or 'agent'), as he uses it, has little to do with role playing, and his use of the term 'scene' does not invoke the onstage/backstage distinction so crucial to Erving Goffman's dramatism. Instead, Burke's dramatism follows Aristotle's theory of tragedy in emphasizing purposive human *action* as distinct from *motion*, a category of physics. Action is intentional, purposeful, and uniquely human. Motion, on the other hand, is sheer movement of an object through space. For Burke, things move, whereas persons act.

Theories of Cultural Performance

The turn of cultural theorists to drama and performance transpires most systematically in the writings of sociologist Erving Goffman and most provocatively in those of Victor Turner.[9] Although other writers have studied the performative dimension of ritual or used an occasional dramatistic metaphor, Goffman is the theorist in whose writing the dramatistic metaphor is most systematically employed and thoroughly sustained. In fact, in his theory the notions of drama, performance, and ritual are not 'mere' metaphors at all.

Goffman applies both ritualistic and dramatistic terminology to ordinary social interaction: Greeting and departing are 'ceremonial'; serving food in a restaurant is 'dramatic'. As he uses them, the terms, 'ritual', 'ceremony', and 'drama' often sound interchangeable, as if there are few significant differences among them. Social performance

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[8] Cf. K. Burke, *Grammar of Motives* (Berkeley, 1969), 236–7.
[9] Earliest mention of 'cultural performance' is usually attributed to Milton Singer; see M. Singer, "The Cultural Pattern of Indian Civilization. A Preliminary Report of a Methodological Field Study", *Far Eastern Quarterly* 15 (1955), 23–36.

is ceremonial insofar as it is a rejuvenation of a community's moral values. Insofar as a performance is taken to condense reality itself (rather than being a mere simulation of it), the performance is said to be "ceremonial."

Occasionally, Goffman discriminates between performance and ceremony. For instance, in *Frame Analysis*, he remarks: "A play keys life, a ceremony keys an event".[10] He means that a play simulates ordinary life in general, while a ceremony strips a deed of its ordinary context in order to create a highly focused event. In plays, he says, performers pretend to be characters other than themselves, while in ceremonies performers epitomize rather than pretend.

The idea of performance is important to Goffman, because it lends his theory a critical, even polemical, edge. Actions are deemed performances when they are not merely done but done to be seen. Done to be seen, actions inevitably misrepresent. Thus, the outcome of Goffman's theory is a hermeneutic of suspicion. The Goffman-inspired interpreter is set to searching for backstage areas in which he or she can spy the face behind the front-stage mask. From a 'Goffmanian' perspective, all social interaction is performance, and performances become ritualized when someone insists on their sacrality, on the unquestionableness of what is being presented. To ritualize is to deny or hide the discrepancy between front and back stage behavior.

Goffman is the most ritually serious when he asserts, "[t]he self is in part a ceremonial thing, a sacred object which must be treated with proper ritual care. . . ."[11] In his view, a ceremony is not merely a thing done or only an analogy for social interaction. Rather, ceremony is how the self is constituted. The ritually constituted self is a "sacred game" because it is essential to survival in society.[12]

Goffman conflates ludic (play-driven), ritualistic, and dramatic language to present a view of supposedly secular life in which the sacred, game-constituted self becomes a god: "The individual is so viable a god because he can actually understand the ceremonial significance of the way he is treated, and quite on his own can respond dramatically to what is proffered him. In contacts between such deities

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[10] Goffman 1974, 58.
[11] Goffman 1967, 91.
[12] A similar position is articulated by Rappaport 1999, 117 ff.

there is no need for middlemen; each of these gods is able to serve as his own priest".[13]

If Erving Goffman is the ritual skeptic employing the idea of performance to debunk highly managed personae or to expose ceremonial cover-ups, Victor Turner is the ritual enthusiast, using the idea of drama to challenge and transform the reigning conception of ritual. By construing everyday life as performative, Goffman sees it as riddled with pretense. By considering social processes as dramatic, Turner sees it as conflict ridden but also as culturally generative. For Turner, as for Goffman, society itself is inherently (not merely analogically) dramatic, creating the possibility for stage drama and the inescapability of performance in ritual.

Victor Turner believed he had discovered drama in the field, that he did not carry the concept of drama into the field with him. The phenomenon he tags "social drama" does not amount to using European plays as analogs of African rites. Rather social drama is, on both continents, patterned social conflict. Social drama follows a predictable and universal form: breach, crisis, redress, and reintegration. This sort of drama, says Turner, is prior to, and the ground of, stage drama. The two kinds of drama feed one another in a circular relationship.

Turner thinks that the redressive phase of social drama is a primary source of ritual.[14] Since he holds that the liminal phase of the ritual process gives rise to theater, the implied sequence is: social drama, ritual, theater. Turner puts it another way that is perhaps truer to his intentions, because it makes the process sound less linear and more dialectical:[15] ". . . The processual form of social dramas is implicit in aesthetic dramas (even if only by reversal or negation), while the *rhetoric* of social dramas—and hence the shape of argument—is drawn from cultural performances. There is a lot of Perry Mason in Watergate!"[16]

Although the terms 'performance' and 'drama' were almost synonymous for Turner, the connotation of 'drama' was that of patterned social conflict, while 'performance' suggested role-playing and

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[13] Goffman 1967, 95.
[14] V.W. Turner 1990, 12, 7.
[15] V.W. Turner 1979, 81.
[16] See also V.W. Turner, "Social Dramas and Stories About Them", *Critical Inquiry* 7 (1980), 141–168, here 153.

the awareness of being watched. Although Turner probably wrote more about the relations between ritual and drama (or performance) than any English-speaking scholar in the twentieth century, he showed little interest in dramatism, the systematic exposition of ritual or ordinary life *as if* they were theatrical.[17]

In defending himself against Geertz's claim that the anthropological use of dramatistic analogies leads to overgeneralizations and that textual analogies are more nuanced, Turner replied that texts, whether social or literary, are best understood not in the abstract but in the context of the performances they inspire.[18] Turner saw no reason why anthropologists should not make use of both textual and dramatistic metaphors. He remained convinced that experience is deepest when social drama and stage drama, performance and text, illumine one another, rather than when one is treated as less real than, or the analogy of, the other.

Performance Studies

The rhetorical shift from speaking of 'drama' to 'performance' occurred near the end of Victor Turner's life as he began to collaborate with Richard Schechner of New York University's Department of Performance Studies and editor of *The Drama Review*.[19] Schechner is a theater director as well as a leading performance studies scholar. The Performance Group, which met in the Performing Garage under his direction, was a widely known experimental theater collective. His theatrical and theoretical research is widely studied in drama departments as well as in experimental theater circles. Not a systematically theoretical writer, he is nevertheless a prolific one who cuts an impressive swath from practice to observation to theory.

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[17] As far as I know, the only attempt at a fully dramatistic approach to ritual is D. Cole, *The Theatrical Event. A Mythos, a Vocabulary, a Perspective* (Middletown, 1975). It uses a set of categories—script, actor, audience, scene, language, and interpretation—to explore connections between theater and a specific kind of ritualizing, shamanism.

[18] V.W. Turner, "Acting in Everyday Life, and Everyday Life in Acting", in Turner 1982a, here 107.

[19] For more on the shift from drama departments to departments of performance studies see B. Kirschenblatt-Gimblett, *Performance Studies* [http://www.nyu.edu/classes/bkg/issues/rock2.htm], 1999; H. Sayre, "Performance", F. Lentricchia and T. McLaughlin (eds), *Critical Terms for Literary Study* (Chicago, 1995), 91–104.

Defining ritual in relation to other kinds of performance, Schechner distinguishes "transformation" from "transportation."[20] On the one hand, rites of passage effect a *transformation* of social state: A dead person becomes an ancestor; a man and a woman become one flesh, and so on. On the other, Euro-American actors are *transported*, carried away by, and into, their roles, but they are always returned to themselves. Their performances do not effect a change of status in the way a rite of passage does. Western stage actors re-enter ordinary life at the same point they left it.

Even though Schechner emphasizes the similarities among drama, popular entertainment, and ritual, he does not ignore the differences, which he plots on a continuum running from efficacy to entertainment. The basic opposition, he insists, is not between ritual and theater but between efficacy and entertainment. Both ritualistic and theatrical activity have effect and entertain, but ritual emphasizes efficacy and theater, entertainment. Schechner's own theatrical values are such that he would reject a purely entertainment-oriented theater. When a performance is efficacious, he teasingly calls it a "transformance." Although this sort of transformation is traditionally attributed to rites of passage, theater has its own ways of transforming. For example, destructive behavior is displayed, but because the display is in a subjunctive mode, the behavior is rendered nondestructive. Another example is that of star-making, a function of a cinematic culture in which ordinary people are transformed into suprahuman (but all too human) beings.[21]

So for Schechner ritual and theater have important differences, but they are not absolute opposites. They become so only in specific cultures where esthetic theater emerges or where ritual is shorn of its entertaining functions. In many cultures and historical periods, performance is a 'braided structure' of efficacy and entertainment. Sometimes the braid is loose and sometimes, tight. When it is tight, that is, when the connections are integral and sustained, ritual is rife.

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[20] R. Schechner, *Between Theater and Anthropology* (Philadelphia, 1985), 117 ff.; see also Schechner 1977, 63 ff.

[21] Michelle Anderson ("Authentic Voodoo Is Synthetic", *The Dama Review* 26 (1982), 106) has extended the purview of Schechner's efficacy-entertainment continuum by showing how efficacious Voodoo ritual is regularly associated with closed spaces or back regions not accessible to tourists; whereas entertainment Voodoo is consistently correlated with front regions open to the public.

Schechner argues that the convergence of ritual and theater is most evident in theater's workshop-rehearsal phase.[22] Ritualizing is less evident in the finished production than in the preparation process. Schechner makes an important distinction between actor training and rehearsal. During rehearsal exact procedures are set in place to be repeated later, whereas actor training grows out of workshops and is not aimed at a specific production but rather at communicating generalized skills and bodily as well as attitudinal readiness.

In early phases of the theatrical process, says Schechner, actors and directors search for actions that work, ones they will keep for performance. In doing so, he argues, they undergo the phases of a traditional rite of passage. First, they separate themselves from ordinary street life and begin to strip away cliches; they are made 'raw'. Next, they undergo an initiation into the life and skills of the group in order to gather new materials. They combine personal elements with non-personal ones such as texts. They either learn by rote imitation or else master a generative code that enables them to build characters and string together actions. And finally, they reintegrate themselves into the larger society by presenting long strips of restored behavior for public viewing. They present themselves transformed, 'cooked'. During the rehearsal process the only audience is the group itself; functionally, the audience is really a congregation or tribe. In this respect the rehearsal process constitutes a temporary community undergoing a rite of passage.

For Schechner, theater arises when an audience emerges as a separate group, when it is accidental rather than integral. Integral audiences do not pay as strict attention to the performance as accidental audiences do. In fact, not paying direct attention is one way of showing off the fact that one already knows what is going on. Relaxed inattention creates the proper conditions under which a performance can be absorbed, thereby exercising formative power over everyday life.

Schechner's 'restored behavior', like Turner's 'liminoid' and 'subjunctive', is an attempt to define an emergent ritual sensibility in the postmodern world. The tone, however, is different. Schechner's emphasis falls on the fictive, contrived nature of such events. Since ritualists 'rebehave', they *never* act naively. There is no first, or original,

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[22] Schechner 1977, 132 ff.

act that charters subsequent performances. Consequently, actors are able to distance themselves from their actions, which they can then treat like a strip of film consisting of frames whose sequence and number can be modified and rearranged. Because restored behavior is separable from performers, it can be composed into scenarios and directed by rubrics; it facilitates reflexivity, seeing ourselves act. Performances are not necessarily based on actual events in the past but rather on previous performances, 'nonevents'. Restored behavior allows performers to become someone other, or, as Schechner, in his impish manner, puts it ". . . to rebecome what they never were".[23]

Performativity and Ritual Theory

From Goffman through Schechner the tendency in North American scholarship has been to press the notion of performance beyond theater. A distinct but convergent strand of theorizing proceeds from philosopher J.L. Austin through John Searle and beyond.[24] In this second line of thought performativity connotes 'doing things with words'. The implied opposite of performativity is expressivity. When words express, they merely point out or describe, but when they perform, they do something. Properly executed, the words "I pronounce you husband and wife" accomplish a legal and social deed.

Recently, both the Goffman-Turner-Schechner and the Austin-Searle lines have been taken up by feminist and poststructuralist writers who apply the terms 'performance' and its abstracted derivative 'performativity' to gender and other social categories. In this view, expressivity comes from within, whereas performativity is socially constructed, borrowed from without. As a student put it: "If you are wearing a dress because you are a woman, that is expressivity. If you are a woman because you are wearing a dress, that is performativity".[25] If gender is the result of mere personal expressivity or the outcome of a purely biological imperative, it is either trivial or unchangeable. However, if it is the outcome of performativity, it is

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[23] Schechner 1982, 41.
[24] See, e.g., J.L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, MA, 1975).
[25] J. Lackow and N.J. Truszkowska, *Performativity*, 2002, http://www.courses.fas.harvard.edu/~lit105/Class_Dictionary/Performativity.

significant but malleable. As constitutive as gender may seem, there are alternative ways of performing it. Thus, the idea of performativity is currently being used as a tool for attacking a dominant social system that construes gender, race, and other social categories in terms of binary opposites.

As used in North American discussions, the word performativity connotes something 'socially constructed, therefore, not given or natural'. Judith Butler, a major theorist, sets performativity against expressivity in a way that echoes but is different from Austin's usage.[26] For her, performativity embodies and yet hides within itself the weight of history and the authority of society: "A performative 'works' to the extent that it *draws on and covers over* the constitutive conventions by which it is mobilized. In this sense, no term or statement can function performatively without the accumulating and dissimulating historicity of force. When the injurious term injures (and let me make clear that I think it does), it works its injury precisely through the accumulation and dissimulation of force."[27]

Thus 'performativity' has emerged as the most recent label for the general human predilection to enact meanings in the presence of others. The term also flags the necessity for a hermeneutic of suspicion. Because performativity depends on dissimulation, it is dangerous and must be rendered transparent and questionable. The expansion of purview indicated by the terminological shifts from 'drama' to 'performance' to 'performativity' has been so pronounced and rapid that some consider the resulting lack of definitional and conceptual boundaries a major weakness of performance studies. Others consider this expansion to be a source of extraordinary conceptional creativity.[28]

From its inception in 1977, ritual studies has exhibited an expansiveness similar to that of performance studies, and it has evoked similar kinds of critique. Catherine Bell has been vigorous in criticizing this performative turn in ritual studies. She would keep ritual

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[26] J. Butler, "Burning Acts—Injurious Speech", in A. Parker and E. Kosofsky Sedgwick (eds), *Performativity and Performance* (Essays from the English Institute; New York, 1995), 197–227; J. Butler, *Gender Trouble. Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York, 1990).

[27] Butler, "Burning Acts—Injurious Speech", 295–296.

[28] T. Gould, "The Unhappy Performative", *Performativity and Performance* 19–44, here 42, n. 2; A. Parker and E.K. Sedgwick, "Introduction", *Performativity and Performance*, 1–16.

and performance more cleanly segregated than I do. Her critique, however, mistakenly argues that performance-oriented approaches are mere exercises in extended analogizing.[29]

In my view ritual and performance are not opposites, nor are they mere analogues. They are kin—substantively related but importantly different. The kinship metaphor enables one to understand ritual in a more balanced way than do bifurcating strategies. Imagining ritual and theater as siblings calls attention to both their common parentage and as well as their implicit rivalry.

I persist in theorizing about ritual alongside other kinds of performance, not only theater but also sports, music, politics, and dance.[30] Doing so can be misleading too, so recently I have begun to speak of ritual 'enactment', as well as ritual 'performance'. I want to pay attention to *both* similarities and differences. The first term signals the *differences* between ritual and other kinds of performance. If 'performance' is heard to suggest 'fictional' or to imply 'for the sake of an audience', then speaking of ritual as performative can lead to serious category mistakes. To enact is 'to put into force', a claim more consonant with claims that ritualists are prone to make.

I continue to insist on the primacy of field research to ritual studies, of studying observable, physically embodied, social acts. Whatever else rites are for, they are, first of all, for the doing. Whatever texts prescribe these rites, whatever intentions, feelings, or ideas participants carry into them, whatever meanings are read into them, and whatever consequences ensue from them, the social and physical enactment of rites is my preferred starting point for theorizing about ritual. Even if it were possible to study a religious tradition by concentrating on its doctrines, writings, and teachings, it is impossible to comprehend ritual without paying serious attention to enactments, things done that others witness. Although it rites can be mentally rehearsed—numerous mystical and meditative traditions teach adherents to do such—the study of ritual (as opposed to its practice) should begin with surfaces and bodies. To begin there, however, is not to end there. Bodies are not ultimately separable from minds and emo-

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[29] A summary and rebuttal can be found in Grimes, "Performance Theory and the Study of Ritual".

[30] One of the more successful attempts to explore ritual's relation to several other performative genres is MacAloon (ed.) 1984.

tions, so methods informed by mind/body or other such dualisms are bound to fail.

My current research and writing proceed in two directions at once. On the one hand, I am finishing a theoretical book on ritual and performance theory. On the other, my fieldwork has become less ethnographic and more consultative. I am less often studying other people's ritual activities than participating, for example, as consultant and critic for documentary productions on ritual. One, a documentary called "Human Rites," is for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC). The other, a three-part series named "Reinventing Rites of Passage" is for Vision TV, the Canadian interfaith channel. Because performance theory detached from actual performances becomes sterile, and because mediated ritual performances unchallenged by theory and criticism become puerile, my aim is for the theoretical writing to be fed by the consultations just as it has been informed in the past by ethnographic participant observation.

A popular view among academics is that research focused on the public (in this instance public media) is without theoretical merit or worse, of no scholarly significance whatever. Such an attitude ignores the revolution in cultural studies, the basic premise of which is that anything, literally anything, can be worthy of scholarly attention. Everything depends on who is paying it and how. A topic is of scholarly or theoretical merit if scholars treat it in a scholarly way, if, for example, they base theoretical conclusions on it or bring theoretical insights to bear on it.

Recently, I have begun theorizing about ritual in a way that takes seriously its mediation in television.[31] My hope is that in the future, students of ritual and performance will pay more attention not only to the constructedness of rites but also to their mediation. One fact that the study of ritual and media makes obvious is that theories themselves sometimes escape their academic domains. No longer the possessions of theorists, they attain public currency. Having become public domain, they determine the ways in which producers, directors, and newscasters depict or interpret ritual events. Once theories

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[31] See R.L. Grimes, "Consuming Ritual: A&E's 'Sacred Rites and Rituals'", in C. Otnes and T.M. Lowrey (eds), *Contemporary Consumption Rituals. A Research Anthology* (Mawah, 2003), 21–36; Grimes 2002.

become culturally pervasive, students of ritual themselves absorb
them.

Another realization that arises from consultative research is that
theories, including theories of ritual, trade as consumer items. Theories
are performed, hawked, and cannibalized in one decade, then ignored
in another. Even among scholars, theories are as fad-driven as any
item of popular culture. In short, the grand and guarded divide sep-
arating academic and popular culture is at best a fragile construc-
tion and at worst a defensively guarded fiction. If theoretical debate
about ritual had remained exclusively theoretical, we may not have
noticed the fiction.

A final but tentative conclusion: Although in highly abbreviated
forms theories sometimes achieve currency in the public domain,
they are often impotent to challenge or change public perceptions
effectively. No matter how subversive the idea of liminality, for
instance, it quickly becomes a cliché in the mouth of a documen-
tary's narrator, just as it can become jargon in the mouth of a scholar
who woodenly applies it. Images, especially performed ones, are more
effective than theories at actually challenging dominant, popular ideas
of ritual. Hence, it is essential that we who think of ourselves as
theorists attend to the images, both latent and manifest, that inhabit
our theories.

PRAXIS

Christoph Wulf

In ritual studies praxis is a central concept that embraces many different dimensions. The concept is used to bridge the opposition between thought and action. It is a construction aimed at overcoming the aforementioned dichotomy. Praxis is conceived less as a synthesis of consciousness and social being, but is instead used "to mediate consciousness and social being, or structure and act."[1] In ritual praxis human actions and social and institutional conditions are thus interrelated. Since praxis focuses on the *mise en scène* and the staging of the ritual action, this perspective leads to a consideration of the body and the aesthetic aspects of the ritual performance. Ritual praxis implies the knowledge of how to perform a ritual. Such knowledge is not theoretical but practical. This raises the question concerning what the characteristics of practical knowledge are and how it is acquired. Practical ritual knowledge is learned mainly in mimetic processes.[2] These relate to issues of desire, power, and imitation. Ritual praxis is a construct that is relevant to the entire spectrum of rituals. Besides signifying intentional ritual acts performed by subjects and groups, the term 'ritual praxis' also refers to that more or less conscious practical knowledge that forms the basis of ritual acts. Ritual praxis encompasses the classical rituals of religion, politics, and culture, as well as everyday rituals. It is relevant in the areas of liturgy, ceremony, celebration, convention, and ritualization, and it is applicable to rituals of transition, institutional rituals, seasonal rituals, rituals of intensification, rituals of opposition, and interactive rituals.[3]

The term 'praxis' has not always played an important role in research on ritual.[4] In order to clarify the changes that have come

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[1] Bell 1992, 77.
[2] See G. Gebauer and C. Wulf, *Mimesis. Culture, Art, Society* (1992), trans. D. Reneau (Berkeley, Los Angeles, 1995); Gebauer and Wulf 1998.
[3] See Bell 1992, 67–70; Grimes 1982 [1995], 40–57.
[4] See Bell 1992; Bell 1997.

with this term's new role, it is necessary to review briefly the development of ritual studies. Within the realm of research into rituals, four main perspectives can be distinguished. The first focuses on rituals in relation to religion, myth, and culture (e.g., James Frazer,[5] Rudolf Otto,[6] Mircea Eliade).[7] The second looks at rituals with a view to analyzing the structures and values of society. Here the relation between rituals and social structure is emphasized (e.g., Émile Durkheim,[8] Arnold van Gennep,[9] Victor Turner).[10] The third perspective considers rituals as texts with a view to deciphering the cultural and social dynamics of society and to investigating the meaning of ritual praxis for cultural symbolization and social communication (e.g., Clifford Geertz,[11] Marshall Sahlins).[12] This is the basis of a range of studies on the praxis of rituals and ritualizations (e.g., Catherine Bell,[13] Ronald Grimes,[14] Victor Turner,[15] Hans-Georg Soeffner).[16] The fourth perspective focuses on the practical, staged, and performative aspect of rituals. Central to this orientation are forms of ritual action that allow communities to generate, restitute, and overcome or work through their differences (Stanley Tambiah,[17] Richard Schechner,[18] Pierre Bourdieu).[19] It is this fourth perspective that is most relevant here.[20] Having chosen this focus, three aspects emerge

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[5] J.G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough. A Study in Magic and Religion* (London, 1955).

[6] R. Otto, *The Idea of the Holy. An Inquiry into the non-rational Factor in the Idea of the Divine and its Relation to the Rational* (1917), trans. J.W. Harvey (London, New York, 1923).

[7] M. Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane* (New York, 1959).

[8] É. Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (1912), trans. J.W. Swain (London, 1915).

[9] A. van Gennep, *Rites of Passage* (1909), trans. M.B. Vizedom and G.L. Caffee (Chicago, 1960).

[10] Turner 1969.

[11] Geertz 1973; C. Geertz, *Local Knowledge. Further Essays in Interpretative Anthropology* (New York, 1983).

[12] M. Sahlins, *Culture and Practical Reason* (Chicago, 1976); M. Sahlins, *Historical Metaphors and Mythical Realities* (Ann Arbor, 1981).

[13] Bell 1992; Bell 1997.

[14] Grimes 1982; see Grimes 1996.

[15] V.W. Turner 1974a.

[16] Soeffner 1992.

[17] Tambiah 1981.

[18] Schechner 1977.

[19] P. Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (1972), trans. R. Nice (Cambridge Studies in Social Anthropology 16; Cambridge, 1977).

[20] See Wulf, *et al.* (eds) 2001; Gebauer and Wulf 1998.

whose interconnection constitutes the main novelty of the present essay. The first relates to the assumption that contemporary ritual praxis can be properly understood only in the context of a rediscovery of the body and the performative turn within cultural science. Here physical movements and gestures play a central role (I). Secondly, ritual praxis is closely connected to the hierarchies and power constellations of society and is structured in a way similar to habitus (II). Thirdly, ritual action depends upon practical ritual knowledge, which is acquired mimetically, involving stereotypical and ludic elements in its performance (III).

I. *Rediscovery of the Body and the Performative Focus*

Finding a focus in ritual praxis would not have been possible if the human sciences had not rediscovered the importance of the body in the 1970s and 1980s.[21] This rediscovery made it clear that rituals, and especially ritual praxis, could not be understood properly without reference to the material nature of the human body. As important as cultural symbolization and social communication may be, it is the human body, with its gestures and symbolic codes, that constitutes the core of ritual settings. Critical efforts at placing the human body at the core of ritual praxis demonstrate that the bodily aspects of ritual cannot be addressed adequately by any one discipline. Thus an interdisciplinary approach in ritual studies became more significant and widespread. Two views of the body have become important: first, the body as the object in which ritual praxis stores practical knowledge; second, the body as the subject whose practical knowledge allows the subject to act.[22] By concentrating on a body possessed of practical knowledge, it becomes possible to comprehend ritual praxis as the staging and presentation of the body.

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[21] See Douglas 1970; M. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish. The Birth of the Prison* (1975), trans. A. Sheridan (New York, 1979); Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*; D. Kamper and C. Wulf (eds), *Die Wiederkehr des Körpers* (Frankfurt, 1982); D. Kamper and C. Wulf (eds), *Das Schwinden der Sinne* (Frankfurt, 1984); M. Feher (ed.), *Fragments for a History of the Human Body*, 3 vols. (London, 1989); M. Featherstone, M. Hepworth, and B. S. Turner (eds), *The Body. Social Process and Cultural Theory* (Thousand Oaks, 1991).

[22] See the chapter on 'embodiment' in this volume.

The Performative Character of Ritual Praxis

Following the 'linguistic turn' in the Seventies and the 'iconic turn'
in the early Nineties, an intense discussion about performativity is
currently being engaged in within the humanities in Germany, a dis-
cussion that also focuses on the performative aspects of rituals.[23]
Social relations are no longer only viewed, read, and interpreted as
text. They are perceived as performances. This perspective encom-
passes three main aspects. First, rituals are performative insofar as
they can be conceived as *cultural performances*.[24] As such rituals can
be regarded as responses to social constellations in which a certain
order is established so as to create or to sustain social coherence.
Ritual performances vary according to the social context, institution,
or organization involved. Secondly, rituals are performative insofar
as they are accompanied by *linguistic utterances* that can be conceived
as *actions*.[25] Thus, for instance, the words spoken during a wedding
ceremony actually constitute the social act of marrying. A ritual
action involves the scenic and physical arrangement of particular
people as well as performative utterances through which social real-
ity is created or transformed. Ritual praxis is a symbolically coded
physical form of action that is often accompanied by spoken magic.
Its performative character creates a sense of community. In ritual
praxis linguistic and physical actions are combined to create the
social effects of the ritual event. Finally, the performative character
of ritual praxis includes an *aesthetic aspect* that is decisive for the suc-
cess of the ritual performance. A glance at artistic performance
confirms this. The aesthetic aspect is ultimately rooted in the phys-
icality of the ritual actors. This includes their voices, movements,

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[23] See Wulf, Göhlich and Zirfas (eds) 2001; E. Fischer-Lichte and C. Wulf (eds),
Theorien des Performativen = Paragrana. Internationale Zeitschrift für Historische Anthropologie,
10 (2001); Snoek 2003; E. Fischer-Lichte and C. Wulf (eds), *Praktiken des Performativen =
Paragrana* 13 (2004); and the chapter on 'performance' in this volume.

[24] See M. Singer, *Traditional India. Structure and Change* (American Folklore Society.
Bibliographical and Special Series 10; Philadelphia, 1959); R. Schechner, *Between
Theater and Anthropology* (Philadelphia, 1985); Schechner 1977.

[25] J.L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (Oxford, 1962); J.R. Searle, *Speech
Acts. An Essay in the Philosophy of Language* (Cambridge, 1969); J.R. Searle, "How
Performatives Work", *Linguistics and Philosophy* 12 (1989), 535–558; U. Bohle and
E. König, "Zum Begriff des Performativen in der Sprachwissenschaft", *Paragrana* 10
(2001), 13–34; S. Krämer and M. Stahlhut, "Das 'Performative' als Thema der
Sprach- und Kulturphilosophie", *Paragrana* 10 (2001), 35–64.

and gestures. By perceiving each other in the ritual action, the participants in a ritual acquire a sense of its multidimensional character and experience the quality of the ritual event.

The ritual praxis of an institution can be understood as a staged production in which its members have different tasks. They present themselves through ritual acts. Who they are and how they view their relationships to others and to the world is expressed in ritual stagings and arrangements. Besides their agreed upon tasks, people also have secret goals and needs regarding personal presentation and expression which help to determine the form ritual praxis will take. Some ritual acts are spontaneous. They happen without any clear indication as to why they happen at this or that moment. Other ritual acts can be understood outside of their context, especially when they are part of an identifiable prehistory. Contingencies between ritual scenes play an important role in ritual acts. Thus ritual praxis is composed of highly specific elements, many of which, however, are replaceable; ritual arrangements can often encompass other elements. Understanding ritual praxis as the result of contingencies prevents us from reducing it to causal or final explanations.[26]

Rituals are among the most important manifestations of performativity because they organize transition processes and contribute to creating feelings of belonging.[27] Their significance and efficacy lie above all in the staging and presentation of the participants' bodies. Even when the participants' interpretations vary, the simple fact that the ritual takes place encourages the creation of a group identity. A glance at the Christmas celebration ritual demonstrates this clearly. Regardless of the differences in perception of Christmas by small children (who still expect Santa Claus to appear), parents (who take pleasure in their children's delight), the teenage son (who experiences Christmas as boring and empty), and the grandmother (who recalls the celebrations of youth), the practical occurrence of this Christmas ritual has a binding effect on all the participants. The fact that they engage in the ritual all together tends to mask the potentially destructive dimension of the differences in their perceptions of Christmas. This destructivity is balanced out in the ritual's *mise en*

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[26] See N. Luhmann, *Soziale Systeme. Grundriss einer allgemeinen Theorie* (Frankfurt, 1984).

[27] See Wulf, Göhlich and Zirfas (eds) 2001.

scène and staging. The ritual thus generally helps to overcome the splitting potential of differences and renew the family's and the community's feeling of belonging together and of identity. Yet the constructive power of a successful ritual is perhaps especially clear when the ritual fails, such as when tensions and hostilities among the participants gain the upper hand and the Christmas celebration is ruined.

The staging and presentation of the ritual require an appropriate framework that allows us to recognize the connection between the ritual and prior actions and that provides clues as to how one is to understand the ritual.[28] The framework engenders a difference between the ritual and everyday actions; it lends to ritual praxis its extraordinary character and ensures the sense of magic that accrues to ritual acts. This 'magic' is the result of the participants' belief in the ritual, whether this involves building a group or community (as in the Christmas celebration) or affirming a boundary (as in initiation rites), the permanence and validity of which the participants acknowledge—regardless of whether that 'boundary' includes or excludes them. But even in community-building ritual praxis, a line is drawn between those who participate and those who are excluded. This drawing of a border can be porous or 'air-tight'.

Ritual Praxis as Bodily Movement and Gesture

Staging and executing rituals require accompanying performative utterances and props. There are, for example, specific statements and songs from the Liturgy during the Christmas celebration, as well as the Christmas tree, presents, and the Christmas feast. In ritual praxis, performative acts create scenes and series of scenes. Creating such scenes requires not only the staging presentation of the human body, but also the arrangement of the environment surrounding the ritual performance. This, too, must be staged in a manner befitting the ritual praxis, so that the necessary ensemble of ritual order can come into being.

Ritual praxis requires bodily movement, by which proximity and distance among the ritual's participants can be theatrically realized.[29]

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[28] See Goffman 1974; C. Lemert and A. Branaman (eds), *The Goffman Reader* (Malden, 2000).

[29] See R.L. Birdwhistell, *Introduction to Kinesics. An Annotation System for the Analysis of Body Motion and Gesture* (Louisville, 1952); R.L. Birdwhistell, *Kinesics and Context. Essays on Body Motion Communication* (Philadelphia, 1970).

These bodily movements express cultural attitudes and social rela-
tionships.[30] Thus hierarchical relationships involving power distinc-
tions require different bodily movements than do friendly or even
intimate relationships. In mastering ritual praxis through bodily move-
ment, the body itself is 'mastered' by ritual praxis: it is civilized and
cultivated. Ritual actions are created by the movements of the body.
Due to their figurative nature, such movements are particularly mem-
orable and lend themselves to repetition. There is often an ostenta-
tious character to ritual actions: the participants want their actions
to be seen and properly esteemed. In bodily movement, the partic-
ipants' goals or concerns are meant to be demonstrated and expressed.[31]

Among ritual bodily movements, gestures play an important role.[32]
They demonstrate non-verbal forms of expression. Gestures accom-
pany performative utterances in ritual acts; feelings are expressed
and represented by gestures, and they are summoned up by them.
As significant bodily movements, they belong to the body's elemen-
tary expressive tools. As physical-symbolic representations of emo-
tions and intentions, they contribute to the socialization of the
individual and to the creation and formation of community. In rit-
ual praxis, gestures are the vehicles of meaning that help us to make
contact with and to understand others. In ritual praxis, accompa-
nying gestures express feelings and social relationships of which those
who perform the acts and those who perceive and respond to them
are often unaware.

In ritual praxis gestures often accompany spoken language; they
often possess an 'autonomous existence' without direct reference to
speech.[33] In various ways gestures transmit messages that elaborate
upon the spoken by emphasizing individual points, relativizing or
calling into question by contradicting. Often the content of a ritu-
ally expressed gesture is more closely connected to the speaker's emo-
tions than are his spoken words. Gestures are thus held to express
more 'reliably' a human being's inner life than words, which are to

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[30] See E.T. Hall, *The Silent Language* (Garden City, 1959); E.T. Hall, *The Hidden Dimension* (Garden City, 1966); E.T. Hall, *The Dance of Life* (New York, 1983).

[31] See C. Wulf, "Rituelles Handeln als mimetisches Wissen": Wulf, *et al.* (eds) 2001, 325–338.

[32] See Gebauer and Wulf, *Spiel, Ritual und Geste*; V. Flusser, *Gesten. Versuch einer Phänomenologie* (Düsseldorf, Bensheim, 1991); A. Leroi-Gourhan, *La geste et la parole* (Paris, 1964–1965); J. Starobinski, *Largesse* (Paris, 1994).

[33] J. Schmitt, *La raison des gestes dans l'Occident médival* (Paris, 1990).

a greater extent subject to more conscious control. Familiarity with other people and with groups is achieved by familiarity with ritual gestures. People know what specific gestures in ritual praxis mean, how they are to be regarded and responded to. Gestures make human behavior comprehensible. They are part of the body language that the members of a community share. They become part of that practical social knowledge that the individual acquires throughout his life and that is important for his behavior.

In those gestures that accompany ritual acts, the acting subject can step out the position of merely being a body, as it were, and show that he or actually possesses it.[34] This requires the 'eccentric position' of the human subject, which is expressed in the fact that the human subject does not simply 'exist' but can 'step out' of himself and relate to himself. Just as with imagination and language, gestures in ritual praxis are made possible by the 'mediated inexpressibility' of the 'eccentric position'.

Ritual praxis thus amounts to a staged presentation of social behavior; a linguistic, cultural, and aesthetic presentation that can be understood as an arrangement of body and gesture. The material praxis of rituals is a physical praxis, and as such it is symbolically coded. Since rituals are complex physical performances, their effects cannot simply be reduced to the intentions of the acting subject, for the effects of a ritual are more varied and farther-reaching than the subject's intentions. Considered as the enactment of physical arrangements, ritual praxis can be seen to contribute to the shaping of social fields, institutions, and organizations. The performance of a ritual action brings its various elements into relation with one another. The staging of ritual praxis shows that in many cases it is a flexible and playful event.[35]

II. *Praxis and Power*

If we understand rituals as particular forms of social praxis, it is obvious that rituals are strongly determined by hierarchies and power

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[34] H. Plessner, *Conditio humana*, Gesammelte Schriften VIII, eds G. Dux, O. Marquard, and E. Ströker (Frankfurt, 1983).

[35] Wulf *et al.* (eds) 2001.

relationships. Rituals always contain a normative order that is guaranteed in and through the formalized and repetitive pragmatics of performance. The various social forms of the performative are shaped by the economic, political, and institutional conditions of the community and its environment, and are therefore embedded within the power structures of society.[36] Thus authority and power relations define the ritual social order and people's connected cognitive and affective dimensions of experience and contribute implicitly to our defining the world as 'real' and perceiving it as 'natural' and 'right', processes that occur at an unconscious level. In seemingly insignificant interactions and pedagogical maxims, through the shaping of everyday spaces and time structures, as well as in consciously staged celebrations and traditions, the normative patterns that engender social attitudes, values, and ways of perception are nevertheless being practiced, lived, and experienced. The power of performative processes results in the incorporation of power structures through the structuring and constituting of world and perception; it creates a habitus that is expressed both in particular lifestyles and in the recognition of authorities and hierarchies. Through the staging of physical performances, interaction forms, language patterns, images and rhythms, spaces and time orders, and schemas and strategies are incorporated into the body. The body thus becomes a social repository, as it were. Through its performative construction the body's relation to itself is defined and a physical geography is developed that contains the pragmatics and schemes of role distribution as well as identity inscriptions. Understanding performativity as productive mimetic normativity in this context means conceiving individual representation as a location for the performance of norms that allows the individual to present the norms to which he is subject. Both the fact that these norms are applied and the manner in which this occurs play more significant roles in this process than theoretical deliberations concerning the norms themselves. Individuals are thus drawn into a strained dialectical process that allows them to recognize the very rule that binds them to a certain relation of recognition.

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[36] Kertzer 1988.

Habitus and Power

As Bourdieu has pointed out, ==ritual praxis is fundamentally determined by habitus.==[37] In habitus and the ritual praxis determined by it, a "structuring structure", a past that has been incorporated in the present finds expression—and social power relationships become effective. Through the acquisition of a habitus, order within social space is created. This space is formed by economic and cultural capital. Social space is determined not only by the differences among people but also by the composition of human relationships. And people accommodate themselves, with the aid of that habitus that they have acquired, to this space.[38] The principle of "subtle differences" leads to further differentiation with respect to power relationships and the social behavior inherent in these relationships. What holds true of both the development of habitus and the social differentiation based on the principle of "subtle differences"[39] also holds for the praxis of rituals. This praxis also takes place in historical and social space[40] insofar as they contribute to the inclusion and the exclusion of people, the processing of differences among them, the creation of hierarchies for human relationships, and the (re)direction of violence.

Nonetheless, for the efficacy of habitus, the following is decisive: "Social reality exists, so to speak, twice; in things and in people's minds, in fields and in behavior, within and outside of the respective actors."[41] Once internalized social structures have been anchored in habitus, they begin to function in ways peculiar to the living organism, that is, according to a systematic, flexible, non-mechanistic logic. And yet it is the working nature of this simultaneously "structured and structuring structure" within the subject that allows the subject "to inhabit the institutions, to in effect make them his own in order to thereby maintain them, keep them alive and going strong; to constantly protect them from dead letters, dead languages; to revive the meaning invested in them—but only insofar as the subject's behavior and attitude compels these institutions to undergo

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[37] See Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice.*
[38] See B. Krais and G. Gebauer, *Habitus* (Bielefeld, 2001).
[39] See P. Bourdieu, *Distinction. A Social Distinction of the Judgment of Taste* (1979), trans. R. Nice (Cambridge, 1984).
[40] See M. Löw, *Raumsoziologie* (Frankfurt, 2001).
[41] P. Bourdieu and J.D. Wacquant, *Reflexive Anthropologie* (Frankfurt, 1996), 161.

change and transformation; changes which are both contrary to and the condition for their reactivation."[42]

Ritual and Power

Ritual praxis regulates questions of power without the actors' always being aware of this fact. It appears inevitable in its presentation, as if it could not function any differently, as if it were 'natural'. It thereby obscures its historical and social character, which protects it from the belief that a ritual act could be subject to change or even replaced by something else. Insofar as a ritual appears natural and 'innocent', it plays a central role in power structures, which it presents in such a way that these structures often cannot be grasped by participants.

Ritual praxis fulfills its social task only when all participants believe in its necessity and/or appropriateness. It is not unusual for this belief to engender the magic of ritual praxis, a magic that in turn strengthens belief in the 'rightness' of the ritual act.[43] The possibility of differentiating processes, which has its roots in the belief in the ritual, is an important characteristic of ritual praxis. In such praxis, differences in lifestyles and concepts are processed in such a way that the potential for violence implicit in such differences is not realized or does not find expression. Ritual praxis manages to rise above the differences they express and process, as well as to create a community. The praxis of the ritual successfully creates community despite differences in the interpretation of the ritual process. The practical completion of the ritual, its performance aspect, and its presentation of the body, including symbolic elements, creates community. This holds true of manifold rituals: from liturgical rituals to ceremonies, celebrations and everyday rituals.[44]

III. *The Mimetic Learning of Practical Ritual Knowledge*

But how does a person acquire the ritual knowledge that allows him to be competent in different social contexts, institutions, and

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[42] P. Bourdieu, *Le sens pratique* (Paris, 1980), 96.
[43] Bourdieu 1982.
[44] See C. Rivière, *Les rites profanes* (Paris, 1995).

organizations? The enactment and performance of rituals implies <mark>ritual knowledge. This is a practical kind of knowledge.</mark>[45] Just as dispositions and schemas are acquired through a process of habitus development, likewise people acquire images, schemes, and dispositions through ritual actions that give them the competence to act ritually.

   This happens when those involved in rituals refer back to prior rituals in which they or members of their group have participated. In referring to prior rituals, participants are concerned with performing the action as it was performed earlier, thereby ensuring social continuity. On the one hand, there is a desire to create a similarity between the present ritual action and prior ritual actions; on the other hand, ritual actions also thrive on the reenactment of prior rituals and thereby on the ability to accommodate themselves to changed conditions or to vary as circumstances dictate. The practical knowledge that makes ritual presentation possible manifests itself in the ability to stage and to arrange rituals.

The Innovative and Ludic Character of Rituals

<mark>Insofar as ritual praxis is always based on prior acts, it contributes in its repetition to the 'revitalization' of specific social practices codified in those rituals.</mark> This process, in which familiar practices are staged and performed, results in the accommodation of these rituals to changes in social relationships and in their consequent modification. This process can lead as far as the creation of new rituals, by which opposition is expressed and without which institutions could not undergo change.[46] The dynamic character of ritual praxis extends even further. Not only does it lead to the formation of new rituals, but also to the creation of new rituals by which institutions are reformed. Historically speaking, one could view the new religious rituals arising from Protestantism as examples of the reforming character of rituals.[47] Research related to new Organization Theory has

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[45] C. Wulf and J. Zirfas, "Die performative Bildung von Gemeinschaften. Zur Hervorbringung des Sozialen in Ritualen und Ritualisierungen", *Paragrana* 11 (2001), 93–116.

[46] See C. Wulf and J. Zirfas (eds), *Innovation und Ritual. Jugend, Geschlecht und Schule = Zeitschrift für Erziehungswissenschaft* 2, Beiheft (2004).

[47] H.-G. Soeffner, *Gesellschaft ohne Baldachin. Über die Labilität von Ordnungskonstruktionen* (Weilerswist, 2000).

supplied us with other examples of new rituals. This research shows that ritual praxis possesses a dynamic that allows rituals to transcend their forms and conditions. The rituals of the Peace Movement, in which people create a chain of light using several thousand candles or in which a large number of individuals create a human chain, are examples of rituals of opposition by which new communities are created.

The spectrum of ritual praxis encompasses pre-determined sequences of actions in which people behave stereotypically, as well as actions in which ludic elements are strongly represented. Ritual praxis is thus bound by rules to varying extents. What is significant is that the rules in ritual arrangements remain implicit and only become clear upon the analysis of those ritual actions. The methodological question is whether one can extract a ritual generative pragmatic that can delineate regularity and that in turn allows us to re- or de-construct the meaning of actions.[48] The question in this case is to what extent the rule or set of rules is bound to a practical knowledge that itself is responsible for the awareness of rules.

The ludic dimension in rituals refers to a playful seriousness that respects certain boundaries and is thus able to combine duty and willingness, solidarity and individuality, as well as affirmation, idiosyncrasy, and criticism.[49] The ritualized togetherness of the actors produces opportunities for spontaneous and creative action during which the norms of the community may be temporarily suspended and then—through playful incorporation—re-inscribed into the consciousness and bodies of the participants. Through the playful incorporation of new themes and forms of action into the community's staged enactment, new possibilities for criticizing, transforming, and subverting established circumstances are tried out. Rituals thus contain certain ever-recurrent staged formal elements that are worked over by the communities in a playful manner. This ludic enactment prevents any reduction of community relations to causal or final or reflexive significations. For, indeed, reflection on the conditions that make community possible tends to dissolve the community to the

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[48] See J. Bouveresse, "Was ist eine Regel?", G. Gebauer and C. Wulf (eds), *Praxis und Ästhetik. Neue Perspektiven im Denken Pierre Bourdieus* (Frankfurt, 1993), 41–56.

[49] See Gebauer and Wulf 1998; G. Gebauer and C. Wulf, "Play, Mimesis and the Body", Köpping 1997 (ed.), 42–55.

extent that theoretical knowledge cannot escape the problem of contingency and otherness—issues that pose a certain danger to the communities. On the contrary, the ludic dimension of rituals contributes essentially to the community's physical self-confirmation.

The dynamic character of ritual acts can be explained in part as follows: The knowledge required for performance is practical knowledge. As such, it is not as subject to rational control as is analytical knowledge. This is particularly the case since practical ritual knowledge does not constitute reflexive knowledge, or knowledge that is conscious of itself. It first becomes reflexive in connection with conflicts and crises in which a rationale for the ritual praxis become necessary. If ritual praxis is not called into question, practical knowledge nonetheless remains half-conscious. As such, it encompasses—like habitus knowledge—pictures, schema, and various forms of actions used in the bodily performance of rituals, without reflection on the rightness or appropriateness of these pictures, schema, or actions. These are simply known and used for the performance of the ritual praxis.

Mimetic Acquisition and Transformation of Ritual Competence

Practical ritual knowledge is thus learned in mimetic processes when acting in or observing ritual praxis.[50] The mimetic processes that are relevant here are those that result in an 'expansion' or 'enlargement' of the participants. Inspired by the desire to belong, individuals refer to the ritual praxis, and such reference leads to an appropriation of the ritual praxis. This is bound to the bodily nature of the ritual act, as well as to its performative character and the sensual presence of the observers. Mimetic processes are thus primarily physical and sensual processes that result in the participants' assimilation of those ritual acts. A reason for this could be that assimilating the ritual praxis can ensure that one belongs to the community and is not excluded. It could be a defense against the dangers that arise from being strange or threatened.

A fundamental characteristic of the mimetic acquisition of practical ritual knowledge is that mimetic processes are movements that refer to other ritual movements that can be viewed as bodily per-

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[50] Gebauer and Wulf, *Mimesis. Culture, Art, Society*.

formances, in other words, movements that possess an element of 'presentation' and performance and that demonstrate autonomous acts. These acts can be understood in themselves, and they can also refer to other ritual acts or arrangements. It is only when these conditions are met that it makes sense to speak of mimetic social acts. Non-mimetic acts are those that are not bodily or physical, such as mental calculations, decisions, structural connections, and reflexive or routine behavior. Singular and unique acts, as well as breaking rules, also fail to constitute mimetic acts. In mimetic learning processes, a repetition of prior ritual acts occurs. Characteristically, the repetition or reference is established not by theoretical thought but with the aid of the senses; compared to the initial ritual praxis, the second ritual act strays from the goal-oriented social praxis to the extent that it does not deal directly with the social praxis, does not effect a change, but merely repeats the social praxis; the mimetic act has a demonstrative, representative purpose; the performance creates in turn aesthetic qualities peculiar to it. Mimetic processes refer to ritual worlds already created by people, worlds that either really existed or that have been postulated or are fictional. Every time someone acts by referring to a ritual praxis that already exists, there exists as well a mimetic relationship between the action and the already-existing praxis. Examples include when someone imitates another's ritual movements, acts according to a ritual model, carries out a ritual praxis, or bodily expresses a ritual concept. These do not have to do simply with mimetic acts. Mimetic acts are merely reproductions that match an original in all points. In mimetic ritual praxis something distinct and original is created.

The acquisition in mimetic processes of that practical knowledge necessary to ritual praxis does not have to have its source in similarity. For example, when mimetic knowledge is acquired by way of reference to a prior world of ritual acts or performative presentations, the point of mimetic reference can only be determined upon comparison of the two worlds. Similarity is but one, albeit common, occasion for the mimetic impulse. Yet even the establishment of a magic point of contact can initiate a mimetic act.[51] A mimetic reference is even necessary for differentiating a ritual act from a prior one. It is this reference that creates the possibility of the acceptance

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[51] See Frazer, *The Golden Bough*.

or the rejection of, and the difference from, prior rituals and other social acts.

Residual instincts, the hiatus between action and reaction, as well as "eccentricity",[52] are requirements for the extraordinary 'plasticity' or adaptability of human beings and the related possibility of acquiring practical knowledge in mimetic processes, knowledge that helps human beings to stage and carry out ritual acts. This practical knowledge includes bodily movements with which scenes of ritual praxis can be arranged or composed. Through the discipline and control of bodily movements arises a disciplined and controlled practical knowledge that—retained in body memory—makes the performance of related forms of symbolic and staged actions possible. This practical knowledge refers to or is based on social acts and forms of performance that arise in the process of civilization. It is thus ritual knowledge that is marked but, in its historical and cultural possibilities, limited.

In mimetic processes an imitative transformation and formation of prior worlds is carried out.[53] Herein lies the mimetic act's moment of innovation and its significance for the staging and performance of ritual acts. Ritual acts are mimetic when they refer to other ritual acts and when they can be understood as ritual arrangements in their own right, ritual arrangements that represent autonomous ritual praxis and that refer to other acts. Ritual acts become possible when practical knowledge is created during mimetic processes. The practical knowledge that is relevant for ritual acts is physical, as well as historical and cultural; it is formed in face-to-face situations and is semantically ambiguous; it has imaginary components; it cannot be reduced to intention; it contains a surplus of meaning; and it manifests itself in the ritual performances of religion, politics, and everyday life.

When ritual actors refer to sequences of a ritual that they have previously experienced or taken part in, it is as if these ritual sequences had been imprinted in them and registered in their imagination so as to be drawn upon in future ritual action. This mimetic learning process involves an adaptation to the performed ritual action whose figure is then recreated and stored in a person's inner imagination

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[52] See Plessner, *Conditio humana*.
[53] G. Gebauer and C. Wulf (eds), *Mimesis—Poiesis—Autopoiesis = Paragrana* 4 (1995).

and thus incorporated. In this way images, rhythms, patterns of action, and movements are embodied and incorporated into a person and used in different ritual contexts. Ritual competence is thus acquired through mimetic processes and drawn upon in various contexts, institutions, and organizations so that a social subject knows how to behave appropriately and is able to create and cooperate in a community in ritual processes. The mimetic character of this learning process confirms the fact that ritual praxis involves not only the re-enactment or creation of a copy of an action but also the re-creation of a ritual action in a new context with different people and under different spatial and temporal conditions. This leads to an action in which an incorporated ritual figure is 'repeated' and performed anew under different circumstances. There is thus a historical and cultural character to ritual praxis that makes it open to future transformations.[54] Performative creativity clearly has a part to play in ritual praxis and allows for the emergence of new, contingent social forms and communities.

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[54] See C. Wulf and J. Zirfas (eds), *Rituelle Welten = Paragrana* 12 (2003), as well as C. Wulf and J. Zirfas (eds), *Innovation und Ritual. Jugend, Geschlecht und Schule.*

RELATIONALITY

Michael Houseman

My aim here is to outline and, in passing, briefly illustrate an approach largely inspired by the work of Gregory Bateson, in which ritual performances are envisaged as experiences afforded by the enactment of special relationships.[1] Particular emphasis is thus placed upon the interactions that occur between ritual participants and the relational configurations these interactions imply.[2] By concentrating upon the patterns of relationship ritual performances bring into play, my intention is to speak to a fundamental issue which the two dominant approaches in this field of study fail to address: the very nature of ritual behaviour itself.[3] Almost everyone agrees to two things about ritual. First, rituals have social and psychological effects: they may be seen as a means of defining or maintaining group boundaries, of bestowing status, of settling conflicts, of bringing about catharsis and so forth. Second, rituals are meaningful, that is, their symbolism can be understood as expressing cultural values and ideas. What has become increasingly evident, however, is the degree to which these complementary perspectives, in spite of their undeniable usefulness, leave important things unsaid. Ritual as an observable phenomenon far exceeds the sociological and/or affect-related functions that may be assigned to it. Conversely, the meanings that may be attached to aspects of ritual performances far exceed the limits of the ritual itself. In other words, only some aspects of the ritual are taken into account

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[1] G. Bateson, *Naven. A Survey of the Problems Suggested by a Composite Picture of the Culture of a New Guinea Tribe Drawn from Three Points of View* (Stanford, 1958 [2nd edition]); G. Bateson, *Steps to an Ecology of Mind* (New York, 1972).

[2] See Houseman and Severi 1998.

[3] As should become clear, I use the word 'ritual' (or the expression 'ceremonial performance') to refer to a particular modality of embodied social action, defined by a number of presuppositions pertaining to the organisation of such action and to the experience of those participating in it. This term thus covers both certain named events in which these presuppositions explicitly hold sway ('rituals'), as well as the process whereby these presuppositions are, often implicitly, put into effect ('ritualization').

by functionalist explanations, whereas in the case of symbolic inter-
pretations, what calls for analysis first and foremost are categories,
values and so forth, extraneous to the ritual proper. Thus, even when
they are combined, as is often the case, these two approaches, the
one concerned with the consequences of ritual, the other with its
ideational premises, leave the specific complexity of ritual action itself
unaccounted for: what are the distinctive organizational features of
ritual as such?

Acting out Special Relationships

Perhaps the most obvious property of ritual is that it is a quality of
action. There are two aspects to this statement. First of all, what
participants may feel or say about the rituals they undertake remains
subordinate to what they actually do. It is above all the participants'
outward conduct that is prescribed. Thus, ceremonial performances
leave less room for the type of ongoing, behavioural negotiation so
characteristic of ordinary intercourse: one has to kneel at appropri-
ate times, pour libations in a particular fashion, put on certain masks
and not others, and so forth. This does not mean that a given rit-
ual is always performed in exactly the same way. Items of behav-
iour may vary from one performance to the next; indeed, as we
shall see, ritual is no stranger to improvisation. However, the over-
all pattern of behaviour of which these items form a part remains
recognizably the same. As Humphrey and Laidlaw have recently
stressed, the foremost object to be attended to in the study of ritual
is neither exegetical commentary, nor doctrinal precepts, nor even
speculations regarding the feelings or ideas ritual experiences may
afford, but the structure of ritual practice itself, as an organized
sequence of acts.[4]
    Secondly, rituals do not tell stories; they enact particular realities.
They do not so much say things ("God, who is like a father, is in
heaven", "This young person has attained manhood", "Your neigh-
bour's witchcraft has been neutralized") as *do* them. For this reason,
linguistic communication is a poor model for understanding what is
going on in ritual. Some rituals may be largely comprised of litur-

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[4] See Humphrey and Laidlaw 1994.

gical formulae. However, spells, chants and other ritual utterances are characterized by a marked diminution of their semantic properties; they are often obscure or highly ambiguous. Thus, ritual discourse is used less to convey information than to accomplish certain acts,[5] to demonstrate the presence of certain non-human agents,[6] to establish undeniable authorities,[7] or to define the speaker's identity.[8] What exactly is meant when a priest pronounces the phrase "This is my body" during the Catholic mass, for example, or when a village elder invites a deity to "take part" of a sacrificial animal, is of less import for the participants than the particular conditions in which these words are spoken: by whom, with what authority, when, in what manner and so forth. Thus, rather than treating ritual as analogous to discursive phenomena—as assertions *in loco verbi*,[9] as enacted recitations,[10] as 'performative' statements[11] and so forth—we should attend to ritual as a mode of action whose distinctive communicative entailments are to be identified in their own right.[12]

Now, the 'particular realities' people enact when they participate in rituals are relationships: an ongoing reciprocal involvement between subjects implying, for all parties concerned, the attendant qualities of agency, interaction, intentionality, affect and accountability. Here again, two general remarks are in order.

First, because ritual relationships are acted out and not merely referred to, they are not, in the manner of myths for example, reducible to logical or metaphorical connections between abstract terms or categories. In other words, ritual relationships, like relationships

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[5] See Tambiah 1981.
[6] See Schieffelin 1985.
[7] See Bloch 1974.
[8] See Severi 1993.
[9] See Lévi-Strauss 1990.
[10] See Staal 1979.
[11] See Tambiah 1985.
[12] One implication of such an approach is that communicative intention, that is, perception of and participation in interaction, is distinct from and instrumentally prior to language using capacities (see G. Airente, "Le rôle des représentations dans le développement de la capacité communicative", *Intellectica* 32 (2001), 155–183, for a developmental argument along these lines). To the degree that this is indeed the case, questions regarding the relational forms governing communicative intention become extremely relevant. It should be noted in passing that one of the pernicious results of treating linguistic communication as primary and basic, is a tendency to envisage emotion essentially in terms of intensity—as expressive frosting on the semantic cake, as it were—rather than in terms of relational form.

generally, are not merely, as some 'relational' approaches might suggest,[13] the expression of or vehicle for certain values or ideas; they constitute lived-through experiences sustained by intentionally and emotionally laden events. Consider for instance the complex ritual relationship established during a marriage ceremony between the couple, their respective families, the celebrating official and the witnesses. It is difficult, one might say impossible, to know exactly what attitudes and feelings these different parties may have. However, it seems fair to assume that because it is they themselves who are actively involved in the ritual's performance, their participation can never be entirely neutral. In other words, ritual relationships are immediate, personally invested and, for lack of a better word, alive.

Second, while the relationships ritual participants enact are mainly with each other, they may also involve various non-human entities: spirits, gods, ancestors, animals, objects, places, liturgical formulae and so forth. In the perspective outlined here, however, analytical precedence is given to ties between persons, whose quality as actual subjects is, in principle, unproblematic. Links with non-persons, while often playing an essential role (think of rings and wedding vows in the case of Western marriages for example), are thus envisaged as being dependant upon ties between persons. Specifically, non-human entities acquire the attributes of agency, becoming virtual subjects with whom a 'relationship' may be possible, precisely to the degree that the participants' encounter with them is causally embedded in a network of interpersonal ties. The establishment of an intimate, significant connection with, say, a ceremonial song or image is inseparable from and dependant upon the network of relationships between those who recite or exhibit this song or image, those who revealed it to them, those who listen to or observe it, those who are knowingly excluded from this recital or exhibition, those who are held to be unaware that this recital or exhibition even exists and so forth.

The relationships which come into being in the course of ritual performances, be they between persons or with non-persons, stand out as exceptional in at least three respects. To begin with, ritual relationships are notoriously polysemous[14] or multiplex.[15] The actions

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[13] E.g. Barraud and Platenkamp 1990; Strathern 1988.
[14] See V.W. Turner 1967.
[15] See M. Gluckman, "Les rites de passage", M. Gluckman (ed.), *Essays on the*

which define them bring together a plurality of pre-existing ties, gen-
erally drawn from a wide variety of domains: subsistence, life cycle
events, kinship, other ceremonial occasions and so forth. During the
funerary ritual among the Beti of Cameroon for instance, women
who are not members of the deceased's lineage (i.e. potential wives),
brandish spears made of branches of 'sweet' plants commonly used
for blessing; a talking drum alternately beats out phrases of insult
and praise while the women execute a warrior dance around the
tomb. In this sequence, war and killing, affinal ties, sexual antago-
nism and healing and sacrificial practices are inextricably combined.
These disparate elements are drawn together as the interdependent
components of a new totality, namely, the ritual relationship that is
acted out between the dancing women, the 'sweet' spears, the dead
man's cadaver and the living members of his lineage. Ritual per-
formances characteristically involve such an interplay of several com-
municative modes (song, music, dance, speech, gesture, etc.).[16] However,
as such, they are not only richly evocative, bringing a broad range
of social phenomena to mind, but exceptionally integrative as well.
They reframe salient features drawn from different realms of expe-
rience in such a way that these features may be appreciated as the
interconnected aspects of a novel, ordered whole, namely, the ritual
performance itself. Ritual action, by situating existing aspects of social
life within a new, shared context, imbues them with further significance.

The context defined by ritual action, however, is a highly pecu-
liar one, for the disparate features it brings together are often if not
always articulated in an apparently paradoxical fashion. Indeed, an
additional property which makes ritual relationships so exceptional
is that they typically entail a condensation of nominally incompati-
ble modes of relationship.[17] Thus, during the Beti funerary dance,
blessing and warlike aggression, ordinarily antithetical, are dramati-
cally fused, as are praise and mockery, and male/male and male/female
relations. The culminating 'grooving' episode of the *naven* ceremony,
undertaken among the Iatmul of Papua New Guinea by a (classificatory)
mother's brother in celebration of a young person's accomplishment,

Ritual of Social Relations (Manchester, 1962), 1–52, here 27–31; V.W. Turner, "Three
Symbols of *Passage* in Ndembu Circumcision Rites", *Essays on the Ritual of Social
Relations*, 124–173, here 125.

  [16] See Kapferer 1983.
  [17] See Houseman and Severi 1998.

provides another, particularly straightforward example of this.[18] The celebrant, adorned as a laughingly dishevelled widow, wanders through the village looking for his "child"; upon finding him, following a ribald interchange with women (the young person's father's sisters) decked out as ludicrously vain warriors, he rubs his buttocks down his sister's child's outstretched leg before presenting the latter with food in return for shell valuables (recalling the bridewealth transferred on the occasion of the sister's child's father's marriage). In this singular act, which may be held to evoke, at the very least, at once childbirth (the mother's brother is identified as his sister's child's mother) and coitus (the sister's child is identified as his mother's brother's husband), parent-child ties and those between sexual partners, normally irreconcilable, are inextricably merged, as are cross-sex and same-sex relations.[19] Such paradoxical situations, entailing the simultaneous occurrence of contrary relational patterns, may, of course, take place in the course of everyday behaviour. In ritual, however, they represent the norm. Indeed, rituals abound in seemingly anomalous episodes in which, for example, affirmations of identity are at the same time testimonies of difference, displays of authority are also demonstrations of subordination, the presence of persons or other beings is at once corroborated and denied, secrets are simultaneously dissimulated and revealed, and so forth. To the degree that ritual performances incorporate such exceptional situations, they become readily recognizable as distinct from everyday interaction: they can not be fully accounted for in terms of ordinary intentionalities and patterns of relationship.

Finally, the various modifications of everyday behaviour that can be accounted for in terms of ritual condensation are not put together either haphazardly or in a purely lineal manner. This is a still further feature of ritual relationships: the actions which define these relationships are undertaken in accordance with an interactive scheme

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[18] See Bateson, *Naven*; M. Stanek, "Les travestis rituels des Iatmul", F. Lupu (ed.), *Océanie: le masque au long cours* (Paris, 1983), 163–182.

[19] A methodological assumption underlying this approach in which ritual actions are regarded first and foremost as ways of defining particular relationships between the participants, is that one must always look beyond the meanings or functions that may be ascribed to any particular item of ritual behaviour in order to identify the relational conditions for its appearance. A useful strategy in this respect consists in discovering the ritual identifications that characterise these behaviours.

that provides the ritual episode as a whole with a particular relational form. The Beti funerary dance, for example, seems to be founded upon a pattern which we might call embedded complementarity, in which an asymmetrical, antagonistic relationship between the dancing affinal women and the dead person's immobile kin on the one hand, and between these two living parties together and the deceased individual on the other hand, are conjoined in a single episode. The *naven* ceremony, during which expressions of ascendancy and subservience are conflated and male and female participants compete in the caricatured portrayal of their opposing gender roles, appears to be grounded in a pattern of dual schismogenesis: symmetrical and complementary differentiation are pursued simultaneously.[20] Thus, the overall relational dynamic governing ritual condensation will vary from one case to the next. Among the configurations that have been proposed for other ritual events are "cumulative inclusion" for Kuna shamanism,[21] the systemic interplay of avowed and concealed secrecy for male initiation rites,[22] the embedding of play within itself for scholastic hazing,[23] rebounding or reversing identification for Amerindian homicide[24] and torture,[25] and cumulative symmetry for Jivaro face-painting.[26]

According to this view, then, a ritual performance's quality as a distinct, structured totality derives less from a pre-established sequence of behaviours (i.e. a script), than from the relational configuration of which these behaviours form a part. This higher-order, interactive

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[20] See Houseman and Severi 1998. Bateson, who introduced the neologism 'schismogenesis' meaning literally "birth of a separation", defined it as "a process of differentiation [. . .] resulting from cumulative interaction" (*Naven*, 75). He distinguishes between two basic types: 'symmetrical' in which the relational responses that comprise the interaction are identical (e.g. rivalry), and 'complementary' in which these responses are different (e.g. dominance/submission).

[21] See Severi 2002.

[22] See Houseman 1993; Houseman 2000.

[23] See M. Houseman, "Is this play? Hazing in French Preparatory Schools", *Focaal* 37 (2001), 39–47.

[24] See E. Viveiros De Castro, *From the Enemy's Point of View. Humanity and Divinity in an Amazonian Society* (Chicago, 1992).

[25] See M. Houseman, "Quelques configurations relationnelles de la douleur", F. Héritier (ed.), *De la violence II* (Paris, 1999), 77–112.

[26] See A.-C. Taylor, "Les masques de la mémoire. Essai sur la fonction des peintures corporelles jivaro", *L'Homme* 165 (2003), 223–247. See also Handelman 1990, 138–156, for what might be termed cumulative inversion in the case of Newfoundland mumming practices.

integration, whereby the participation of different parties is system-ically orchestrated in a mutually reinforcing fashion, provides the experiential scaffolding by means of which ritual relationships are progressively put into place. Such underlying relational form allows a given ceremonial event to be readily recognized as such; at the same time, by virtue of its systemic qualities, it overrides, and thereby accommodates the personal and historical variations that inevitably occur. Similarly, by accentuating the participants attunement to the affective rhythms and scenic effects their coordinated activities bring about, this form accounts for both the overall emotional tone or 'style' of the ritual performance and the appearance of certain emer-gent, expressive features in the course of its enactment.

Unusually Meaningful Experiences

Ritual performance, as an enactment of exceptional relationships, imposes itself upon the participants as an incontestable personal and social experience, numerous features of which contribute to its pre-sumed meaningfulness. The interactive coordination such perfor-mances imply, the affective qualities and bodily attitudes they afford, the perceptual irregularities and unusual modes of expression they call for, their ostensibly mandatory nature as well as their observ-able, pragmatic outcomes, all attest to the fact that more than mere play-acting is involved. However, because the actions whereby rit-ual relationships are realized involve the condensation of ordinarily antithetical modes of relationship bringing together a diversity of pre-existing ties, they are difficult to conceptualize in terms other than their own enactment. From this point of view, the distinctive evoca-tive qualities of ritual acts (including ritual speech) and their inher-ent conceptual uncertainty are two sides of the same coin. Ritual participants are thus engaged in concrete, prescribed performances whose exact meaning, in terms of everyday intentionalities and pat-terns of intercourse, remains nonetheless unclear. One important con-sequence of this is that the intelligibility of these performances requires the supposition of some other, extra-ordinary significance, instanti-ated in the ritual events themselves. In other words, the meaning-fulness of ritual performances involves a degree of self-reference: the special relationships acted out in them and the integrative contexts these relationships imply are upheld by circuits of recursive allusion

which confer a measure of indisputable authority upon them. They appear as necessary, appropriate repetitions rather than as arbitrary inventions.

According to this view, the participants' commitment to the supposed effectiveness of the ceremonial performances they undertake, that is, to the reality of the relationships these performances actualize, derives less from the optional and partially idiosyncratic, substantive interpretations they may ascribe to them, than from the well-defined pragmatic conditions of their execution. It is the performances themselves—the fact of doing them—that serve as the experiential grounds for the irrefutable yet difficult-to-define 'truths' they are held to enact.[27] This is not to say that participants go through ritual actions in an unthinking fashion. As exegetical traditions suggest, ritual performances often incorporate a significant degree of conceptual speculation and reflexivity. However, the relational configurations and perceptual circumstances that constrain the participants' experience of ritual events, while acting to structure and sustain their supposed significance, at the same time preclude the participants from forming definite, shared, non self-referential ideas of these episodes.[28]

This self-validating character of ritual performances is further upheld by the distinctive pragmatic premises that, intuitively, underlie people's participation in such events. Everyday interaction proceeds in large part from the tacit presupposition that, in principle, behaviours express or notify dispositions: if I get angry it's because I'm irritated, if I apologize it's because I'm sorry and so forth. However, because a person has no direct access to another's motives and feelings, this equation is often uncertain: the relationship between personal dispositions and outward behaviour may be deliberately modified or concealed. As a result, everyday interaction inevitably entails a process of negotiation in which the participants' positions with respect to each other are being continually worked out. On the basis of their own immediately experienced feelings and intentions

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[27] See Rappaport 1979, 173–221.
[28] See Houseman 2002 for an illustration of this with regard to two recurrent forms of ritual reflexivity: 'dissimulation', centred upon a perceptual divergence within the context of interactive complementarily, and 'simulation', founded upon a recursive circularity mediated by the manipulation of material (or discursive) artefacts.

and on the basis of inferences regarding the feelings and intentions of others, people are involved in co-constructing a mutually accommodating social reality. In a ritual situation, however, the connection between personal dispositions and overt actions seems to be oriented in the opposite direction. The patterning of behaviour, rather than being continually negotiated, is sharply constrained: it is the participants' actions, rather than their private motives and emotions, which are presumed to be stipulated and clearly defined. In short, dispositions proceed from behaviour rather than the other way around. This does not mean that real feelings and intentions are not involved, but rather that these are as much informed by the conventional actions participants undertake as they may be said to provide the basis for these actions. Consider, for example, the case of wailers in funerary ceremonies. They are rarely, if ever, those persons nearest to the deceased. Indeed, their unrestrained outpourings often stand in sharp contrast to the silent stoicism exhibited by the dead person's closest kin. In many societies, it is, among other things, the reciprocal patterning of these two parties' behaviour that furnishes the basis for the participants' distinctive, shared experience of ritualized mourning.

The problem, however, is that, as has been stressed, ritual actions are generally highly ambiguous, such that the feelings and motives which may be said to be appropriate to them are difficult to determine. We might indeed say that while for ordinary interaction, the overriding question is "given what I feel (and what I can infer about others' feelings), what should I be doing?", in the case of ritual it is "given what I am doing (and what I perceive others doing), what should I be feeling?". Whereas in the case of everyday intercourse, the presumption of individual dispositions provides the definite starting point from which negotiated social behaviour proceeds, in the case of ritual, it is, on the contrary, well-defined patterns of social behaviour that are taken to furnish the tangible basis for the partially idiosyncratic construction of individual participants' dispositions. Thus, for example, it is not because the women are upset and angry that they scream and cry when young men are snatched from the village to be brought to the initiation camp where a monstrous being is said to devour them. Certain of these women may indeed be more or less angry or upset; others will be proud, anxious or even bemused. Chances are that they experience a mixture of contradictory feelings, all the more so because—unlike what young men themselves, who

hear the women's desperate wailing, might well assume—a fair number of these women, who have participated in this episode any number of times, are well aware that the reality of the monster in question is far from certain. On the other hand, the women's prescribed screaming and crying imposes upon them a common performative crucible within which their individual experiences of this moving episode are constructed. Their stipulated behaviour provides a shared wellspring from which the private emotions and intentions of each of these women are drawn.

In order for ritual performances to be effective, that is, for the participants to acquire a measure of commitment to the realities they enact, it is necessary that they be personally involved in the actions they undertake. In other words, it is important that they experience emotional and intentional states in connection with these actions. However, the exact nature of these states, while informed by the prescribed behaviour they pursue and regulated by (at time conflicting) cues provided by the actions and discourse of others, remains under-determined. Each participant is involved in fashioning his or her own inner experiences in an individual, and therefore, partially idiosyncratic fashion. In much the same way that what seems to count is less the precise interpretations participants may make of their behaviour than their presumption that this behaviour is meaningful, what is crucial is not the particular private dispositions the participants' acts may give rise to but the fact that their acts are invested with personal feeling and intentionality.

Emergent Effects

As an unusually meaningful acting out of special types of relationship, a ritual event is perhaps best viewed neither as producing precise messages to be deciphered, nor as buttressing existing social structures directly, but as a particular process of recontextualization. On one level, this recontextualization derives from the polysemous or multiplex character of ritual action and concerns the unitary integration of the disparate elements it brings together. The Beti women's funerary dance, for instance, does not orient participants towards any particular understanding of the connection between, say, a man's death and his affinal relations; nor does it guarantee lineage-group solidarity or a resolution of conflictual relations between the sexes.

Rather, it provides experiential grounds for the participants' commitment to the presumption that these various aspects of their social life are related to each other in a circular fashion. In other words, this ritual event acts as an emotionally and intentionally invested touchstone for representations to the effect that blessing and warlike aggression, marriage alliance and descent, the living and the dead and so forth, are not joined in a theoretically contingent, external or causal relationship, but in an internal or constitutive one. In short, it makes these diverse phenomena easier to communicate about as mutually reinforcing, inescapable features of the participants' social world.

The recontexualisation conferred by ritual action, however, relates not only to such comprehensive, conceptual concerns, but to particular, concrete situations as well. This second level of recontextualization is founded upon the two complementary, tangible operations ritual enactments invariably entail. To begin with, because ritual actions involve the condensation of nominally contrary modes of relationship drawing upon a plurality of domains, they give rise to complex, highly evocative behaviours: distinctive acts, utterances and artefacts. In other words, they entail the definition of a specific symbolism. The main symbolic features of a given ritual are thus simply that which the participants are given to experience in the course of its execution: the golden rings exchanged during a Western marriage ceremony for example, the words that are solemnly pronounced, the spatial placing of the participants, their dress, the order of events and so forth. As has already been mentioned, the particular meanings that can be attributed to such features (e.g. gold's precious, untarnishable character bearing witness to the treasured and presumable permanence of the matrimonial tie), are generally founded upon cultural ideas and values which are current beyond the ritual enactment itself. However, what makes these features instances of a *ritual* symbolism, deriving specifically from the ceremonial enactment itself, is pointedly not such precise interpretations, but the fact that they serve as the auto-referential vehicles for designating the system of relationships acted out in the course of the rite (e.g. gold wedding rings 'stand for' matrimony). In this respect, the particular actions, utterances and objects that emerge as the symbolic expression of a given ritual performance constitute less a definite code signifying particular messages than a special idiom indexing a privileged context.

At the same time, to the extent that ritual behaviour consists in the acting out of relationships, it presupposes the designation of particular agents, namely those between whom these relationships are acted out: persons occupying particular positions (e.g. the bride, the groom, the in-laws, the officiants, the witnesses, etc.), but also, causally embedded in a network of interpersonal ties, other, non-human entities such as spirits, gods, ancestors and other 'powers' (e.g. government, the law, 'society', etc.) as well as animals, objects, texts, formulae or locations.

The designation of particular agencies on the one hand, and the emergence of a specific idiom whereby the relationships between these agencies may be expressed on the other, comprise what C. Severi and I have called the "work" of ritual.[29] This two-fold work constitutes the instrumental grounds for the characteristic efficacy of ceremonial performance: the provision of indisputable, highly integrative contexts in the light of which the myriad relationships that make up the participants' social world may be conventionally reappraised and redefined.

In this perspective, ritual efficacy may be understood as the emergence, subsequent to and beyond the ritual performance itself, of discourse and behaviour which, drawing upon the idiom this performance gives rise to and implicating the agencies designated in it, are predicated upon the relationships realized in the course of the ritual's execution. The occurrence of such speech and action tells the tale of the participants' commitment less to abstract 'beliefs', than to the ongoing reality of the relationships they ritually enact. According to this view, as a result of people's (central or peripheral) participation in ritual activities, the relationships acted out in the course of these activities—undying faithfulness, mutual responsibility, social recognition of change of status, subordination to legal authority and so forth in the case of marriage—are more easily entertained, in speech and conduct, as unquestionable references for the evaluation of particular persons and situations in the world at large. Indeed, once said and done, such evaluative items of discourse and action, while anchored in ritual experience, take on a life of their own, acquiring the distinctively naturalized, self-evident quality which is

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[29] See Houseman and Severi 1998, 254, 263.

the hallmark of everyday interaction. Ritual action, if it is efficacious, thus irreversibly affects ordinary intercourse in perceptible ways: the participants' overt behaviour attests to the fact that 'before' and 'after' are not the same. From this point of view, ritual is serious business: its efficacy is quite different from the gratification that results from playing (or observing) a game or from observing (or participating in) a spectacle.

According to this view, then, rituals do rather less than more. Specifically, they do not create anything *ex nihilo*. The presumed faithfulness of cohabitating couples, their joint responsibility towards each other and towards any children they may have, the distinctive ties with parents, friends and the government authorities this cohabitation implies, are, for example, as much premises as they are results of the modern Western marriage ceremony. However, what ritual does do is lend new life to such principles of relationship by grounding them in the largely irrefutable yet difficult-to-define experience afforded by the ritual performance itself. From this standpoint, ritual appears as a distinctive mode of cultural transmission geared to the organisation of action: it facilitates the ongoing relevance of certain cultural values and ideas by packaging them in the form of highly memorable relational enactments the experience of which provides participants with self-referential contexts in whose light these values and ideas may be justifiably put into effect.

Finally, it is worth remarking that in the perspective outlined here, it seems hardly accidental that ritual activities intervene, for the most part, in connection with situations in which a conventional revaluation of existing social connections is most vital, that is, in those relating to change and, notably, to relational change. In everyday circumstances, change generally takes place by means of incremental adjustments governed by linear feedback processes taking place between particular individuals or collectivities: as a person (or a collectivity) adopts new attitudes and patterns of behaviour, others respond by altering their own attitudes and behaviour towards him or her, alterations which, in turn, may prompt the person concerned to introduce still further modifications and so forth. The type of change or relational reappraisal mediated by ritual events is of a more holistic nature: when a youth undergoes initiation or when two people become married or when a sacrifice or a healing ritual is performed, it is an entire complex of interrelated relationships that are simultaneously affected and, in many cases, transformed. Whole

sets of new, interdependent social redefinitions are brought into play. On the one hand, change brought about through ritual entails a definite break: as has been mentioned, one of the hallmarks of ritual actions is that, for those who perform them, before and after are not the same. At the same time, however, in so far as such change implies a confirmation of a prior set of interconnections between the various persons (and other entities) involved, it corroborates the pre-existing order it presupposes. In short, in the type of recontextualization favoured by ritual action, local discontinuities (e.g. the change of social status entailed by becoming husband and wife) are systemically embedded within the predication of wider continuities (e.g. the system of social statuses as defined through connections with and between family members, friends, government representatives, etc.). This is not to say that such systemic revaluations can not take place in the absence of ritual, but only that ritual is particularly well-suited to bringing them about.

Conclusion

To sum up: by means of stipulated behaviour enacting highly evocative and fundamentally ambiguous relationships (entailing the condensation of opposites), structured by interactive patterning (overall form) and implying an inversion of certain pragmatic suppositions governing ordinary interaction (actions tend to inform dispositions rather than the other way around), ritual performances afford participants with the immediate, personal experience of highly integrative, extra-ordinary realities, sustained by self-reference and by the introduction of designated agencies and of special idioms (symbolism); in doing so, these performances provide the participants with largely unassailable contexts for the conventional reappraisal of the coordinate relationships that make up their social world.

Ritual has been envisaged here as a distinctive way of enacting relationships. As such, it is neither a straight-forward, objective feature of the world (a given item of behaviour is ritual regardless of how it is perceived), nor a purely subjective phenomena (anything can equally well be appreciated as ritual), but something in between. Specifically, ritual is one of what must surely be several basic organisational poles or attractors governing the perception and patterning of embodied social action.

According to this view, ritual is less a particular category of behaviour *per se* than it is an interrelated a set of interactive premises pertaining to intentionality, degree of systemic closure, the link between feeling and action, the constitutive attributes of relational condensation and so forth. Within the framework of any particular enactment, these pragmatic presuppositions may be intuitively entertained by individual participants to a greater or lesser degree: what is resolutely a ritual for some may, for example, be more of a spectacle for others. At the same time, however, the exigencies of ongoing coordinated action will tend to minimize such disparities, orienting participants' perceptual and performative expectations along similar lines. The closer these lines match those implied by the premises of ritual, the more their interaction gives rise to events having the qualities described above. Indeed, because ritual consists in a particular experience of relationships, its identification hinges essentially upon personal participation. It is impossible, for example, when witnessing an heretofore unknown sequence of behaviour from a totally detached standpoint, to determine whether this sequence is a ritual rather than, say, a game, a spectacle or a simply a peculiar instance of ordinary interaction. On the other hand, even the slightest active involvement in such an episode is often sufficient to allow one to correctly evaluate it in terms of these different interactive modes. Finally, it should be stressed that if ritual is indeed an elementary mode of communicative intention, it is hardly alone in this respect. Play and spectacle, for example, represent other, equally distinctive means of enacting relationships which, in many concrete situations, are associated with ritual and with each other in complex ways.[30] Recognition of this plurality is required if we are to go beyond the sacred/profane dichotomy (and its contemporary avatars) that continues to hold sway in the study of ritual.

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[30] See M. Houseman, "Vers un modèle anthropologique de la pratique psychothérapeutique", *Thérapie Familiale* 24 (2003), 309–332.

SEMIOTICS

Jens Kreinath

Preliminary Considerations

If one conceives of rituals as sign processes, as semiotics does, the questions arise (1) what concepts of signs can be used to analyze rituals, (2) what is characteristic of rituals, and (3) how do rituals differ from other forms of social action. It is necessary to specify what kind of sign processes rituals are and how they can be distinguished from other forms of action by their particular use of signs. The signs in ritual have to show by their usage that they follow their own logic and composition and thereby unfold their own dynamic and efficacy, which can be ascribed to them based on characteristics such as sequentiality, regularity, referentiality, or formality. Furthermore, it will be necessary to determine the extent to which rituals consist of an arrangement of sign processes that are related to one another in such a way that, through their interplay, they are unique and form a unity in their own right.

It has long been and continues to be common for semiotic approaches to ritual to use language as the primary model for analyzing and determining rituals as systems of signs; this is rooted in the fact that semiotics is usually identified with linguistics. Even though it seems evident that rituals differ from language, the various concepts of signs that are developed in modern linguistics have often been uncritically applied to the analysis of rituals. Justice cannot be done to the difference between language and ritual as long as linguistic concepts are used. This also accounts for the assumption that the use of signs in ritual performances is coded or that the meaning communicated in rituals follows a particular set of conventional rules (comparable to the rules of syntax). Even if rituals are instead compared with other forms of social action—say, to take the most prominent examples, with performing arts such as music, dance, and theater—one still has to guard against analyzing these forms within the restricted borders of linguistic parameters, because even here the very selection of linguistic concepts makes it impossible

to grasp the dynamic and efficacy in the performance of ritual actions that mark a peculiar difference between ritual and language.

In keeping with these considerations, the claim is that a semiotic approach to ritual theory has to establish concepts of signs that are capable of addressing rituals as a form of social praxis and of dealing with the actual performance of ritual actions. Unfortunately, there is still no established set of semiotics concepts for theorizing the pragmatics involved in the performance of ritual actions as it is developed in linguistics for analyzing spoken and written languages in terms of syntax and semantics.[1]

As long as such a set of concepts is not established capable of covering the pragmatics of ritual actions, the potential of semiotics for theorizing rituals remains limited and even questionable in its usefulness.[2] Although semiotics can be seen as an unresolved problem for ritual theory, it is nevertheless indispensable and its relevance for any attempt to theorize rituals can hardly be overemphasized once one acknowledges that this involves its own pragmatics of scholarly discourse which can itself be seen as a sign process in its own right.

The following discussion focuses on a selected number of paradigmatic approaches that are considered to be major contributions to a semiotics of ritual. By way of presenting them, the attempt is made to scrutinize these approaches and their conceptual framework in light of pragmatics as crucial for the semiotic analysis of ritual performances. In what follows, the consideration of different approaches, which also exemplify different versions of theory and theorizing,[3] will avoid privileging or presupposing a particular understanding or theory of semiotics from the outset or applying or imposing any one understanding to the possible approaches to theorize rituals by means of differing sign concepts; to do so would only compound the degree of abstraction by adding yet another approach to the many that have already attempted to advance a semiotics of ritual without first having established a set of related concepts so as to give a more valid account of the pragmatics of the ritual sign processes involved.

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[1] See, e.g., F. Staal, "The Sound of Religion", *Numen* 33 (1986), 33–64, 185–224, here, 35–36, 60–61.

[2] This even accounts for semiotic approaches that adopt the speech act theory. See, e.g., Tambiah 1968; Finnegan 1969; Ray 1973; Wheelock 1982; Schaller 1988.

[3] See also the respective considerations on theory and theorizing in the introductory essay to this volume.

What is at issue here is a scrutiny of the logics and pragmatics in the design of semiotic approaches to ritual, a scrutiny that proceeds by analyzing the various sign concepts and exploiting the implications these concepts have for the configuration of ritual theory as a field of scholarly research. Such scrutiny of a limited number of semiotic approaches to ritual on a meta-theoretical level focuses neither on the particular contexts of scholarly discourse nor on the general significance of empirical material on which the respective approaches are built,[4] but on the actual operations and procedures that are performed so as to conceptualize ritual performances as sign processes and to theorize rituals in terms of semiotics.

The argument presented in this article is subdivided in four sections to account for the different thematic issues that are addressed in the respective approaches. The first concerns 'the paradigm of linguistic signs and the structure of ritual sequences' and discusses the approach of Edmund Leach. The core of this approach is its identification of ritual with language in terms of syntax and semantics. The second section is on 'the meaning and performance of ritual symbols' and takes up the approaches of Clifford Geertz and Victor W. Turner. Here the focus is on the argument that the meaning of ritual symbols has to be seen as different from linguistic signs. The third section addresses 'the formalization and the sequentiality of ritual action' and takes up the approaches of Maurice Bloch and Frits Staal. At issue here is the claim that the form and meaninglessness of ritual action made from the vantage point of different theories of syntax. The fourth and final section deals with 'the performativity and indexicality of ritual symbols' and discusses the approaches of Roy A. Rappaport and Stanley J. Tambiah. It tackles the concept of indexical signs and its relation to the pragmatics of ritual actions and utterances.

The fact that the thematic focus in discussing the various issues is on what is commonly known as semantics (Section 2), syntax (Section 3) and pragmatics (Section 4) suggests that linguistics and its concepts of signs is a, if not *the*, crucial issue that binds together even competing approaches to ritual, regardless of their differences. By attending even to the differences among a wide range of semiotic approaches, the attempt will be made to sketch some theoretical parameters that are crucial for a semiotics of ritual. The critical

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[4] See Kreinath 2004b, 101–103.

scrutiny of the four paradigmatic approaches will finally lead to the introduction of the concept of the index as an alternative concept that is with regard to it formal features capable of theorizing the pragmatic dimension in the performance of ritual actions without presupposing or privileging any linguistic concept of sign.

Four Semiotic Approaches to Ritual

1. *The Paradigm of Linguistic Signs and the Structure of Ritual Sequences*

In the 1960s and 1970s, the French tradition of structural linguistics, structuralism, and semiology established the paradigm for anthropological research that all cultures and cultural phenomena can be understood as systems of signs.[5] This tradition considered language as the primary semiotic system, and linguistics as a paradigmatic discipline in terms of which all cultural phenomena could be analyzed. As a consequence of the enthusiastic reception of this line of inquiry, linguistics was applied to various fields of research. Ultimately, the paradigm of linguistic signs as championed by the French tradition of structuralism and semiology also became the point of departure for various approaches to ritual theory. On the assumption of the universal applicability of the concepts of linguistic signs, the structural analogy between language and ritual was conceptually presupposed and further elaborated.[6] It was Edmund Leach who prominently introduced the paradigm of the linguistic sign into ritual theory and used it to analyze the structure of ritual sequences in terms of syntax and semantics.

Based on the principles of structural anthropology and semiology, Leach conceives of rituals as "a language in a quite literal sense".[7] Thus for him, rituals follow rules of syntax that are comparable to the grammar of language. He assumes that signs used in ritual have in analogy to linguistic signs their function and meaning through the position that they occupy in relation to all other signs and to which

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[5] See, e.g., C. Lévi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology* (1958), trans. C. Jacobsen and B.G. Schoepf (London, 1968); R. Barthes, *Elements of Semiology* (1964), trans. A. Lavers and C. Smith (London, 1967).

[6] See, e.g., Lawson 1976; Fernandez 1977. See also Lévi-Strauss' (1990) discussion on ritual; for further considerations on this issue, see Smith 1982 and the essay by Severi in this volume.

[7] Leach 1968, 524.

they are—along the axis of syntagmata and paradigmata[8]—set in a particular relation in accordance with the rules of an underlying grammar. This derives from Leach's famous semiotic premise: "The elements of the ritual ('the letters of the alphabet') do not mean anything in themselves; they come to have meaning by virtue of contrast with other elements."[9] To discover the meaning and function of the particular signs in ritual, Leach contends that it is necessary to determine the rules that these signs follow in ritual and non-ritual contexts.[10] Only after determining these rules as the syntax of the 'unknown language' (of non-verbal communication), it is possible for him to disclose the meaning and function of the particular signs within the ritual context.

Leach perceives of rituals as systems of communication, which include verbal and non-verbal forms of communication.[11] To determine the communicative aspect of rituals, he identifies two aspects that are involved in every action: "a technical aspect which does something and an aesthetic, communicative aspect which says something".[12] Based on this assumption, Leach correlates language and (ritual) action as forms of social communication and presupposes that all forms of human behavior function and work like a language. Furthermore, he claims that, "the term ritual is best used to denote this communicative aspect of behavior".[13] In all ritual forms of human behavior, he regards the communicative (and aesthetic) aspect as dominant without actually denying that there is also a technical aspect to ritual.

Applying this assumption to the analysis of rituals, Leach says that they "are organised in patterned sets so as to incorporate coded information in a manner analogous to the sounds and words and sentences of a natural language".[14] It is assumed that the information that is transmitted in the performance of ritual actions is culturally

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[8] Here, Leach follows the work of Roman Jakobson who applied the linguistic paradigm to all kinds of semiotic systems. See R. Jakobson, "Two Aspects of Language and Two Types of Aphasia", R. Jakobson and M. Halle, *Fundamentals of Language* (Janua Linguarum, Series Minor 1; The Hague, Paris, New York 1952), 69–96, here, 90–96. See also Leach 1976, 25.

[9] Leach 1976, 95.

[10] See Leach 1968.

[11] See Leach 1976, 43.

[12] Leach 1968, 523.

[13] Leach 1968, 524.

[14] Leach 1976, 10.

coded. Only someone who knows the codes of ritual communication by which the information is transmitted is able to understand what is communicated in ritual and what is 'said' in the particular sequence of a ritual action. The message is given with the very structure of the ritual, which consists of particular sequences of ritual action. This information, which constitutes the message of a ritual, is simultaneously transmitted through different sensory channels. Leach describes this process in analogy to the performance of a symphony as the interplay of different but composite musical instruments.[15]

For him the message of a ritual is not to be found in the particular sequences of ritual action but in the way in which they are interrelated. Insofar as sequences of ritual action are repeated and different channels of communication are used for transmitting the same information, redundancy emerges. According to Leach, this is necessary for the transmission of the message of a ritual because the signs in ritual may carry multiple meanings. This is due to symbolic condensation, a process by which religious ideas are materially represented in visual signs and symbols.[16] Only because of redundancy the meaning of the symbolically condensed ideas can be determined: "In any event, in ritual sequences the ambiguity latent in the symbolic condensation tends to be eliminated again by the device of thematic repetition and variation."[17]

The crucial problem in Leach's approach is his presupposition that the structure of language is inherent to ritual in the form of syntax and semantics, which function in the same way as in language and serve the same communicative purposes. This critique can be specified with regard to the following issues: 1) it is one message that is transmitted through different channels of communication; 2) nonverbal communication is a mode of communication without words that functions in the same way as language; 3) all forms of action are distinguishable based on the ideal types of technique and communication as the equivalent to transformation and expression; and 4) the actor's point of view is principally inadequate.

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[15] Leach argues that "a performance of orchestral music provides a helpful prototype model of what goes on in any kind of ritual sequence" (Leach 1976, 41). See also Leach 1976, 43–45.

[16] See Leach 1976, 37–39.

[17] Leach 1966, 408.

First, while Leach considers redundancy peculiar to the ritual performance, he is convinced that rituals have to be theorized in keeping with the paradigm of linguistic signs. Yet his assumption (that the same message is transmitted through different sensory channels) needs to be examined more closely. He assumes that non-verbal communication follows the same rules as verbal communication and is therefore capable of transmitting the same information. On this view, non-verbal communication would merely duplicate the information that would be in itself redundant if communicated verbally and probably could be transmitted more effectively through verbal communication. If the performance of ritual actions were regarded only as a means of non-verbal communication and the same message could be transmitted through different channels of communication, it would not be constitutive but merely ornamental inasmuch as the non-verbally transmitted message could also be more easily transmitted verbally.

Secondly, the performance of ritual actions would not only be redundant but also quite ineffective because one and the same message would need to be transmitted through different channels of communication. In this regard, it is highly questionable whether rituals have the capacity to communicate the same message either by way of saying or by way of doing. Nevertheless, Leach assumes that ritual has literally to be seen as a language and that the smallest elements of it are like the letters of the alphabet of a still unknown language. Here it is obvious just how far he goes in subsuming even the forms of non-verbal communication under the structural model of language. Because he assumes that the paradigm of the linguistic sign is applicable to all forms of communication, he cannot avoid annihilating the differences between language and ritual or, in his terms, between verbal and non-verbal communication.

Thirdly, by the same token, it is problematic that Leach not only models the forms of non-verbal communication on the linguistic paradigm but also divides all aspects of human behavior into two ideal types, the technical and the communicative. The technical aspect of human behavior is understood to be the transformation of physical reality, whereas the communicative aspect is understood to be the expression of the social status of the actors. Insofar as Leach characterizes ritual as the communicative aspect of human behavior, it is impossible to specify what is peculiar to ritual. Since Leach conceives

of ritual only in communicative terms, it is clear that he identifies the ritual exclusively with the expressive and not with the transformative aspect of human behavior.[18]

Finally, even though Leach considers each sequence of a ritual to be open to a number of interpretations—as he admits "the same ritual sequence of behavior may mean different things to different people"[19]—he does not take the emic perspective seriously since he assumes that in principle "the actor's own view is inadequate".[20] In other words, for Leach the actor does not really know what he communicates, neither verbally nor non-verbally. In this regard, Leach assumes that even though rituals have the power to transform the actors' point of view, they predominantly serve communicative purposes and (rather accidentally) change the social status of the actor, for the ritual "serves to express the status of the actor vis-à-vis his environment, both physical and social; it may also alter the status of the actor".[21]

2. *The Meaning and Performance of Ritual Symbols*

When the paradigm of linguistic signs and the assumption of its universal applicability became questionable, the possibility basing a semiotics of ritual on structuralist or semiological presuppositions were called into question. Once the analogy between language and ritual became problematic, the use of the linguistic concepts of signs for the theorization of rituals became less common and the concept of the symbol came to the fore; it promised to give a better account of the ambiguity and multiplicity of meanings involved in ritual performances. In this vein, the symbol was regarded either as a more general category that is able to include linguistic signs or as an alternative category that permits the opposition of (ritual) symbols to (linguistic) signs. Moreover, it had the potential to focus on the

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[18] This form of auto-communication in ritual becomes clear from the following passages: "When we participate in ritual we 'say' things to ourselves" (Leach 1976, 43); or: "We engage in rituals in order to transmit collective messages to ourselves" (Leach 1976, 45). It should be noted that Leach does not take the intentionality of the actors into consideration because he does not distinguish between ritual action and behavior.

[19] Leach 1976, 43. Even though Leach touches here on the pragmatic aspects of the attribution of meaning to ritual behavior, he cannot take these aspects into account because he neglects the emic point of view.

[20] Leach 1968, 523.

[21] Leach 1968, 525.

performance of ritual actions, which was taken as a starting point for exploring the meaning of ritual symbols within their particular context of use. Clifford Geertz and Victor W. Turner attempted to analyze rituals in terms of semiotics that reaches beyond linguistics. They focused upon the performance of ritual actions by questioning the universality of linguistic signs and not taking the ritual sequences as linguistic propositions.

Geertz developed his approach to ritual as part of his semiotic theory of culture. He conceives of culture essentially as a system of symbols that is "an historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life".[22] For Geertz, the concept of symbol is not limited to language; every object, action, event, property, or relation can become a symbol if it is perceived as the visible expression of a conception. He is not concerned with the symbols themselves so much as with the meaning of symbols, that is, a culturally coded conception. Geertz therefore considers culture also as a texture or a 'web of meaning', which can be read like a text. In order to understand the native's point of view, he bases his approach on what he calls a 'thick description'.[23] In this regard, his approach proves to be a hermeneutic one that is dialogically oriented so as "to aid us in gaining access to the conceptual world in which our subjects live so that we can . . . converse with them".[24]

Within the framework of a semiotic theory of culture, Geertz relates rituals explicitly to religion.[25] He takes ritual to be so constitutive of religion that it is almost synonymous with his concept of religion.[26] This becomes clear when one considers that Geertz understands

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[22] Geertz 1966, 3.

[23] See Geertz 1973, 3–30, here 14. In Geertz's interpretative approach, theory plays a specific role; according to him, "the essential task of theory here is not to codify abstract regularities but to make thick description possible, not to generalize across cases but to generalize within them" (Geertz 1973, 26).

[24] Geertz 1973, 24.

[25] For a shift in conceiving rituals as having exclusive religious connotations, see Moore and Myerhoff 1977. For a discussion see also J.G. Platvoet, "Ritual as War. On the Need to De-Westernize the Concept", Kreinath *et al.* (eds) 2004, 243–266, here, 252–255. See also the contribution by Platvoet to this volume.

[26] Geertz's definition of religion reads as follows: religion is "(1) a system of symbols which acts to (2) establish powerful, persuasive, and long-standing moods and motivations in men by (3) formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and (4) clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that (5) the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic" (Geertz 1966, 4).

rituals as 'consecrated behavior' within which the conviction is built that "religious conceptions are veridical and that religious directives are sound is somehow generated".[27] As he puts it "the imbuing of a certain specific complex of symbols . . . with a persuasive authority" is the 'essence' of religious action; and it is the 'really real' as generated in rituals "upon which the religious perspective rests and which the symbolic activities of religion as a cultural system are devoted to producing, intensifying, and . . . rendering".[28]

Following Milton Singer,[29] Geertz views rituals as cultural performances (or as semiotically coded events), to which—depending on the context and the perspective with regard to the participants—different meanings are attributed.[30] Whereas an observer may perceive a ritual performance as the expression of a religious perspective, actors and participants would experience the same performance due to their religious convictions as the manifestation of the 'really real', of which the authority is presupposed in the course of the ritual performance.[31] Depending on the different perspectives, Geertz regards rituals as models not only *of* but also *for* (social) reality. From the native's point of view, both models are fused and transposed in the performance of ritual: "By inducing a set of moods and motivations—an ethos—and defining an image of cosmic order—a world view—by means of a single set of symbols, the performance makes the model *of* and the model *for* aspects of religious belief mere transpositions of one another."[32] In this symbolic fusion and transposition of ethos and worldview, the conception of the 'really real' is created: "In a ritual, the world as lived and the world as imagined, fused under the agency of a single set of symbolic forms, turns out to be the same world."[33] Needless to say, Geertz's concept of a 'model *of* ' and 'model *for*' reality presupposes particular notions of meaning and efficacy as well as semantics and pragmatics.

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[27] Geertz 1966, 28.
[28] Geertz 1966, 28.
[29] See, e.g., M. Singer, "The Great Tradition in a Metropolitan Center: Madras", M. Singer (ed.), *Traditional India. Structure and Change* (Philadelphia, 1959), 140–182; M. Singer, "On the Semiotics of Indian Identity", *American Journal of Semiotics* 1 (1981), 85–126.
[30] See also Leach 1976, 16.
[31] Geertz writes: "The acceptance of authority that underlies the religious perspective that the ritual embodies thus flows from the enactment of the ritual itself" (Geertz 1966, 34).
[32] Geertz 1966, 34.
[33] Geertz 1966, 28.

The central problem of Geertz's approach to ritual lies in his guiding principles of how the concepts of symbol and culture are determined in relation to religion and ritual and how these principles follow the methodological presuppositions that are made on the basis of the categorical distinction between the emic and etic perspective. This critique becomes apparent when one considers that: 1) due to the emphasis on meaning in the concepts of symbol and culture, Geertz is not able to account for the theoretical implication of his pragmatic approach; 2) the categorical distinction between the emic and etic perspective as perpetuated in the distinction between actor and observer necessarily leads to a dichotomization of semantics and pragmatics as well as of thought and action; and 3) due to the fact that semantics and not pragmatics is taken as the conceptual frame of reference, Geertz continues to perpetuate a linguistic model by taking the text and narrative as the theoretical framework for analyzing culture and religion as webs of meaning.

First, without doubt, one of the advantages of Geertz's approach to ritual is the emphasis he places on the specific contexts of ritual action. The meaning of ritual symbols varies due to the respective contexts and situations.[34] If this assumption were taken seriously, it would not be possible to argue that the meaning of ritual symbols can be determined independently of the particular contexts and situations of their respective performance. This means that neither the scholarly observer's etic nor the religious actor's emic interpretations can (according to Geertz's theoretical design) be analyzed independently of the particular setting in which it emerges. It is this issue that gives rise to the idea of the thick description; however, it is one of the most striking shortcomings of Geertz's approach to ritual that he reduces the flux of shifting perspectives and standpoints to the concept of the 'really real' by stressing the categorical difference between the emic and etic perspective, a difference that is drawn out in reference to the distinction between the religious actor and the scholarly observer.[35]

Secondly, although Geertz clearly emphasizes the pragmatic dimension in the performance of ritual actions, he is not able to solve the

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[34] See, e.g., Geertz 1980. For a critique of Geertz, see Bloch 1987. On Geertz and Bloch see Gellner 1999 and also the essay by Rao in this volume.

[35] For a discussion of this issue, see Platvoet, "Ritual as War", 245–249. On the shift in perspective, see also Kreinath 2004a, 271.

dichotomy between semantics and pragmatics or, as Catherine Bell has put it, between thought and action.[36] Because Geertz presupposes (or better, perpetuates) the categorical distinction between observer and actor in his approach to ritual, he inscribes the dichotomy between the meaning of and the efficacy in the performance of ritual actions in his attempt to analyze rituals as cultural performances without taking account of the conceptual consequences of these categorical bifurcations. For him, ritual performances are conceived of as a mode of action in which (at least, for the religious actor) the notion (or conception) of the 'really real' is generated through the fusion of the 'model of' and 'model for', but which are categorically distinct from the theoretical perspective of observation (and representation) in which the meaning and efficacy in the performance of ritual actions are separable from one another.[37]

   Thirdly, even though Geertz assumes that the actors of cultural performances are able to tell their story to themselves (and to others),[38] it is only the scholarly observer who is able to 'read' the performance of ritual actions and its (emic) representation as a text or narrative, that is, as a web of meaning. While the emic interpretations of a ritual performance as given by the actors are taken seriously, it is telling that Geertz is almost exclusively concerned with the semantics (as presented in its narrative mode of representation)[39] and not with the pragmatics in the performance of ritual actions.[40] This is due to the fact that he focuses his analysis on the emic conceptions as revealed by the scholarly observer as the meaning of the symbols. Insofar as Geertz focuses primarily on the meaning of cultural performances (and its emic viewpoint), it becomes impossible for him to correlate thought and action in such a way that the meaning (or representation) of the performance of ritual actions is considered to

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[36] See Bell 1992, 195–196, 211–212.

[37] Therefore, Geertz argues that the concept of the cultural performance can provide a focus for analyzing religious ceremonies as they "represent not only the point at which the dispositional and conceptual aspects of religious life converge for the believer, but also the point at which the interaction between them can be most readily examined by the detached observer" (Geertz 1966, 29).

[38] See also Geertz's analysis of the Balinese cockfight (Geertz 1973, 412–453).

[39] For a critique, see V. Crapanzano, "Hermes' Dilemma. The Masking of Subversion in Ethnographic Description", J. Clifford and G.E. Marcus (eds), *Writing Culture. The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography* (Berkeley, 1986), 51–76, here, 68–75.

[40] From the foregoing it becomes clear that it is more important for Geertz what the symbols in a ritual performance say than what they do.

be something that is neither separable from its particular contexts and situations nor different from the pragmatics of representing or performing ritual actions. Because Geertz establishes the dichotomy between thought and action through the categorical distinction between observer and actor, it becomes clear that he is not able to carry through pragmatics as the theoretical framework for his thick description and its multiplicity of perspectives; due to his focus on meaning, he sticks to the paradigm of linguistic signs and their mode of textual representation.

In a similar vein, Turner developed an approach to ritual that is based on the assumption that the actual meaning of a symbol becomes apparent only within the context of its use—the ritual performance. For him, rituals are forms of symbolic action that are performed to solve the conflicts and crises in the social relations of a community. The conceptual framework of his approach was predominantly shaped by his earlier work on the Ndembu.[41] Based on his notion of the 'social drama' and of the *rites des passages*, Turner conceives of all rituals as processes of transition and transformation wherein symbols play a crucial role for the negotiation and re-negotiation of social relations.[42] Symbols are taken as 'building blocks' or 'molecules' of ritual performances: "The symbol is the smallest unit of ritual which still retains the specific properties of ritual behavior; it is the ultimate unit of specific structure in a ritual context."[43] In other words, symbols are those units in the performance of ritual actions by which the modes of signification are distinguishable from those of everyday communication. In this respect, rituals are defined as "prescribed formal behavior for occasions not given over to technological routine, having reference to beliefs in mystical beings or powers".[44]

Due to the existence of different modes of signification, Turner distinguishes between symbols in ritual performance and signs in everyday communication. Even though he questions the paradigm

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[41] See, e.g., the earlier studies: V.W. Turner, *Schism and Continuity in an African Society. A Study of Ndembu Village Life* (Manchester, 1957); V.W. Turner, *Ndembu Divination. Its Symbolism and Techniques* (Rhodes-Livingston Paper 31; Manchester 1961); see also V.W. Turner, "Three Symbols of *Passage* in Ndembu Circumcision Ritual. An Interpretation", M. Gluckman (ed.), *Essays on the Ritual of Social Relations* (Manchester, 1962), 124–173.

[42] See Turner, *Schism and Continuity*, 161; V.W. Turner 1974c, 61–62. For a discussion of Turner see also Kapferer 1979.

[43] V.W. Turner 1967, 19; see also Turner 1969, 14; Turner 1974b, 1.

[44] V.W. Turner 1967, 19.

of structural linguistics and its focus on verbal communication, he still employs its main distinctions.[45] To this concept of sign he ascribes the conventional relationship between signifier and signified, while determining symbols as based on the similarity, analogy, and association between them.[46] Moreover, signs are regarded as univocal, simple, and unambiguous, while symbols are held to be multivocal, complex, and ambiguous. Signs transmit information in everyday communication, while symbols are involved on various levels in the performance of ritual actions.[47]

According to Turner, ritual symbols involve a twofold structure. They have the capacity to condense different meanings due to their binary polarity. Here he distinguishes between an emotional (or bodily) and a normative (or ideological) pole. In contrast to linguistic signs, symbols are capable of uniting disparate meanings and presenting them simultaneously. The semantic field of a symbol emerges in the tension between these two poles, to which different meanings are attributed and which are reciprocally charged. Because ritual symbols carry—through analogy and association—many meanings, they can also be combined and related to one another in different ways. They address different themes, and the same theme can be addressed by different symbols.[48] Due to their bipolar structure, as Turner argues, symbols trigger social actions and transform the social relations of a community.

It is important to recall that Turner views the performance of a ritual action as 'dramatic unity'. Due to the fact that symbols processually condense, unite, and relate a multiplicity of different meanings, the ritual performance is conceived as a dramatic unity with a climactic structure, wherein there occurs an exchange of properties between the opposite poles of symbols. In this context, Turner also uses the concept of the cathartic effect in the ritual process to emphasize that the social relations of a community are transformed by the

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[45] See V.W. Turner 1974c, 53–54.

[46] Turner conceives symbols "both as sensory perceptible vehicles (*signifiants*) and as sets of 'meanings' (*signifiés*)" (Turner 1974c, 55); see also F. de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics* (1915), trans. W. Baskin (New York, 1959). For a critique, see Bloch 1974, 55.

[47] See, e.g., V.W. Turner, "Symbols in African Ritual", *Science* 179 (1973), 1100–1105, here, 1100.

[48] See Turner, "Three Symbols of *Passage*", 125; Turner, "Symbols in African Ritual", 1101.

dynamic interplay of ritual symbols. He is therefore convinced that the actual meaning of a ritual symbol—which varies in every performance—is only accessible in the particular context of its usage.[49] Although the actual meaning may depend on (and is determined by) the respective contexts of the ritual performance and is charged differently in every performance, Turner contends that—due to the multivocality of the symbols and their bipolar structure—the potential meaning of a symbol cannot be exhausted. In each context, new meanings emerge and the internal dynamics of the ritual performance launch the attachment of new meanings to the respective symbol in use.

It is noteworthy that Turner focuses almost exclusively on the liminal phase of the ritual process in which the modes of everyday communication are bracketed and the stratification of social hierarchy is loosened.[50] It is only the liminal phase in which the modes of signification are transformed and symbols are introduced, combined and re-combined in a number of ways. Turner conceives of this liminal phase as a form of meta-communication where the rules and codes of everyday communication are reflexively called into question.[51] This form of communication is limited to the liminal phase and is characterized by the realm of the possible, or the subjunctive mode of the 'as if', in which new possibilities of social relations are conceptualized through the experimental play of symbols within the flow of the ritual process.[52] He traces this mode of bracketing of everyday modes of signification back to the fact that ritual performances consist of an orchestration of a broad range of performative genres

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[49] Obviously, Turner is interested in the meaning of symbols as it becomes apparent in the performance of ritual actions. However, he distinguishes between the three levels of meaning: *the exegetical*, which regards the potential (or abstract) meaning of a symbol, *the operational*, which regards the meaning of a symbol within the particular context of its usage, and *the positional*, which regards the position of a symbol in the worldview of a community. Moreover, Turner identifies these levels of meaning also with the linguistic distinctions between syntax, semantics, and pragmatics. See, e.g., Turner, "Three Symbols of *Passage*", 125; Turner, "Symbols in African Ritual", 1103; Turner 1974c, 53.

[50] See V.W. Turner 1967, 95–99; Turner 1969, 94–97; Turner 1974c, 56–60; Turner 1977, 33–34.

[51] See V.W. Turner 1977, 34, 48–49; Turner 1984, 22–24, 26–28.

[52] See V.W. Turner 1984, 20–21. Turner writes: "Liminality is full of potency and potentiality. It may also be full of experiment and play. There may be a play of ideas, a play of words, a play of symbols, a play of metaphors. In it, play's the thing" (Turner 1977, 33).

in which a variety of different codes is used and all forms of sense perception are involved.[53] Turner admits that ritual performances are framed by particular rules, but these rules are by no means rigid, fixed, or stereotypical; rather, they are open for improvisation, manipulation, and negotiation, for they are not only part of the ritual process but can also be called into question.[54] This implies that every ritual performance has its own dynamic, yet it also implies the very possibility of change inasmuch as each performance not only resonates or responds to the reality of social relations but also reshapes and prefigures the possibilities of establishing and re-establishing the various forms of social relations.

One main difficulty with Turner's approach to ritual is that he presupposes linguistic concepts of signs to theorize the performance of ritual actions, as well as the meaning of ritual symbols, even though he draws a categorical distinction between signs (in everyday communication) and symbols (in ritual action) without introducing concepts that are capable of overcoming the conceptual dichotomies between sign and symbol. This critique crystallizes around three issues: 1) he continuously uses—despite his strong objections to language as an appropriate model for the theorization of rituals—linguistics as the conceptual framework for distinguishing between signifier and signified and between sign and symbol; 2) because he relies on the dichotomy between sign and symbol (and between language and ritual respectively) as derived from linguistics, he is unable to develop concepts to question and eventually overcome the linguistic paradigm; and 3) he thereby subverts his own attempt to elaborate an approach to ritual that theoretically accounts for the pragmatics of ritual performances.

First, Turner's approach is based on his disposal of the assumption that the performance of ritual actions transmits any information or particular messages akin to forms of verbal communication. For him, the meaning of ritual symbols is not to be found in mental conceptions but in social relations in the context of ritual performances.[55] Although he aims to emphasize the specificity of ritual

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[53] See V.W. Turner 1977, 35; Turner 1984, 25.
[54] See V.W. Turner 1974c, 61; Turner 1977, 44.
[55] Because Turner is concerned with ritual performances as processes for transforming social relations, he conceives of symbols not in terms of meaning as conceptions, as Geertz does, but rather in terms of dynamic and efficacious factors in establishing social relations.

in terms of its dynamic and efficacy in establishing and transforming social relations, he succumbs to a conceptual shortcoming when he simply adopts the opposed concepts of sign and symbol from linguistics in order to situate these differences within his theoretical framework. The distinction between sign and symbol is already problematic on a conceptual level because it identifies signs exclusively with the forms of verbal communication and symbols with the performance of ritual action and therefore tends to dichotomize sign and symbol, as well as verbal communication and ritual action—if not communication and action and semantics and pragmatics respectively.[56] Moreover, by applying linguistic concepts such as syntax, semantics, and pragmatics to the analysis of ritual performances,[57] it becomes clear that Turner naively presupposes the paradigm of linguistic signs even when he claims to reject it.

As a consequence, Turner is, secondly, unable to conceptualize how the modes of signification in everyday communication are bracketed, how they are transformed through the transition in the performance of ritual actions, and how ritual performances are able to transform social relations outside ritual. To relate these different modes of signification (and communication) to one another, it would be necessary, for example, also to take such forms of action and communication into account as everyday action and ritual communication as well as the various transitions between them.[58] Yet, based on the distinction just outlined, it is not possible to relate the forms of ritual and everyday communication clearly to one another or even to contrast the performance of ritual actions with other forms of social action, which may also have the capacity to transform social relations. That is to say, insofar as Turner conceives of symbols as factors in the contexts of social action,[59] it remains unclear what is

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[56] As a form of symbolic communication, Turner conceives of ritual action primarily in terms of non-verbal communication.

[57] Turner even confounds the differences between syntax, semantics, and pragmatics. Semantics cannot be regarded as identical with the lexical exegesis of textual sources; the notion of the positional meaning of symbols is quite different from the notion of syntax as the (use of) grammatical rules in forming meaningful propositions. His notion of the positional meaning instead presupposes the concept of *langue* as an abstract system of signs in which the meaning is based on the difference between the respective signs; it radically differs from the concept of *parole*, which concerns the pragmatics of spoken language.

[58] For a general critique of privileging only this mode of signification, see also Babcock 1978, 292.

[59] See V.W. Turner 1967, 20; Turner 1974c, 55–56.

peculiar to ritual. And by taking these considerations seriously, it becomes obvious that the difference between ritual and language is based conceptually on the dichotomies derived from linguistics through the simple reversal without further conceptual refinement.

Thirdly, although Turner makes a strong plea at the level of analysis and description for the pragmatics of ritual performances, he falls short in terms of the theoretical conclusions that he derives from the results of his analyses and descriptions. Even though he stresses that social relations contextually condition the meaning of ritual symbols, he nevertheless fails to determine the relation between the semantics of ritual symbols and the pragmatics of ritual performances. Even though he makes clear, for example, that the cathartic effect of ritual performances is established only through the interplay of the emotional and normative poles of the ritual symbols, it remains unclear how the relation between ritual symbols and ritual performances is specified. He merely presupposes that symbols trigger social action and become meaningful within the particular contexts of social relations.

3. *Formalization and the Sequentiality of Ritual Action*

As it should have become clear from the foregoing discussion, in placing almost exclusive emphasis on the contextual meaning of ritual performances, those approaches that based their main theoretical argument on the concept of the symbol ended up conceiving of rituals once again as similar to language and failed to see that they remained caught up in the theoretical parameters of linguistics. The crucial problem with these approaches is that they even regard ritual symbols as similar to linguistic signs insofar as they consider symbols to be meaningful units; in doing so, they set aside and neglect all formal characteristics by means of which sequences or sequential patterns of ritual action are related to one another. This problem is taken up by those approaches that explicitly reject the assumption that rituals can express, articulate, or transmit any proposition in a way comparable to language. These approaches were developed by Maurice Bloch and Frits Staal. Both scrutinize the semantic implications of linguistic parameters in the assumption that rituals can be analyzed as symbolic actions. On the assumption that ritual actions follow one another sequentially, they both inquire into whether and how the relations between them can be analyzed in terms of syntax. Whereas Bloch focuses on the process of formalization and the

features of articulation and argues that ritual utterances and actions become meaningless relative to their degree of formalization, Staal is concerned with the meaninglessness of ritual activity and claims that ritual actions are meaningless because they simply follow rules that have no meaning. Although both approaches focus on whether and how the forms of ritual actions matter, it is striking that they still presuppose, once again, linguistics and theories of syntax as their theoretical framework.

Bloch first elaborates his approach to ritual in the context of his analysis of the various forms of traditional authority by focusing on the linguistic "features of articulation".[60] Here he presupposes a framework that assumes that syntax and semantics cannot be studied independently because they are intrinsically interrelated.[61] Therefore, Bloch conceives of meaning as inherently related to propositions that are generated by the rules of syntax. He contends that meaning is conditioned by the possibilities of syntax to articulate a proposition in more than one way. Maintaining that a meaningful proposition is related to the possibility of choice,[62] he stresses that meaning ultimately depends on what he calls the "creativity of syntax".[63] Such creativity is said to decrease when language becomes formalized and its inherent possibilities of choice are restricted by the imposition of a formal code. Due to the identity of syntax and semantics, the process of formalization reduces the creativity of syntax and the meaning of such propositions respectively.[64] Besides these implications, the process of formalization offers Bloch also another, more significant aspect. In the process of formalization, the medium of communication is transformed in such a way that the language loses its argumentative force while its performative force increases. It is this

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[60] Bloch 1974.

[61] For the linguistic argument of the identity of syntax and semantics that Bloch presupposes (1974, 55–56), see J.C. Fillmore, "Entailment Rules in a Semantic Theory", J.F. Rosenberg and C. Travis (eds), *Readings in the Philosophy of Language* (Englewood Cliffs, 1971), 533–547. For further discussion see the contributions in J.C. Fillmore and D.T. Langoenden (eds), *Studies in Linguistic Semantics* (New York, 1971).

[62] Bloch 1974, 65–66.

[63] Bloch 1974, 56, 62.

[64] It is important to note that Bloch regards the process of formalization as based on a continuous scale between the two extremes of meaning and meaninglessness, that is to say, meaninglessness is conceived of as the end of a process of transformation, which begins with formalization and ends with meaningless forms. See Bloch 1974, 60–61.

pragmatic implication that makes for Bloch linguistic theory applicable in the analysis of the performance of ritual utterances and actions.

Although Bloch states that the performance of ritual action is not a form of language, he tries to show how the possibilities of choice are reduced by means of a formal code in performing ritual songs and dances.[65] Moreover, he argues that through the process of formalization, ritual songs and dances are charged with performative power, which means that in the performance of ritual actions and utterances, the participants are forced to accept a formal code and, by not being able to reject it or resist to it, they accept the authority through the ritual performance by following the prescribed code.[66] This form of authority is established through this process of formalization and the introduction of a formal code. For Bloch, it is thus necessary to focus on the features of articulation and the processes of formalization through which the medium of communication is transformed. Bloch also traces the establishment of traditional authority back to the fact that ritual songs and dances are mechanisms by which the propositional meaning of ritual utterances is disconnected from the 'real world'. Therefore, the ritual symbols are continuously 'drifting out of meaning' and turn into ambivalent objects through the process of formalization.[67] Thus rituals establish forms of traditional authority through the process of formalization and by transforming the medium of communication into something else. In doing so, they simultaneously hide reality, which would—according to Bloch—be accessible only through discursive language.[68]

For Bloch it is important to look not at what rituals say but rather what they do, because they neither do what they say nor say what they do. Moreover, he assumes that ritual utterances and actions are intrinsically interrelated and combine the characteristics of both statements and actions, and therefore cannot be studied separately.[69] Bloch's main argument here is that rituals do not follow the syntax

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[65] See Bloch 1974, 69–73.
[66] See Bloch 1974, 62, 67–68.
[67] See Bloch 1974, 74.
[68] See Bloch 1974, 66–67.
[69] Bloch writes: "The problem lies in the fact that rituals are neither an exposition of the knowledge of the people studied: a statement; nor are they actions whose meaning lies simply in their performance. Rituals are events that *combine the properties of statements and actions*. It is because of this combination that their analysis has proved endlessly elusive" (Bloch 1986, 181—emphasis in the original [JK]).

or rules of grammar but instead pursue the rigid and meaningless prescription of a formal code. Due to the loss of the creativity of syntax and its inherent possibilities of choice, ritual utterances and actions become objects.[70] Because of the sequentiality of ritual acts and utterances their only means of emphasis in persuasively establishing authority is repetition and redundancy, which charge ritual actions with performative force and endow them with an emotionally and socially binding power.[71] The efficacy of performing ritual actions and utterances is thus based on their being repetitious and redundant.

The main critique of Bloch's approach to ritual centers on his presupposition that language is a semiotic system that is superior to all other systems of signs. From this follows that he: 1) takes linguistics as an exclusive frame of reference and applies the results of his analysis of the linguistic features of articulation as theoretical framework to the study of ritual actions; 2) claims that there is a continuous transition from propositional meaning to relative meaninglessness in the establishment of the formal code in ritual performances; 3) introduces, with his emphasis of the possibility of choice and the creativity of syntax, a double concept of meaning; 4) categorically opposes the creativity of syntax in articulating linguistic utterances and the redundancy of sequences in performing ritual actions.

First, Bloch's contribution to the theorization of rituals establishes a conceptual framework for a rigorous analysis of the form of ritual performances, but it is problematic insofar as he privileges language as the primary semiotic system. Because he is convinced that only language has a logical and discursive capacity for rational argumentation, he regards it as the sole tool for the critical scrutiny of the various forms of 'traditional authority'. As a consequence, his analysis is focused mainly on the linguistic features of articulation, which are applied to the analysis of ritual performances only subsequently. Although his theoretical framework is sound with regard to the analysis of linguistic propositions, it contains inconsistencies, which become apparent in its application to the analysis of ritual performances.

From this it follows, secondly, that although Bloch presupposes a continuous scale between two extremes without specifying how the gradations between them are conditioned by increasing and decreasing possibilities of choice, it remains unclear how the specific degrees

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[70] See Bloch 1974, 75.
[71] See Bloch 1974, 76.

of meaning and meaninglessness in the process of formalization are determined based on the possibility of choice. While his argument concerning the relation between the process of formalization and the reduction of possibilities with regard to linguistic propositions is convincing, it remains questionable how the transition from the creativity of syntax to the acceptance of a formal code in following a sequence of ritual actions is achieved.

Thirdly, Bloch merges two different concepts of meaning in what he calls the 'creativity of syntax'. The first concept of meaning is attributed only to language and is based on the notion that meaning is a matter of linguistic propositions. The second concept is related to the mathematical theory of information that is transmitted by the decisions that are made in view of the possibility of choice. Bloch combines the linguistic concept of propositional meaning with the concept of decision as developed in information theory.[72] These two concepts differ with regard to their extension since they address quite different subject matters. Whereas the first concept of meaning is restricted to language and is applicable only to the analysis of propositions articulated in ritual utterances, the second concept—at least in its abstract form—is not restricted to language and thus is also applicable to the analysis of the performance of ritual actions.

Finally, although the concept of the 'creativity of syntax' is applicable to the analysis of ideology as a form of authority, it is inappropriate to use this concept if the performance of ritual actions and the articulation of linguistic utterances are distinct with respect to their efficacy and meaning. Bloch clearly states that the performances of ritual actions are not language-like because they cannot articulate meaningful propositions. Because meaning is a matter of proposition and is restricted to language, ritual action would be for Bloch as meaningless as any other kind of action. Therefore, ritual performances cannot be analyzed in terms of their propositional meaning even though the sequence of ritual actions (and utterances) may transmit some information due to the decisions that are made. Only if meaning is identified with the possibility of choice, the performance of ritual actions and utterances can be meaningful and transmit information.

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[72] Moreover, the notion of the creativity of syntax allows for the introduction of the concept of reference as the way in which propositional meaning can be related to any particular subject matter.

The problem of conflicting concepts of meaning is not resolved by combining the properties of statements and actions, for this only reintroduces the same conceptual problem on yet another level.

In a similar but more radical way than Bloch, Staal stresses the argument that ritual actions have no meaning. He maintains that rituals are meaningless because they are performed for their own sake and follow rules with no meaning.[73] He further contends that rituals have to be studied for their own sake and are best approached with regard to the syntactical rules they follow. According to him, rituals should not be studied in relation to something other than themselves, such as religion, society, or culture, but only in relation to themselves and from a more general perspective.[74] From different angles, Staal stresses time and again that rituals as performance of ritual actions are meaningless.

He starts with contrasting rituals with everyday activities in terms of their intentionality. Whereas everyday activities are carried out for the sake of something else, ritual activities are performed for their own sake. In everyday activities, a particular goal is reached; in ritual activities, there is no aim other than the performance itself. In contrast to everyday activities, it is not the result that matters but the fact that the performance of ritual activity correctly follows a prescribed set of formal rules. Thus ritual performances cannot fail because they reach no goal beyond themselves. Unlike in everyday activity, the only thing that matters is the activity itself, not its success or outcome.[75] Due to their particular intentionality, everyday and ritual activities also differ in their points of reference. While everyday activity refers to something else, ritual activity always refers to itself. Staal cites this difference as the key to the distinction between the meaning of everyday activity and meaninglessness of ritual activity. The former is meaningful because it refers to something other than itself; the latter, by contrast, is meaningless because it refers only to itself. As a consequence, in everyday activities it is important what one thinks or says, while in ritual activities the only thing that matters is what one is doing.[76] So, Staal conceives of the performance

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[73] See Staal 1979, 7, 9, 11, passim.

[74] F. Staal, "The Search for Meaning. Mathematics, Music, and Ritual", *American Journal of Semiotics* 2 (1984), 1–57, here, 8–9, 18.

[75] As Staal also puts it: "In ritual activity, the rules count, but not the result. In ordinary activity it is the other way around" (Staal 1979, 9).

[76] See Staal 1979, 3–4.

of ritual activities as self-absorbed and self-contained and therefore as meaningless.

On a higher level of abstraction, Staal argues that rituals are rule-governed activities.[77] Here, he adopts Noam Chomsky's formal theory of syntax and syntactical relations, which presupposes that there is a considerable difference between syntax and semantics[78] and that every system of signs following prescribed rules can be studied only in terms of syntax. Based on these assumptions, Staal categorically distinguishes ritual from language as well as from any other sign system that is capable to establish syntactical relations between meaningful units. The similarity between language and ritual consists only in the fact that they use signs systematically and follow a prescribed set of formal rules or have, in other words, a syntax. Consequently, rituals are comparable to language only in terms of syntax, but not in terms of semantics. In this respect, rituals have more family resemblances to music and dance than to language or poetry.[79]

From Staal's point of view, rituals can be interpreted endlessly. This makes ritual comparable to mathematics, because the elementary units of ritual activity can be seen as variables or formulas.[80] In contrast to the meaning and reference of words (and sentences), rituals and mathematics are concerned only with the orders of variables and their internal relations that are established by the formulas to determine the relations between them. Because of their abstractness, they can be modified and combined with increasing or decreasing complexity.[81] Apart from their complexity, variables and formulas embody and replicate themselves over and over again because they are recursive and constantly refer back to themselves. They bear no meaning or refer to nothing but themselves. For Staal, meaning and reference are only a matter of interpretation or application, but they are externally related to the ritual activities and determined by their

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[77] See Staal 1979, 4; see also Staal, "The Sound of Religion", 42–43.

[78] N. Chomsky, *Syntactic Structures* (The Hague, 1957); N. Chomsky, *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax* (Cambridge, Mass., 1965). See Staal 1979, 19; Staal, "The Search for Meaning", 19, Staal, "The Sound of Religion", 36–39. See also the discussion of Chomsky in Staal 1989, 52–60.

[79] On the similarities between ritual and music, see Staal, "The Search for Meaning", 23–44, 46.

[80] See Staal, "The Search for Meaning", 18.

[81] See Staal 1979, 16–17, 22. On the issue of complexity, see also the essay by Gladigow in this volume.

internal relations.[82] The abstractness of variables and formulas con-
dition the possibility of their interpretation and application.[83] The
internal relations of the variables in their respective formulas establish
their endless interpretability. This is why Staal argues: "The meaning-
lessness of ritual explains that variety of meanings attached to it."[84]

In Staal's approach, the rules of syntax are only relevant in the
relations of ritual activity; and these rules are the only means by
which the structure and respective changes in internal relations become
manifest.[85] For this reason, Staal distinguishes between such rules as
embeddedness, abbreviation, omission, and modification, according
to which the sequences of ritual activity are related to one another.[86]
He regards these rules as essentially recursive in their increasing or
decreasing degree of complexity insofar as every activity that is embed-
ded, abbreviated, omitted, or modified also changes the relations
between all other variables.[87] That is, even if merely one relation
between variables changes, all other relations change in turn.[88] How-
ever, it is striking that the sequences of ritual activity and the rela-
tions between them can change, but not the ritual itself,[89] because
for Staal change is based on a difference in meaning and reference.
Therefore, even if the meaning that is ascribed to ritual can change,
rituals themselves cannot because of their self-reference.[90]

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[82] As Staal writes: "the most important feature of ritual is structure, and not sub-
stance or interpretation" (Staal, "The Search for Meaning", 45).

[83] For Staal, ritual as music has "no meaning and content, and can be provided
with any number of different meanings and interpretations" (Staal, "The Search
for Meaning", 46).

[84] Staal 1979, 12.

[85] Here Staal follows the assumptions of Noam Chomsky's early work on trans-
formative grammar according to which linguistic sign processes can be studied only
on the basis of their formal rules as general structural rules of universal validity.
For a critique of Staal's almost exclusive reception of the early Chomsky, see also
T.S. Turner's contribution to this volume.

[86] See Staal 1979, 15–19.

[87] For Staal, ritual change can therefore best be studied in syntactic terms (Staal,
"The Sound of Religion", 64).

[88] See, e.g., Kreinath *et al.* (eds) 2004. For a consideration of this particular issue,
see also Kreinath 2004a, 267–272.

[89] In this connection, Staal could argue that changes *of* ritual (i.e. modification)
are conditioned by meaning, whereas changes *in* ritual (i.e. variation) are condi-
tioned by form. For a differentiation between changes *in* and changes *of* ritual in
terms of modification and transformation, see Kreinath 2004a, 267–268.

[90] See Staal 1979, 12.

What renders Staal's approach to ritual suspect, however, is that—beyond some results of ethological research—he again uses linguistic theories almost exclusively as frame of reference and claims their universal validity without ever taking the pragmatic dimension of ritual performances into account. Problematic is not the general argument that rituals are meaningless[91] but the specific contradictions in his use of terms and concepts. The problems related to this issue are that he: 1) identifies meaning with reference and attributes it to language as well as to the intentionality of action[92] and based on that he explains the meaninglessness of ritual through its self-reference; 2) falls short in his concept of rule in terms of interpretation and reference; 3) leaves the notion of interpretation as a mode of saying and doing unresolved; 4) restricts the term 'meaninglessness' to semantics alone.

It is questionable first and foremost that Staal identifies meaninglessness with self-reference. It is significant that Staal does not consider self-reference to be a mode of reference when arguing that rituals are meaningless due to their self-referentiality; but if self-reference is a mode of reference, ritual would also be meaningful. If self-reference were not a matter of reference, then the question of meaning (and meaninglessness) would not even arise. Therefore, the meaning of ritual would not inhere in reference to something external to it but in its own self-reference. Paradoxically, if meaning is based on a reference, rituals could be meaningful because of their self-reference.

Secondly, the concept of 'rule', on which Staal bases his assumption that ritual actions are fundamentally rule-governed, has to be called into question in light of his thesis of the meaninglessness of rituals. The rules that govern the course of ritual action are exter-

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[91] Regarding their formal features, rituals are more likely to be compared with the song of birds or the dance of bees than with the consistent deduction of a logical or mathematical argument, even though these songs and dances are by no means meaningless to their fellow birds or bees.

[92] Although Hans H. Penner (1985) argues that Staal confounds meaning and reference, Penner still assumes that rituals have meaning and thus overlooks the fact that the linguistic and philosophical distinctions he is using are not relevant to Staal, because for the latter meaning has the same extension as reference and every reference to something other than itself has meaning. Penner misses the point because he reintroduces a philosophical concept of meaning into ritual theory and fails to notice that Staal does not restrict meaning to reference and language but instead relates it to intention and action. For the discussion of the concept of meaning, see also the essay by Michaels in this volume.

nal to ritual actions; that is to say, ritual actions refer to the rules as something different from them even if they were to indicate that they embody or exemplify sequential patterns of prescribed rules. And even the aim to follow a rule has to be interpreted in terms of intentionality because the concept of 'rule' would in any case presuppose the notion of reference in relation to the intended aim, simply, to follow a rule. If the course of ritual actions is rule-governed, these rules and the ritual actions in which they are followed cannot exclusively be described in terms of self-reference, because rules have their meaning in the actions that are performed in accordance with them.[93] Also, if the rules and actions are not inherently self-referential, they cannot be meaningless because both refer to one another as something other than themselves. If ritual action is rule-governed, it refers to the rule it follows. And if the meaning of a rule is given by its interpretation, it is questionable whether there are rules without meaning because there is no rule without interpretation. However, Staal only postulates that rituals are meaningless without showing how they follow their own rules.

Thirdly, the problem with the concept of 'rule' is carried over to the notion of interpretation, in which Staal does not distinguish between the ritual performance as an interpretation (of a set of prescribed rules) and the interpretation of the ritual performance (in terms of the ascriptions of meaning to it). Rituals can become subject to an attribution of meaning and a point of reference, although they are not capable of generating meaningful propositions. But from this it does not follow that the meaninglessness explains the meaning attached to it. To argue that rituals are meaningless because of the multiplicity of their possible interpretations, and that there are multiple meanings only because of the meaninglessness of ritual, is to fall prey to a vicious circle. It is a shortcoming that Staal does not specify how the meaninglessness of ritual conditions its endless interpretability.

There is, finally, also a terminological shortcoming of the concept of 'meaninglessness'. Its implications are not only restricted to 'meaning' and 'reference' but also to 'being without significance' or 'being without efficacy'. In claiming that rituals have to be studied for their

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[93] Only the notion of autonomy would allow one to combine the properties ascribed to ritual, namely, that it is an action performed for its own sake following its own rules.

own sake, Staal presupposes that it is important to study rituals (for their own sake) yet undermines his claim by the very term he uses. With regard to its pragmatic dimension, the term 'meaningless' also suggests that performance of ritual actions itself is without significance (and efficacy), but this would weaken his own assumption that ritual actions are performed for their own sake.

4. *Performativity and Indexicality of Ritual Symbols*

From the preceding discussion it should have become clear that the various concepts of syntax (and semantics) that are used by the approaches consider so far to scrutinize the symbolic approaches to ritual presuppose, or better reintroduce, linguistics as a theoretical framework for the theorization of rituals and use linguistic concepts for the formal analysis of ritual sequences. While such an approach does not account for the dynamics and efficacy of ritual actions and utterances, other approaches have made performativity and indexicality their major concern.

Due to the broader reception of Charles S. Peirce's semiotics in the late 1970s, the paradigm of linguistic signs that had dominated the former approaches to rituals was called into question and eventually left behind.[94] The tripartite concept of signs—for Peirce, a sign is anything that signifies an object to an interpretant[95]—and its emphasis on the pragmatics of sign processes made it possible to open up a new framework for the theorization of ritual performances. Moreover, his concept of the index[96] seemed to be a powerful tool for scruti-

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[94] It was mainly the linguistic concept of sign and meaning that proved to be the crucial problem in the analysis of ritual performances. In this respect, various attempts were made to address this issue without falling into the trap of linguistics. It seems that the only reason why the former approaches failed to determine the issue of pragmatics is that they all took the theorems of modern linguistics as their frame of reference for granted. Even in negating the paradigm of linguistic signs, they failed because they maintained (albeit unintentionally) the very same paradigm.

[95] In Peirce's words: "A *Sign*, or *Representamen*, is a First which stands in such a genuine triadic relation to a Second, called its *Object*, as to be capable of determining a Third, called its *Interpretant*, to assume the same triadic relation to its Object in which it stands itself to the same Object" (C.S. Peirce, *Collected Papers*, ed. Ch. Hartshorne and P. Weiss [Cambridge, Mass., 1932], 2.274).

[96] An important role for the later reception of Peirce's semiotic concept of the index played the still classical article by A.W. Burks, "Icon, Index, and Symbol", *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 9 (1949), 673–689. See also J.J. Fitzgerald, *Peirce's Theory of Signs as Foundation for Pragmatism* (Studies in Philosophy 11; Den Haag, 1966). For a further refinement of the usefulness of Peirce's concepts of the index, see the conclusion of this essay.

nizing attempts to theorize rituals in terms of syntax and semantics. Because Peirce's semiotics grasps every act of interpretation as a sign process and a starting point for theorization, this allows one to take the specificity of the pragmatic dimension of ritual performances more seriously. Roy A. Rappaport and Stanley J. Tambiah introduced the concept of the indexical sign to ritual theory by loosely adopting it in line with Peirce's semiotics; they did so in two different ways to account for the performative efficacy of ritual acts and utterances. The concept of the 'indexical' was either related to the 'symbolical' in order to distinguish between two distinct but overlapping levels of ritual communication, as Rappaport does, or it was attributed to ritual symbols as that property which characterizes their efficacy in ritual performances, as Tambiah does. Whereas Rappaport focuses on performance and participation and favors the invariance of ritual performances, Tambiah takes performative speech acts and theatrical performances as a theoretical framework and focuses on the efficacy and dynamics of ritual performances as forms of symbolic communication.

Rappaport first introduced the concept of the indexical sign into the analysis of ritual performances by way of emphasizing—primarily from a cybernetic viewpoint—the 'obvious aspects of ritual'.[97] He considers the form (or surface) of ritual to be its most obvious aspect and from that attempts to determine what is specific to ritual. According to him, it is possible to distinguish ritual categorically from other forms of social action in terms of its formal features while leaving aside the determination of any meaning or content.[98] Rappaport also asserts that it is possible to show that ritual is without functional equivalences by determining that it has logically necessary entailments.[99] For him, formality and performance are the two aspects of the ritual form that are constitutive.[100] He regards the invariance of liturgical order[101] and the relation between performer and

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[97] Rappaport 1974.

[98] See Rappaport 1979, 173–175.

[99] Moreover, Rappaport stresses that "ritual is not simply an alternative way to express certain things, but that certain things can be expressed only in ritual. This is to reiterate that certain meanings and effects are intrinsic to the ritual form, which is further to suggest that ritual is without equivalence or even alternatives" (Rappaport 1979, 174).

[100] See Rappaport 1979, 175–177.

[101] Rappaport defines 'liturgical orders' as "more or less invariant sequences of formal acts and utterances repeated in specific contexts", and regarding the relation

performance as two further components that are necessary for the ritual form. Even if each aspect may appear to be independent of the ritual form, it is the conjunction of these aspects that makes the ritual form unique.[102] Rappaport specifies this conjunction as the ritual's form (or structure) and defines ritual as "the performance of more or less invariant sequences of formal acts and utterances not encoded by the performers".[103]

As becomes clear from this definition, Rappaport considers symbols not to be constitutive elements or entailments of the ritual's form. It is characteristic of this approach that rituals are not seen as entirely symbolic. Although symbols are not part of the ritual form, they play an important part in ritual communication. Here Rappaport identifies self-referential and canonical messages as those messages that are necessarily transmitted by every performance of ritual actions and utterances. Self-referential messages are related to the kind of information that is immediately transmitted by the physical presence of participants. Canonical messages, by contrast, are related to the kind of information that can be found by the participants in the liturgical order and is not encoded by them. Only self-referential messages reflect the immediate physical and psychical conditions of the participants and their social status and relation to the other participants; this does not hold for canonical messages, which are more-or-less invariant and therefore cannot reflect any of the immediately given conditions of the participants.[104] Due to their different frames of reference, these messages involve different sorts of signs and imply different temporal dimensions.[105] Self-referential messages are transmitted by indexical signs and are related to the 'here and now' of a particular situation, whereas canonical messages are transmitted by symbolic signs and refer to the enduring, due to the relative invariance of the liturgical order, that is, they refer to something that is not immediately given and was already performed formerly.[106] Because of these temporal parameters, Rappaport dis-

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between the formality and the invariance of liturgical orders, he notes that "invariance emerges out of, or is an aspect of, increasing formality" (Rappaport 1979, 175).

[102] See Rappaport 1979, 175.
[103] Rappaport 1979, 175.
[104] See also Bloch 1974, 68.
[105] On the elaboration of the different temporal dimensions, see Rappaport 1992.
[106] See Rappaport 1979, 179–182.

tinguishes also between the variance of self-referential messages and the invariance of canonical messages.[107]

Only in the performance of ritual acts and utterances are indexical and canonical messages conjoined. These messages are related to one another by the transposition of the indexical and symbolic signs. Through participation, the performer indicates a self-referential relation to his or her own performance. According to Rappaport, performance and participation are those properties of ritual that constitute the self-referential messages of the ritual performance, and both are based on indexical signs. At the same time, they are reciprocally related: Performance requires participation, and participation, in return, presupposes performance.[108] Therefore, Rappaport can regard participation as the formal act in which the performers publicly indicate their acceptance of the liturgical order.[109] Indeed, that order is constituted and accepted through the very act of participation. By performing ritual acts and utterances as they are prescribed in the liturgical order, the performers reflexively establish that order, and by participating in the performance of ritual actions they reflexively subordinate themselves to that order and accept it.[110] According to Rappaport, even though the performance of ritual acts and utterances follows the sequences of a liturgical order, this order comes into existence only through the performance of ritual acts and utterances.[111] Canonical messages that are encoded in the liturgical order have to be embodied (and exemplified) by the participants as indexical messages, and they are accepted and transmitted through the performance of ritual acts and utterances. This means that only in the performance of these acts and utterances does the canonical message become indexical and therefore efficacious.[112]

The crucial problem with Rappaport's approach to ritual is that he considers the indexicality of participation and performance exclusively in terms of communication, and he therefore interprets it ultimately as serving to communicate the acceptance of the liturgical order such that indexicality of ritual actions becomes transformed into a

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[107] See Rappaport 1979, 182–183.
[108] See Rappaport 1980, 187.
[109] See Rappaport 1979, 194–197.
[110] See Rappaport 1980, 187.
[111] See Rappaport 1979, 192–193.
[112] See Rappaport 1979, 193.

kind of symbolic communication.[113] Consequently, it is necessary to inquire into why he: 1) reduces the dynamic and efficacy in the performance of ritual action to the invariance in communicating the liturgical order; 2) cannot account for its potential for transformation and change that goes beyond repetition and variation, that is, invariance and variance; 3) mistakenly identifies participation with acceptance and subordination; and 4) addresses only the relation between the performer and his own performance message.

First, as indicated by his distinction between indexical and symbolical messages, the concept of communication is crucial to Rappaport's approach to ritual.[114] The strength of this approach is that it conceives of performance and participation in terms of indexical signs and takes them as constitutive of ritual. The problem with it, however, is that Rappaport confounds communication and action by reducing the latter to the former and reintroducing the concept of meaning into the communication of indexical and symbolic messages. For him, information is transmitted through indexical signs as a constitutive element in the communication of self-referential messages (that is, subordination to and acceptance of the liturgical order). However, it is problematic to conceptualize performance and participation in terms of communication rather than action. If the performance of ritual acts and utterances is considered to be the basic social act, then it is not the transmission of information or the communication of messages but the performance of ritual actions that is crucial for the establishment of social order. Therefore, it is necessary to ask how performance becomes efficacious through the act of participation and how participation conditions performance, but not how they communicate. Even though Rappaport claims that rituals are not completely symbolic, he weakens his own argument by taking participation and performance to be modes of communicating messages, which finally presuppose the use of symbols rather than indexes for the interpretation of the information that is transmitted.

Secondly, a major issue that has to be emphasized is that Rappaport—by reducing the indexicality of performance and participation to a matter of communication—does not grasp the dynamic and efficacy of ritual action in pragmatic terms. Therefore, his concept

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[113] See Rappaport 1979, 178–179.

[114] For a discussion of Rappaport's concept of communication, see the essay by Thomas in this volume.

of indexical messages is not able to explain the change and trans-formation that are part of every performance and that go beyond repetition and variation. Indeed they can be accounted for only if one views the change and transformation not merely in light of the canonical messages of liturgical orders and the communication of their acceptance.

Thirdly, another problem with Rappaport's approach is that it confounds participation and acceptance by taking participation to be simply the transmission of the message of acceptance. However, par-ticipation is a precondition for accepting the canonical message and may therefore imply the possibility of acceptance, but it is not iden-tical with it. While participation indicates a high probability of accep-tance, it is not the act of acceptance itself, because acceptance can only be regarded as the (intended or expected) result of the partic-ipation that becomes manifest in the performance of speech acts rather than in the performance of ritual actions. Acceptance is not the necessary implication of participation. The problem is that Rappaport reduces acceptance to the mere physical presence of the participants[115] without distinguishing between different modes of par-ticipation.[116] Here one would also need to address the various rela-tions between the participants, as well as the various forms of implicit or explicit acceptance, and to distinguish more clearly between those who act and those who are acted upon in terms of participation and acceptance.[117] If only these two different modes of participation are taken into consideration, one is not justified to simply identify par-ticipation with acceptance. This shortcoming obviously derives from a concept of participation that accounts only for the participant's physical presence. This is manifest in the assumption that partici-pation necessarily implies the acceptance of canonical messages with-out acknowledging that the possibility of the participant to distance oneself from, or identify with, the performance matters for the mode of acceptance.

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[115] For the problem of physical presence, see G. Thomas, "Changing Media—Changing Rituals. Media Rituals and the Transformation of Physical Presence", Kreinath *et al.* (eds) 2004, 115–127.

[116] For the discussion of different modes of participation, see the essay by Schieffelin in this volume.

[117] On this issue, see also Houseman 1993 as well as his contribution on rela-tionality to this volume.

Fourthly, in terms of the reflexive acceptance of the liturgical order,[118] Rappaport's approach is insufficient insofar as it regards only the relation between the performer and his own performance as indexical message. Because Rappaport conceives of participation only in terms of the transmission of the indexical message of acceptance, he is unable to account for either the reciprocal relations between participants or their impact on the emerging acceptance or neglect of a ritual performance. For example, Rappaport does not address the possibility that the performance of a ritual can fail (for some or all participants), which may be due to the contextual settings or various decisions that the participants made in the course of the performance of their ritual acts and utterances.[119] Moreover, the ritual performance (or a particular act or utterance of it) can be evaluated, criticized, and its validity questioned.[120] And performers can be (publicly) sanctioned for their failure of performance, but they can also distance themselves from their performance. For Rappaport, participation is only a matter of fact and he conceptualizes it only in terms of the subordination of the performer to his own performance, without taking the dynamic and efficacy of the relations between the different participants into consideration. In this respect, Rappaport is unable to focus on the pragmatics of the ritual performance, which inheres in the dynamics of reciprocal relations between the participants and the irreversible effects of the participants' interaction upon the course of the ritual performance.

Tambiah presents another way to theorize rituals by adopting Peirce's concept of indexical signs. In his "performative approach to ritual", he identifies rituals as forms of symbolic communication, which consists of patterned and ordered sequences of words and acts and can be characterized by altering gradations of "formality (conventionality), stereotypy (rigidity), condensation (fusion), and redundancy (repetition)".[121] Tambiah specifies three different senses in which he approaches rituals as performative and identifies the ritual's distinctive features not only in terms of performative speech acts or theatrical performances but also within a semiotic framework as

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[118] See the essay of Stausberg in this volume.
[119] On the discussion on the failure of performance, see Schieffelin 1996 and K.-P. Köpping, "Failure of Performance or Passage to the Acting Self? Mishima's Suicide between Ritual and Theater", Kreinath *et al.* (eds) 2004, 97–114.
[120] See Grimes 1988a; Grimes 1988b; Grimes 1990.
[121] Tambiah 1981, 119.

dynamic and efficacious sign processes. The two former features are often taken to indicate the performative turn in ritual theory, whereas the latter feature was mainly abandoned. As he puts it, rituals are performative:

> in the Austinian sense of performative wherein saying something is also doing something as a conventional act; in the quite different sense of a staged performance that uses multiple media by which the participants experience the event intensively; and in the third sense of indexical values—I derive this concept from Peirce—being attached to and inferred by actors during the performance.[122]

Adopting speech act theory as developed along the lines of Austin and Searle,[123] Tambiah considers ritual performances to be conventional acts that follow a set of prescribed rules. For him, formality is the mode in which ritual actions and utterances are performed. It is this formality that allows actors to distance themselves from the expression of spontaneous emotions or intentions. Hence, the performance of ritual actions and utterances are not an expressive act but a simulation of emotions or intentions by following the conventions of a formal code.[124] Due to their formality, Tambiah regards the performance of ritual acts and utterances likewise as stereotypical and rigid modes of mediated communication, which is set apart from everyday forms of communication. In this regard, he conceptualizes rituals as staged performance in which it is not important what information is transmitted but how meaning arises through different media of communication.

For Tambiah information theory is inappropriate because it bases meaning on the possibility of choice and views the transmission of information in terms of statistical probability, but this cannot account for the modality in which ritual actions and utterances are performed. Thus he identifies repetition and redundancy not (in terms of information theory) as a reduction of meaning but as the features by

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[122] Tambiah 1981, 119.

[123] See J.L. Austin, *How to Things with Words* (Oxford, 1962); J.R. Searle, *Speech Acts. An Essay in the Philosophy of Language* (Cambridge, 1969).

[124] On the formal code in symbols of feeling, see S.K. Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key. A Study in the Symbolism of Reason, Rite, and Art* (Cambridge, 1942), 204–245, especially 211–215; see also S.K. Langer, *Feeling and Form. A Theory of Art Developed from Philosophy in an New Key* (New York, 1953) 24–41. On the discussion of the role of emotion in ritual, see Scheff 1977; Marglin 1990; see also the essay by Lüddeckens in this volume.

which meaning arises. Due to the multiple media involved in ritual communication, Tambiah also conceptualizes repetition and redundancy as 'pattern recognition' or 'configurational awareness' and argues that by using these media, the ritual performance not only involves but also fuses the phatic, emotive, and meta-communicative dimensions of ritual communication.[125] In his view, the performance of rituals is "a dramatic actualization whose distinctive structure including its stereotypy and redundancy has something to do with the production of a sense of heightened and intensified and fused communication".[126]

In the third sense of performative, Tambiah appeals to Peirce's semiotics. Even though he refers to Peirce and alludes to his notion of indexical signs when he introduces his concept of indexical values, Tambiah obviously does not adopt Peirce's three classes of signs; rather, he conceptualizes the indexical (value) as an attribute of ritual symbols so as to specify the dynamics and efficacy of ritual performances. Ritual symbols, he maintains, unfold their efficacious and dynamic dimension only through the indexical values that are attached to the ritual symbols. This specification of the concept of the symbol accounts for the existential dimension as established through the inference by the actors within the reciprocal relations between actors and participants. Due to their indexical values, ritual symbols are indexical symbols that have a duplex structure. In terms of their formality (and conventionality), they are "associated with the represented object by a conventional semantic rule", and in terms of their condensation (and fusion), "they are simultaneously also indexes in existential pragmatic relation with the objects they represent".[127] Thus Tambiah takes ritual symbols to be indexical symbols that imply the conjunction of a semantic and pragmatic dimension.

Reflecting on the pragmatic dimension of ritual symbols, Tambiah considers that every performance of ritual remains open for interpretation and variation. In this regard, he conceives rituals as arrangements of contents rather than forms and rejects the view that rituals can be sufficiently analyzed only in terms of their formal features:

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[125] For the distinction between the phatic, emotive, and metalingual functions of verbal communication as signifying to the addresser, contact, and code, see R. Jakobson, "Concluding Statement. Linguistics and Poetics", T.A. Sebeok (ed.), *Style in Language* (Cambridge, Mass., 1960), 350–377, here, 353–358.

[126] Tambiah 1981, 140.

[127] Tambiah 1981, 154.

"if ritual events are performative acts . . . then the connections between the unit acts and utterances of the ritual, the logic of the rules of obligatory sequences of the ritual acts *per se*, cannot be fully understood without realizing that they are the clothing for social actions".[128] By introducing the concept of indexical symbols, he tries to address the uniqueness of every performance, which he makes clear when he writes that ritual performances "ride on the already existing grids of symbolic and indexical meanings, while also displaying new resonance".[129] What is more, he admits that participants understand the symbolic and indexical meanings differently because "the rituals of ordinary times carry both symbolic and indexical meanings in different mixes, and the participants too understand these meanings in varying measure, according to their lights, interests, and commitment".[130]

The main critique of Tambiah's approach to ritual is that he ultimately fails to reflect on the dynamic and efficacy in the performance of ritual actions because he subsumes the indexical under the symbolic by privileging the paradigms of performative speech acts and the theatrical model of the staged performance over the indexicality of the ritual performance. This is due to the facts that Tambiah: 1) takes communication to be a major concern and interprets the pragmatics of ritual actions within the framework of semantics; 2) mainly takes the theatrical performance as the theoretical model and transposes this model onto the analysis of ritual performances; 3) presupposes a unity of meaning and therefore cannot account for the emergence of new meanings or the indexicality of ritual actions; and 4) takes repetition and variation as the main characteristics of ritual without taking the equally obvious change and transformation of social relations into consideration.

First, it is striking that Tambiah is concerned mainly with symbolic communication. What he presents is an attempt to conceptualize various semantic and pragmatic issues of ritual performances, but he interprets even the performance of ritual actions primarily in communicative terms. Although he explicitly emphasizes the pragmatic dimensions of ritual performance, he primarily perceives the performance of ritual acts and utterances in terms of communication rather than action. This is already apparent in his definition of ritual as a

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[128] Tambiah 1981, 139.
[129] Tambiah 1981, 160.
[130] Tambiah 1981, 166.

mode of symbolic communication; due to his concept of symbol, he defines ritual symbol as the medium that constitutes ritual communication, and he thereby presupposes that the symbolic meaning is encoded according to conventions that are given prior to the actual performance of ritual actions. Because he presupposes 'already existing grids' of symbolic (and indexical) meanings, he implies that these meanings exist independently of the actual performance and could be grasped just as easily, for example, from the sequences of the respective words and acts. The structure of the ritual sequences therefore functions to make the message of ritual performances clear, in which the symbolic elements are mere slots that are inferred by the actors with indexical values to make this mode of symbolic communication efficacious.

Secondly, this emphasis on the communication of symbolic meanings is also manifested in the fact that Tambiah presupposes the theatrical (or staged) performance as his theoretical model. Within this framework, he prefigures a categorical distinction between the actors and participants as senders and receivers, and the theatrical performance itself as the medium of communication. The ritual performance viewed in this vein also suggests that the role of the actors is clearly defined by the stage separating them from the participants. In this regard, Tambiah privileges the actors because only they communicate (with the participants) through their use of ritual symbols and they infer the indexical values in the course of the performance, so that all that the participants have to do is to understand its meanings and act as recipients of this message. What is important for Tambiah is not the transformation in the existential relations between actors and participants but that the participants understand the symbolic and indexical meanings that are communicated to them. This framework implies from the outset that the actors communicate *to* rather than interact *with* the participants while they perform their acts and utterances.[131]

Thirdly, Tambiah thus cannot consider the uniqueness of the performance of ritual actions by presupposing the unity of meaning. Although he argues that ritual performances are distinctive because of their formality, he identifies the formality with conventionality and presupposes that the unity of meaning is given with the formality of

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[131] For a valuable critique on this issue, see Schieffelin 1985, 722.

ritual performances. However, because he does not take the index as a specific category of signs, he fails to address the dynamic and efficacy of ritual performances and instead subordinates the indexical to the symbolic sign. By doing so, Tambiah privileges the conventionality instead of the formality that would be appropriate for analyzing the indexicality of ritual actions. Therefore, he is unable to account for the emergence of new meanings that are derived from and attached to every ritual performance.[132] Though he argues that the display of new resonance is a variation in symbolic (and indexical) meaning, it is questionable whether he can—based on his concept of indexical values—account for the indexicality of ritual performances.

Finally, he still takes repetition and variation as more characteristic of ritual performance than change and transformation, because—as he argues—the actors merely actualize the grids of symbolic (and indexical) meanings in the course of the ritual performance and by doing so, they just repeat and vary what is already given by the conventionality of ritual symbols. To address the singularity of ritual performances, their particularity and uniqueness, Tambiah would need to consider more precisely the indexicality of every ritual act and utterance, and not only the performative efficacy of the modes of ritual communication. Only if he would take the concept of indexical signs more seriously he could address the particularity and uniqueness of the arrangements and constellations of the specific roles that the participants play in relation to one another within the specific setting of an actual performance. This is to say that Tambiah ultimately fails to give an adequate analysis of pragmatics in terms of the indexicality of ritual performances and the efficacy of the various processes of interaction, which change in the course of every ritual performance.

Tentative Conclusions: Theoretical Parameters for Theorizing Semiotics of Ritual

As I sought to show in the foregoing discussion of some key semiotic approaches to ritual, one of the fundamental problems is that they

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[132] For an outline of the components leading to the emergence of new meanings, see Gerholm 1988, 191–196.

theorize rituals primarily in terms of linguistic concepts. Although they are critical of such concepts, linguistics is still a crucial issue for each of the approaches discussed above. Due to that, it is extremely questionable what is peculiar to rituals as sign processes. Ritual performances as forms of social action cannot be specified by the use of linguistic concepts of sign. Even the concept of the symbol with its semantic implications has shown itself to be inappropriate for the analysis of rituals where the primary focus is on the pragmatics. Only the concept of the index seems feasible to theorize the performance of ritual actions as a sign process by addressing those issues that are peculiar to the dynamic and efficacy in the pragmatics of ritual actions.

In order to specify some initial theoretical parameters, I will establish a set of distinctive features of ritual performances that are derived from the results of the foregoing discussion. The following account for the pragmatics of ritual as a sign process is based on the concept of the index, which I regard as an alternative to the concept of the symbol. The concept of the index has the advantage that it gives a clear depiction of the uniqueness of every ritual performance and focuses on what participants are actually doing when they perform their ritual actions (and utterances). Using this concept for the analysis of ritual performances, it is possible to avoid imposing questions of syntax and semantics. With the concept of the index, it is possible to specify the details in the performing of ritual actions and to explore how rituals efficaciously work in establishing and transforming social relations.

Before setting up the theoretical parameters, it is helpful to determine the concept of the index as developed in Peirce's semiotics. For him, the index signifies any kind of relation between the sign and its object in which the sign refers to its material object in a most direct way (without relying on any use of linguistic signs), in such a way that this object determines the sign through a causal relation, like the visible traces of footprints in the snow indicating the immediate, but past, physical presence of a human being.[133] The concept of the index indicates what is particular in the direct reference of a sign to its respective object through its material imprint. It is causally related and connected to the specificity of its originating context and therefore conditioned and determined by it. It is

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[133] See Peirce, *Collected Papers*, 2.303–308.

only through (the analytic use of) the concept of the index that it becomes possible to carve out the uniqueness of a specific reference. It is characteristic of indexes that they not only function as vectors in causal relations but that they are also self-referential and therefore capable of causal inference that allows to build hypotheses about the intentions or capacities of another person.[134] Indexicality, in this line, can be seen as characteristic of sign processes if the specificity of a particular context determines the uniqueness of reference that is embodied or materialized through the index.

The theoretical potential of the concept of the index for analyzing the pragmatics of ritual performances can be explored with regard to a set of seven distinctive features: 1) *sequentiality*, that is, how ritual acts and utterances are related to one another in a particular way and function therefore as specific vectors and not as abstract variables; 2) *regularity*, that is, how the rules that inherently regulate the performance of ritual acts and utterances configure the respective pattern in the ritual performance, in terms of self-similarity; 3) *referentiality*, that is, how ritual acts and utterances constantly indicate themselves by referring back to their respective contexts; 4) *formality*, that is, how ritual performances indicate that they are based on particular modes of action and utterance by embodying themselves and becoming similar to themselves and sensitive of, and dependent upon, the contexts that they generate; 5) *temporality*, that is, how ritual acts and utterances exist only in the present moment of their performance by mirroring their actual presence in that they create their own frame of reference; 6) *dynamics*, that is, how every interplay among participants, which presupposes their agency to choose intentionally between options, configures reciprocal patterns of interaction and relation among them (as those who act and on whom is acted), which change over the course of ritual performance and have irreversible consequences for the outcome of the ritual performance; and 7) *efficacy*, that is, how the performance of ritual acts and utterances establishes and transforms the (symmetrical and asymmetrical) relations among the participants by determining the differences and similarities between them in charging or discharging their agency.[135]

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[134] For this use of the concept of index and causal inference, see A. Gell, *Art and Agency. An Anthropological Theory* (Oxford, 1998), 12–50, especially 13–16.

[135] For the relational concept of agency and its distinction between agent and patient, see Gell, *Art and Agency*, 15–23.

   This set of distinctive features as derived from the concept of the index functions as a first attempt to establish a matrix for theorizing rituals as indexical sign processes and to consider the singularity and uniqueness of their performance. This is to say by using the concept of the index for analytic purposes it becomes possible to account for the arrangements and configurations of the various sign processes involved in the performance of ritual acts and utterances. My suggestion is that the concept of the index would not only lead to a radically empirical approach to ritual but also encourage a different way of theorizing, which starts with particularities of the agents' observation of details in every single act and utterance and ends with the pragmatics of theorizing ritual peculiarities for their own sake.

PARADIGMATIC CONCEPTS

AGENCY

William S. Sax

In this essay I explore the usefulness for ritual theory of the concept of 'agency'. Despite the centrality of agency in contemporary social thought, ritual theorists have rarely addressed the topic explicitly. In those few cases where they have done so, they have usually assumed that agency is exclusively a property of individual persons who invent and perform rituals. Nevertheless, many descriptive accounts make it clear that: ritual agents are often complex rather than individual, ritual agency is often distributed among multiple actors and institutions, and indigenous or 'emic' models often attribute ritual agency to non-human beings. In this essay I argue that individual human agency is not the only kind of agency, suggest that rituals themselves might have a distinctive kind of agency, and urge that ritual theorists give thought to other sorts of agency: specifically distributed, complex, non-human, and supernatural agency.

Since the late 1980s, agency has been a prominent topic in the social sciences and especially the humanities, as is illustrated by the growing number of publications in which the term appears.[1] Why has the topic become so fashionable? In part, this is because at some point discussions of agency took on an ethical dimension. Sometimes agency is conflated with a "socially unfettered free will," as Laura Ahearn points out in her discussion of the philosopher Donald Davidson's influential article on the topic.[2] More often, 'agency' is contrasted with 'structure',[3] and the central problematic concerns the

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[1] See, e.g., N.B. Dirks, G. Eley, and S.B. Ortner, "Introduction", N.B. Dirks, G. Eley, and S.B. Ortner (eds), *Culture/Power/History. A Reader in Contemporary Social Theory* (Princeton, 1994), 3–45; A. Giddens, *Central Problems in Social Theory. Action, Structure and Contradiction in Social Analysis* (London, 1979); C.J. Greenhouse, *A Moment's Notice. Time Politics across Cultures* (Ithaca, 1996); S.B. Ortner, "Theory in Anthropology since the Sixties", *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 26 (1984), 126–166; M. Strathern, *The Gender of the Gift. Problems with Women and Problems with Society in Melanesia* (Studies in Melanesian Anthropology 6; Berkeley, 1988).

[2] L.M. Ahearn, "Language and Agency", *Annual Review of Anthropology* 30 (2001), 109–137, here 114. See D. Davidson, "Agency" (1971), D. Davidson (ed.), *Essays on Action and Events* (Oxford, 1980), 43–61.

[3] See, e.g., Giddens, *Central Problems in Social Theory*.

ways in which persons pursue their individual projects and interests within the multiple, more-or-less constraining structures of society. From here it is only a short step to an investigation of the ways in which marginalised or oppressed persons resist the structures of power. 'Agency' thus comes to be conflated with 'resistance', so that feminists have focused on women's agency in resisting patriarchal structures, post-colonial theorists have written about resistance to colonialism, queer theorists have discussed resistance to heterosexism, etc. As Ahearn, Webb Keane, and others have pointed out,[4] the groundswell of interest in agency can be traced at least partly to the ethical aspects of these discussions.

In most of these writings it is assumed that agency is a capability or power exercised by individual persons.[5] To develop a theory of ritual agency along these individualistic lines would not take us very far. It might invite a discussion of how individuals use rituals for purely 'political' or 'strategic' ends, but such a discussion would most likely give insufficient attention to rituals' collective nature and internal dynamics,[6] or might lead back to the now-sterile debates regarding rituals' inherent 'irrationality.'[7]

It seems clear, however, that 'agency' means more than just 'free will' or 'resistance'. Perhaps the most straightforward definition of agency is 'the ability to transform the world'. Such an ability is clearly relevant to rituals, which are often concerned with transformation. Rituals transform boys into men, and men into kings. They transform dead persons into ancestors, wine into blood, and blood into sacrifice. In these and a thousand other ways, rituals clearly transform the world. What is the nature of this transformative agency? Where is it located? In the actions of ritual? In social relationships among ritual actors? In the supernatural agents believed to be the ultimate

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[4] See Ahearn, "Language and Agency"; W. Keane, "Self-Interpretation, Agency, and the Objects of Anthropology. Reflections on a Genealogy", *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 45 (2003), 222–247.

[5] See, e.g., C. Taylor, *Philosophical Papers* I. *Human Agency and Language* (Cambridge, 1985), where agency is an individual mental process.

[6] Consider Pierre Bourdieu's discussion of symbolic capital in his *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, trans. R. Nice (Cambridge Studies in Social Anthropology 16; Cambridge, 1977), which manages to avoid these problems by insisting on the collective nature of ritual practice.

[7] M. Hollis (ed.), *Rationality and Relativism* (Oxford, 1982); Tambiah 1981.

ritual actors?[8] These are the central questions of agency, and it is instructive to look at theories of ritual in light of them.

One of the most enduring strands of ritual theory grows directly out of the Durkheimian tradition. For Émile Durkheim and his followers, Society was a reified agent, which produced and reproduced itself through ritual.[9] This was true not only of the Australian Aboriginal society that was the main subject of Durkheim's *Elementary Forms*, but also of contemporary European societies. "There can be no society," wrote Durkheim, "which does not feel the need of upholding and reaffirming at regular intervals the collective sentiments and the collective ideas which make its unity and its personality."[10] And collective ritual was the chief means through which societies accomplished this work of affirmation. Although the Durkheimians had sophisticated ideas about the ritual dynamics through which Society reproduces itself, they did not develop any explicit theory of agency, implicitly locating it in 'Society' itself. The difficulties of specifying the precise locus of agency have become even more evident in contemporary social theory, where society is regarded as highly differentiated.[11]

Theories of ritual as a form of 'expressive' action[12] fail to consider the transformative dimension of ritual, and thus ignore the question of agency altogether.[13] Instead, such theories focus on how ritual 'expresses' or 'symbolizes' internal states or ideological structures. Since ritual is not directed toward pragmatic ends, the question of agency hardly arises. A much more promising direction for a theory of ritual agency is suggested by theories of ritual as instrumental

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[8] See Lawson in this volume.

[9] É. Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (1912), trans. J.W. Swain (New York, 1915); E.E. Evans-Pritchard, *The Divine Kingship of the Shilluk of the Nilotic Sudan* (Cambridge, 1948).

[10] Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, 474.

[11] See, e.g., Lukes's call to apply Durkheimian ritual theory within a "conflictual and pluralistic model of society" (Lukes 1975, 301).

[12] D. Cannadine, "The Context, Performance and Meaning of Ritual. The British Monarchy and the 'Invention of Tradition', c. 1820–1977", E. Hobsbawn and T. Ranger (eds), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge, 1984), 101–164; P. Stallybrass and A. White, *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression* (London, 1986), 14; Schieffelin 1985.

[13] See O'Hanlon's critique of the instrumental/expressive dichotomy in R. O'Hanlon, "Recovering the Subject. Subaltern Studies and Histories of Resistance in Colonial South Asia", *Modern Asian Studies* 22 (1988), 213–214.

action, for example as therapy,[14] conflict resolution,[15] or a device to reduce cognitive dissonance.[16] The performative approach to ritual, which analyzes the dynamics of ritual as instrumental action based on cosmological theories,[17] takes us several steps closer to developing a plausible account of ritual agency by seeking to explain precisely how rituals accomplish their social effects. Such theories recognize that ritual is often directed toward specific ends and thus has an 'agentive' dimension. Moreover, they tend to confirm the Durkheimian insight that ritual is a collective activity (involving audiences as well as performers) with the consequence that ritual agency is also seen (at least implicitly) as complex rather than individual. In addition to

[14] J.M. Atkinson, "The Effectiveness of Shamans in an Indonesian Ritual", *American Anthropologist* 89 (1987), 342–355; M.M. Balzer, "Doctors or Deceivers? The Siberian Khanty Shaman and Soviet Medicine", L. Romanucci-Ross, D. Moerman, and L. Tancredi (eds), *The Anthropology of Medicine* (South Hadley, Mass., 1983), 54–76; M.F. Brown, "Shamanism and its Discontents", *Medical Anthropological Quarterly* 2 (1988), 102–120; Dow 1986; Kapferer 1983; C. Laderman, "Wayward Winds. Malay Archetypes, and Theory of Personality in the Context of Shamanism", *Social Science and Medicine* 27 (1988), 799–810; G. Obeyesekere, "Sorcery, Premeditated Murder, and the Canalization of Aggression in Sri Lanka", *Ethnology* 14 (1975), 1–23; G. Obeyesekere, "Illness, Culture, and Meaning. Some Comments on the Nature of Traditional Medicine", A. Kleinman, E.R. Alexander, and J.L. Gate (eds), *Culture and Healing in Asian Societies. Anthropological, Psychiatric and Public Health Studies* (Cambridge, Mass., 1978), 253–264; G. Obeyesekere, *Medusa's Hair. An Essay on Personal Symbols and Religious Experience* (Chicago, 1984); G. Obeyesekere, "Depression, Buddhism, and the Work of Culture in Sri Lanka", A. Kleinman and B. Good, (eds), *Culture and Depression. Studies in the Anthropology and Cross-Cultural Psychiatry of Affect and Disorder* (Berkeley, 1985), 134–152; O. Wikström, "Possession as a Clinical Phenomenon. A Critique of the Medical Model", N.G. Holm (ed.), *Religious Ecstasy* (Scripta Instituti Donneriani Aboensis 11; Stockholm, 1982), 87–102.

[15] M. Gluckman, *Custom and Conflict in Africa* (New York, 1956); V.W. Turner, *The Drums of Affliction. A Study of Religious Processes among the Ndembu of Zambia* (Oxford, [1968] 1981); M.J. Aronhoff (ed.), *Culture and Political Change* (New Brunswick, London, 1983).

[16] Leach 1976.

[17] Kapferer 1983; Kapferer 1997; Köpping and Rao (eds) 2000; W.S. Sax, "The Ramnagar Ramlila. Text, Pilgrimage, Performance", *History of Religions* 30 (1990), 129–153, reprinted in: R.P. Singh (ed.), *Banaras (Varanasi). Cosmic Order, Sacred City, Hindu Traditions. Festschrift to R.L. Singh* (Cultural Traditions of India 5; Varanasi, 1993), 257–273; W.S. Sax, "Ritual and Performance in the Pandavalila of Uttarakhand", A. Sharma (ed.), *Essays on the Mahabharata* (Leiden, 1991), 274–295; W.S. Sax, "Who's Who in Pandav Lila?", W.S. Sax (ed.), *The Gods at Play. Lila in South Asia* (New York, 1995), 131–155; W.S. Sax, "Draupadi and Kunti in the Pandav Lila", A. Michaels and C. Vogelsanger (eds), *The Wild Goddess in South Asia* (Studia Religiosa Helvetica 1; Zürich, 1996), 355–381; W.S. Sax, "In Karna's Realm. Toward an Ontology of Action", *Journal of Asian Philosophy* 28 (2000), 295–324; Schechner 1977; R. Schechner, *Performative Circumstances. From the avant garde to Ramlila* (Calcutta, 1983); R. Schechner, *Between Theatre and Anthropology* (Philadelphia, 1985); Schechner 1993; Schechner and Appel (eds) 1990; Tambiah 1981.

'agency', such discussions also raise the closely related issue of 'efficacy'. What is the difference between ritual agency and ritual efficacy?

If we define agency as the capacity to transform the world (whether by ritual or by some other means), then we must acknowledge that this agency need not be exercised: it can remain potential. 'Efficacy', however, refers to the success or failure of a ritual, whether or not it was effectively or successfully performed on a given occasion. Thus, whereas 'agency' points to the capacity to transform the world and raises the question of where this capacity lies, 'efficacy' indicates success (or failure) in transforming the world and points to the ritual techniques used for doing so.

In raising the question of what a notion of agency might add to a theory of ritual, we must first ask what is to be gained by introducing the concept in the first place. After all, the terms 'action' and 'actor' already serve perfectly well to indicate those who perform rituals, as well as the actions they perform within them. What is the point of distinguishing between 'actor' and 'agent'? I contend that the category of 'agent' subsumes that of 'actor', which is to say, actors are a more narrowly defined kind of agent. Ritual actors (like social actors generally) are particular, conscious, embodied and intentional beings, while ritual agents (like social agents generally) may be non-human or human, complex or individual. Actions are performed by particular social actors, whereas agency is distributed in networks.

This becomes clear when we look at a wedding ritual, or at the ritual of a judge sentencing a criminal. The agency of a priest who marries a bride and groom is not merely the property of the priest as an individual person. It must also be seen as the distributed among persons, institutions, and practices. The church is an agent here, and so is the couple wishing to be married. The marriage contract itself is an agent, and so is the state that enforces it. The priestly ordination ritual, which publicly and officially established the priest's authority to conduct the marriage ritual in the first place, has agentive force. Similarly, the agency of the judge who sentences the criminal is not simply a property of the judge as an individual, but is dependent upon a whole set of antecedent relationships and institutions, both human and non-human, each contributing in its own way to the agentive network we call the 'legal system'. What is of particular interest is the fact that within this network rituals themselves have agency—that is, the power to transform the world—precisely because they are the occasions when definitions of social reality are publicly

and officially confirmed: the priest is ordained, the couple is pro-
nounced man and wife, the judge is sworn into office, the criminal
is sentenced, and all of these actions are public rituals that define
and reiterate a certain definition of social reality. Ritual is the point
at which the agency distributed among other persons, relationships,
and social institutions is articulated and made manifest.

In short, agency is distributed in networks and is not necessarily
(or even usually) a property of individual persons. In this respect, it
is rather like Michel Foucault's notion of intentionality without a
subject.[18] The advantage to ritual theory of such a notion of agency
is that it avoids the substantivist fallacy of attributing agency exclu-
sively to individual ritual actors. This is consistent with Caroline
Humphrey and James Laidlaw's influential theory of ritual,[19] accord-
ing to which "ritual commitment" (the key part of the theory) con-
sists precisely in abandoning agency altogether. When performing a
ritual, one gives up, or defers, the "intentional sovereignty" of the
individual agent.

What about non-human ritual agents? The discipline of anthropology
has a long tradition of writing about indigenous concepts of disem-
bodied or non-embodied agency—the agency of ancestors, spirits,
gods, winds, and so forth[20]—and it is important, not only for anthro-
pologists but also for ritual theorists in general, to respect the fact
that 'the natives' (including religious persons within their own cultures)
are likely to have notions of ritual agency that are by no means lim-
ited to embodied human individuals. Both Ronald Inden and Dipesh
Chakrabarty have recently argued that an adequate account of South
Asian history cannot do without acknowledging the agency of gods

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[18] B.J. Good, *Medicine, Rationality and Experience. An Anthropological Perspective* (The
Lewis Henry Morgan Lectures 1990; Cambridge, 1994), 69.

[19] Humphrey and Laidlaw 1994, 99.

[20] For recent discussions see J. Boddy, *Wombs and Alien Spirits. Women, Men and the
Zâr Cult in Northern Sudan* (Madison, 1989); J. Comaroff and J. Comaroff, *Of Revelation
and Revolution. Christianity, Colonialism, and Consciousness in South Africa* I (Chicago, 1991);
A. Gell, *Art and Agency. An Anthropological Theory* (Oxford, 1998); R. Inden, *Imagining India*
(Oxford, 1990); W. Keane, "From Fetishism to Sincerity. On Agency, the Speaking
Subject and Their Historicity in the Context of Religious Conversion", *Comparative
Studies in Society and History* 39 (1997), 674–693; W. Keane, "Religious Language",
Annual Review of Anthropology 26 (1997), 47–71; W. Keane, "Self-Interpretation, Agency,
and the Objects of Anthropology"; H. Miyazaki, "Faith and its Fulfillment. Agency,
Exchange, and the Fijian Aesthetics of Competition", *American Ethnologist* 27 (2000),
31–51; S.B. Ortner, "Thick Resistance. Death and the Cultural Construction of
Agency in Himalayan Mountaineering", *Representations* 59 (1997), 135–162.

and ancestors.[21] In his article on cognition in this volume, E. Thomas Lawson shows that the category of "superhuman . . . agents with counterintuitive properties" is common to ritual systems the world over, functioning as a cognitive representation distinguishing ritual from other forms of action.[22] My argument here is similar, but stronger. Along with Chakrabarty and Inden, I contend that supernatural beings function as real social agents in systems of ritual, and I shall provide an ethnographic example below.

Other fruitful ways of thinking about agency are suggested by recent discussions of the agency of non-human primates,[23] machines,[24] technologies,[25] and signs.[26] Most useful of all are theories of distributive cognition, which show that knowledge of complex systems is distributed among numerous agents, no single one of which has knowledge of the complete system.[27] The classic source is Edwin Hutchins's *Cognition in the Wild*,[28] which analyzes various forms of navigation as systems of distributed cognition. The knowledge of how to land a passenger airplane, for example, is distributed among pilot, air traffic controller, and the array of computers used by both. It might be argued analogously that, with respect to its *location*, ritual agency—like communicative, political, and technological agency—is distributed in networks.

I should like to conclude with an ethnographic example from my own research in the Rawain area of the upper Tons River basin in

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[21] Inden, *Imagining India*; D. Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe. Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton, 2000).

[22] See Lawson in this volume.

[23] M.F. Small, *Female Choices. Sexual Behavior of Female Primates* (Ithaca, 1993).

[24] A. Pickering, *The Mangle of Practice. Time, Agency, and Science* (Chicago, 1995).

[25] M.-A. Dobres, *Technology and Social Agency. Outlining a Practice Framework for Archaeology* (Oxford, 2000); B. Latour, *Science in Action. How to Follow Scientists and Engineers through Society* (Cambridge, Mass., 1987); B. Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, trans. C. Porter (Cambridge, Mass., 1993).

[26] V.M. Colapietro, *Peirce's Approach to the Self. A Semiotic Perspective on Human Subjectivity* (Albany, 1989); C.S. Peirce, *Philosophical Writings of Peirce* (New York, 1955).

[27] M. Cole and Y. Engeström, "A Cultural-Historical Approach to Distributed Cognition", G. Salomon (ed.), *Distributed Cognitions, Psychological and Educational Considerations* (Cambridge, 1993), 1–46; Y. Engeström and D. Middleton (eds), *Cognition and Communication at Work* (Cambridge, 1996); M. Huhns and L. Gasser (eds), *Distributed Artificial Intelligence* II (Menlo Park, Calif., 1989); Latour, *Science in Action*; D. Middleton and D. Edwards (eds), *Collective Remembering* (Inquiries in Social Construction; London, 1990); L.B. Resnick, J.M. Levine, and S.D. Teasley (eds), *Perspectives on Socially Shared Cognition* (Washington, D.C., 1991).

[28] E. Hutchins, *Cognition in the Wild* (Cambridge, Mass., 1995).

the Central Himalayas of North India. The traditional local system of government, what Peter Sutherland calls "Government by Deity,"[29] resembles forms of divine kingship found elsewhere in Asia. But whereas the divine kings of South and Southeast Asia were normally human beings with divine characteristics,[30] the divine kings of Rawain are gods with human characteristics. That these gods are conceived of as divine kings is beyond doubt: not only are they addressed as 'king' (*raja*), but they have many other royal characteristics as well: they attack rival kings' territories and defend their own; important local decisions are made in their temple compounds by a council of elders and ratified by the gods themselves, speaking through their oracles, and they have the power to appoint and dismiss officers, confiscate property, and levy fines. Through their oracles they settle civil and criminal cases and enforce their judgments. All these actions take place in ritual contexts where the god is summoned, possesses his oracle, and announces his decisions or has them enforced. The borders of the gods' kingdoms are defined by ritual processions in which their images are placed on palanquins and carried around the peripheries of their territories.[31]

How should we characterize these divine kings? For their subjects, the answer is clear: they are divine persons, independently existing supernatural beings with consciousness and volition, hence social actors in my sense. (Such beliefs are, of course, characteristic of religious people throughout the world, be they Christian, Muslim, or Taoist.) While ritual theory cannot go so far as to classify these gods as 'actors', thereby attributing volition or consciousness to them, it does make a great deal of sense to see them as articulating the complex agency that is distributed within their 'kingdoms'. When a decision must be made about when to sow and when to reap, or when the gods are at war and strategic decisions must be made, or when

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[29] P. Sutherland, *Travelling Gods and Government by Deity. An Ethnohistory of Power, Representation and Agency in West Himalayan Polity* (Oxford University, Ph.D. dissertation, 1998).

[30] Inden, *Imagining India*; L. Gesick (ed.), *Centers, Symbols and Hierarchies. Essays on the Classical States of Southeast Asia* (Southeast Asian Monograph 26; New Haven, 1983); R.P. Goldman (ed.), *The Ramayana of Valmiki. An Epic of Ancient India* II: *Ayodhyakanda*. Introduction, Translation, and Annotation by S.I. Pollock (Princeton, 1986).

[31] W.S. Sax, "Worshiping Epic Villains. A Kaurava Cult in the Central Himalayas", Margaret Beissinger et al. (eds), *Epic Traditions in the Contemporary World. The Poetics of Community* (Berkeley, 1999), 169–186; W.S. Sax, *Dancing the Self. Personhood and Performance in the Pandav Lila of Garhwal* (Oxford, 2002), here 157–185.

a dispute between the divine kingdoms or amongst families or factions within them must be settled, the gods articulate the intentions of the community, manifesting its complex agency. Just as in any other system of government, agency is located not only in individuals, but also in other institutions and social forms: in this case, families, castes, villages, a council of elders, and the divine king himself, who stands at the head of this rather Hobbesian body politic. The most convincing evidence of this fact is that when the community is divided over some factional dispute and takes its problem to the god for resolution, he normally says nothing, or he tells them to discuss the matter further before coming to him. In other words, the god's pronouncements are often a kind of ratification of decisions that have already been made within the community, and in the absence of such a collective decision, he is unable to pronounce upon the issue.

These gods' agency is built up, as it were, from subordinate forms of agency distributed amongst individuals, families, clans, and other kinds of associations in the region. This is not so exotic as it might seem: all organizations and societies, from the local Bridge Club to the United Nations, develop means for articulating complex agency. The important point for ritual theory is that, while agency itself is always distributed throughout a network of people, social relations, and institutions, the authority to articulate the complex agency of the group is usually conferred by public rituals, such as elections, inaugurations, enthronements, and the like. Moreover, this articulation of collective agency often takes the form of a public ritual, such as a formal meeting, an address to the nation, a military parade or other patriotic display, or, as in this case, an oracular pronouncement. It seems that ritual agency, which is always distributed, is often articulated through public rituals in which those involved submit to the superordinate authority of the group. In this case, public ritual is precisely the point at which complex agency is articulated and confirmed.

COMPLEXITY

Burkhard Gladigow

Elements and Structure

As a rule rituals are not determined by an 'open accumulation' of ritual elements (rites), but have a 'structure' that possesses a beginning and an end that is recognizable to actors and spectators. Internally, rituals combine typical sequences of rites into 'groups' and organize their repetitions according to schemas that possibly have a neurological or an ethological basis.[1] To the extent that each of the different levels of a ritual appears with its own structure and that those levels are combined into a 'superstructure',[2] one can speak of a complexity of rituals. It is more a special case when a ritual is 'one-dimensional', consisting of only one element, and in many cases is to be understood as an 'abbreviation' of a more complex ritual, such as the quick prayer, the bow, or the apotropaic throwing of a stone. There does not seem to be an unstructured *lectio continua* in rituals—despite the temptation to compare a written sentence with a performed ritual.[3]

Unity and Complexity

Rituals must have a beginning and an end, not only from the perspective of their 'surveyability' but also in view of the situation of the cultic actors, who must be qualified in a definite way as participants. After the conclusion of a ritual, the actor leaves the cultic sphere in a demonstrative way—say, by taking off a garland, changing clothes, or removing signs on the body—and turns once again to the 'profane' concerns of daily life. Thus for outsiders the difference

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[1] See D'Aquili, Laughlin, Jr., and McManus (ed.) 1979; W. Toman, "Repetition and Repetition Compulsion", *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 37 (1956), 347–350.

[2] On the multidimensionality of rituals, see Tambiah 1981.

[3] See Rappaport 1979, 173–221.

between 'sacred' and 'profane' is recognizable by way of optical sig-
nals and time phases. The overall structure of a ritual comprehends
different patterns of an integration of the elements of diverse 'ritual
levels' and thereby determines its complexity: To the extent that the
integration of the different levels and subsystems of a ritual becomes
possible and even increases, the complexity of a ritual also increases.
A special problem of a 'unity' of a complex ritual (in contrast to an
open stringing together of elements) lies in the different ways of inte-
grating diverse levels in the sequence of ritual events: the patterns
of movement (the motor level), the staging of visual elements (the
optical level), cultic sounds and music (the acoustic level), and the
use of language or *tituli* (the declamatory level).

Moreover, in complex rituals simple elements of action are com-
bined with linguistically formulated elements and the employment of
requisites into a specific pattern of action, which renders a ritual sur-
veyable and 'identifiable' in different places and at different times.
In many cases, of course, a ritual's connection to a calendrically
fixed event and topographical peculiarities is part of its complexity.
Celebration cycles and regionalized cults also constitute an orderly
succession and coexistence of rituals. Spoken elements in rituals can
possess quite different functions in the sequence of ritual events: nam-
ing of the occasion, naming of the human patron (or the organiz-
ing institution), naming of the god, invocation, and prayer. Within
this framework, specific variations and accommodations of a prede-
termined ritual are possible.

A performance of myths as part of a ritual provides, in parallel
to mere recitation on the primary level of elements, a meta-level of
ritual, typically in the form of an etiological myth:[4] The divine ori-
gin of this ritual and the human obligation resulting therefrom are
presented and the latter's implementation in the current ritual is
announced. The incorporation of etiological myths into a ritual is
an explicit way in which rituals can become reflexive. This specific
form of reflexivity competes with the meta-levels of ritual organiza-
tion on which different groups of elements of action are combined
and made surveyable.

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[4] Here we do *not* accept the separation of 'genuine' and 'etiological' myth as it
is carried out by A.E. Jensen in *Mythos und Kult bei Naturvölkern. Religionswissenschaftliche
Betrachtungen* (München, [1951] 1992), 104–118.

Surveyability and Complexity

The correctness of the sequence and the completeness of the presentation of a ritual are of decisive significance for its 'efficacy'. For complex rituals, a heightened level of integration of discrete groups of elements (of ritual subsystems) stands in the foreground. The complex structure produces a logic of connection or constellation which at the same time ensures that a ritual is learned and that its repetition occurs with as few errors as possible. Complexity renders rituals surveyable for actors and participants, even if the rituals seem to consist of an 'unsurveyably' large number of rites. This complexity now ensures on a 'meta-level', and not only on the level of an additive stringing together, that all relevant parts of the entire system are appropriately presented.

The fact that rituals have (or can have) the property of complexity[5] is just as constitutive for the learning of extended rituals as it is for their perception and 'reception' by spectators. If rituals are invariably repeated,[6] with each further performance of a ritual its structure can become more explicit and a professionalism of performance can become clearer, such that a new relation arises between the participants. Under the conditions of a 'successful communication' that is surveyable and comprehensible, in this framework pragmatic parameters are given for an increase in complexity.[7] A 'ritual competence'[8] can then produce a special relationship between spectators and 'in' those acting in the ritual, a relationship for which 'expertise' on the part of the spectators represents a level of depiction or resonance. The competent spectator is able to appreciate the achievements of

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[5] The concept of the complexity of rituals employed here is comparable to that employed by Hans-Georg Soeffner of the 'total arrangement' (*Gesamtarrangement*) of rituals, but the former concept is distinguished from the latter, which is oriented more towards aesthetic production, by an emphasis on a complexity that encompasses the ritual's levels. See Soeffner 1988.

[6] See Baudy 1998.

[7] In keeping with his other premises, Frits Staal allows "the construction of rituals of indefinitely increasing complexity" (Staal 1989, 109). Concerning the limits of complexity, see section 9 below.

[8] Thus far the literature has focused on an 'understanding' of rituals by the actors and hardly distinguished between actors and 'spectators'. It is safe to assume that under certain circumstances the ability of spectators 'to read rituals' declines; on this see B. Gladigow, "Von der Lesbarkeit der Religion zum *iconic turn*", G. Thomas (ed.), *Religiöse Funktionen des Fernsehens? Medien-, kultur- und religionswissenschaftliche Studien* (Wiesbaden, 2000), 107–124.

a 'perfect' or aesthetically appealing staging of a ritual, especially
when he has already experienced the ritual many times. Every concrete
ritual staging finds itself in competition with earlier performances of
the same kind, or with simultaneous performances in different places.
On the path leading through prestige economics, every ritual that
is staged publicly is bound up with almost every other ritual.

Expectations Concerning the Sequence of Events in a Ritual

Within a succession of elements, rituals have not only a spatial but
also a diachronic structure, which can be determined by expecta-
tion, acceleration, and delay of the ritual phases. Especially in highly
complex rituals, the certainty of a linear sequencing[9] is frequently
interrupted by retardations and contingencies. The best examples in
a ritual are integrated elements of play[10] that introduce contingencies
into the sequence of events: The sacrificer is determined only by
means of a contest, the choice of a sacrificial animal is left to 'chance',
the beginning of a ritual depends on omens. These examples show
at the same time that a divinatory procedure[11] is concealed in the
incorporated contingencies: The god to whom the ritual is dedicated
is involved and can announce his acceptance or rejection by means
of 'signs' for the success of a ritual sequence.

  The bloody sacrificial animal in Mediterranean antiquity provides
examples at various points in the ritual sequence for retardations or
contingencies: If during the extispicy, thus during the opening of the
slaughtered sacrificial animal, an anomaly was discerned in specific
places in the entrails, the sacrifice was regarded as not having been
accepted by the god and therefore often had to be repeated until it
was accepted (*usque ad litationem*). A second contingency during this
Mediterranean sacrificial sequence could be that the smoke from the
burned meat does not right properly, that is, vertically. An integration
of such contingencies represents a kind of feedback in the ritual sys-
tem:[12] The positive reply in a certain place confirms the 'correctness'

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  [9] On the endeavor to sequence rites see Gladigow 2004.
  [10] J. Huizinga, *Homo Ludens. A Study of the Play-Element in Culture* (1938), trans.
R.F.C. Hull (London, 1949).
  [11] See B. Gladigow, "Divination", *Handbuch religionswissenschaftlicher Grundbegriffe* 2
(Stuttgart, 1990), 226–228.
  [12] For the further categories see Gladigow 2004, 68–73.

of the preceding steps, whereas a negative signal invalidates them. The consequence of the latter is that the ritual invariably has to be repeated completely, which is an index for a necessary connection of events on the element-level with the entire ritual complex.

Participants and Spectators

Normally the incorporation of the 'spectators' also belongs to the complexity of a ritual insofar as the spectators are present but are not directly involved in the ritual's sequence of events. One implication of this reciprocity of ritual actors and 'spectators' lies in the question of whether a certain ritual is 'effective' also for the spectators and whether every kind of presence can be classified as participation. Greek antiquity defined social entitlements to a participation in sacrificial communities,[13] in which only a small number of people took part in the sacrifice ritual in the narrower sense, whereas most were merely 'recipients' of the sacrificial meat. For the early Christians it was precisely for this reason that the participation in a banquet a possible contribution—and thus one to be excluded—to a pagan ritual. Commensalities of all kinds or a running along in a procession generate similar open structures of contribution and participation.

Among the people acting in a ritual there can be explicit hierarchies, with patrons (e.g. the 'sacrificial lord' in the Northern Germanic cult), protagonists (e.g. the butchers, *popa* and *cultrarius*, in ancient Roman sacrifice), and assistants (e.g. the servers at Catholic masses). In addition, there are social differences in the personnel of a ritual (especially where there is a large number of participants), differences that can correspond to the structure of the society:[14] The national celebrations in the Renaissance mirror the social and political differences among the participants in redundant signs and symbols.[15]

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[13] See W. Burkert, "Opfertypen und antike Gesellschaftsstruktur", G. Stephenson (ed.), *Der Religionswandel unserer Zeit im Spiegel der Religionswissenschaft* (Darmstadt, 1976), 168–187.

[14] See Douglas 1966, 114–128 and, incorporating the functions of literature, Braungart 1996, 101–106.

[15] See R. Strong, *Feste der Renaissance, 1450–1650. Kunst als Instrument der Macht* (Freiburg, Würzburg, 1991) and, with a broader historical frame of reference, P. Hugger (ed.), *Stadt und Fest. Zu Geschichte und Gegenwart europäischer Festkultur* (Stuttgart, 1987).

Another function of complexity lies in the synchronization that ensures the cooperation of many actors, especially of throngs of people in diachronic succession: the common beginning of movement in a procession, the choreography of a group dance, the moment of the fatal blow to the sacrifice, the musical order of antiphons. Connected with an adaptation of participants in rhythmic sequences is also a control of emotions: euphoria at the climax of a ritual composition can be just as 'planned' as an aggressive mood that continues beyond the end of the ritual. The possibilities of synchronizing the rituals, movements, and emotions of human beings—in connection with experiences of continuity and certainty—have made complex rituals 'attractive' to massive political events of a certain type.[16]

Scope of Variation and Frame of Improvisation

Form requirements on a religious ritual and a consciousness of form in view of its efficacy—for both, rituals from the sphere of law represent a typical specialization—rule out variations and even ritual improvisations. In religions exceptional rituals *ex tempore* are more of a special case, which can then be characterized by a contribution of specialists. Of course, with the increasing complexity of rituals, more and more 'interstices' or open spaces arise in which variations and extensions are possible while maintaining the overall structure.[17] In the transition from procession to sacrifice, a 'free' musical interlude can occur, the decoration of the cult site can expand according to region and season, a recitation of a 'sacred' text can extend the text's content and scope.

In structural analyses of complex rituals hardly any attention has yet to be paid to the fact that only in very few instances do the actors experience or carry out the ritual for the first time. That means that, when the ritual is started, they already know its 'climaxes' and its 'outcome'. The complex structure of a ritual establishes its surveyability for the actors and spectators; both groups of participants then know in what 'phase' of the ritual they find themselves and which

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[16] K. Vondung, *Magie und Manipulation. Ideologischer Kult und politische Religion des Nationalsozialismus* (Göttingen, 1971), 113–121.

[17] Michael Oppitz (1999) has illustrated the extendability and recombination of rituals on the example of the Naxi.

consequences an error or even a departure from the sequence can entail. Improvisations in or ad hoc conceptions of a ritual suffer for these reasons from an enduring lack of plausibility and even comprehensibility.[18]

Increase in Complexity

A complexity of rituals can be increased under certain circumstances without there being any loss in a ritual's surveyability. Even if the added elements are recognizably 'foreign' sequences of rites, which perhaps come from other rituals[19] and now are integrated as ritual subsystems, the structure of the ritual can remain intact. The limits of complexity can be strained, however, at the point where disparate and dysfunctional components, as well as components with different structures of complexity, are adopted. The adoption of tournaments, dramas, or pieces of music in rituals involved, with a certain regularity, the danger of de-composing the underlying ritual: The criticism of performances of Attic tragedies, which belonged to the cult of Dionysius, was that they had "nothing more to do with Dionysius"; it was objected to medieval mystery plays that they served the gratification of profane curiosity; an overabundant presentation of artworks within a church was even said to distract from the Gospel.

Common to all these constellations is that between components of the ritual and the overall complex there prevails a striking difference in complexity, at least from the perspective of the participants. The achievement and 'message' of the ritual complex seemed to be disturbed when one attempted to maintain this asymmetry of individual complexes. Programmatic reactions to such situations could consist in downright reductions in complexity: In the iconoclasm of the eighth century and that of the sixteenth,[20] the element-level 'image' is modified in or completely excluded from the mass (*Gottesdienst*).

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[18] Soeffner (1988, 534–542) discusses this by way of the example of Pope John Paul II's practice of kissing the ground of each guest country upon arriving there.

[19] On the phenomenon of 'ritual quotations' see Gladigow 2004.

[20] The literature has thus far largely treated the controversies from the perspective of the admissibility of images (good surveys on this may be found in M. Barash, *Icon. Studies in the History of an Idea* [London, 1992] and K. Möseneder [ed.], *Streit um Bilder. Von Byzanz bis Duchamp* [Berlin, 1997]), but not from the perspective of asymmetrical complexity.

The fact that in the latter case the element *Wortgottesdienst* was at the same time developed considerably might indeed point to something like a *homeostasis* in rituals:[21] After there has already been an increase in complexity, reductions in complexity are no longer possible without further ado and lead only to a shift or transformation of supercomplex elements. 'Rituals of antiritualism'[22] are a comparable phenomenon, whereby elements of the traditional ritualism are in fact negated but ultimately not eliminated. For several decades research in religious studies has focused on the question of priority,[23] especially regarding a significant difference in complexity between myth and rite. From the perspective championed here, however, the problem is not one of 'priority' but of a possible difference between ritual repeatability and hermeneutic fuzziness,[24] which possibly gives rise to a difference between performance and understanding.

'Second-Order' Complexity

Too little attention has been paid to the fact that rituals are not only internally organized and structured but that they are always related to other rituals as well or set themselves off from their rivals. Rituals can be complex first of all in such a way that, in the temporal succession of the ritual events, they engender both a hierarchical and a reflexive internal structure. However, they can also engender a meta-system of rituals by means of a temporal or spatial relation to other rituals in that the discrete rituals are both 'networked' with one another on a simple level through individual elements and also supplement one another complementarily as wholes. When, for example, in the same city and on the same day both initiation rituals (sacralization, baptism, acceptance in a group) and excommunication

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[21] Another systematic access to this issue is provided by a semiotics of religion; see F. Stolz, "Hierarchien der Darstellungsebenen religiöser Botschaft", H. Zinser (ed.), *Religionswissenschaft. Eine Einführung* (Berlin, 1988), 55–72.

[22] Soeffner 1988; on the framing theoretical and social conditions of an antiritualism see Douglas 1970, 54–57, passim.

[23] Ackermann 1991; Calder III 1991. In general concerning the relationship between rituality and orality, Braungart 1996, 116–117.

[24] On the framing cultural conditions of ritual and textual coherence, see J. Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis. Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen* (München, 1992), 97–103.

rituals (burial, expulsion, excommunication) take place, these rituals are conceived antithetically not only in the biography of a person but simultaneously in the current repertoire of the culture in question. At a baptism the participants 'know' that there are also ex-communications and burials, and in fact not only for the person to be baptized in a hopefully distant future but also simultaneously in their society.

A current ritual 'is never isolated' but also invariably has other rituals as its 'religious environment'. Such an 'interrituality'[25] doubtless constitutes for all cultures a 'supersystem' of rituals, a 'second-order complexity' that combines 'all' religious rituals on a first meta-level, while on the next meta-level there are also legal, economic, political and other varieties of rituals. One systematic property of complex rituals is their ability to connect and thus network with other rituals, but also with other cultural institutions. By way of the 'second-order complexity' of rituals, then, not only is a general communication produced but culture[26] is simultaneously ensured as a specific system of communication.

Complexity and 'Meaning'

A complexity of rituals, especially a 'second-order complexity', achieves on this level an integration of rituals into a 'community of rituals and cultures': complexity and integration find themselves in a dialectical (or paradoxical) relationship to one another. Calendar, sacred topography, tradition of normative religious texts—to name only a few examples on the simplest level—provide possible guidelines for an integration: Rituals are 'always' simultaneously determined calendrically

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[25] The concept is modeled on that of intertextuality and incorporates the discussions conducted in this connection. For surveys see U. Broich and M. Pfister (eds), *Intertextualität. Formen, Funktionen, anglistische Fallstudien* (Konzepte der Sprach- und Literaturwissenschaft 35; Tübingen, 1985) and H.F. Plett (ed.), *Intertextuality* (Research in Text Theory 15; Berlin, 1991). On quotations in rituals see Gladigow 2004, 60–63.

[26] On cultural subsystems and the systematic property of culture see B. Gladigow, "Kulturen in der Kultur", H.W. Blanke, F. Jaeger, and T. Sandkühler (eds), *Dimensionen der Historik. Geschichtstheorie, Wissenschaftsgeschichte und Geschichtskultur heute* (Köln, 1998), 53–66. Using the guiding concept of *Schemaspiel* (play of schemas), which depends on 'ritual', Hans Lenk has characterized culture as a 'community of interpretation'; see H. Lenk, *Schemaspiele. Über Schemainterpretationen und Interpretationskonstrukte* (Frankfurt a.M., 1995), 252.

and topographically, biographically and socially (or possibly pro-grammatically disintegrated). With this it is possible to link the ques-tion (which doubtless can be raised only theoretically) of whether a complexity of rituals can be increased 'arbitrarily' and at what points a counter-movement can perhaps set in. The 'logic' of this approach implies first of all that—while supercomplex rituals have to be inter-preted in view of a specific culture—an assignment of achievements and meanings is left increasingly to specialists.

An increase in the complexity of rituals is limited especially by the capacity of a culture to keep an 'order of rituals' or a system of symbols[27] current and simultaneously capable of being passed on. Now that means in practice that complex rituals (in a formal sense) and the meanings bound up with them cannot as a rule be passed on 'separately'. If it may perhaps hold of (individual) ritual elements that they have no meaning that has been fixed in advance, this does not hold at all regarding a complexity of rituals. The complexity appealed to here assures an integration of rituals in 'their' culture, limits a multiplicity (or fuzziness) of possible interpretations, and sta-bilizes a controllable tradition: complexity assures an assignment of meaning to ritual actions.

In this classification complex rituals are not at all 'black holes' that suck up any number of meanings, "like black holes suck up matter,"[28] but rather are cultural events that are caught in a sec-ond-order complexity like a 'symbolic net'. That means that neither ritual elements nor complexity (as a formal frame) 'have' a meaning in the beginning, or a priori. Integration and a gain in complexity, and thus meaning, are produced only in the course of ritual sequences and in the networks that correspond to that course: In the end the complex ritual is 'meaningful' in a specific way for the participants, 'comprehensible' for the spectators, and potentially 'unique' for the

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[27] Concerning culture as a 'symbolic net' and man as *animal symbolicum* see E. Cassirer, *An Essay on Man. An Introduction to a Philosophy of Human Culture* (New Haven, 1944). For further discussion see J. Morgan, "Religion and Culture as Meaning Systems. A Dialogue between Geertz and Tillich," *Journal of Religion* 57 (1977), 363–375.

[28] So the striking formulation by Fritz Staal (1991, 233). Staal operates there (relying loosely on Ivan Strenski) with a tabula rasa premise: There are 'first' naked rituals, when 'then' seek meanings: "This very observation might seem to explain why meaningless things survive: they are looking for meaning, nay, they demand to be provided with meaning. Rites and mantras suck up meanings that come up their way like black holes suck up matter."

reporters. With an increase in cultural complexity, the complex rit-
uals performed—above and beyond the routines that support them—
then invariably become datable and locatable: The Pan-Hellenic
Ptolemaia in 271–270 BCE are, though only a ritual procession, a
historical event in Alexandria;[29] the intermezzi in Florence in 1589
are locatable forms of a ritual theater of domination;[30] the modern
Vatsal ritual is not 'thinkable' outside Nepal.[31]

  From the individual cases and their systematic classification we
can derive the thesis that the more complex rituals become, the more
'individual' and integrated they are. And conversely: The 'simpler'
they are, the more topical and disintegrated is their concrete status.
At first glance this thesis seems to contradict in the farthest-reaching
way that of the 'meaninglessness of rituals', as well as the latter's
current modifications. "Rituals are in this sense always external,
assembled, provisionally existent, and therefore controversial and
negotiable in their meanings."[32] What is not considered thereby is
that the simplistic thesis of provisional 'meaninglessness' holds at best
only for the first element in a sequence of ritual action. With every
additional element, every subsequent complex of rites, meaning is
generated, until 'every' ritual that has come to an end has a defined
'meaning' that can be passed down. In the course of ritual events
and actions, a meaning of the ritual is purposively 'produced' in
diachronic succession and appeals to other rituals. Therefore, at issue
here is not the arbitrariness of a "suck[ing] up [of] meanings that
come their way,"[33] but the staging of a curriculum in the course of
which patrons, actors, participants, and spectators are to experience
and learn something determinable. With every repetition of the entire
ritual, moreover, the earlier performance is presupposed—lifecycle
rituals, each of which can be performed only once, represent a spe-
cial case in this regard. If in most religions a repetition of rituals is
intended, and these repetitions are not classified as merely redundant,

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[29] The Greek poet Callixenus provided a normative description, Athenaeus 5,
196 ff.
[30] See Strong, *Feste der Renaissance*, 225–239.
[31] See A. Michaels, "Das Heulen der Schakale. Ein Tier- und 'Menschen'-
Opferritual in Nepal", C. Wulf and J. Zirfas (eds), *Die Kultur des Rituals. Inszenierungen,
Praktiken, Symbole* (München, 2004), 217–236, which includes an in-depth discussion
of Staal's thesis.
[32] Michaels, "Das Heulen der Schakale", 233, with reference to Humphrey and
Laidlaw 1994, 88–89.
[33] Staal 1991, 233.

then the 'success' of lifelong repetitions may be 'greater' than the
sum of the individual, concrete rituals. As in the case of the inter-
nal course of a ritual, in the sequence of the repetitions of entire
rituals there lies a gain in experience and 'certainty';[34] this sum of
absolved rituals cannot be denied an individual and a collective
meaning. Complex rituals are in a certain way also 'learning sys-
tems', since the experiences of older performances enter into every
new performance of the ritual and at the same time innovations can
be generated. With an increase in internal and external complexity,
a meaning of rituals 'inevitably' increases, and in large part irre-
versibly: a complexity of rituals is a guarantee that their meanings
can be individualized and passed on.

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[34] Concerning religion as a 'security system' see B. Gladigow, "Sicherheit", *Metzler
Lexikon Religion* 3 (Stuttgart, Weimar, 2000), 305–308.

DEFERENCE

Maurice Bloch

Anthropologists have long been puzzled by the observation that, while it is clear that rituals seem to be (in part at least) meaningful acts insofar as some kind of non-trivial information is conveyed and is involved for both participants and observers alike, it seems very difficult to be satisfactorily precise about what this content might be. Many, including myself, have even suggested that a precise decoding of the message of rituals is necessarily misleading.[1] Some have gone so far as to argue that rituals are simply meaningless,[2] though exactly what such a claim would amount to is very unclear. One reason for arguing in this way is simply that we are frustratingly and continually faced in the field by informants who say that they do not know what rituals mean or why they are done in this or that way. Nonetheless, what stops anthropologists from adhering easily to the thesis that rituals are meaningless is that these very same informants, who a minute before admitted that they did not know what elements of the ritual were about, add puzzlingly and portentously that these elements mean something very deep and they insist that it is very important to perform them in precisely the right way.

   In light of this, anthropologists are often satisfied with making the rather lame point that rituals convey something or other that is vague but somehow powerful. Here I want to follow a tradition in ritual analysis that, instead of being embarrassed about vagueness, makes it its central concern. This is what I want to be precise about. Furthermore, I want to go far beyond my predecessors, myself included, in arguing that the vagueness of ritual offers us a clue to the nature of much human social knowledge and learning processes.

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[1] Bloch 1974; D. Sperber, *Le Symbolisme en Général* (Paris, 1974); Lewis 1980; Humphrey and Laidlaw 1994.
[2] Staal 1979.

Repetition

One feature that has often been noted in discussions of ritual is the presence of repetition.[3] In fact, the term 'repetition' in these discussions is used to refer to quite a variety of phenomena, all of which are commonly present in rituals.

First of all, the same elements or phrases are often repeated in the same performance. For example, in a type of the Malagasy circumcision ritual, the same phrase can recur several hundred times, perhaps even more. Similarly, in Christian rituals the word 'Amen' is said many times. Secondly, there is the fact that entire rituals are often repetitions of one another. One weekly mass is in many parts much the same as that of the week before. Finally, actors in rituals guide much of their behavior in terms of what they believe others, or themselves, have done or said on previous occasions. In this sense they are repeating either themselves or others. Indeed, in English any act, whether a speech act or otherwise, that appears to originate fully from the actor cannot properly be called 'ritual'.

It is on repetition of this latter type that I want to concentrate here. At least some, if not most, of the actions involved in the kind of phenomena mentioned above are understood by actors and observers alike to be repetitions; that is, they are acts, whether speech acts or acts of another kind, that do not completely originate in the intentionality of the producer at the time of their performance. It means that what is involved in ritual is conscious 'repetition', either of oneself or, much more often and much more importantly, of others who one has seen or heard perform the ritual before.

Familiar statements given to anthropologists by participants in rituals imply conscious quotation, statements such as: 'we do this because it is the custom of the ancestors', 'we do this because it is what one does at these events', or 'we do this because we have been ordered to act in this way'.

Therefore, the inevitable implication of such statements is that, both for participants and onlookers, it is not just the specific present spatio-temporal context that frames the intentionality of the acts of the ritual actor and that is relevant to understanding them fully, but also the past spatio-temporal context of specified, or unspecified, previous occurrences of the repeated or quoted acts. As Caroline

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[3] Leach 1966; Bloch 1974; Rappaport 1974; Lewis 1980.

Humphrey and James Laidlaw have put it, in a way that echoes a point I made in an earlier article,[4] "ritualization transforms the relation between intention and the meaning of action."[5]

When, during a circumcision ceremony, a Malagasy sprays water by way of blessing on those present, everyone knows that he or she is doing this kind of action (the spraying) in this way, because this is 'what one does', that is, it is the tradition. This means that whatever the elder feels at the time and however he perceives the situation will be insufficient to explain, and is well known to be insufficient to explain, why he uses water at that moment he does as he does. Compare this with a situation where he merely reaches for water from a stream. In this case most observers would find, though not necessarily rightly, that, given their background knowledge, the twin facts that the person was thirsty and that he saw the water in front of him, that is, his beliefs and desires (in the psychological-philosophical sense of the terms), was all there was to it.

Deference, Understanding, and Truth

Rituals therefore are acts of repetition or quotation. Such a remark places ritual within what externalist philosophers have identified as a central aspect of human thought and communication[6] and which has been called by some 'deference',[7] that is, reliance on the authority of others to guarantee the value of what is said or done. What makes such an observation particularly interesting for anthropologists is that deference fundamentally alters the relation between understanding something and holding it to be true. It seems common sense that one must understand something in order to hold it to be true. This is not the case, however, when deference is involved, especially when deference is linked to quotation.

We can say roughly that, in pragmatic theories along Gricean lines,[8] understanding meaning is seen necessarily to require not only

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[4] Bloch 1974.

[5] Humphrey and Laidlaw 1994, 90.

[6] H. Putnam, "The Meaning of 'Meaning'", H. Putnam, *Philosophical Papers* 2: *Mind, Language, and Reality* (Cambridge, 1975), 215–271.

[7] T. Burge, "Content Preservation", *Philosophical Review* 102 (1993), 457–488.

[8] H.P. Grice, "Utterer's Meaning, Sentence-Meaning, and Word-Meaning", J.R. Searle (ed.), *The Philosophy of Language* (Oxford, 1971), 54–70; D. Sperber and D. Wilson, *Relevance. Communication and Cognition* (Oxford, 1986).

knowledge of the lexicon and of the syntax employed but also the unconscious reading of the mind of the speaker and of what (s)he intends as (s)he utters the sounds. Without such 'mind reading', the words are, at the very least, so open to a wide range of ambiguities that it is impossible for the hearer to process them successfully. Such a theory is all the more interesting in that it makes the understanding of language directly dependent on what many would now argue is *the* key distinguishing feature of Homo Sapiens Sapiens, the so-called 'theory of mind' that enables a person to 'read' the mind of others and that separates humankind fairly sharply from all other animal species.[9]

Quotation implies an obvious modification of the simple Gricean principles just considered. It forces the hearer to try to read not only the mind of the speaker but also the mind of the speaker being quoted. Given the meta-representational ability of human beings, this is easily done, even if we are dealing with further degrees of meta-representation.[10] In this case, once the quoted sentence is understood, its truth can be considered.

Quotation offers another possibility, however. This is a kind of abandonment of the examination of the truth of the quoted statement, because one is only concerned with the fact that the statement has been made and that the speaker has been identified. If this speaker is worthy of trust, one can assume that what has been said is true without making the effort of understanding. In such a case, deference is combined with quotation, and it accounts for the rather odd possibility that one may hold something to be true without fully understanding it. If one trusts the source sufficiently, understanding is not necessary for the truth to be accepted, as is illustrated by the following example from Gloria Origgi.[11] She tells us of a follower who is convinced of the truth of a statement made by a leader who asserted that there are too many neo-Trotskyites in their party, even though she knows that she has no idea what a neo-Trotskyite might be. She will then be happy to transmit the information to another

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[9] D. Premack, "Does the Chimpanzee Have a Theory of Mind? Revisited", R. Byrne and A. Whitten (eds), *Machiavellian Intelligence. Social Expertise and the Evolution of Intellect in Monkeys, Apes and Humans* (Oxford, 1988), 160–179.

[10] D. Sperber (ed.), *Metarepresentations. A Multidisciplinary Perspective* (Vancouver Studies in Cognitive Science 10; Oxford, 2000).

[11] G. Origgi, "Croire sans Comprendre", *Cahiers de Philosophie de L'Université de Caen* 34 (2000), 191–201.

without understanding it. This might seem an unusual scenario, but a moment's reflection will confirm that we are all, to varying degrees, in much the same sort of situation most of the time.

Deference and Social Life

What is particularly interesting for anthropologists about an example such as the one just given is that not only do such occurrences crop up continually but that their occurrence is not random in the course of social life. Situations in which the truth of certain propositions are to be accepted through deference, and therefore not necessarily understood, are socially and culturally organized and regulated. Living in a partially institutionalized form of life—which is what it means to live in society—means that there are moments, concepts, contexts, in which one may examine the whys and wherefores and moments, concepts, and contexts in which this is inappropriate. For the reason we have seen above, this means that the latter need not be understood.

Thus, social life 'manages' the occurrence and the nature of deference through different institutional devices and thus establishes at the same time an economy of the necessity of understanding. It is clear that living in a socially organized system, even the apparently most *ad hoc* system, nonetheless involves moments of compulsory deference in the sense used above. There are moments when there are limits not only to understanding but also to the appropriateness of attempting to understand. This means that all normal human communication involves a mixture of searching for meaning (our own and that of others) and *also* not searching, moments of understanding and not understanding. When young children exhaust their parents by endlessly asking why-questions, they may well be training their judgment of when to search and when not to search.

We have seen why deference makes it possible to hold something true without understanding it, but there is also a reason why social life makes this abandonment of the search for meaning common. Namely, the experience of living in a historically constructed system means that deference continually occurs without it being possible to identify easily to whom one is deferring. As a result, intentionality cannot be 'locked' onto an intending mind, and therefore understanding cannot be 'clinched'. People around us and we ourselves are clearly deferring to others. But if we were so unwise as to want to examine

these others more closely, they would turn out to be deferring to yet others, and so on, without the process having any clear terminus. This is because humans live and act within a set of conventions that are no doubt the product of a long historical process of communication and quotation and that are experienced as 'given', that is, without specific minds intending them. These are the conventions that have been so internalized that they have become completely unconscious. Anthropologists sometimes call them 'culture' or 'habitus' and sometimes by other names, such as 'structure'. In other words, we are continually deferring to others but we do not catch sight of the minds to which we are deferring. For what we are reading are not simply human minds but historically constructed human minds. We do not simply understand others and ourselves; we always, to varying degrees but semi-consciously, understand that people around us are deferring to invisible and indeterminable others and that therefore we should limit our attempt to understand them.

Of course, such indeterminate deference is unconscious much of the time, though not always. The example of the follower who accepts the belief about the neo-Trotskyites is a case where it is quite possible that the act of deference becomes conscious, although here the person deferred to is clearly identified. What difference this consciousness of deference means, has not been, to my knowledge, much explored in pragmatics or in philosophy, but since it is so prominent in ritual and religion and so closely linked with the question of exegesis, we shall have to consider the question.

Thus there are three elements in human communication which can be combined: 1) quotation and deference, 2) consciousness of deference, and 3) lack of clarity on the person to whom one is deferring. When all three are present, we have the phenomena that in anthropological English are commonly referred to as ritual. Because the combination of these three elements is likely to lead to limited understanding, it is not surprising that this state of affairs is frequent in ritual.

Deference and Religion

Now we have the tools to examine what all this might mean for ritual and religion. At first, I shall examine two apparently simple deference scenarios, both of which correspond closely to Origgi's example.

The first concerns learning the Quran in Muslim schools and the second concerns spirit possession.

Reading or reciting the Quran, which is the central purpose of Muslim education, apparently involves a simple type of quotation on the part of the student since the speaker is merely quoting one single other intentional mind: that of God to which he defers totally.[12] Ideally, the student should learn the Quran perfectly by heart and so become a totally transparent medium, just like Mohamed himself. He should become a sort of tape recorder, so that his intentionality, and thus his understanding, disappear or become irrelevant to the text. As a result, the speaker or the hearer can focus entirely on the presence of God in the words. The student should efface himself as much as possible.

Another example of such ideally 'transparent' quotation is spirit possession. Theoretically, the utterers of sound have totally surrendered his or her body, and especially his or her vocal organs, to the being who temporally possesses them. In this case, too, the source of the emission of the sound should ideally disappear. Asking the student of the Quran, or the medium, to explain his or her choice of words or content, that is, to provide an exegesis, would clearly be to deny their complete deferral.

These two examples may seem simple, but in fact they involve two quite different elements. Both the pupil learning the Quran and others around him or her believe that what is proposed there is true and that they must assert it, whether they understand it or not. The medium has so effaced him- or herself that the assertions that come from his or her mouth must be true, precisely due to their spiritual source irrespective of his or her understanding. This is straightforward. However, one might expect that such practices would simply place at one remove the effort to understand. Having gotten past the pupil or the medium, it should be possible to concentrate on understanding God or the spirit. This, however, does not seem to be the case ethnographically. In such practices the act of deferral takes center stage, and everybody joins with the pupil or the medium in abandoning their intentionality and in making themselves transparent to whomever's words they are quoting, which strangely fade out of focus.

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[12] D. Eickelman, "The Art of Memory. Islamic Education and Social Reproduction", *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 20 (1978), 485–516.

In such cases we have two of the elements isolated above: defer-
ence and the consciousness of deference, even though this may ulti-
mately disappear. What is not present, however, is the third element
discussed above: the indetermination of the originating mind. It is
clear that it is God who is the source of the Quran or it is Great
Grandmother who is the spirit. But what happens when such definition
disappears? It is to this that I now turn.

Ritual

It is the presence of the third element which characterizes much rit-
ual and, more especially, those ritual elements that are most strongly
resistant to exegesis. In such instances quotation, and therefore def-
erence, is obviously taking place, but it is not clear who is being
quoted or deferred to.

As noted above, a very common experience among anthropolo-
gists who ask why someone is doing something in a particular way
in a ritual is that these questions are answered with such phrases
as: 'It's the tradition', 'It is the custom of the ancestors', or 'It goes
back to early history'. Now, these apparently frustrating answers are
nonetheless interesting in many ways, for they combine explicitness
concerning deference and awareness of the imprecision about who
exactly is the originating mind behind the practice.

If the participants, or the observers, engaged in such rituals as the
mass, the Malagasy initiation ritual, or making the sign of the cross,
try to work out who intended what they are doing to be *exactly* so,
they are going to be in a difficult situation.

The search for original intentionality is in itself perfectly reason-
able, and although frustrating, almost inevitable. After all, we are
dealing with people with human minds, that is, with an animal whose
mind is characterized by an intentionality-seeking device that is nor-
mally exercised ceaselessly (one might almost say obsessively), some-
times consciously but often unconsciously, and that enables them to
read the minds of others and thus coordinate their behavior with
them. But in a ritual these poor animals, including the poor anthro-
pologists, appear to be faced with an impossible situation because
the search for intentionality leads them ever further back, to ever
more remote authorities, but without ever settling anywhere with
any finality. This is the predicament both of participants who might

unwisely ask themselves why on earth they are doing this or that and of mere onlookers who ask the same question.

This Kafkaesque nightmare of being endlessly referred back to other authorities can be rendered bearable only in one of three ways.

The *first* is the most straightforward. One can attempt simply to switch off the intentionality-seeking device, an attitude that could be described as retreat or 'putting on hold' or 'letting things be'. This switching off requires some effort since, given the way our mind works, it is unnatural, but it can be done nonetheless. Saying that you do what you do, or say what you say, because of 'tradition' may in some cases be nothing more than an expression of this attitude. The refusal to look for intentionality, however, presents the participants with a disappointing propositional thinness. It is as if, when one is very tired and kept awake by a hubbub of voices, one apparently makes out somebody or other saying 'raindrops are Jesus's macaroons'. In such a situation, the person might make no effort to discover the intentionality of the speaker and hope to go to sleep as quickly as possible. The only thing that the person has from the situation is the realization that it involves the use of proper language, therefore probably that it has potential for speaker meaning. Clearly here there is no understanding, and it is far from clear whether anybody in such a situation even holds the proposition to be true.

The *second* possibility is much more common, but will also appear in a number of somewhat exceptional situations, one of which is being faced by an over inquisitive anthropologist, though not the only one. Then, for some reason, it will seem necessary to make an effort to understand what is going on. At first, one is tempted to search in the dark recesses behind the producer of the ritual acts, whom we know, after all, is only quoting someone, somewhere, who might have meant to mean something. (Doing this without paying attention to informants in anthropology is called 'functionalism'.) But it's dark back there: as soon as someone seems to come into focus, he or she becomes transparent since the person seen reveals another person behind him or her. He or she is only deferring to someone else, further back, who, when focused on, becomes similarly transparent, and so on. Finally, we give up searching for meaning, though not in the same total way as the giving up discussed in the first case, and for the following reason.

All this frustration occurs only due to the difficulties encountered while searching for the intentionality of the initiator of the message.

By contrast, the intentionality of the speaker, the singer, or the actor
in the ritual is not more problematic than those of the spirit medium
or the pupil learning the Quran discussed above. The intentionality
of all these people can be read simply as deferral, and this act is
greatly valued. The search for intentionality is therefore switched to
the unproblematic examination of the intentionality of the transmit-
ter, the situation that Humphrey and Laidlaw describe for the Jain
Puja.[13] And when people tell us that they do not know what such
and such a phrase means, or why such and such an act is per-
formed, but that it is being said or performed in this way because
one is following the customs of the ancestors, they are surely telling
us that what they are doing, saying, singing is, above all, *deferring*.

This brings us to the *third* possibility. Namely, that even this solu-
tion to the problem may be unsatisfactory. In rare, but important,
moments people are going to ask themselves, or others, why things
are done or said in this or that way, and they will not give up in
spite of the apparent difficulties encountered in their search. Their
mind reading instinct will just not leave them alone. Thus, one wants
to attribute speaker meaning to what is going on, but to do that
one must inevitably create some sort of speaker. A normal speaker
is not available since such a speaker would become transparent as
soon as he or she is considered and will therefore perform the dis-
appearing act discussed above.

The solution to the problem of wanting to locate meaning with-
out having normal originators of that meaning is to merge all the
shadowy transparent figures into one phantasmagoric quasi-person
who may be called something like 'tradition', 'the ancestors as a
group', 'our way of doing things', our 'spirit', our 'religion', perhaps
even 'God'. These are entities to which 'minds' may be attributed
with some degree of plausibility, thus apparently restoring intentional
meaning to the goings on of ritual. The apparent specificity of such
entities thus appears at first to solve the problem of the indeterminacy
of the intentional source. After all, we are familiar with the attribu-
tion of human-like intentional minds to things like mountains or dead
people,[14] so why not attribute such a mind to an essentialized tra-

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[13] Humphrey and Laidlaw 1994.
[14] P. Boyer, "What Makes Anthropomorphism Natural. Intuitive Ontology and
Cultural Representations", *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* n.s. 2 (1996),
83–97.

dition? And here we are faced with a situation that is somewhat similar and somewhat dissimilar to that of the second case discussed above. It is similar in that the message is held to be true regardless of whether it is understood. Again, the act of deference is consciously present and valued in and of itself. However, the act of deference does no hold center stage as much as in the second case, because speaker meaning becomes an alternative point of interest. Nonetheless, this is no ordinary speaker meaning to the extent that the 'speaker' is no ordinary mind but is instead an essentialized conflation. In fact, I would propose that the precision of our understanding varies with the degree to which the phantasmagoric initiator is close or distant in nature to ordinary minds. Thus the mind of an entity called 'the tradition' would be more difficult to interpret than that of an entity called 'the ancestors', but the latter are themselves probably more difficult to interpret than a singular spirit, simply because plural minds are not what we are equipped to understand readily.

The three variants just discussed are, of course, not distinct in time or place. Individuals may slide from one to another during a particular ritual, and not everybody present will do so completely. However, the form of the ritual and the entities invoked will ensure the general organization in most people's minds of relative degrees of understanding. This is because the problems of attributing clear meanings to what is done all result from the central fact that ritual involves high degrees of deference.

However, as we have seen, deference is a common aspect of human life. It occurs whenever we do something, or believe something to be true, and rely thereby on the authority of others—something we do constantly. If people are always partly, but very significantly, living in a sea of deference, this is largely an unconscious fact. But it is nevertheless a fact that hovers not very far from the level of consciousness, and which can, and often does, cross into the level of consciousness. As Hilary Putnam stressed,[15] people are almost conscious of the fact that they are constantly relying on the understanding of others and that they normally act in terms of beliefs that they do not fully understand but that they hold valid because of their trust in the understanding of others. People therefore allow themselves to depend on others. By and large, this is a good feeling,

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[15] Putnam, "The Meaning of 'Meaning'".

while at other times it is oppressive. But when one is in trouble and
does not know what to do, one allows oneself to be taken over by
the knowledge and the authority of others. It is only sensible to do
so, and there is not much else that one can do.

Now I am arguing that ritual is just that, in a rather extreme
form. Rituals are orgies of conscious deference. But if this is so, the
search for exegesis is always misleading. This is not because it is
impossible. Clearly, exegeses exist, whether private or shared, whether
the secret of experts or available to all, whether conscious, semi-con-
scious, or unconscious. But the exegeses are beside the point of the
central character of ritual: deference.

DYNAMICS

Bruce Kapferer

This discussion of the dynamics of ritual concentrates both on the inner processes of ritual and the dynamics of the relation between ritual and the realities that are part of its larger context. I do not oppose dynamics to statics, for what appears to be static, repetitive, or unchanging in ritual is nonetheless a product of the particular dynamics of its action, which has the capacity to effect changes in the experience of participants, as well as within the wider social and political contexts in which rituals are enacted. Overall, the concern with the dynamics of ritual is with the organizing or structurating practices or techniques through which it intervenes pragmatically (often constitutively) in lived experience.

Any exploration of the dynamics of ritual turns on the issue of whether ritual is a distinct phenomenon in its own right. Does the concept of ritual in fact occur as an actual discrete phenomenon, or is the concept merely an anthropological construct with its roots in the European Enlightenment, colonialism, and the emergence of a scientific and technological age?[1] Undoubtedly, it is ritual as a concept, as an analytical tool for understanding psychological and social phenomena, that is vital. The invocation of the term 'ritual' to describe an increasingly vast array of practices engages a particular analytical attitude. Ritual exists in the anthropological imagination. How it is imagined has implications for the analysis that follows the naming of an event as being ritual. The definitions of ritual outline how rituals are conceptually imagined and how ritual as a relatively distinct practice is recognized. Such definitions are contingent on theoretical commitments in a diversity of disciplines from anthropology (where the concept has had a central status) via theology and performance studies to ethology and socio-biology. In other words, analytical or theoretical orientations independent of whatever the phenomenon may be in itself (as an actual empirical practice somehow

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[1] See Asad 1993; Bell 1997; Tambiah 1981.

independent of its conceptual imaginary), have governed both the identification of specific practices as ritual and the kind of interpretive procedures that are applied to it.

Thus, understandings of ritual (especially what are considered to be its processes) draw on a diversity of theoretical orientations, some of which gain their *raison d'être*, to a degree, from their capacity to reveal ritual's mysteries. These include psychoanalysis, symbolic interaction, phenomenology, linguistics, and a variety of sociologies of Durkheimian, Weberian, and Marxian persuasion, structuralism, and post-structuralism. Catherine Bell's (1992) survey of perspectives for understanding ritual processes demonstrates this, for it is a compendium of available approaches in the social sciences and humanities largely formed independently of an attention to ritual in itself.[2] Largely, these approaches deny the existence of any dynamics in ritual that are ultimately peculiar to it, though many scholars would concede that ritual is a particular formation (or concentration) of dynamics observable in a wide array of practices which themselves are usually not described as being ritual. As such ritual gives prominence or emphasis to processes or phenomena formative of human experience that are integral within ordinary practice yet not consciously apparent.

Thus, an interpretation of ritual dynamics from a Durkheimian perspective would see ritual as the spark of the social, the primordial ground of the social. The religious or sacred quality of ritual is nothing but a sanctification of the vital processes at the heart of social formation. A Marxist position might see the dynamics of ritual acts as hiding a fundamental emptiness shrouding a potency that really derives from the world external to it. Ritual is a dynamic domain of masking, transformation, and inversion, a field of fetishistic and magical forces, that simultaneously supports the status quo by according itself potencies that in fact derive from the political and economic processes over which ritual falsely claims determining ascendancy. Michael Taussig recently reiterated such a position in his discussion of the power of rite to be based on an elaborate trick, whereby it conceals as its core mystery, the *sanctum sanctorum*, a fundamental emptiness or nothingness.[3] Paradoxically, this is a position integral

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[2] Bell 1992.

[3] M.T. Taussig, *Defacement. Public Secrecy and the Labour of the Negative* (The Raymond Fred West Memorial Lectures; Stanford, 1999). Taussig's argument resonates with many others. It is also, e.g., the argument of Buddhist thought and also practice

to some Buddhist interpretations and is a basis of the authority of their thought and practice.[4] A Weberian orientation, however, would conceive of rite as a locus for the unfolding of ultimate values within which the differentiated directions of social action unfold. In other words, what Taussig and others might see as the focal emptiness of rite is the vital spirit that is at the legitimating center of the values that condition the ritual practice. Weberians might stress ritual as being an ontological process par excellence within which a variety of subjectivities may be founded or refounded. The rites of Protestant Christianity, for example, inculcate a particular conception of self and responsibility that forge an orientation to existence in the world that may have world-changing consequence.

I have only touched fleetingly on some of the major orientations influencing the recognition of ritual and an understanding of its dynamics. Broadly, my point is that ritual and its particular dynamics is largely relative to the theoretical positions that are taken towards the phenomenon and in which terms the phenomenon, to a degree, is constructed for examination. None of this is to say that events that are recognized as rites do not exist (that is, as distinct phenomena) but that their critical dynamics are often identified through the filter of preexisting theoretical commitments.

The definitions of or conceptual orientations towards ritual contain implicit assertions concerning both how ritual organizes action and how ritual may relate to and affect its larger social and political contexts. The approaches of Victor W. Turner and Roy A. Rappaport together encompass, though with markedly different emphases, much of what anthropologists have to say on ritual dynamics.

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in folk rites (see Kapferer 1997). Claude Lévi-Strauss argues something similar regarding the *leger de main* of the shaman (see C. Lévi-Strauss, "The Sorcerer and His Magic" in *Structural Anthropology*, trans. C. Jacobson and B.G. Schoepf [New York, 1963], 167–185). Sartrean existentialism pursues a similar point on a larger philosophical plane, e.g., in Sartre's metaphor of the donut—the ring of substance that surrounds an essential nothingness (see J.-P. Sartre, *Being and Nothingness. An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology*, trans. H.E. Barnes [New York, 1956])!

[4] Some intellectuals in Sri Lanka equate Buddhism with the arguments of Marx. Indeed, a close examination of the argument of some of the main folk Sinhala Buddhist cults might detect an argument that implicitly argues against ritual. Most exorcisms involve a destruction of their ritual edifices and end with comedy that casts the ritual as a whole in an absurd light. There is a powerful sense that ritual is a prop and that ultimately human beings must confront their realities without the final falsity of ritual assistance.

Two Perspectives on Ritual Dynamics

Rappaport's recent statement on the dynamics of ritual develops from fairly conventional anthropological positions.[5] He stresses the repetitive or liturgical pattern of ritual acts, their formality and invariance, and their encoding of sacred, canonical or foundational principles. He[6] underlines the magical performative[7] character of ritual, whereby the act does what it says or represents. That is, the action of rite is a total, constitutive act in itself, its magicality being part of a general class of performative acts that are routine in much everyday activity. Rappaport's important application of arguments in linguistic philosophy aside, he carries forward what has long been a tradition of ritual studies and epitomized early on, for example, in the structural-functional definition proffered by Jack Goody.[8]

Structural functionalism, and many subsequent positions in anthropology, adopt the modernist and rationalist/secularist position that conceives of ritual as a relatively empty phenomenon whose final potency is in the beliefs and practices within which it is embedded. (The performative and ritual act of dubbing a knight would have little constitutive effect outside the political institutions of knighthood.) In such an orientation, the passing of traditional society (that is, pre-modern society) results in the decline of ritual, its revelation as empty or fetishized practice, which only those who reject modernity or the processes of a scientific/technical age cling to either in resistance or in a heightened mysticism born of modernism, such as New Age cults. The empty fetishized and obsessive understanding of ritual continues in structuralist thinking,[9] as well as in some psychoanalytic interpretations and neo-Marxist arguments.

The importance of Rappaport's discussion is that he shows that the formal properties of ritual are critical to its effects. The dynamics that he discusses promote the constitutive and meaningful force of much ritual. Turner, who is also concerned in a major way with

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[5] Rappaport 1999.

[6] See also Tambiah 1981.

[7] J.L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (Oxford, 1962).

[8] J. Goody, "Religion and Ritual. The Definitional Problem", *British Journal of Sociology* 12 (1961), 142–164.

[9] E.g., Claude Lévi-Strauss's stress on over-determining concern in ritual with detailing which is continued in Frits Staal's stress on the meaninglessness of ritual (Staal 1979).

dynamics and the production of meaning, is ultimately antagonistic to formalist approaches.[10] Indeed, as he develops his position, he moves away from any formalized definition of ritual. What it is becomes more and more an open question in his analyses. Broadly, Turner moves away from an earlier interest in the integrative structural-functional character of ritual action and refuses notions of ritual as an instrument of stasis or an expression of timeless and unchanging cosmological orders.[11] Van Gennep's model of *rites de passage* effectively becomes Turner's model for all ritual. *Rites de passage* are for Turner instruments of change and their dynamics (a dynamic of transition and transformation) can be found in all societies at all times. Turner placed the greatest stress on the liminal moments of rites, which he interpreted as manifesting the most intensive creative and generative events of ritual (and, more generally, in social processes as a whole). A critical feature of such moments is their antistructural process and their negation of formal categories, conventions, and hierarchies. This makes them the source for new constructions of reality rather than mere invariant, repetitions of the same.

For Turner liminal—or as he elaborated, liminoid—processes are vital in diverse kinds of human activity. His implication is that the liminal is not only the source of the creation of the social but is also generative of what is often recognized as ritual. In other words, processes of ritualization spring up around liminal processes, isolating them as key ritual dynamics and effectively enshrining or sanctifying them.

A classic account of the liminal phase in rites is Turner's description of Ndembu initiation ritual.[12] Here he stresses liminality as a specific transitive turning point. It manifests the dangers and potencies of chaotic emergence, often a terrible period of the un-making of old, and the making of new, orders and structures. Turner describes such periods in the Ndembu initiations into adulthood, and there

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[10] V.W. Turner, *Schism and Continuity in an African Society. A Study of Ndembu Village Life* (Manchester, 1957); Turner 1967.

[11] Turner 1969; Turner 1974a. I have explored Turner's discussion of liminality in relation to the Kantian notion of the sublime (B. Kapferer, "Sorcery and the Beautiful", A. Hobart and B. Kapferer, *Aesthetics in Performance. Formations of Symbolic Construcution and Experience* [New York, 2005]). This latter idea bears a potential for creativity in the Kantian system, which has an affinity with Turner's development of the liminal concept.

[12] Turner 1967.

are many similar examples. The liminal also as a moment of ritu-
alization (or a dynamic that becomes enshrined as ritual) is demon-
strated in his discussion of the events of the Hidalgo insurrection in
Mexico (or perhaps the events in Paris in 1968).[13] Hidalgo's action
at a critical turning point or liminal moment in Mexican history, his
famous cry (*grito*) in conjunction with his recognition of the Virgin
of Guadalupe, becomes ritualized into a nationally repeated cele-
bratory event.

Turner is critically interested in ritual dynamics as a symbolic
process that unfolds meaning. In his seminal work on Ndembu rit-
ual Turner drew on both Sigmund Freud and C.G. Jung (and also
on the philosopher Susanne Langer and later John Dewey) and
stressed ritual as a site where symbols come into multidimensional
(multivocal) relation. He described the symbolic process of rite as
one in which emotions grounded in the experiencing body (the orec-
tic pole of meaning) are brought into a dialectical relation with
abstract meanings (the exegetical pole) so that each effectively pro-
duces and authenticates the other. His approach emphasized what
would now be understood as a dynamic of embodiment[14] and is
most brilliantly demonstrated in his analysis of the Ndembu Chihamba
cult.[15] The ritual dynamic to which Turner pointed showed how rit-
ual achieves what may be regarded as its truth values, and gener-
ated commitment. Thus the involvement in rite is not necessarily
premised on belief, or merely a function of belief, as in most struc-
tural-functional anthropology. Rather, ritual is a dynamics for the
production of beliefs and commitment to them and, potentially, for
their destabilization and change.

Later, Clifford Geertz took a similar view—though less directed

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[13] Turner 1974a.
[14] Turner initiated the concern with the body in ritual with his approach to color
symbolism (Turner 1967). He argued that the primary colors involved in ritual
reflected fundamental bodily processes. Later work has taken either a Durkheimian
position (the body as a reflection of ritual processes that become embodied) or the
phenomenological orientation of Merleau-Ponty (the body as the ground which gen-
erates or produces its realities through its movement into the world). The latter
perspective was used by Pierre Bourdieu, *An Outline of a Theory of Practice*, trans.
R. Nice, (Cambridge Studies in Social Anthropology 16; Cambridge, 1977) and more
recently by T.S. Csordas, *Embodiment and Experience. The Existential Ground of Culture
and Self*, (Cambridge Studies in Mecial Anthropology 2; Cambridge, 1994).
[15] Turner, *Schism and Continuity*; V.W. Turner, *Chihamba, the White Spirit. A Ritual
Drama of the Ndembu* (Rhodes-Livingstone Papers 33; Manchester, 1962).

to rite as an agent of change—in his celebrated study of the Balinese cockfight.[16] Concentrating on the dynamics of the event (specifically, the pattern of betting), Geertz showed how focal values were (re)produced through the dynamics that also conditioned shifting intensities of interest among participants. The way in which ritual holds its participants to its project is critical for understanding ritual as a meaningful event. The dynamic production of a situation of "deep play" in rite, or total absorption and engrossment within the action, occurs when the critical values integral to the ritual (its ontology) operate and become re-affirmed at profound levels in the lived existence of performance. This is so both for central actors in the ritual events and for onlookers.[17]

Geertz's orientation to meaning in ritual is motivated by his dominantly Weberian perspective, as well as cultural aesthetic concerns. The latter is perhaps even stronger in Turner's case, whose background in literature influences a major stress on the dramatic and theatrical dynamics of ritual as a performance. This emphasis extends a long-term assumption among scholars of the close connection between ritual and drama/theatre. Contemporary theatre has often regarded ritual as its virtually primordial source of inspiration, employing what are seen to be ritual techniques in theatrical experiment.[18] The dramatic metaphor, of course, is quite prominent in sociological orientations towards social life, as is the metaphor of ritual. There can be little doubt of the dramatic and theatrical dimensions of much ritual, but the common subsumption of these events under the broad

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[16] C. Geertz, "Deep Play. Notes on the Balinese Cockfight", *Daedalus* 101 (1972), 1–37.

[17] An important implication of Geertz's cockfight is the way in which the ritual continually reorganizes the relation of the audience to the focal events and in fact structures varying degrees of their participation (see also B. Kapferer, "The Ritual Process and the Problem of Reflexivity in Sinhalese Demon Exorcisms", J.J. MacAloon (ed.), *Rite, Drama, Festival, Spectacle. Rehearsals Toward a Theory of Cultural Performance* [Philadelphia, 1984], 179–207). The argument has implications for the understanding of ritual as an event of reflexivity and reflection, to follow Turner here. The import of ritual as communicating deep existential messages is dependent on the distancing or involvement of members of the audience—or, more appropriately, ritual gathering—with regard to the ritual process.

[18] Drama and theater have been seen as extensions of ritual (see Jane Harrison, *Ancient Art and Ritual*, [London, 1913]). In this regard, they are effectively conceived as the secular and rational formation of ritual. Turner would not have seen things this way. Although he did view rite as the primordial source of the arts, he did stress rite as a problematization of reason and as a site for intensive reflexivity—both features that those in contemporary artistic fields would accord their practice.

category of performance may distort key distinctions that could become evident when particular empirical instances are examined.

The stress on the theatricality and performance quality of ritual tends, in the work of both Turner and Geertz, to overdetermine ritual as a dynamics of representation and meaning. Thus the power of ritual is its dynamic potency of representation wherein the values underscoring and directing practices in the social order as a whole find intense expression, as in Geertz's depiction of the ritual of the Balinese royal court integral to Bali as a theatre state.[19] Turner's approach goes further than Geertz here, for he continually refers to the internally critical discourse of meaning and representation within ritual, bringing it more into line with contemporary discourse on theatre and the arts generally.

Notwithstanding their importance, the overall result of perspectives such as those of Turner and Geertz tends to dissolve the idea of ritual as a distinct phenomenal category and therefore the particularity of its dynamics. This is so despite the fact that they begin their analytical developments with the assumption that empirical phenomena widely recognizable as ritual exist. While they suspend a general and positive definition of the phenomenon, such as the one Rappaport attempts, their general and specific understanding—like all anthropology—is a mixture of their encounter with particular events that they relatively unproblematically recognized to be ritual, on the one hand, with their conceptual predilections, on the other hand. While Rappaport's definition might be unsuccessful, his approach is important because he tries to isolate the features that appear to influence widely the anthropological recognition of particular events as being ritual.

Ritual Delimited: Key Dynamics of Ritual Recognition

In the remainder of this discussion I shall comment on what I think are critical dynamics of rites that underpin a widespread recognition of certain events as being ritual. What is generally grasped as being

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[19] In a certain sense, Geertz's perspective is a kind of 'end of ideology' approach applied to ancient Bali at the moment of its colonially determined transition (see Geertz 1980).

ritual (at the hazard of being too exclusive and essentialist) is action that is simultaneously set apart from ongoing life yet continuous with it and, most important, intimate with its reproduction or generation. Such ritual events tend to be strongly ontological (i.e. establish the ground of being in existence) in their constitutive force and are recognized by participants as such (often indicated both by the sacralizing and desacralizing processes of the action). Thus they play with the elements of existential formation. In this regard, rituals often have a sacrificial dynamic whereby deconstructive (or destructive/fragmenting) processes are critical elements of reconstitution or reformation. The liminal period of initiation rites described by Turner could also be understood as a sacrificial process in the way Henri Hubert and Marcel Mauss addressed sacrifice and which they implicitly took as the critical, definitive dimension of rite.

In accordance with the foregoing I concentrate on the dynamics of: a) framing, b) habitus, and c) sacrifice. I shall close with a brief consideration of the aesthetic dynamics of rite whose import achieves its force in the context of one or more of the preceding dynamics. Overall, the dynamics of rite are relatively distinct because they are directed to personal and social problematics with the intention to change them or to secure the continuity of life's flow.

Ritual Framing

The key dynamic of ritual is its framing. This makes the activity that occurs within the frame significant *as ritual action*. That is, all action that is included within the frame is bound together by it (created as a significant formation) and becomes subject to processes (of meaning and interaction) relative to the themes and projects of the rite. The ritual frame effectively establishes the events of action occurring within it as a self-referencing system that has its own relatively independent legitimacy and meaning. Thus the framing of acts and events as ritual constitutes rite as its own domain of belief and veracity. Overall, the framing of ritual establishes the acts and events organized within it as comprising the one teleological nexus, that is, a design whose interrelation of acts and events are conditioned by the overall project or purpose of the ritual.

I should state here that the framing of ritual action as ritual is not independent of the acts that are constituted within it. They are mutually sustaining (and referencing), and in certain minimal ritual

acts—such as gestural acts of entry and egress—they are their own framing. That is, they declare themselves as being ritual acts requiring no other legitimacy than this, their ritual force or magicality being performatively present in the ritual gestures as such.

This approach to ritual framing draws from the work of Gregory Bateson, Erving Goffman, and others.[20] Bateson's own study of *naven* behavior among the Iatmul of Papua New Guinea indicates how *naven* action, highly framed activity that communicates it as such, may suddenly erupt in the midst of social processes.[21] It operates to adjust difficulties or problematics that have arisen within social relations and their ongoing process. Applying the concept of frame in contemporary North American contexts, Goffman refers to practices (what he calls 'interaction ritual') that switch the trajectories of interaction flow, bridging breaks in ongoing activity, or repairing damage to the continuity of social relations that have emerged in the course of interaction.[22]

The framing of such ritual action is created by the action itself and can operate as an invisible membrane surrounding the action, momentarily setting it off from the ongoing flow of life yet simultaneously pragmatically engaged with it. The ritual framing of action and events creates a context in which elements of experience can be acted upon and potentially changed or transformed. Moreover, the action of the rite not only is made self-determining but is also placed in a potentially determining relation to surrounding contexts within which it has momentarily emerged.

In major rituals the framing of the events as a whole is more physically apparent, a ritual space being clearly demarcated. In Buddhist Sri Lanka, major rituals to the deities and demons have a boundary (*sima*) delineated around them. The *sima* effectively creates a space of ritual authority and determination, a domain of powers,[23] which not only establishes a particular significance for everything that enters within it but also binds them together so that they build and exchange

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[20] G. Bateson, "A Theory of Play and Fantasy", *Steps to an Ecology of Mind* (New York, 1978), 150–166; Goffman 1974. See also Handelman 1990 and Kapferer 1983 with specific attention to elaborate ritual formations.

[21] G. Bateson, *Naven. A Survey of the Problems Suggested by a Composite Picture of the Culture of a New Guinea Tribe drawn from Three Points of View* (Stanford, 1936; 2d ed., 1958); see Handelman 1979.

[22] Goffman 1967.

[23] See Kapferer 1983; Kapferer 1997.

import with each other within an overarching teleological dynamic. This framing of the ritual opens participants to the particular logics of transformation and transition that are integral to the teleological process that the frame defines. In the case of Sinhala Buddhist rites of healing that define illness in terms of demonic attack, the demonic condition of patients (which subverts the appropriate cosmic order of things) is overcome by re-situating patients within a proper ordering of cosmic processes, one within which human beings have a degree of constitutive control (ritual being a device of such control). In this way, demons (and the illness) are subordinated to human authority conditioned by the ultimate ordering potency of the Buddha (human being in its most perfected form). The framing of ritual as ritual isolates particular dimensions of ongoing reality insofar as these affect embodied existence and passes them through a system of controlled and delimited transformations and transitions. In the Sinhala case to which I am referring here, this enables patients or demonic victims to reestablish the continuity of their life that their illness has interrupted.

Ritual as a Dynamics of Habitus

The framing of rite constitutes a particular lived in space whose dynamics may be likened to what Pierre Bourdieu (drawing on Durkheim and Mauss) describes as the habitus. As I interpret Bourdieu, the habitus is a structuring of dispositions that is of ontological import.[24] Bourdieu's probably best known example is the Kabyle house. This is a structural (architectural) spatial order whose meaning is broadly defined paradigmatically in terms of a logical system of cultural significations (male/female, hot/cold, dry/wet, etc.). In terms of the movement and orientation of persons through this space, what might appear to be fixed relations are continually brought into different relations with a variety of meaningful possibilities. Thus the house is a context of shifting orientations towards meaning that are both produced through the movement of the body and are embodied. The Kabyle house is a living/ground space of ontological formation and reformation. The dynamics of much ritual may be regarded in a broadly similar way.

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[24] Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*.

Rituals can be conceived as complex dispositional structures through which participants are made to move. These structures are not static but are brought into different relations of meaning and signification through ritual events in which the bodies of participants are centers of meaning production and themselves laden with its import. The details of Victor Turner's own rich Ndembu ethnography is filled with examples, and there are numerous others. James W. Fernandez's work on Bwiti ritual architectonics is a fascinating instance, as is Audrey I. Richard's early study of the Bemba *cisungu* initiation.[25] I have explicitly used the idea of habitus to explore the ritual dynamics of the Sinhala anti-sorcery rite, the Suniyama.[26] In this rite, the central ritual space is a cosmic house in which the victim is progressively oriented and reoriented (moved through a number of dispositional possibilities) and ultimately reconstituted as a being capable of acting and re-making his or her own existential realities.

The direction of participants through ritual processes—their dispositional orientation within the ritual habitus—is subject to some control in the rules of ritual performance. Most rituals to be recognized as being of a particular type and project (e.g. cure, protection, worship) are a complex of rules (of differing degrees of explicitness and flexibility) that direct the actions of participants. Generally, such rules are foregrounded, demanding particular attitudes and organizations of the body relative to particular ritual events. It is such rules of rite that give it the potentiality to have similar effects over a wide array of separate instances. For example, the capacity of some rituals at a particular moment in their organization to elicit trance is in part a function of the way the entranced are oriented, through the rules of performance, within specific events. The ritual habitus, more than that of the house in Bourdieu's analysis, is a controlled habitus (in which choice is relatively limited) whereby participants are regulated by the rule-governed procedures of the performance.

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[25] J.W. Fernandez, *Bwiti. An Ethnography of the Religious Imagination in Africa* (Princeton, 1981); A.I. Richards, *Chisungu. A Girl's Initiation Ceremony among the Bemba of Zambia* (London, 1956; 2d ed., 1982). See also Handelman 1990 and esp. J.K. Simonsen, *Webs of Life. An Ethnographic Account of Cisungu Female Initiation Rites among Mambwe-speaking women in Zambia* (Dissertation; Oslo, 2000).

[26] Kapferer 1997.

The Sacrificial Dynamics of Rite

A vital feature of much ritual is what can be described as its sacrificial dynamic. This is not to say that an actual sacrifice occurs, although most major rituals of anthropological ethnography center on acts of sacrifice (the most common being the actual or metaphoric killing of victims) and focus on gift exchange (that often has a sacrificial structure to it). Hubert and Mauss's study of sacrifice indicates a general theory of ritual.[27] Certainly, in the ethnographic record, major rituals of state that concentrate on kingship articulate a central sacrificial structure in which king, state, and society are regenerated via acts of destruction. The *Sinhala* healing rites to which I have referred here center on sacrificial/anti-sacrificial acts with the patient in the position of the victim. Much gift exchange and the presentation of offerings in worship implicate a sacrificial dynamic. Here I expand the notion of sacrifice beyond most conventional usage to refer to those ritual processes that are simultaneously deconstitutive and reconstitutive, the latter being dependent on the former.

Such a dynamic describes a great many kinds of processes that fall within the broad conceptual rubric of ritual. For example, the New Orleans Mardi Gras[28] has one of its focal practices the exchange of beads between those of the opposite gender in return for disrobement (principally, the exposure of body parts normally covered: breasts, genitalia, buttocks). The action plays against the values of dominant society and, it should be noted, in the New Orleans red-light district. Values are reciprocally subverted in return for 'payment'. This can be interpreted as working within (and making an enjoyable parody of) the contradictions of capitalism (which is line with the overall argument that the anthropologist whose work I engage with here follows), where all falls or is subordinated to money or open to a monetary value (anything can be bought). But, I add, such key events in Mardi Gras can be conceived as expressing a sacrificial dynamic. In one sense there is a reciprocity of the victims. Victims are targeted in the exchange. Individuals are challenged to expose

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[27] H. Hubert and M. Mauss, *Sacrifice. Its Nature and Function*, trans. W.D. Halls (Chicago, [1898] 1981).

[28] W. Shrum, "Ceremonial Disrobement and Moral Choice. Consumption Rituals at Mardi Gras", C.C. Otnes and T.M. Lowrey (eds), *Contemporary Consumption Rituals. A Research Anthology* (Mahwah, NJ, 2004), 38–58.

themselves, and by agreeing to do so, set off an exchange of beads. Their mutual agreement to acts of exposure (a form of destruction of routine composure)—in other words, to become a victim (or willing sacrificer and sacrifier)—sets off the exchange of sociality (for the challenges are thrown at strangers) and the restitution of a dressed composure. The return to composure in the context of a now (re)established sociality and interpersonal socio-moral order is effected and expressed by the exchange of beads. The overall process of Mardi Gras is one of a public participatory involvement in acts of deconstruction and reconstruction—the socio-moral order as being open to continual challenge in which the public as a whole is charged with the agency of making and breaking the reality they share.

The foregoing illustrates another dimension of what I gloss as the sacrificial dynamic of much ritual. This 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). There is a process of decomposition and then recomposition usually into a different or transformed kind of unity (the structure of ritual offerings often follows this course). Lévi-Strauss comments on what he describes as the obsessive concern in ritual action with breaking down totalities into their elements and classifying them. He complains that this is the meaninglessness of rite (a point echoed in the later work of Staal)[29] and its inferiority to myth, but overlooks the fact that the process of reduction (decomposition) and recomposition is the very dynamic of ritual constitutive potency. Cooking is often a central aspect of ritual activity (indeed, sacrifice and ritual in South Asia is expressed as cooking)[30] that is through and through a dynamic of deconstruction and reconstruction mediated by acts of destruction. The food itself is integral to exchange, a sustenance of the body and of social relations, a fundamental ingredient of (re)constitution.

I have discussed three broad but critical dimensions of the dynamics of ritual action. These, along with the thorough pragmatic and interventional intention of ritual action, condition the import of other crucial dynamic aspects. I refer specifically to the aesthetic features of much ritual: that is, the ritual engagement of the material and plastic arts (painting, sculpture, and other modes of material object

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[29] Staal 1979.
[30] See C. Malamoud, *Cooking the World. Ritual and Thought in Ancient India* (Dehli, 1997).

or shaped symbolic form), music, dance, poetic and other verbal forms, dramatic mimetic acts, etc. Relative to cultural context, these have particular dynamics to them. In Sinhala healing rites, drumming and dance combine to produce particular temporalizing and spatializing effects relevant to the symbolic development of demonic and counterdemonic processes, which in their specific structuring of the perception of participants generate both the experience of demonic possession and release from it.[31]

The importance of aesthetic processes and their dynamics is an enormous issue of major relevance for understanding the dynamics of ritual performance.[32] However, their force is effected within the framing, habitus, and sacrificial dimensions of ritual. That is, it is the dynamics of ritual linked to a specific project and practical/technical intervention that demands and locates specific aesthetic formations of performance within the ritual process. The ritual, as it were, makes use of particular aesthetic formations and puts their specific possibilities to work. Thus dance explicitly makes the body the site of cosmological and ontological forces, the body becomes a discipline of the habitus of the rite. Comedy works with language, often extending its possibilities as an exploration of consciousness and human constitutive capacity tying, furthermore, its movement to the visceral pleasures of the body (as in the expression of laughter). In Sinhala healing rituals, comic drama typically occurs at the end of rites operating to fragment the hitherto integrated totality of ritual realities. In this way, comedy explores the meaning of ritual acts, engages participants in the delights of making and breaking their existential realities through language and other gestures, and dissolves the ritual frame, thereby effecting a transition back into everyday life.[33]

Throughout this discussion the principal focus has been on the dynamics of ritual in itself. Of course, rites are part of ongoing quotidian realities and may often be conceived as critical events occupying a significant moment in their process. The dynamic potency of rites is already part of other dynamics and—as many have commented—gathers into the special processes that are recognized as being ritual, dimensions of otherwise routine ways through which

[31] See Kapferer 1983.

[32] See Boyd and Williams in this volume; Hobart and Kapferer, *Aesthetics in Performance.*

[33] See Kapferer 1983; Kapferer 1997.

human beings form their realities and realize them. Ritual, or what is generally described as ritual (what is "obviously ritual" as Rappaport might say) condenses nonetheless, and through the kinds of dynamics I have isolated, everyday processes, but works to intensify their force as specific instruments of personal, social, and cosmic formation.

EFFICACY

Jørgen Podemann Sørensen

About a century ago, in the *Année sociologique* for 1902–1903, Henri Hubert and Marcel Mauss defined rituals as "actes traditionels d'une efficacité *sui generis*".[1] Like the editor of this famous annual, Émile Durkheim, they were leading figures in early French sociology, anthropology, and history of religions. The basic theory that guided their studies was that religion was both a representation, almost an image, of society and at the same time a system of belief and practice motivating people to maintain their social order. Hubert and Mauss had shown the collective and social significance of rites in their famous essay on sacrifice from 1898, probably still the best general work on sacrifice. What they set out to do in 1902 was to extend their theory to what was—and sometimes still is—called magic. They were aware that their research tended towards a general theory of ritual, but their primary concern in the *General Theory of Magic* lay with the social setting of so-called magic. Since they had convincingly shown the collective nature and basis of sacrifice (with general implications for communal ritual), it was important for them to ascertain whether the private rituals they called magic would conform to the pattern already established for communal ritual.

There is no doubt that with 'efficacy' Hubert and Mauss had in mind the postulated or believed efficacy of the ritual. They were aware that the distinction between magic and communal rituals was not, as some later anthropologists believed, a matter of efficacy. Efficacy is a constituent of ritual as such, and the main result of their inquiry was that private, individual rituals conform to the pattern already established for communal rituals, that is, the 'magician' uses (or usurps) the collective representations also employed in communal ritual. The only substantial basis for a distinction between magic and communal ritual, then, remains the social setting. Communal

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[1] H. Hubert and M. Mauss, "Esquisse d'une théorie générale de la magie", *Année sociologique* 7 (1902–1903), 1–146, here 12; English translation: *A General Theory of Magic*, trans. R. Brain (London, 2001).

rituals are communal; magic rituals are private—but in both cases
the rituals make use of collective representations in very much the
same way. Although Hubert and Mauss ended up supporting one
of the most dubious distinctions ever made, that between magic and
religion, they had also shown that this distinction was entirely a mat-
ter of the social setting of the rituals. An interest in the (testable) effects
of ritual on society is beyond doubt present in the work of Hubert
and Mauss, but that was not their concern in speaking of 'an efficacy
sui generis' as the distinctive mark of ritual.

As sociologists, Hubert and Mauss did not deal with religious texts
and representations in terms of the thoughts of an individual. Earlier
approaches to ritual efficacy took it to be a matter of belief in exotic
or straightforwardly wrong principles of causality. According to James
George Frazer, early mankind adhered to very much the same reli-
gion: "This universal faith", he says, "this truly Catholic creed, is a
belief in the efficacy of magic".[2] No subtle theological distinctions
between faith, creed, and belief blur the message here. It is all a
matter of having confidence in those two "misapplications of the
association of ideas" that are also called the "Law of Similarity" and
the "Law of Contagion".[3] In primitive man, Frazer assures us, these
principles are a matter of implicit, not explicit belief, but neverthe-
less a belief in principles of causality. Such a belief would have to
be inferred from ritual texts and expressive gestures; and to do so
comes very close to setting up creeds on behalf of others. In order
to avoid the construction of exotic causalities or *Urdummheiten*, I sug-
gest that we stay at the level of religious expression and ask the
much less problematic question: What makes a ritual or a spell look
efficacious—perhaps even to the point of convincing those who con-
structed it? We all know that in real life, belief is often a matter of
degree, of the momentary, etc. It is at the level of rhetoric that rit-
ual efficacy can best be studied.

Alfred R. Radcliffe-Brown, who introduced Durkheimian theory
among British anthropologists, turned his attention exclusively to the
social effects or the social function of ritual as the proper object of
anthropological study. Local ideas "that many or all of the religious
rites were efficacious in the sense of averting evils and bringing bless-

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[2] J.G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough* (London, 1911), I, 235–236.
[3] Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, I, 52–53.

ings"[4] he considered an entirely different matter. However, Bronislaw Malinowski, his contemporary, took a lifelong interest in the efficacy attributed to rituals by their participants, especially in the language that qualifies ritual formulae or spells as efficacious. For rituals considered as 'means to ends' he uses the word 'magic',[5] which is no longer part of a scholarly vocabulary, but according to the definition by Hubert and Mauss, we may simply translate it as 'rituals'. Malinowski's ideas of "the power of words in magic"[6] and of language in general[7] aroused considerable interest and continues to exert an influence. Stanley J. Tambiah[8] suggests that Malinowski's insistence on the spell as a 'verbal missile' and at the same time as a text comparable to binding legal formulae anticipated John L. Austin's theory of speech acts[9] and Tambiah's own[10] 'performative' theory of ritual.

The idea of speech acts, or, more precisely, illocutionary acts, is very important in understanding ritual as efficacious speech. An illocutionary act is the pronouncement of phrases like 'I give and bequeath my watch to my brother', 'I bet you a fiver . . .', 'I promise . . .'. These sentences are performative utterances, since to pronounce them is also to perform the very act they speak about. And since the act they perform is brought to pass in speech (Latin: *in locutione*), it is called an illocutionary act. Nowhere are such illocutionary acts more common than in ritual: 'N, I baptize thee in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost', 'I pronounce that they be Man and Wife together, In the Name . . ., etc.', "Father Mars, if anything in those suckling *suovitaurilia* was not satisfactory for thee, I make atonement with these *suovitaurilia*."[11] Already Austin observed

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[4] A.R. Radcliffe-Brown, *Structure and Function in Primitive Society* (London, 1969), 158.

[5] B. Malinowski, "Magic, Science and Religion" (1925), *Magic, Science and Religion and Other Essays* (New York, 1954), 17–92.

[6] B. Malinowski, *Argonauts of the Western Pacific. An Account of Native Enterprise and Adventure in the Archipelagoes of Melanesian New Guinea* (Studies in Economics and Political Science 65; London, 1922), 428–463; B. Malinowski, *Coral Gardens and Their Magic* (London, 1935), II, 213–250.

[7] B. Malinowski, "The Problem of Meaning in Primitive Languages" (1923), C.K. Ogden and I.A. Richards, *The Meaning of Meaning* (London, 1972), 296–336; B. Malinowski, *Coral Gardens and Their Magic*, II, 1–74.

[8] S.J. Tambiah, *Magic, Science, and the Scope of Rationality* (The Lewis Henry Morgan Lectures 1984; Cambridge, 1990), 74.

[9] J.L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (Oxford, 1962).

[10] S.J. Tambiah, *Culture, Thought, and Social Action. An Anthropological Perspective* (Cambridge, Mass., 1985).

[11] Cato, *De Agri Cultura*, 141; see M.P. Cato, *On Agriculture*; M.T. Varro, *On Agriculture* (Loeb Classical Library; London, 1954), 122.

that illocutionary acts are often dependent on more than just the words that paraphrase the act. Certain situations, a certain authority in the person who speaks, and a consensus that this is the way a bet, a promise, or what not is made. The same undoubtedly holds for ritual; we have already seen how Father, Son, and Holy Ghost— or sacrificial animals—support and stage the ritual words.

Austin's illocutionary acts provide a good basis for a theory of ritual;[12] they may explain at least part of what is hidden in Hubert and Mauss's 'efficacy *sui generis*'. For an illocutionary act must by definition be efficacious, since the mere pronouncement of a phrase, in the agreed situation and circumstances, constitutes the intended act. Furthermore, it is efficacious not only in the sense of a local confidence that it works, but it does in fact work, and all it needs in order to work is the local agreement that this is the way to do it. There are, however, ritual texts that promise more than any local consent could accomplish: good harvest, stalwart sons, spiritual bliss. This is very much the point made by Emily Ahern,[13] who distinguishes weak and strong illocutionary acts. The latter are those which claim substantial effects and in which the problem of efficacy becomes more acute. And to put this somewhat more sharply: Does it make any sense to speak of an illocutionary act if the act spoken about is not one that could be accomplished in mere speech? Perhaps a proper illocutionary act is only possible where public acknowledgement is both the means and the end of the act. And in that case, efficacy is no mystery.

But even if the illocutionary act is not a universal key to ritual, it is useful as an analogy for understanding how ritual texts often paraphrase the act they are to accomplish. Let us consider a Danish ritual from 1665 against mice, which eat up the grain stores: In a piece of tin or copper is engraved the picture of a rat with a mouse in its mouth. In order to activate the piece before it is buried in the middle of the yard, wrapped in a rat's skin, the following spell is recited over it:

> I coerce all mice
> On this farm,
> That none in its place
> Shall do any harm.[14]

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[12] See Ray 1973.
[13] Ahern 1979.
[14] F. Ohrt, *Danmarks Trylleformler* I–II (København, 1917–21), I, 320.

Could the recitation of this spell, with its very explicit claims to efficacy, be considered an illocutionary act? The idea of an agreement with the mice seems excluded, if not for other reasons, then at least by the first sentence. It might be argued that what really matters for the user of this spell is the social prestige or even the economic gains he may obtain as a *mousagetes*. Although this is very likely to be the case, it does not come to terms with the formalities of the rite, nor does it make it an illocutionary act. The best answer is probably that this rite is not an illocutionary act, but pretends to be one. Like the performative utterance of an illocutionary act, it para-phrases an act that the user wants to take place, and by the very illocutionary form it assumes, it dramatizes or pretends the efficacy inherent in every illocutionary act.

Most often, however, ritual texts have other elements supporting their postulated efficacy. Just as legal illocutionary acts take place 'in the name of the law' or 'in the name of the King', we have seen ritual formulae pronounced 'in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost'. In a similar manner, rituals may iden-tify themselves with the mythical events that laid the foundation of the world. The Maori sweet potato planting ritual explicitly identifies its agricultural procedures as the mythical deed of *Rongo*, when he stole the potatoes in heaven, hid them in his penis, and impregnated his wife with them. On this basis, the ritual bids the land to become pregnant "right into the country, right out to the sea".[15] In ancient Egypt, the ritual drama celebrating the mythical origin of kingship in the victory of Horus over Seth explicitly names itself: "The *bring-ing to pass* of the triumph of Horus over his enemies."[16] Such ritual dramas are akin to illocutionary acts in that they identify themselves as *the* efficacious act, happening and accomplishing its aim here and now. But to call them illocutionary acts may be to stretch Austin's category too far.

Just as a ritual may construct its action as a powerful, primeval deed, it may also construct its object as not yet firm and finished. This is what happens in rites of passage, which dramatize the extreme susceptibility of the object and the universal risks—but *eo ipso* also

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[15] J.P. Johansen, *Studies in Maori Rites and Myths* (Historisk-filosofiske meddelelser Kongelige Danske Videnskabernes Selskab 37, no. 4; København, 1958), 147.

[16] H.W. Fairman (ed. and trans.), *The Triumph of Horus. An Ancient Egyptian Sacred Drama* (London, 1974), 82.

the possibilities—of the moment. In numerous studies, Victor W. Turner[17] has given special attention to this liminal period in rites of passage; all students of ritual are indebted to his fine, analytical descriptions of how a ritual may dramatically construct its object and its moment as open to all risks, all influences, and all possibilities. This may be taken as another way of constructing ritual efficacy *sui generis*, but Turner himself thinks of liminality very much in terms of social psychology. In a later study,[18] he explicitly distinguishes the meaning of ritual symbols from their efficacy; the latter, he says, is a matter of psychology, and—in terms that might almost have been coined by Radcliffe-Brown—he combines it with the real aim of ritual: to make participants think and feel coherently about their mutual social relationships.

In order to understand this shift in the use of the word 'efficacy'—from the postulated efficacy inherent in ritual to the *de facto* or testable effect of ritual on man and society—it is worthwhile to follow another line of thought. Throughout most of the twentieth century, after evolutionism, there was a noble endeavor in anthropology and history of religions to show that ritual, which occupies such a prominent role in traditional religions, is not just so much useless mumbo-jumbo, but serves to maintain important mechanisms in traditional society. The idea was present already in the work of Durkheim, and it was his grand vision of religion in society that became the background of later functionalist studies of the 'positive latent function' of ritual. "If legal phrases, if promises and contracts were not regarded as something more than *flatus vocis*", Malinowski wrote, "social order would cease to exist . . . there is a very real basis to human belief in the mystic and binding power of words."[19] In his analysis of Malinowski's theory, Tambiah emphasizes the ambiguity or the duality of ritual efficacy.[20] "When he was pushed to it", Malinowski admitted that Trobriand ritual "was 'objectively' false but . . . 'subjectively' true to the actors".[21] Tambiah adds that it was also 'pragmatically effective' in the sense that it addressed psychological and social needs in its users or participants and thus influenced their motivation. This

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[17] Turner 1967, 93–111; Turner 1969.
[18] Turner 1975, 78–81.
[19] Malinowski, *Coral Gardens and Their Magic*, II, 234–235.
[20] Tambiah, *Magic, Science, and the Scope of Rationality*, 81–83.
[21] Tambiah, *Magic, Science, and the Scope of Rationality*, 81.

dual nature of efficacy corresponds very much to the distinction made by Moore and Myerhoff between doctrinal efficacy (postulated by the ritual) and operational efficacy (testable by outsiders).[22] Tambiah finds this 'duality of magic' puzzling and confesses his dream of a theory grand enough to transcend it.

Such a dream may in general have been at work behind the stage in the formation of anthropological theory. Some have not observed the duality at all, while others have tried in one way or another to unite or combine the two sorts of efficacy. In 1949 Claude Lévi-Strauss published his article "L'efficacité symbolique",[23] an analysis of a Cuna (Panama) shaman's song for the occasion of a difficult and very painful birth. Lévi-Strauss, who knew the work of Hubert and Mauss, may have used the word 'efficacy' as in a witty way, for his analysis suggests that a ritual may actually heal or remedy the sufferings of a patient by presenting her with a structured series of images through which she may conceptualize bodily pains in an orderly manner and obtain psychosomatic relief. More recently, G. Samuel[24] addressed the same problem of the analogical model of healing from the much wider perspective of his own theory of modal states,[25] a theory that might be exactly what Tambiah is dreaming of. He suggests that rituals may be described in non-Cartesian terms as imposing states on the psychic as well as the social level. Spirits and goddesses both mark and trigger such states; and when rituals actually work, they do so because they key in to capacities for such states in society or in the mind-body complex. However, giving up the Cartesian distinction between the *res cogitans* and the *res extensa*, as well as distinctions between individual, society, and nature, may lead in the study of ritual to theories of cosmic sympathy such as those that flourished in Renaissance thought and in alchemy.

The effect of ritual on society was the focus of Pierre Bourdieu's important contribution to ritual studies.[26] Bourdieu pointed out that this kind of ritual efficacy is entirely dependent on public consent

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[22] Moore and Myerhoff 1977, 12–13.
[23] C. Lévi-Strauss, "L'efficacité symbolique", *Revue de l'histoire des religions* 135 (1949), 5–27; reprinted in C. Lévi-Strauss, *Anthropologie structurale* (Paris, 1958), 205–226.
[24] Samuel 2001.
[25] G.H. Samuel, *Mind, Body, and Culture. Anthropology and the Biological Interface* (Cambridge, 1990).
[26] Bourdieu 1975, 183–190; Bourdieu 1982, 121–134.

and acknowledgement. On the other hand, once these social conditions are present, ritual may in fact structure and shape society, not by analogy or sympathy but by what Bourdieu calls 'social magic'. The real importance of the male circumcision ritual is not what it does to the boy, but the 'social magic' by which it contributes to shaping a world in which male and female are thoroughly distinguished. The 'true efficacy', as it were, of the rite is thus its contribution to social structure. In her two important books on ritual, Catherine Bell speaks of ritual efficacy exclusively in this sense;[27] and, even more so than Bourdieu, she emphasizes the role of misrecognition for the social efficacy of ritual. Both Bell and Bourdieu thus speak of ritual efficacy (or social magic) very much in the sense of 'positive latent function'.

Bell's project is to transfer Bourdieu's general theory of practice to the study of ritual and thus to develop an approach to ritual which takes into account that ritual is first and foremost action. Thoughts and ideas represented in ritual should be studied as integrated in the ritual action, and the traditional sharp distinction between thought and action should be given up. With this in mind, Bell suggests a new focus of theoretical inquiry: 'ritualization', that is, the formation and use of ritual as a social strategy. This focus implies an interest in a) how ritual acquires the properties of privileged discourse or action and b) the 'social magic' that it works: the social distinctions and hegemonies it prescribes and upholds. While b) may largely rely on well established ways of describing end investigating social structure, I believe it is a) that allows for the application of Bell's innovative and seminal idea of an approach to thought and action as a unity; for as we shall see, thoughts and ideas enter ritual—or participate in 'ritualization'—in order to qualify it as privileged discourse and action.

Bell's two important books, though rich in perspective, do not achieve conceptual clarity concerning ritual, but rather deliberately keep key concepts in a state of creative fluctuation. Conceptual clarity as well as a unified approach to thought and action in ritual may be obtained, however, by returning to the original idea of a postulated or formal efficacy in ritual. For it is this implicitly or explicitly postulated efficacy, that is, the formative principle in ritual[28] and

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[27] Bell 1992, 210; Bell 1997, 81–83.
[28] Podemann Sørensen 1993; Podemann Sørensen 2003.

that qualifies ritual as privileged discourse and action. This means that the thoughts and the religious ideas represented in ritual should be studied not as explanations of or reasons for the action, but as the means it employs to establish itself as ritual, that is, as rhetorical means towards that formal efficacy which, since Hubert and Mauss, has been the very criterion of ritual. Without this formal or pretended efficacy, there would be no 'social magic' to carry out the 'positive latent function'.

There are multiple ways in which ritual efficacy may be postulated. In the mouse-spell quoted above, we have seen that the postulate is implied in the form of the ritual, which has assumed the form of a straightforward illocutionary act. This kind of spell may be considered a basic or minimal ritual. Most rituals are far more elaborate and display a rich variety of religious ideas and representations in order to account for their efficacy. It is well known how rituals often cite mythical exemplars of the acts they seek to accomplish; this serves to situate the action or the ritual discourse at the very beginning of things and to qualify it as creative. In a quite analogous manner, liminal periods, divine authorship, and other pseudo-epigraphic maneuvers may serve to establish that privileged situation of speech in which to say or otherwise signify something is also to do it. What constitutes ritual is a distinct dramatic rhetoric that constructs itself as an illocutionary act. Some rituals obviously *are* illocutionary acts, a few straightforwardly pretend to be, and the vast majority employs a rich religious symbolism so as to establish themselves as such. It is as part of such a ritual rhetoric that religious symbols and ideas may be studied as integrated in ritual practice. They are not there to explain or motivate ritual action, but as the rhetorical means to render it efficacious. The resulting privileged discourse may, of course, work its 'social magic' and thus contribute to social structure by prescribing ideological hegemonies, etc. Such effects are bound to vary, however, with the circumstances.

EMBODIMENT

Catherine Bell

The Field

In ritual studies embodiment may mean many things. While it consistently signals extra theoretical attention to physical human presence, the passive form of this term can imply a submissive imprinting or molding of this physical identity, even the anachronous image of caging consciousness in brute physicality. Perhaps for these reasons, ritual studies does not restrict itself to this term in order to give attention to the body. And many theories of the body have flourished over the last few decades. While there was no lack of attention to the body in cultural theory throughout the twentieth century, the publication in 1989 of the lovely and provocative Zone volumes, *Fragments for a History of the Human Body*, signaled something of a high water mark in the new wave of attention.[1] Studies of the body *and ritual*, however, have been far fewer, although general interest in the body has undoubtedly nurtured ritual studies in general.

Writing in 1992, I suggested the leading roles of anthropology and gender studies in this new attention to the body.[2] A decade later, it is easier to appreciate more fully the contributions of other disciplines, notably sociology, philosophy, and critical theory. Although most disciplines still pursue fairly distinct theoretical agendas, they all tend to encounter some version of the so-called Cartesian mind-body problem and therefore seek to propound an expanded view of the body that attempts to overcome this culturally embedded dichotomy. The same analytic attraction to the body appears in other less-expected areas. In the history of science and even nursing theory, for example, the language of embodiment redefines body and mind in terms of a more authentic holism.[3] Other sciences of the 'embodied mind'

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[1] M. Feher, *Fragments for a History of the Human Body*, I–III (London, 1989).

[2] Bell 1992, 94.

[3] C. Lawrence and S. Shapin (eds), *Science Incarnate. Historical Embodiments of Natural Knowledge* (Chicago, 1997); M.H. Wilde, "Why Embodiment Now?" *Advances in Nursing Science* 22 (1999), 25–38.

and the 'mindful body' have also provided terminology and further impetus to this wave of interest.[4] In this environment, even a widely used concept like 'internalization' is more carefully analyzed than ever before.[5]

The study of ritual is one place where scholarship on the body from many of these disciplines is likely to come together. These cross-disciplinary resources are a source of strength for ritual theory, but they may also contribute to its continued marginality in an era in which disciplinary boundaries are still surprisingly robust. Nonetheless, a number of theoretical camps are contributing most directly to analyses of ritual practices. There are, first of all, the gender analyses of critical theorists such as Judith Butler or historians such as Caroline W. Bynum.[6] Sociologists, led by Bryan S. Turner, are responsible for a particularly sustained disciplinary inquiry, although Turner himself continues to argue that a more coherent research agenda is needed for the field. Published in 1984, the first edition of Turner's *Body and Society* can be credited with bringing the body into the center of sociological parlance.[7] Several valuable review essays in sociology provide a broad introduction to the new emphasis to 'body' theory in general. Turner's "Introduction. The Embodiment of Social Theory" in the second edition of *Body and Society* distinguishes major approaches and research areas,[8] while Arthur Frank creatively analyzes work on the body in a number of fields.[9] The lead essays by Turner ("Recent Developments in the Theory of the Body") and Frank ("For a Sociology of the Body. An Analytic Review") in *The Body. Social Process and Cultural Theory* are probably

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[4] F.J. Varela, E. Thompson, and E. Rosch, *The Embodied Mind. Cognitive Science and Human Experience* (Cambridge, Mass., 1991); N. Scheper-Hughes and M.M. Lock, "The Mindful Body. A Prolegomena to Future Work in Medical Anthropology", *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* n.s. 1 (1987), 6–41.

[5] A.M. Gade, "Taste, Talent, and the Problem of Internalization. A Qur'anic Study in Religious Musicality from Southeast Asia", *History of Religions* 41 (2002), 328–368.

[6] J. Butler, *Bodies that Matter. On the Discursive Limits of 'Sex'* (New York, 1993); C.W. Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast. The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley, 1987).

[7] B.S. Turner, *The Body and Society. Explorations in Social Theory* (Thousand Oaks, 1984; 2d ed., 1996).

[8] B.S. Turner, *The Body and Society*, 1–36.

[9] A.W. Frank, "Bringing Bodies Back in. A Decade Review", *Theory, Culture & Society* 7 (1990), 131–162.

the best place to begin any investigation into literature on the body.[10]

As another rich source of theory, anthropological attention to the body builds on a long tradition loosely anchored in the work of Robert Hertz, followed by Victor W. Turner, Mary Douglas, Pierre Bourdieu, Jean Comaroff, and Talal Asad, among others. In a recent work, Thomas J. Csordas analyzes the ritual healing practices of Catholic charismatics, specifically arguing that embodiment provides a new theoretical paradigm for anthropology.[11] In cognitive studies, understood as both philosophy and empirical psychology, the work of George Lakoff and Mark Johnson continues to attract the attention of ritual scholars.[12] From their *Metaphors We Live By* to their most recent collaboration, *Philosophy in the Flesh*,[13] Lakoff and Johnson have developed a model of cognition fully rooted in the body that effectively breaks free of the classical model of a body-free mind and the modernist understanding of objectivism. Another distinct cognitive approach, one very much interested in analyzing religious ritual in order to explain the 'architecture of *Homo religiosus*' is developed in two works by Robert N. McCauley and E. Thomas Lawson.[14] Francisco Varela and his colleagues have also forged a 'cognitive science' able to explore the bodily experience of meditation and Buddhist notions of self.[15] Most recently, philosophers have entered the conversation on the body and ritual, drawing on Maurice Merleau-Ponty among others, to suggest the resources of philosophy for analyzing the "how rituals embody the practical wisdom" of those who perform them.[16]

Scholars of religion usually address the body by investigating the cosmologies thought to be embodied or projected through religious practices. For almost a decade, Lawrence Sullivan was an isolated

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[10] See B.S. Turner, "Recent Developments in the Theory of the Body"; A.W. Frank, "For a Sociology of the Body. An Analytic Review", M. Featherstone, M. Hepworth, and B.S. Turner (eds), *The Body. Social Process and Cultural Theory* (Thousand Oaks, 1991), 1–35 and 36–102, respectively.

[11] T.J. Csordas, "Embodiment as a Paradigm for Anthropology", *Ethnos* 18 (1990), 5–87.

[12] Bell 1992; Frankiel 2001.

[13] G. Lakoff and M. Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago, 1980); G. Lakoff and M. Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh. The Embodied Mind and its Challenge to Western Thought* (New York, 1999).

[14] Lawson and McCauley 1990; McCauley and Lawson 2002.

[15] Varela, Thompson, and Rosch, *The Embodied Mind*.

[16] See N. Crossley, "Ritual, Body Techniques, and (Inter)subjectivity", K. Schilbrack (ed.), *Thinking Through Rituals. Philosophical Perspectives* (London, 2004).

voice until joined by William LaFleur's summary analysis of the importance of the category to the field in *Critical Terms for Religions Studies*.[17] Two edited volumes, Sarah Coakley's *Religion and the Body* and Jane Marie Law's *Religious Reflections on the Body*, did much to consolidate the religious studies focus, with broad attention to the work of Bryan Turner and Talal Asad, while still offering primarily discrete studies of single religious traditions.[18] Yet the culturally specific approach of Thomas Kasulis's 'self as body' in Asia is often cited as a useful model for this form of attention.[19] Philip A. Mellor and Chris Shilling's *Re-forming the Body. Religion, Community and Modernity*, which draws heavily on Durkheim to analyze 'somatic experience of the sacred' is an example of increasingly complex analyses of body, society, and sacrality.[20]

An important if muted influence on understandings of the body and embodiment comes from a diverse group of writers attempting to describe the body in pain,[21] the medicalized body,[22] the disabled body,[23] and the relentlessly physical determinants of consciousness.[24] Turner's work in medical sociology addresses the construction of bodies by the various means of social control (often said to be ritualized) wielded by medical authorities.[25]

Towering above all of these theoretical camps is the figure of Michel Foucault, whose final project, the study of modern sexuality

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[17] Sullivan 1986; L.E. Sullivan "Body Works. Knowledge of the Body in the Study of Religion", *History of Religions* 30 (1990), 86–99; W.R. LaFleur, "Body", M.C. Taylor (ed.), *Critical Terms for Religious Studies* (Chicago, 1998), 36–54.

[18] S. Coakley (ed.), *Religion and the Body* (Cambridge, 1997); J.M. Law (ed.), *Religious Reflections on the Body* (Bloomington, 1995).

[19] T.P. Kasulis with R.T. Ames and W. Dissanayake, *Self as Body in Asian Theory and Practice* (The Body in Culture, History, and Religion; Albany, 1993).

[20] P.A. Mellor and C. Shilling, *Re-forming the Body. Religion, Community, and Modernity* (Theory, Culture, and Society; Thousand Oaks, 1997), 1–3.

[21] E. Scarry, *The Body in Pain. The Making and Unmaking of the World* (New York, 1985).

[22] A.W. Frank, *At the Will of the Body. Reflections on Illness* (Boston, 1981; 2d ed., 2002); A. Kleinman, *The Illness Narratives. Suffering, Healing, and the Human Condition* (New York, 1988).

[23] S.V. Betcher, "Rehabilitating Religious Discourse. Bringing Disability Studies to the Theological Venue", *Religious Studies Review* 27 (2001), 341–348.

[24] Frank, *At the Will of the Body*; Kleinman, *The Illness Narratives*; D.T. Mitchell and S.L. Synder (eds), *The Body and Physical Difference. Discourses of Disability in the Humanities* (Ann Arbor, 1997); O.W. Sacks, *The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat and Other Clinical Tales* (New York, 1985).

[25] B.S. Turner, *Regulating Bodies. Essays in Medical Sociology* (London, 1992); B.S. Turner, *Medical Power and Social Knowledge* (London, 1987; 2d ed., 1995).

and the techniques of the self, is invoked by nearly every author and every discipline. Foucault set out "to investigate those practices with which individuals act on their own bodies, souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being in order to transform themselves and attain a certain state of perfection or happiness".[26] He demonstrated that "to write the history of feelings, behavior and the body" it is necessary to map the mechanisms of power and domination—domination from without, as seen in his study of the clinic and the prison, and domination from within, addressed in his study of sexuality as the locus for the self-awareness of the modern individual.[27] In a discussion of embodiment per se, Turner aptly characterizes the shift that Foucault brought to the study of the body. For Foucault, Turner suggests, the body is "an effect of the deeper structural arrangements of power and knowledge" in contrast to understanding the body as a "symbol system which produces a set of metaphors by which power is conceptualized" or as a "consequence of long-term historical changes in human society".[28]

Yet Foucault is a complex influence on ritual studies. His analysis of modern discourse on sexuality, and the sense of self that is anchored to it, are indebted to medieval rituals of confession and penance—although these rites, as rites, are left behind for more discursive 'truth games'. While Foucault's historical analysis is not necessarily reductive (he finds self-examination in Greek culture, not just medieval Christian culture), it suggests the irrelevancy of traditional ritual in the molding of modern identity. While the specific theses of Foucault's career have been less important perhaps than the questions and methods of inquiry he articulated, these theses may leave out much of what has dominated ritual studies so far. Still, there are many provocative Foucaultian applications yet to explore, such as an investigation of the type of truth games put into play by ritualized ways of acting.

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[26] L.H. Martin, H. Gutman, and P.H. Hutton, *Technologies of the Self. A Seminar with Michel Foucault* (Amherst, 1988), 4.

[27] See B.S. Turner, "Recent Developments in the Theory of the Body"; Featherstone, Hepworth, and Turner (eds), *The Body. Social Process and Cultural Theory*, 17; Martin, Gutman, and Hutton, *Technologies of the Self*, 19.

[28] B.S. Turner, "The Body in Western Society. Social Theory and Its Perspectives", Coakley (ed.), *Religion and the Body*, 15–41, here 15–16.

Theoretical Reflections on Embodiment

Two main concerns have led ritual theorists to turn to embodiment and the body. The first is a straightforward concern to avoid the mind-body dualism, now judged quite inadequate for representing human presence and activities. The second concern is to deal with human substantiality, usually conceptualized as a material mind-body. An occupation with this materiality may reflect the importance given to increased specificity—these people, at this place, during this time, with these historical understandings.[29] However, materiality is also important to the pervasive argument about social constructionism so central to most disciplines today, including ritual studies. Some studies take a more or less uncomplicated view of constructionism by asking *how ritual shapes the body*—that is, how social practices such as those deployed in ritual determine or construct the personal body. For this approach, ritual is only one sphere of action that "writes on the body although it is often given an analytic priority".[30] And since this approach makes the body the object of social action, the recipient of social molding, it invokes embodiment in its passive sense.

A logical alternative approach asks *how the body shapes ritual* or how ritual is the expressed language of the body, a medium uniquely able to communicate messages, perform experiences, and create environments that are impossible with other media. This approach asks how ritual emerges from the logic of bodily practice; the body is seen as the *subject* of the action and ritual is rendered the object. In this way of theorizing, the language of embodiment is apt to be used less often due its suggestion of pure receptivity. In an analogous schema, Bynum articulates a distinction in body scholarship between approaches that view the body as 'constrained' and those that view it as full of 'potential'.[31]

While the first approach (ritual shapes the body) is immediately familiar from countless examples,[32] the second (the body shapes ritual) has received less attention as a discrete approach—in part, perhaps, because it has not been identified in terms of a clear set of questions. While it is not surprising that the first approach is likely

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[29] Asad 1993.
[30] Bell 1992.
[31] C.W. Bynum, "Why All the Fuss about the Body? A Medievalist's Perspective", *Critical Inquiry* 22 (1995), 1–33, here 5.
[32] E.g., V.W. Turner 1969.

to be the focus of liberal ex-Marxists who worry about the impossibility of real human freedom, the second often falls to those who cast ritual and performance as inordinately positive forces in human society—for example, in the comparative work of Richard Schechner on the performing body[33] or the more ambitious system of Roy A. Rappaport, who suggests that humanity generated ritual and religion as evolutionary adaptive structures with ritual as "the social act most basic" to human expression.[34]

When polarized in this way (ritual creates body or body creates ritual), it is easy to see the limitations of both approaches and how they might give rise to a more complex theory of social constructionism—one in which there is no unconstructed priority granted to either ritual or the body. This stance is apt to be called a discursive or performative approach, and it is readily seen in Bourdieu's notion of the *habitus*, Foucault's corpus of work addressing both inner (the clinic and the prison) and outer (sexuality) forms of domination, Comaroff's analysis of the 'body of resistance' and my description of the 'ritual body' and 'ritual mastery'.[35] Particularly interesting remarks on the issues involved in this complex constructionism are offered in Judith Butler's *Bodies that Matter*. With her characteristic clarity, Bynum describes Butler's anti-essentialism as the attempt to explain how "the categories with which we live are created by us as we live them".[36] Turner, on the other hand, identifies Butler's main thesis in *Bodies that Matter* as arguing that the "materiality of sex [exists] within a hegemonic order of power which both produces and regulates bodies in social space".[37] In this vein the goal of most theories of ritual performance in the last decade has been to describe a complex and mutual constructionism of bodies, practices, communities and power.[38] A few studies have even attempted to do this historically.[39]

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[33] R. Schechner, *Between Theater and Anthropology* (Philadelphia, 1985).

[34] Rappaport 1999, 31.

[35] P. Bourdieu, *An Outline of a Theory of Practice*, trans. R. Nice (Cambridge Studies in Social Anthropology 16; Cambridge, 1977); P. Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, trans. R. Nice (Stanford, 1990); M. Foucault, *Madness and Civilization*, trans. R. Howard (New York, 1965); M. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish. The Birth of the Prison*, trans. A. Sheridan (New York, 1977); M. Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, I–III, trans. R. Hurley (New York, 1978–1986); J. Comaroff, *Body of Power, Spirit of Resistance. The Culture and History of a South African People* (Chicago, 1985); Bell 1992.

[36] Bynum, "Why All the Fuss about the Body?" 28.

[37] B.S. Turner, *The Body and Society*, 28.

[38] Bell 1998.

[39] B. Lincoln, *Discourse and the Construction of Society. Comparative Studies of Myth,*

As with Foucault, however, cultural theorists have not been par-
ticularly concerned with ritual per se. For Butler ritual is simply a
matter of repeatable social conventions. In both *Bodies that Matter* and
Excitable Speech, she refers to 'ritualized repetitions' and characterizes
kneeling in prayer as a 'ritualized repetition of convention'—for which
she explicitly invokes John L. Austin's theory of the necessity of
repeatability to language-as-social convention.[40] Amy Hollywood points
out the importance of repetition to how critical theorists, generally
not concerned with ritual, analyze the performative construction of
self, act, or gender.[41] Emphasizing repetition can link the analysis of
ritual to the more provocative critical theorists, but ritual studies
have long determined ritual to be much more than repeatable acts.

One of the challenges that lie ahead for the study of ritual becomes
apparent from Hollywood's analysis. Ritual theorists must make use
of the tools provided by critical theory, without which the study of
ritual is apt to remain somewhat marginal, dated by simplistic the-
ories of constructionism, and even prone to new theological assump-
tions. But we need to use care and imagination in adopting critical tools
that emerged in a secular culture of few rites and disdained con-
ventions. These tools are very effective in representing many cultural
practices, but so far have been quite unable to see the construction
of cosmos, self, and power in the formal and informal rituals that
are still important aspects of the modern—and postmodern—world.

Rites with and without Bodies

Scholarship on embodiment, in all formulations of that concept, now
has a constant stream of analytic ethnographies to digest. To cite a
recent and curious example, Mathew N. Schmalz's account of the
miracle-working child, Audrey Santo, draws attention to how a body
immobilized and silenced by coma becomes the iconic focus of intense
devotion—and multiple interpretive frameworks.[42] Less dramatically,

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Ritual, and Classification (New York, 1989); E. Muir, *Ritual in Early Modern Europe*
(Cambridge, 1997); P.C. Johnson, *Secrets, Gossip, and Gods. The Transformation of Brazilian
Candomblé* (New York, 2002).
    [40] Butler, *Bodies that Matter*, x, 2, 10; J. Butler, *Excitable Speech. A Politics of the Per-
formative* (New York, 1997), 25, 148, 152, 165 n. 3.
    [41] Hollywood 2002.
    [42] M.N. Schmalz, "The Silent Body of Audrey Santo", *History of Religions* 42
(2002), 116–142.

more ordinary ritual routines become visible with a focus on the body. In this vein I am exploring several forms of ritualization that lurk on the margins of most notions of ritual. One form might be called tending practices, or even grazing rites to be more glib, and includes such simple routines as lighting votive candles, feeding the deity in the local shrine, or tending to the orientation of New Age stones. These activities are, of course, particularly ubiquitous and fluid. As acts ritualized by repetition and the simplified evocation of more elaborate ritual patterns in the culture, such rites hover on the blurry boundary between formal religion and informal domesticity. Perhaps when formal religious rituals are being culturally abandoned, limited to a few special events, or simply out of reach for non-official personnel, tending rites can contribute to the construction of a self that is orientated and ordered, fortified—yet also subdued. If so, they may go to the very heart of ritualization as the bodily construction of a social self.

Also on the margins of most notions of ritual would be many forms of physical exercise, such as the meditative exercises of the Chinese-based organization, the Falungong. Their prescribed routines are said to be simply good for one's health, but organization publications also describe them as cultivating more esoteric forms of spiritual growth and power. The rubric of physical exercise for the health of the body may serve as a relatively safe language for activities that are in effect constructing a self quietly if relentlessly resistant to a repressive political regime. From another perspective, Falungong practices for enhancing the flow of *qi* (chi) may also be effective in defining a body-identity more adapted to the rhythms and perils of the new-sprung capitalist economy.[43] For these examples, both Susan Sontag's classic *Illness as Metaphor*[44] and William H. McNeill's lively *Keeping Together in Time. Dance and Drill in Human History*[45] continue to suggest many points of reflection.

Some recent events have raised the question of rites and bodies in a compelling manner. In the wake of the destruction of the World Trade Center in New York City on September 11, 2001, there were

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[43] C. Bell, "Körperliche Übung, Ritual und politische Abweichung. Die Falun Gong", C. Wulf and J. Zirfas (eds), *Die Kultur des Rituals* (München, 2004), 237–246.
[44] S. Sontag, *Illness as Metaphor* (New York, 1978).
[45] W.H. McNeill, *Keeping Together in Time. Dance and Drill in Human History* (Cambridge, Mass., 1995).

painstaking efforts to devise appropriate rites of mourning, both for short-term grief and long-term remembrance. Yet the families of those killed regularly voiced the added anguish of having no bodies to bury. Recovery of the body is the proof needed by the heart that a loved one is *really* dead. Without the body emotional closure is difficult despite the performance of repeated final rites of passage.[46] There are, of course, many funeral rites that do not expect to have bodies, most notably military rites for soldiers killed in foreign battlefields or ships lost at sea. Increasingly, however, Euro-American society has gone to great effort to retrieve bodies. Taking cues from both public opinion and the distinct *esprit d'corps* of the modern armed forces, the military has made a point of bringing back bodies even at a high degree of risk to the living. Those missing in action in the Korean War far out number the missing of the Vietnam War, primarily due to the efforts at recovery after the latter conflict. The current ethos suggests that a nation may have a right to a soldier's service, but the termination of that service by death means that his or her physical person has a right to return to the family. Similarly, when passenger planes go down at sea, airline companies hurry to bring family members as close to the crash site as possible. Televised images of ocean maps and flowers cast on the water mark, in our imaginations, the reassuring location of the dead. There is a body resting there.

A funeral without a body may need to rely more heavily on the meaning systems, the plausibility systems to use Peter Berger's term, provided by religious belief (celebration of the soul's passage) or nationalism (hero language for the firemen and others killed at the World Trade Towers and Pentagon). If such meaning systems are no longer very socially effective, funeral rites without a body risk making all too clear an unnerving fact—that rites are primarily for the living, not for the benefit of the dead. Some families found the funeral rites a cause of greater grief since their emphasis on the mourners undermined any sense that the family could facilitate the deceased's passage into a new spiritual life. What can be done for the person whose body is beyond any loving touch? Yet ritualization is a very creative activity. A rite without a body must, by eulogy or gesture

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[46] See, e.g., D. Barry, "For One 9/11 Family, Five Waves of Grief", *New York Times*, September 10, 2003, Section A, 1 and 20.

or metonymic association, create a type of body that can be mourned, fondled by grief, and then laid very clearly to rest. Perhaps as modern selfhood comes to be lodged more than ever in the material and corporeal, rites will become more explicitly about bodies.

EMOTION*

Dorothea Lüddeckens

Rituals can be performed, observed, and described. They are sensory expressions of human culture for those who participate in them. Now emotions, inasmuch as they naturally accompany human experiences and activities, play a part in rituals as well. The present article seeks, on the one hand, to provide an overview of the ongoing discussion in ritual theory regarding emotion. On the basis of this overview, we undertake a systematic analysis of various perspectives on the relationship between emotion and ritual. On the other hand, we examine the question of why rituals are so well suited as an 'accompaniment' to emotional processes. In the course of our considerations we will develop an interpretation of ritual as a site of emotional experience—a site invested with a most particular power for dealing with emotions. To begin with, however, let us specify what we mean here by the terms 'emotion' and 'ritual'.

1. *'Emotion' and 'Ritual'*

1.1. *Emotion—A Polysemic Category of Description*

> What are emotions? To most of us, the question hardly needs asking; emotions are the most immediate, the most self-evident, and the most relevant of our orientations toward life. But from the moment the question is taken seriously, troubling difficulties of definition arise.[1]

Since the mid-1970s the number of 'studies on emotion' has increased significantly and investigations into the subject have been conducted in a wide variety of scientific disciplines. Today one can even speak

  [1] W.M. Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling. A Framework for the History of Emotions* (Cambridge, 2001), 3. For an example see *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (Multimedia edition, 1999), art. "Emotion".

of 'the field of emotion research'.[2] Nevertheless, there is still no consensus as to what emotions are or how the term can be usefully defined. Even within the disciplines involved in the debate—neurology and psychology,[3] sociology,[4] anthropology and ethnology, history and literature—no consensus has been reached.

W.M. Reddy identifies three revolutions in the field of emotion research in recent years:

> Psychologists have found ways of applying laboratory techniques devised for the study of cognition to questions involving emotion sparking one revolution. Ethnographers have developed new field techniques and a new theoretical apparatus for understanding the cultural dimension of emotions,[5] sparking a second. Finally, historians and literary critics have discovered that emotions have a kind of history (but what kind is not entirely clear).[6]

What is clear, however, is that emotions are 'children of their times',[7] to be understood within a particular cultural and historical context.

The discussion of the definition and understanding of emotion turns on a number of questions. One subject of ongoing debate (a debate that has yet to yield any satisfying consensus) is the relationship between emotions and cognition;[8] the boundary between the

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[2] J. Corrigan, "Introduction: Emotions Research and the Academic Study of Religion", J. Corrigan (ed), *Religion and Emotion. Approaches and Interpretations* (Oxford, New York, 2004), 31–31.

[3] J.C. Borod (ed.), *The Neuropsychology of Emotion* (Series in Affective Science; Oxford, 2000); P. Ekman and K.R. Scherer (eds), *Approaches to Emotion* (Hillsdale, N.J., 1984).

[4] H. Flam, *Soziologie der Emotionen. Eine Einführung* (Konstanz, 2002).

[5] U. Wikan assumes it is a nonverbal 'resonance' of emotions which makes it possible for ethnologists to understand and communicate beyond cultural limits. See U. Wikan, *Managing Turbulent Hearts. A Balinese Formula for Living* (Chicago, 1990) and U. Wikan, "Beyond the Words. The Power of Resonance", *American Ethnologist* 19 (1992), 460–482. Regarding emotions and body language see E. Hatfield, J.T. Cacioppo, and R.L. Rapson, *Emotional Contagion* (Studies in Emotion and Social Interaction; Cambridge, 1994). Among ethnographic studies of pre-eminent importance is M. Rosaldo, *Knowledge and Passion. Ilongot Notions of Self and Social Life* (Cambridge, 1980).

[6] Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling*, x.

[7] See, e.g., A. Kneppe and D. Metzler (eds), *Die emotionale Dimension antiker Religiosität* (Forschungen zur Anthropologie und Religionsgeschichte 37; Münster, 2003).

[8] R.B. Zajonc, "Feeling and Thinking. Preferences Need No Inferences", *American Psychologist* 35 (1980), 151–175. For a contrasting position see R.S. Lazarus, "Thoughts on the Relations between Emotion and Cognition", *American Psychologist* 37 (1982), 1019–1024. For an overview see B. Parkinson and A.S.R. Manstead, "Appraisal as a Cause of Emotion", M.S. Clark (ed.), *Emotion*, (Review of Personality and Social Psychology 13; Newbury Park, CA, 1992), 122–149. For recent approaches see

two fields also remains moot. The question of biological foundation[9] versus social construction of emotions is still open as well, the conclusions here running the gamut from an absolute cultural relativism[10] to a universally conceived neurological conception.[11]

Against the backdrop of these studies, the present paper sets out from the position that, while emotions can indeed be examined from a neurological perspective, that fact does not in itself indicate the operation of a universal process independent of cultural influence. Rather, both genetically conditioned and culturally learned emotional reactions should be assumed—though even emotional reactions that can be traced to a genetic foundation are interpreted by the experiencer according to patterns that have been determined culturally. In short, there is always a cultural factor at work.

In any event, on the descriptive level the term 'emotion' is a constructed category of description that can be differentiated in several ways from the other relevant categories: cognition and sensory perception. In the present paper emotion is understood as a polysemic

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D. Barnett and H.H. Ratner, "Introduction. The Organization and Integration of Cognition and Emotion in Development", *Journal of Nonverbal Behaviour* 17 (1997), 303–316. See also R. DeSousa, *The Rationality of Emotion* (Cambridge/Mass, 1987).

[9] On the question of culturally independent emotions see, e.g., R. Rosaldo, *Culture and Truth. The Remaking of Social Analysis* (Boston, 1989). Rosaldo speaks of a 'force' of emotions that is culture-independent. Moreover, he assumes the existence of universal linkages, such as grief and anger, that can be found independently of a particular cultural context. See also A. Kleinman, V. Das, and M. Lock, *Social Suffering* (Berkeley, 1997).

[10] "Emotion is culture", says Grima in B. Grima, *The Performance of Emotion among Paxtun Women. "The Misfortune which has befallen me"* (Austin, 1992), 6. Besnier also stresses the cultural aspect of emotions, although he does not exclude a biological-universal component in each instance. See N. Besnier "The Politics of Emotion in Nukulaelae Gossip", J.A. Russell, J.M. Fernández-Dols, A.S.R. Manstead, and J.C. Wellenkamp (eds), *Everyday Conceptions of Emotion* (Dordrecht, 1995), 221–240, here 236. See also C. Lutz and G.M. White, "The Anthropology of Emotions", *Annual Reviews Anthropology* 15 (1986), 405–436; C.A. Lutz, *Unnatural Emotions. Everyday Sentiments on a Micronesian Atoll and their Challenge to Western Theory* (Chicago, London, 1988); L. Abu-Lughod, *Veiled sentiments. Honor and Poetry in a Bedouin Society* (Berkeley, 1986); W.M. Reddy, "Against Constructionism. The Historical Ethnography of Emotions", *Current Anthropology* 38 (1997), 327–351. Based on language analyses Wierzbicka offers eleven "emotional universals" for discussion in A. Wierzbicka, *Emotions across Languages and Cultures. Diversity and Universals* (Cambridge, 1999).

[11] See J. Panksepp, "A Critical Role for 'Affective Neuroscience' in Resolving what is Basic about Basic Emotions", *Psychological Review* 99 (1992), 554–560; W.C. Drevets and M.E. Raichle, "Reciprocal Suppression of Regional Cerebral Blood Flow During Emotional versus Higher Cognitive Processes. Implications for Interactions between Emotion and Cognition", *Cognition and Emotion* 12 (1998), 353–385.

descriptive category embracing 'extended families' of words rather than governing a strictly defined field. This approach makes it possible to discuss a broad spectrum of ritual theories despite the fact that they may employ quite dissimilar understandings of emotion and may originate in quite distinct scientific languages whose terms are by no means interchangeable. 'Emotion' will thus signify the German family of words *Gefühl, Stimmung, Affekt*, and *Emotion*, the French family of words *sentiment, disposition*, and *émotion*, and the English family of words 'feeling', 'sentiment', 'mood', 'affect', and 'emotion'.[12]

1.2. *Rituals—Culturally Shaped Spaces of Experience*

Like 'emotion', the term 'ritual' and its related terms, 'rite' and 'ceremony', are not employed in a uniform fashion. In order not to exclude prematurely any ritual theory that has arisen in other contexts but that might well prove to be stimulating for and relevant to our present task, the term 'ritual' will not be defined here too strictly. With this in mind, and as a way of approaching the special power of rituals for dealing with emotions, we take rituals in the following discussion to be culturally shaped spaces of experience that display a clear structure, make use of already-existing symbol systems, and offer a variety of sensible dimensions and a determinate plane of performance or action. This understanding of ritual will shape the structure of our considerations as we explore diverse ritual theories. In the final part of our discussion we can then take up the question of how rituals interact with emotions in and through the four components of ritual just mentioned: a symbol system, sensory stimuli, a structural dimension, and a plane of performance or action.

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[12] For attempts to compare emotions in different cultures see K.G. Heider, *Landscapes of Emotion. Mapping Three Cultures of Emotion in Indonesia* (Cambridge, 1991); S. Kitayama, H.R. Markus, and H. Matsumoto, "Culture, Self, and Emotion. A Cultural Perspective on 'Self-Conscious' Emotions", J.P. Tangney and K.W. Fischer (eds), *Self-Conscious Emotions. The Psychology of Shame, Guilt, Embarrassment, and Pride* (New York, 1995), 439–464.

2. *The Relationship between Ritual and Emotion*

In this section we shall consider the extent to which the subject of emotion has entered into the discussion in ritual theory. As will become clear, the ritual act and the emotions linked to it cannot be separated from one another in the concrete execution of the ritual. In order to investigate the relationship between the ritual act and the emotional experience, however, an analytical separation can and indeed must be undertaken.

In our attempt to systematize the various approaches to the relationship between ritual and emotion, it is necessary to bear in mind that these approaches are by no means mutually exclusive. Rather, we find diverse perspectives which bring diverse aspects of that relationship to the fore. Determinative for a given perception or a given construction in ritual theory is the analytical point of view adopted with respect to the ritual, and the particular point of entry, so to speak, through which the ritual is accessed. In our discussion this will mean that the various approaches to ritual theory will be considered with regard to not one but several aspects of the relationship between ritual and emotion. Concretely, the following aspects will be considered in addressing the question of the various possible relations between ritual and emotion:

Rituals can take up and make use of existing emotions, one that were already on hand independently of the given ritual. This real possibility allows us to consider the relationship between emotion and ritual in two respects: On the one hand, the emotions already present can be examined as catalysts or triggers for a given ritual; on the other hand, that ritual can be examined as the representational medium wherein emotions already present can be embodied or communicated.

However, in the section 2.1.3 below, which is entitled "Emotions and Rituals in Dynamic Interaction", we will see that a theory of clear causality or chronological sequence—that is, first the emotion, then the ritual—can be sustained only with qualifications. However, this very limitation on a causal relation can be turned to our advantage. It opens up the possibility of a manifold of other relations and directs our attention to the question of the extent to which rituals constitute a medium for coping with emotion, given that within the ritual procedure emotions can be both communicated and transformed. Furthermore, just as we can ask about the extent to which

emotions bring forth rituals, so we can turn the question around and ask about the extent to which rituals call forth emotions. Furthermore, in the latter case, the emotions called forth in ritual may serve quite different functions for the ritual. They may also have a relevance that extends beyond the ritual itself. Once the issue of the function of emotions within rituals comes into focus, the question of a sequential and causal relationship between the two is resolved, for these functions exist and continue to exist regardless of whether they were already present before the ritual or were called forth in the course of the ritual.

2.1. *Ritual's Use of Existing Emotion*

2.1.1. *Emotion as an Occasion for Ritual—Ritual as a Reaction to Emotion*

The ritual expressions of mourning following the accidental death of Princess Diana, and especially the way in which these arose and the consequences they produced, provide a good example of ritual forms that take shape in connection with emotions already on hand. Diana's sudden death released a wave of shock and mourning which the House of Windsor had neither expected nor especially desired. In the days following her death, Lady Di's 'supporters' organized unofficial manifestations of grief and tribute on such a scale that the royal house saw itself compelled to allot far more ritual space to the mourning over Diana than had at first been planned.

A number of ritual theories suggest such a causal correlation between emotion and ritual, and ritual studies dealt quite early with the role of emotion. Mary Douglas observed that in nineteenth century the so-called 'primitive religions' were supposed to be inspired by feelings of fear.[13] Her analysis might be extended and turned into an explanation of the origin and existence of the rituals of these religions as well, thus placing the whole in a causal relationship.[14]

Émile Durkheim, Marcel Mauss, Robert Hertz, and Arnold van Gennep followed this interpretation only partially. Although they, too, acknowledge that emotion can serve as the origin or "occasion"[15]

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[13] Douglas 1966, 1.
[14] See, e.g., B. Malinowski, *Magic, Science, and Religion* (London, 1974), 47–53.
[15] É. Durkheim, *Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (1912), trans. J.W. Swain (London, 1976), 403.

of rituals, their theories also show that the relationship between emotion and ritual is considerably more complex. For Durkheim rituals are closely linked to emotions that refer to and impact upon the social community. The death of a member of society, for example, is experienced by the various individual surviving members as a weakening of the collective; hence, the arising of grief is virtually inevitable.[16] But the subsequent collective experience of a shared ritual activity (such as keening) leads to the awareness of commonly shared emotion and thereby to the assurance of the continuity of the collective—and to the end of grief.[17]

Not only the death of a member but also other events, such as a crop failure, can send the social community into "sorrow and fear", according to Durkheim.[18] The concomitant "distress in which the society finds itself" serves then as an occasion for ceremony:[19]

> Everything that inspires sentiments, of sorrow or fear necessitates a piaculum and is therefore called piacular. So this word seems to be very well adapted for designating the rites which are celebrated by those in a state of uneasiness or sadness.[20]

In the ritual as such, however, the ritual expression and the individually experienced emotions can be quite distinct:

> Mourning is not the spontaneous expression of individual emotions. . . . it is more generally the case that there is no connection between the sentiments felt and the gestures made by the actors in the rite. . . . it is a ritual attitude which he is forced to adopt out of respect for the custom, but which is, in a large measure, independent of his affective state.[21]

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[16] Durkheim, *Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, 401.
[17] See Durkheim, *Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, 394–396. ". . . men do not weep for the dead because they fear them; they fear them, because they weep for them. But this change of the affective state can only be a temporary one, for while the ceremonies of mourning result from it, they also put an end to it. Little by little they neutralize the very causes which have given rise to them. The foundation of mourning is the impression of a loss which the group feels, when it loses one of its members. But this very impression results in bringing individuals together, in putting them into closer relations with one another in associating them all in the same mental state, and therefore in disengaging a sensation of comfort which compensates the original loss." Durkheim, *Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, 401.
[18] Durkheim, *Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, 403–404.
[19] Durkheim, *Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, 403.
[20] Durkheim, *Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, 389.
[21] Durkheim, *Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, 397.

Stepping out of the ritual expression can also signify the end of the emotion that was linked to it.[22] Thus for Durkheim rituals are not the result of individually experienced emotions. Rituals are not concerned, for example, with a merely personal loss and, generally speaking, the ritual performers are not expressing simply subjective feelings. Rather, Durkheim views rituals as a fundamental way for the community to respond to emotions that are shared by individual members of a collective and that in fact have the community as their reference.[23]

2.1.2. *Rituals as the 'Stage' for Existing Emotions*

Half a century later Clifford Geertz too interpreted rituals as an important societal means for dealing with existing emotions. Whereas for Durkheim emotions prepare the way for ritual events, Geertz's interpretation of the Balinese cockfight[24] sees them as providing the actual script of the ritual. The ritual not only displays the social-status relationships within Balinese society but also provides a vent for the relevant emotions, according to Geertz. The ritual is an "Aesopian representation of the complex fields of tension set up by the controlled, muted, ceremonial, but for all that deeply felt, interaction of those selves in the context of everyday life."[25] The magnitude of the ritual-related emotions is directly correlated with the 'depth' of the ritual: "The 'deeper' the match . . . the greater the emotion that will be involved and the more the general absorption in the match."[26] Thus the ritual deals with existing emotions, structures and endows them with coherence, gives them significance, and makes them "meaningful-visible, tangible, graspable-'real,' in an ideational sense."[27] Geertz finds that the ritual, by representing emotions, exposes the emotions publicly and thus makes it possible for the Balinese to deal with them.[28] The ritual reveals to its participants how their reality—and also the reality of their emotions—looks and how it functions;

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[22] Durkheim, *Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, 397.
[23] Durkheim, *Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, 399.
[24] C. Geertz, "Deep Play. Notes on the Balinese Cockfight", *Daedalus* 101 (1972), 1–37.
[25] Geertz, "Deep Play", 17.
[26] Geertz, "Deep Play", 22 (the typography here follows the author's).
[27] Geertz, "Deep Play", 23.
[28] Geertz, "Deep Play", 25–26.

thus the ritual becomes a '*model of*' reality. At the same time the ritual is also a '*model for*' reality inasmuch as it demonstrates how reality ought to function—that is, how individuals ought to cope with their emotions within this reality.

2.1.3. *Emotions and Rituals in Dynamic Interaction*

Geertz's analysis further suggests that the relationship between emotions existing before the ritual begins and those felt and expressed in the course of the ritual is a complex one: "Quartets, still lifes, and cockfights are not merely reflections of a preexisting sensibility analogically represented; they are positive agents in the creation and maintenance of such a sensibility."[29] When considered in the context of ritual events and ritual experience, emotions are neither simply preexistent nor simply resultant; rather, they are both inherent in the ritual from the very start and at the same time constantly recreated or even strengthened in the ritual process. What Phoebe C. Ellsworth and William M. Reddy claim for the expression of emotions in general can be asserted all the more for the expression of emotions in rituals: "The [emotional] process almost always begins before the name [of the emotion] and almost always continues after it. The realization of the name undoubtedly changes the feeling, simplifying and clarifying."[30] With regard to the collective expression of feelings, Durkheim too had taken up this aspect of ritual: "We have seen elsewhere how human sentiments are intensified when affirmed collectively."[31] Later he states, "Now, as always the pooling of these sentiments results in intensifying them. By affirming themselves, they exalt and impassion themselves and attain a degree of violence of the gestures which express them."[32] According to Reddy, "Emotion and emotional expression interact in a dynamic way. I provide

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[29] Geertz, "Deep Play", 28. Durkheim was likewise unable to find a simple causal connection between the emotions that were already present before the ritual and those that received expression in the ritual. "Not only do the relatives, who are affected the most directly, bring their own personal sorrow to the assembly, but the society exercises a moral pressure over its members, to put their sentiments in harmony with the situation." Durkheim, *Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, 399.

[30] P. Ellsworth, "Levels of Thought and Levels of Emotion", P. Ekman and R.J. Davidson (eds), *The Nature of Emotion. Fundamental Questions* (Series in Affective Science; Oxford, 1994), 192–196 and 192–193. Quoted from Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling*, xii.

[31] Durkheim, *Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, 400.

[32] Durkheim, *Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, 407.

evidence to suggest that this one aspect of emotional expression *is* universal . . ."[33]

2.2. *Rituals as Medium or Vehicle for Management of Emotions*

2.2.1. *The Transformation of Emotions within Ritual Processes*
Although emotions can be a trigger for rituals or for participation in rituals, emotions and ritual expression also interact with one another, as we have seen. Thus the ritual expression can alter and transform emotions and this in turn can trigger further changes in the participants, even beyond the emotional plane. This is particularly evident in mourning rituals, as well as in healing rituals, and applies both to the individual participant and to the group as a whole. Thomas J. Scheff ascribes to rituals an all but therapeutic function in view of their potential "for coping with universal distress".[34] According to his analysis, rituals endow their participants with an "esthetic distance"[35] not only to the ritual event but also to their own emotions. 'Esthetic distance' refers to a kind of detachment of the ritual participant from the ritual event so as to become aware of the ongoing situation *as a ritual*—that is, as something performed or represented, and not as unmediated reality. Yet at the same time this very possibility permits the participant to be caught up in the event *as a ritual*, permitting a situation from the past to be re-experienced in the present. "Esthetic distance involves a balanced experience of a present and past scene, seemingly simultaneously." In contrast, "overdistanced experience" is "completely cognitive" and thus hinders an emotional immersion in the event: "Total overdistancing involves responding only to the nonemotional aspects of the present environment—there is no emotional resonance at all." The opposite is "underdistancing . . . the return of repressed emotion in

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[33] Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling*, xii (author's emphasis). See also B. Kapferer, "Emotion and Feeling in Sinhalese Healing Rites", *Social Analysis* 1 (1979), 153–176, here 154: "Performance both expresses and creates what it represents." Reddy quotes Bertrand Russell, who recalls an encounter with Lady Ottoline: "I did not know I loved you till I heard myself telling you so—for one instant I thought 'Good God, what have I said?' and then I knew it was the truth" (Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling*, 102–103).
[34] Scheff 1977, 484.
[35] Scheff 1977, 486.

a situation in which it is not appropriate".[36] In this case the partic-
ipant fails to perceive the ritual framework and context of the event.
What is called for then is an adequate or appropriate detachment.
Scheff maintains that effective rituals allow one to remember and
re-experience "repressed emotions" in a "safe situation",[37] and thus
"emotional distress" can be understood as "catharsis".[38]

Citing Scheff, Bruce Kapferer demonstrates on the basis of heal-
ing rituals that within ritual structures it is particularly the ritual's
ability to shift among different perspectives of 'esthetic distance'—its
alternation between underdistancing and overdistancing—which plays
a decisive role in the positive effect of the ritual. The varying emo-
tional near-far 'distances' of the participants ensures the dynamic
nature of the ritual act and thus makes the healing process possible.[39]

Ritual theory has devoted considerable attention to the significance
of rituals for emotion management, and this is particularly apparent
in the case of mourning rituals.[40] Some studies have also attempted
to provide evidence for the negative consequences that can ensue if
no adequate rituals are available to the grieving party.[41] The death
of another person is generally assumed to trigger emotions of grief,
fear, or anger, and inasmuch as rituals offer models for understanding
the world, they also offer the possibility to 'make room' for these
emotions within the model of the world. The emotions are thus
placed in relation to this understanding of the world and thereby
receive legitimacy and justification. This occurs insofar as an expla-
nation for the presence of these emotions is offered and the object

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[36] Scheff 1977, 486.

[37] Scheff 1977, 487.

[38] Scheff 1977, 484–485. "I define catharsis as the discharge of one or more of
four distressful emotions: grief, fear, embarrassment, or anger. These emotions are
physical states of tension in the body produced by stress. . . . In the absence of inter-
ference, these tension states will be spontaneously discharged by convulsive, invol-
untary bodily processes whose external manifestations are weeping, for grief, shivering
and cold sweat, for fear . . . This definition of catharsis is unusual in making a sharp
distinction between emotion as distress and emotion as discharge" (485).

[39] Kapferer (ed.) 1979, 170–173.

[40] See also Durkheim, *Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, 408: "In a word, even
when religious ceremonies have a disquieting or saddening event as their point of
departure, they retain their stimulating power over the affective state of the group
and individuals. By the mere fact that they are collective, they raise the vital tone.
When one feels life within him—whether it be in the form of painful irritation or
happy enthusiasm—he does not believe in death."

[41] G. Gorer, *Death, Grief, and Mourning* (Garden City, 1965). See also L. Pincus,
Death and the Family. The Importance of Mourning (New York, 1974).

of the emotions—to what or to whom they refer—is acknowledged, the value that the emotions have for the individual or for the social group is recognized, and guidelines are available for coping with them. Rituals offer a safe space for expressing emotions in forms that are in part already given. Moreover, they incorporate actions and activities that are understood as 'generating satisfaction'. Thus a fear of the power of the dead, for example, can be overcome by means of ritual protective measures,[42] and the fear of one's own death can be contained by adhering to the injunctions set forth in taboos.[43]

The ritual process takes hold of the participants' emotions and can transform them in the ritual process. This constitutes a valuable contribution to emotion management which benefits not only the individual participant but the whole community.[44]

2.2.2. *The Ritual Communication of Emotions*
Often the transformative power that rituals exert upon emotions is viewed in the light of rituals' ability to communicate emotions. Both Durkheim and Geertz took up the idea of rituals as a communications medium for emotions. According to Durkheim, the individual demonstrates his belonging to the group through the public expression of emotion during the ritual process. The collective expression of emotion in turn can intensify the affective state. Moreover, this collective expression serves the maintenance of the social group:

> Since they weep together, they hold to one another and the group is not weakened, in spite of the blow which has fallen upon it. . . . The

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[42] It should not be overlooked, however, that fear of the dead can also be seen as the *myth* that the ritual practice legitimates. See, e.g., Durkheim: "men do not weep for the dead because they fear them; they fear them because they weep for them." Durkheim, *Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, 401.

[43] See also Durkheim, *Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, 408: "In a word, even when religious ceremonies have a disquieting or saddening event as their point of departure, they retain their stimulating power over the affective state of the group and individuals. By the mere fact that they are collective, they raise the vital tone. When one feels life within him—whether it be in the form of painful irritation or happy enthusiasm—he does not believe in death."

[44] For an example of the capacity of rituals for transforming a particular, individually experienced emotion (sanskr. *bhāva*) into a de-personalized sentiment (sanskr. *rasa*), see the analysis of a Krishna sect from the Mount Ghovardan Region in P.M. Toomey, "Krishna's Consuming Passions. Food as Metaphor and Metonym for Emotion at Mount Govardhan", O.M. Lynch (ed.), *Divine Passions. Social Construction of Emotions in India* (Berkeley, 1990), 157–181.

exceptional violence of the manifestations by which the common pain
is necessarily and obligatorily expressed even testifies to the fact that
at this moment, the society is more alive and active than ever.[45]

And in the end it is the communication of grief which allows that
grief to be left behind.

For Geertz too rituals are not about the simple manifestation of
emotions but about their communication. Betting or gambling con-
stitutes a highly complex social phenomenon that can also be viewed
as a communication system, as can fighting. In both instances emo-
tions are displayed and exchanged in a framework governed by
specific rules. Accordingly, emotions are not only communicated
within the group; they are also communicated by the ritual itself to
the individual participant. Geertz observes that on Bali certain feel-
ings that are otherwise veiled by the "haze of etiquette"[46] become,
in the cockfight, "enveloped",[47] and thereby communicated: "Jealousy
is as much a part of Bali as poise, envy as grace, brutality as charm.
But without the cockfight the Balinese would have a much less cer-
tain understanding of them, which is, presumably, why they value
it so highly."[48]

2.3. *Rituals Call Forth Emotions*

As we have seen, rituals are able to draw specifically desired emo-
tions out of the participants. The emotions thus produced can pos-
sess a meaning and a function for the ritual itself, but can also extend
beyond it. The Passover feast, for instance, celebrates the joy of the
exodus from Egypt, while at the same time the ritual and the related
emotions keep this memory alive:

> In every single generation it is a man's duty to regard himself as if
> he had come out of Egypt, as it is said: "And thou shalt tell thy son
> in that day, saying: It is because of that which the Lord did for me
> when I came forth out of Egypt" (Ex. 13:8). Not only our fathers did
> the Holy One, blessed be He, redeem, but us also He redeemed with
> them; . . . Therefore, it is our duty to thank, praise, laud, glorify, exalt,
> honor, bless, extol, and adore Him who performed for our fathers and

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[45] Durkheim, *Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, 401–402.
[46] Geertz, "Deep Play", 25.
[47] Geertz, "Deep Play", 25.
[48] Geertz, "Deep Play", 26.

for us all these wonders. He brought us forth from slavery to free-
dom, from anguish to joy, from mourning to festivity, from darkness
to great light, and from bondage to redemption. Let us sing before
Him a new song. Halleluja![49] And this is taught by the masters of the
Talmud: A man is in duty bound to make his children and his house-
hold rejoice on a Festival, for it is said: And thou shalt rejoice in thy
feast . . . Where with does he make them rejoice? With wine.[50]

Here it is obvious that rituals not only take up and express existing
emotions but are specifically intended to generate, even provoke
specific emotions in their participants. While the ritual with its atten-
dant emotions serves to quicken and preserve a particular memory,
the emotions can also be relevant in this regard for the ritual itself
by making it memorable.

2.3.1. *Emotions as Vehicles of Memory*

Rituals that are seldom performed are often those that call forth
particularly intense emotional experiences, according to Harvey
Whitehouse. Such experiences are likely to be long remembered by
the participants and this serves to ensure their survival.[51] However,
in light of several counter-examples it becomes questionable whether
the infrequency of rituals does in fact correlate with the intensity of
emotions experienced. Nevertheless, Whitehouse's observation that
emotions preserve the memory of the ritual itself is important. If one
does take this observation seriously, it becomes possible to under-
stand why for some participants—contrary to Whitehouse's thesis—
it is precisely the repetition of certain rituals which facilitates a more
intense emotional experience. Every fresh experience of the 'same'
ritual is amplified by the memory of previous performances of this
ritual. When one considers that the emotions called forth in the pre-
sent ritual performance can call up the memory of emotions elicited
in previous performances of the ritual, one can understand that the

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[49] A.M. Silver (ed.), *The Complete Seder. Step-by-Step Directions, Halakhic References,
Reasons, and Sources for the Customs of the Seder* (New York, 1980), 27–28.
[50] *The Babylonian Talmud*, Seder Mo'ed, vol. III, Erubin Pesahim (London, 1938),
Pesahim 109 a, 563.
[51] H. Whitehouse, "Memorable Religions. Transmission, Codification, and Change
in Divergent Melanesian Contexts", *Man* n.s. 27 (1992), 777–797; H. Whitehouse,
Inside the Cult. Religious Innovation and Transmission in Papua New Guinea (Oxford Studies
in Social and Cultural Anthropology; Oxford, 1995).

repetition increases both the complexity and the intensity of the emotional experience.

2.3.2. *Emotions as Carriers of Ritual Meaning and Message*

For Robert N. McCauley and E. Thomas Lawson, the emotions elicited in the course of a ritual event serve not only to preserve the memory of the ritual but also to make conscious the significance of the ritual event for the individual participants.[52] McCauley and Lawson correlate the magnitude of the emotions that come forth with the role played within the ritual structure by what they call a 'CPS-Agent' (culturally postulated superhuman agent).[53] If a ritual is performed by a 'CPS-Agent', or if one of the performers is seen as the intermediary of a 'CPS-Agent', the effects of this ritual will be understood as timeless and consequently the ritual need not be repeated:

> These rituals contain high levels of sensory pageantry and emotional arousal because participants must *remember* these unique ritual experiences, and they also must emerge from them with the *conviction* not only that something profound has transpired, but also that the actions of the gods are ultimately, if not proximally, responsible for that profundity.[54]

Geertz maintains that the emotions experienced during a ritual afford an "authoritative experience",[55] validating and confirming the system of symbols that are ritually displayed and that themselves embody "conceptions of a general order of existence".[56] Now these conceptions may also refer to the political sphere, as David I. Kertzer has demonstrated.[57] In view of their links to "a limited pool of powerful symbols", emotions can be employed in political rituals so as to reinforce political messages:[58]

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[52] Lawson and McCauley 1990; McCauley and Lawson 2002.
[53] McCauley 2001, 124.
[54] McCauley 2001, 135–136 (author's emphasis).
[55] "The constantly recurring struggle of Rangda and Barong to an inevitable draw is thus—for the believing Balinese—both the formulation of a general religious conception and the authoritative experience which justifies, even compels, its acceptance" (Geertz 1966, 35).
[56] Geertz 1966, 4; see also Geertz 1966, 12–24.
[57] Kertzer 1988.
[58] Kertzer 1988, 95. See also J. McManus, "Ritual and Human Social Cognition", in D'Aquili, Laughlin J., McManns (eds) 1979, 216–248, here 227.

> If political rites encourage certain interpretations of the world, they do
> so in no small part because of the powerful emotions that they trig-
> ger. Our perceptions and interpretations are strongly influenced by our
> emotional states, but the process works very much in the reverse direc-
> tion as well. Our fears are aroused, terror incited, joy created through
> rites that channel our political perceptions.[59]

Culturally established associations between certain symbols and cer-
tain emotions can be deliberately and effectively exploited within a
ritual for specific purposes. First, the employment of symbols allows
the ritual to hook up with the on-hand emotions, and then, in the
course of the ritual performance, these symbols and their emotions
can be placed in a new or unexpected context and perspective. In
their new context the symbols can be hooked up to yet other emo-
tions, thus transmitting a new and unexpected message. As an exam-
ple: A social group that has hitherto evoked only negatively-charged
associations can, during a ritual event, be symbolically placed in a
new context, one charged with a positive emotional association.
Through the performance of the ritual, this group can now become
a more positively perceived entity. Typical here would be the way
in which Nazi rituals made use of Christian symbols. But Christian
rituals, too, can borrow symbols that were originally at home else-
where. A Christian youth service, for example, might integrate pos-
itively-charged emotional symbols that in fact stem from the
non-Christian youth culture. In this way the participants at the youth
church service may experience positive emotions that previously would
not have been associated with church events. These symbols and the
emotions attendant upon them transmit a message that from now
on can be associated with the performance of the Christian ritual.
In any case, emotions support the transmission of cognitive messages
in the course of a ritual event:

   Successful ritual has just this structure. It creates an emotional
state that makes the message uncontestable because it is framed in
such a way as to be seen as inherent in the way things are. It pre-
sents a picture of the world that is so emotionally compelling that
it is beyond debate.[60]

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[59] Kertzer 1988, 99.
[60] Kertzer 1988, 101.

2.2.3. *Emotions as Motivating Factor in Ritual Participation*

Rituals stir up emotions in order to ensure their own remembrance and to mediate a message linked with the given emotions. The employment of emotions, however, also motivates people to participate. Where the message and significance of a ritual has become less well-known among the individual members of a ritual community, and where a shared social consciousness is not particularly strong among its members, the ritual's potential for releasing or taking hold of emotions together with the expectation of a positive emotional experience can constitute the decisive motivating factor in the decision to participate in the ritual.[61] Church youth groups, for example, will take pains to create an atmosphere at youth services which is at once both relaxed and emotionally stimulating. The participants should be involved not only intellectually but also emotionally; indeed, the ritual should become an emotional event. An Agape meal or Eucharist service should spread feelings of community, an Easter service, the feeling of renewal and liberation, and a Christmas service, security and harmony. Generally, however, these emotions are not supposed to become an end in themselves; rather, they play a mediating role, as the preceding discussion has stressed.

2.2.4. *Emotions as a Catalyst for Action*

Closely linked to these considerations is the ritual potential to call up emotions or to intensify latent ones so as to motivate participants to engage in specific actions. Whether war dances, North American election campaigns, or the infamous National Socialist rituals—all call forth a certain aggressiveness that will be important if not decisive for the activities that will follow the ritual. On the other hand, Alfred R. Radcliffe-Brown has called attention to the fact that ritual dances can serve to reduce or diminish feelings of aggression, even to such an extent that the ritual can end in peacemaking:

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[61] It stands to reason that emotions are important not only for ritual acts; they are crucial vessels of memory: "With cognitive judgements, there is no reason, other than an affective one, to perfer any goal whatever over some other. Cognitive reasoning may argue that a particular event could lead to loss of money or health or life, but so what? What is wrong with death, other than that it is disliked?" N.H. Frijda, "Emotions Require Cognitions, Even If Simple Ones", P. Ekman and R.J. Davidson (eds), *The Nature of Emotion. Fundamental Questions* (Oxford, 1994), 197–202, here 199.

The purpose of the ceremony is clearly to produce a change in the feelings of the tow parties towards one another, feelings of enmity being replaced through it by feelings of friendship and solidarity. It depends for its effect on the fact that anger and similar aggressive feelings may be appeased by being freely expressed.[62]

2.2.5. *Emotions as 'Bonding Material' for the Ritual Community*

Just as emotions can motivate one to participate in a ritual, so they can serve to bond the individual to the community, at least to the extent that the ritual is itself bound up with community identity. One sees this clearly in initiation rituals, but it may be observed also in community-forging rituals such as the Communion service among Christians. Furthermore, the associated emotions can convey a wealth of information regarding the meaning of the community and its structures—information that extends far beyond the particular ritual event. Durkheim sees in rituals the possibility for the individual to experience feelings that in fact refer to the very existence of the society. In the periodic recurrence of ceremonial rites he finds that the "effect of the cult really is to recreate periodically a moral being upon which we depend as it depends upon us. Now this being does exist: it is society".[63]

In the course of the ritual performance, the participants come to feel that "there is something outside of them which is born again"; in this way they take part in a "collective renovation".[64] Accordingly, Durkheim finds that society is celebrating itself in these rituals, wherein the emotionally experienced interdependency of individual members achieves expression.

Emotions, initiated and expressed through rituals, consequently serve a function both for the individual and for the collective. By taking part in the emotional expressions of the ritual, the individual becomes incorporated in the collective and displays his or her sense of belonging: "Not to be interested in them would be equivalent to breaking the bonds uniting him to the group."[65]

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[62] A.R. Radcliffe-Brown, *The Andaman Islanders* (Glencoe, 1964), 238–239. For another example of how war dances can help from a view of the participants to express and overcome grief and anger see G. Wilson, "Nyakyusa Conventions of Burial", *Bantu Studies* 13 (1939), 1–31, here 13.

[63] Durkheim, *Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, 348.

[64] Durkheim, *Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, 349.

[65] Durkheim, *Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, 400.

Radcliffe-Brown too finds that rituals, as "regulated symbolic expressions of certain sentiments",[66] make an important contribution to society. Sentiments here are understood as "mental dispositions"[67] governing the individual's behavior with respect to other members of the society. Indeed, society is grounded in these sentiments, according to Radcliffe-Brown, and rituals have the power to "regulate, maintain and transmit [these sentiments] from one generation to another".[68] As an example of this process he cites ancestor-rites that reaffirm and strengthen a sense of dependence, expressing both gratitude to the ancestors and a sense of duty to the descendents.[69] Bruno Bettelheim's analysis of the National Socialist 'Heil Hitler' salute documents an example of the emotional power of universally obligatory rituals or ritual elements to reinforce one's sense of belonging to a community: "To Hitler's followers, giving the salute was an expression of self-assertion, of power. Each time a loyal subject performed it, his sense of well-being shot up. For an opponent of the regime it worked exactly opposite."[70] In the latter case, an opponent of Hitler would be made painfully aware both of his outsider position and of the betrayal of his position as he performed this ritual gesture. Hence: "Since one's integration rests on acting in accord with one's beliefs, the only easy way to retain his integration was to change his beliefs."[71]

3. *Ritual as a Space of Emotional Experience*

In the following section we will see that ritual's potential for dealing with emotion consists, first, in the particular way rituals work with symbol systems—specifically, in the way rituals integrate symbols that are part of, and thus give access to, broader symbol systems. Then we shall consider the way in which the power of ritual with respect to emotion lies in the sensible dimension of ritual—

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[66] A.R. Radcliffe-Brown, "Religion and Society", *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* 75 (1945), 33–45, here 35.

[67] Radcliffe-Brown, "Religion and Society", 43.

[68] Radcliffe-Brown, "Religion and Society", 35, see also 40.

[69] Radcliffe-Brown, "Religion and Society", 43.

[70] B. Bettelheim, *The Informed Heart. Autonomy in a Mass Age* (Glencoe, 1960), 290–291.

[71] Bettelheim, *The Informed Heart*, 291.

specifically, in the effects of sensory stimulation upon the ritual participant. Thereafter, we shall consider the way in which this power is latent within the structure of ritual, both in the structure of a single and concrete ritual process and in that of a complex of interrelated rituals. Finally, this power will be considered in the actual physical performance of the ritual, that is, in the activity of the human body that makes possible the expression and experience of emotion. Though for the purposes of our analysis we shall consider each of the aforementioned dimensions in turn, it must be stressed that these are not to be understood ultimately as separate and discrete elements. On the contrary, ritual's power with respect to emotion consists far more in a ceaseless interplay of overlapping and mutually dependent dimensions. Ultimately, the course of this analysis will place us in a position to take up and develop more fully the understanding of ritual presented at the outset of our considerations here.

3.1. *Rituals draw on Symbol Systems*

The polysemy of ritual symbols, ranging from the normative to the orectic, has been demonstrated by Victor W. Turner. Whereas the prevailing social-structural relations are found at the normative pole, physiological and emotional relations are located at the orectic.[72] In adopting this approach, Turner picked up on the sociological reflections of Durkheim, as well as on the psychological observations of Sigmund Freud. According to Turner, it is precisely in their multivocality and in their reference to a transcendent dimension that symbols facilitate emotional experience. It is here that the transformative power of rituals can develop.[73]

One need not adopt Turner's distinction between a normative and an orectic pole in order to concur with him regarding the cognitive, normative, and emotional meaning of symbols. Symbols can offer the ritual participant access to emotionally-frightening dimensions of the symbol system of which they are a part—be it through the enact-

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[72] V.W. Turner, "Colour Classification in Ndembu Ritual. A Problem in Primitive Classification", M. Banton (ed.), *Anthropological Approaches to the Study of Religion* (London, 1966), 47–84.

[73] V.W. Turner, *Chihamba the White Spirit. A Ritual Drama of the Ndembu* (The Rhodes Livingstone Papers 33; Manchester, 1962); V.W. Turner, *Revelation and Divination in Ndembu Ritual* (Ithaca, London, 1975).

ment of a well-known myth[74] or in the transmission of a theological teaching. A Hindu bathing in the Ganges, for instance, might be emotionally affected when thinking of the spiritual meaning of mother Ganga; the Lutheran participant at a Communion service might be emotionally affected by the consciousness of Jesus' self-offering. The expressions 'thinking' and 'consciousness' are misleading, however, for at work here is not simply a cognitive but also a sensory and emotional process. Kertzer finds that in the ritual employment of symbols emotions are 're-remembered':

> Symbols have a history of cognitive and emotional associations. Their power comes in part from this history: the childhood memories they arouse, feelings of past solidarity, the way they have been used to define one's own identity and one's understanding of the world.[75]

In connection with the transformation of emotions during the mourning process, we observed that rituals propose models for an understanding of the world, an understanding of human experiences. This occurs insofar as a ritual communicates the elements and relations of a larger, more comprehensive symbol system. Now the ritual may bring these elements and relations together in a context that is already familiar to the ritual participants from the symbol system, or these elements and relations may be re-combined in a new and unfamiliar context. A ritual thereby not only rests upon its own internal system of relationships but also offers access to further and more comprehensive relational complexes extending beyond the particular ritual itself.

For example, in a ritual intended to drive out evil spirits the symbolic elements of the ritual are, of course, internally related and refer to one another. At the same time, these same elements are themselves part of a more comprehensive symbol system—a worldview, for instance. By employing them in the exorcism, a link will be established to that larger, more comprehensive system as well. The power of the demons over their victims, the emotions they arouse both in their victims and in other members of the group, and the possibility of driving them out, can thus be accounted for against the backdrop of the larger, more comprehensive symbol system. Through their access to symbol systems, rituals are able to present experienced

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[74] See also, e.g., Dow 1986, 56–69; Scheff 1977.
[75] Kertzer 1988, 92.

reality as understandable reality—understandable inasmuch as it can
find a place within a larger order. As a consequence, the accom-
panying emotions can also be integrated into this understanding.

Rituals thereby provide a horizon of explanation and justification
for the emotions—a horizon that at the same time extends beyond
the concrete ritual that has been enacted. The extent to which sym-
bols customarily linked to particular emotions in a given symbol sys-
tem can be purposefully redirected and put to use in new contexts
so as to produce new emotional relations has been indicated by
Kertzer with respect to political rituals. Indeed, the fascist rituals of
the Third Reich furnish a multitude of 'successful' examples, such
as when church elements were successfully integrated into political
contexts.

3.2. *The Sense Dimension of Rituals*

Not only symbols but also immediate bodily, sensory impulses can
serve as the vehicles of emotional processes in rituals.[76] Emotions
can be roused by means of associations linked to certain stimuli,
such as childhood memories, as Kertzer observes. Culture-specific
associations, such as the smell of incense in orthodox churches, organ
music by Bach during a Protestant service, or Ganges water for
Hindus in Benares, can all serve the same function.

Generally speaking, empirical research sets out from the idea that
sense perceptions arising from external stimuli are always influenced
by cognitive factors and are not simply immediately 'given'. This
does not, however, preclude the operation of sensory impulses that
have the potential to produce an immediate emotional effect. These
would include pain-producing bodily injuries,[77] strong tactile, visual,
auditory, and olfactory impulses, as well as the influence of drugs.[78]

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[76] "Stimulating ritual participants' senses is the most straightforward, surefire
means available for arousing their emotions. The intuition is that the resulting lev-
els of emotional excitement are often at least roughly proportional to the levels of
sensory stimulation a ritual contains" (McCauley 2001, 119). See also Kertzer 1988,
10: "The power of ritual, then, stems not just from its social matrix, but also from
its psychological underpinnings. Indeed, these two dimensions are inextricably linked.
Participation in ritual involves physiological stimuli, the arousal of emotions; ritual
works through the senses to structure our sense of reality and our understanding
of the world around us."

[77] See, e.g., B. Shell-Duncan and Y. Hernlund, *Female "Circumcision" in Africa.
Culture, Controversy and Change* (Directions in Applied Anthropology; Boulder, 2000).

[78] See, e.g., J. Westermeyer, J. Bush, and R. Wintrob, "A Review of the Relationship

The ritual experience of physical violence can lead both to a temporary suspension of 'everyday identity' as well as to the construction of a new one.[79] Sensory stimuli in the ritual event work towards the dissolution of space-time orientations. In the participants' experience emotions function as the decisive arena within which the ritual process can become the space of a 'wholly different' order or even of a 'non-order', the breakdown of all orientation.

With this discussion of the sense dimension of rituals we arrive at yet another fundamental aspect of rituals with respect to their effect upon their participants. For not only are rituals processed cognitively but they are also and always experienced sensorially. Of course, the sensory perceptions are invariably accompanied by cognitive contents and this means that rituals can have no effects that could be considered to be independent of cognitive factors. However, it is precisely through their particular cognitive content that they can produce emotional effects beyond the particular cognitive content. The ritual participants can be 'addressed', as it were, on several sensory levels: they hear, see, smell, and possibly touch the ritual event. Rituals can thus affect those who take part on quite different sensory levels. And through this exploitation of several sensory levels rituals are able to establish links on all of these levels to broader, more comprehensive symbol systems. It is thus possible for rituals to take up symbols from a plurality of sensory levels in a symbol system and to exploit them emotionally.

3.3. *The Structural Dimension of Rituals*

If disorientation and dissolution are always potentially present in emotions, structure—ritual structure—is also present, serving as a vehicle of emotions. Both aspects must be borne in mind. As Kertzer writes: "Ritual action is repetitive and, therefore, often redundant, but these very factors serve as important means of channeling emotion, guiding cognition, and organizing social groups."[80] Consequently, emotions can be deliberately influenced through the deliberate application of structural elements within a ritual, as Scheff's and Kapferer's

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between Dysphoria, Pleasure, and Human Bonding", *Dis. Nervous System* 39 (1978), 415–424.

[79] On the role of violence in rituals see, e.g., Houseman 1998, 447–467.

[80] Kertzer 1988, 9. Kertzer refers to Leach 1966, 404, and Rappaport 1979, 175–176.

analyses have made clear. The same influence can be achieved with structures that extend beyond the particular ritual in question, calling up experiences that transcend the actual space-time situation. In this sense, a ritual understood by its participants to have existed in its present form long before their own lifetimes and expected by them to continue in just this form throughout the lifetimes of future generations will naturally produce the feeling of belonging to a ritual community that extends far beyond any single individual life. Kertzer maintains that this experience goes even further by "giving us confidence that the world in which we live today is the same world we lived in before and the same world we will have to cope with in the future."[81] Likewise, Barabara Myerhoff explains: "By stating enduring and underlying patterns, ritual connects past, present, and future, abrogating history and time."[82] What Kertzer and Myerhoff claim for the dimension of temporal experience can be argued also regarding the level of spatial experience, as, for instance, in Islamic ritual prayer or in Ramadan rites. Participation in the Islamic ritual testifies here to an emotional incorporation into the Islamic *Umma*, which extends throughout the world, enacting in diverse far-flung places the same ritual at the same time. Thus not only is the world the same today as it was yesterday and will be tomorrow, but also a feeling of security and stability is produced by the ritual, affirming the one world in opposition to a multiplicity of worlds.

The emotional effect of rituals upon children has been taken up in recent pedagogical literature.[83] The structural power of rituals is seen here, too, as bringing about a feeling of security. Fixed, recurring rituals related to particular seasons of the year mark off the passage of days, weeks, and years. Their very repetition and the rhythm that they thus establish endow the passing of time with structure.[84]

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[81] Kertzer 1988, 10.
[82] B. Myerhoff, "A Death in Due Time. Construction of Self and Culture in Ritual Drama", in MacAloon (ed.) 1984, 149–178, here 152.
[83] This literature is discussed in M. Stausberg, "Reflexive Ritualisationen", *Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte* 56 (2004), 54–61.
[84] See also Douglas 1966, 64.

3.4. *The Performance Dimension of Rituals*

Symbols, sensory impulses, and the ritual structure itself facilitate the experience of emotion in ritual. Emotion can be experienced and expressed in actions—or the other way around: Emotion is expressed in actions and than experienced:

> There is . . . some clear evidence that choosing to express an emotion or to cognitively rehearse it may intensify or even create the actual experience of that emotion while choosing to suppress it or not think about it may have the opposite effect.[85]

In any event, ritual activity exerts a direct influence upon emotions. Wikan reports that the Balinese assume that "emotional expression shapes and modulates feeling".[86] This is precisely what rituals in their controlled and at the same time expressive fashion make possible, both through the 'ritual script' and their integration of the human body. The resulting emotional expression can achieve significance both for those whose bodies are actively, expressively involved and also for those who do not physically participate. In the case of wailers, that is, the women hired to keen at mourning ceremonies in some societies, we see that it is precisely those who do not stand in a direct connection with the dead and therefore would not be immediately emotionally affected who become the physical expression of emotions.[87] The activity aspect of ritual makes it possible for the participants to translate their emotional involvement into movement, whether through their own physical expression or, as in the employment of wailers, through the physical expression of 'ritual experts'.

Above and beyond then the simple perception and experience of emotions, rituals give access to a certain regulated latitude for activity and physical expression. The participants thus can be actively involved in the processing of emotions; they might be acting for themselves or they might be acting for their ritual community; their actions might also find their reference in a comprehensive symbol system. All in all, rituals accommodate the fact that emotions can

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[85] M. Clark, "Historical Emotionology. From a Social Psychologist's Perspective", A.E. Barnes and P.N. Sternes (eds), *Social History and Issues in Human Consciousness. Some Interdisciplinary Connections* (New York, 1989), 262–269.

[86] Wikan, *Managing Turbulent Hearts*, 294–312, here 302.

[87] For the effect of expressed emotions upon other people see, e.g., A. Bandura, *Social Learning Theory* (Englewood Cliffs, 1977), 65.

demand physical expression and through this physical expression they can then be altered, diminished, or furthered.[88]

4. *Conclusion*

In sum, then, rituals offer a space of experience that can take up, alter, express, and also produce emotions in a special way. Rituals are able to do this because they draw on established, culturally constructed, and maintained systems of symbols—pre-formed 'models of world' already associated with certain emotions. Their material dimension makes use of sensory perceptions that in turn arouse and influence emotions—emotions that may be grounded in universal neurological processes, as well as in their connections to symbol systems and with personal experience or memories. The controlled experience of emotion is made possible through the structural dimension inherent in ritual as such. Within the ritual event these three dimensions: the symbolic, the sensory, and the structural, overlap and interact both with one another and also with the performative dimension—the physical activity—of the ritual. Embodied in ritual action and embedded within a symbol system, emotions are expressed, sensorially perceived, and experienced, as well as controlled and checked within a ritual structure. At the same time, the experiential space of the ritual brings together perceptions of the symbolic, the sensory, and the structural and focuses them upon the particular emotions of the individual participants. The individual is thus able to relate to emotions in a controlled situation and provoke, express, communicate, or alter them, though without robbing them of their own peculiar dynamic.

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[88] See also Jack Barbalets on Durkheim: "Durkheim's somatic theory of emotion holds not only that collectives or groups as opposed to individuals may be the locus of emotional experience, but that the means of their attaining ritual emoton is through socially situated bodily movements and relationships rather than through merely cognitive or cultural processes. . . . Rituals are formalized arrangements of bodily articulation that produce the efficacious aspects of the affective dimension of the things they represent by situating the body of individuals in an appropriate interactional context. . . . rituals produce emotions because of the arrangements of and context within which bodies are situated by them" (J.M. Barbalet, "Ritual Emotion and Bodywork. A Note on the Uses of Durkheim", W. Wentworth and J. Ryan [eds], *Social Perspectives on Emotion* II (Greenwich, 1994), 111–123, here 121.

FRAMING

Don Handelman

The idea of framing is potentially a powerful concept by means of which one can theorize ritual as different from, similar to, and inter-active with not-ritual. Yet such thinking is little developed, and fram-ing is treated primarily as a weak metaphor with which to summarize ritual.[1] Apart from this and similar usages, framing in the humani-ties is used mainly in the study of narrative (through ideas like that of 'master frame') and in the social sciences in research on collec-tive action, social movements, and mass communication—these works have sporadic relevance to the use of framing to theorize ritual.[2]

Lineal Framing

Using lineal framing to discuss ritual depends on a single premise: that the realities of ritual are different from those of not-ritual. If this premise is acceptable, then it gives framing theory the initial impetus to discuss ritual. The premise is akin to the statement of the mathematician, G. Spencer Brown: "Draw a distinction."[3] Making a distinction always invokes its separate 'sides' in relation to one another, as these 'sides' come into existence with the separation made by the distinction. Spencer Brown argues that, "There can be no distinction without motive, and there can be no motive unless con-tents are seen to differ in value."[4] Making the distinction between ritual and not-ritual entails attributing different value to each of these

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[1] See, e.g., Strathern and Stewart 1998.
[2] In these works, framing is understood primarily as an ideological process that focuses social action. See M.W. Steinberg, "Tilting the Frame. Considerations on Collective Action From a Discursive Turn", *Theory and Society* 27 (1998), 845–872; R.D. Benford and D.A. Snow, "Framing Processes and Social Movements", *Annual Review of Sociology* 26 (2000), 611–639.
[3] G. Spencer Brown, *Laws of Form* (London, 1969), 3.
[4] Spencer Brown, *Laws of Form*, 1.

'sides' of the cleavage, in its spatial and temporal dimensions. However, this will not happen unless there is feeling and reason (the motives) for the separation. The distinction, itself the frame in my terms, is constituted by its epistemological intent towards what it separates from, separates with, and encloses. Framing draws immediate attention to three major issues in studying ritual: the structuring of the ritual frame, the organization of ritual within the frame, and the relationships between the interior and exterior of the frame, processes of *endosmosis* and *exosmosis*, in Simmel's phrasing.[5]

The distinction in value between the outside and the inside of the lineal ritual frame enables one to consider the frame as meta-communicative. As meta-message, the frame brings into being the shift from one reality to another, through communicating how the inside of the frame, the ritual reality, is to be perceived and practiced by those who enter into it. In Gregory Bateson's terms, meta-communication is both the separation and the linkage between the world within ritual and the world outside it. The meta-message, *This is Ritual*, describes the epistemological intent of ritual framing at its highest level of abstraction.[6] Given that the existence of ritual framing is a problem in epistemology, the frame is *asking*, as it were, how its meta-messages are to be applied towards whatever the frame encloses.[7]

The Batesonian approach to framing derives from the Theory of Logical Types, proposed by Whitehead and Russell. The theory was intended, in passing, to do away with paradoxical borders and their problematical crossings, by organizing these boundaries as distinct meta-levels whose relationship to the levels they address is hierarchical. The meta-message, *This is Ritual*, therefore is by definition of greater value than the mundane, the not-ritual from which it separates, and also of greater value than the ritual practice that the message brings into existence by shaping and orientating cognition and

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[5] G. Simmel, "The Picture Frame. An Aesthetic Study", *Theory, Culture and Society* 11 (1994), 11–17.

[6] G. Bateson, "The Message, 'This is Play'", B. Schaffner (ed.), *Group Processes* (New York, 1956), 145–242; G. Bateson, "A Theory of Play and Fantasy", *Steps to an Ecology of Mind* (New York, 1972), 177–193. See also Handelman 1979; D. Handelman, "Passages to Play. Paradox and Process", *Play and Culture* 5 (1992), 1–19.

[7] The Batesonian frame is not seamlessly self-referential, but negotiable to a degree, changing through practice. See Bateson, "A Theory of Play and Fantasy", 192.

feeling. The Batesonian approach to framing, always hierarchical, demands a clean-lined logic of inclusion (the ritual inclusive of itself) and exclusion (the not-ritual excluded from the ritual). In these respects, lineal ritual-framing is an excellent representation of its period—of Durkheimian conceptions of ritual and of their intellectual indebtedness to the idea of the cleanly bordered, modern nation-state and its reliance on 'bureaucratic logic'.[8]

The signal value of Batesonian framing is that it depends from difference premised on value, without the need to assign names immediately (for example, sacred and profane) to the sides of the difference. Whatever the terms of difference, these are to be addressed empirically, not deductively. Batesonian framing enables the theorizing of ritual in its own right, without necessarily shackling ritual to religion and then, on this basis, imposing a clumsy designation (like that of 'secular ritual') on rituals that are said to have divorced themselves from religion.[9] The future of fruitful ritual studies depends on not confounding ritual with religion and then distinguishing between kinds of rituals in terms of their presumed linkage to religion.

Nonetheless, theorizing the framing of ritual as a monothetic difference in value between not-ritual and ritual raises critical problems for analysis. Such lineal framing turns ritual phenomena into the passive recipients of change. Change itself originates primarily outside the ritual frame, for the hierarchical meta-message, *This is Ritual*, largely shuts down the capacity of ritual process to generate changes within itself through its practice.

Bateson uses two kinds of frame analogy. One, taken from mathematical set theory, is a way of delineating membership in categories or classes such that the elements belonging to a category are separated from other categories by the thinnest of frames. Thinnest because such frames depend on abstract logical divisions among categories, not existential ones. Though mathematical sets overlap, this is not prominent in Bateson's theorizing. The other analogy is material, that of the picture frame hanging on the wall, separating that which is inside it from everything outside and cognitively corresponding more closely to categories of activity in the lived-in world.[10]

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[8] On bureaucratic logic and 'ritual' in a modern state, see D. Handelman, *Nationalism and the Israeli State. Bureaucratic Logic in Public Events* (Oxford, 2004).

[9] Moore and Myerhoff 1977, 10–24.

[10] See Bateson, "The Message, 'This is Play'", 145–151 and 163, as well as Bateson "A Theory of Play and Fantasy", 186–189.

Both frames, imaginary and cultural, depend from the premises that their epistemological intent is one of monothetic classification towards whatever they divide and meta-communicative towards what is within them and outside them. The relationship of both of these frames to their inside and outside is hierarchical. At issue, then, is whether framing can be less monothetic, depending less on the hierarchy of meta-communication. So long as framing is lineal, it affects perception by existing, yet not by actively doing something to participants. Moving from one frame to another (within a single ritual, or among rituals) is itself necessarily monothetic, involving the shuffling of frames, one replaced by another, each frame more akin to a set-piece, inserted into social life.[11]

The problematic of movement among frames lies primarily in Bateson's derivation of framing from the Theory of Logical Types, with its axiomatic hierarchization of meta-communication.[12] If the relationship between the framing meta-message and what the frame contains is hierarchical, then movement between frame and content (the less abstract level) is unidirectional, from frame to the content framed. Ritual practice within the frame has little effect on the frame itself. Indeed, ritual practice is made derivative of the framing meta-message(s). This contributes to the scholarly understanding of ritual as unchanging, or as changing only in response to external stimuli, and as unquestioned truth reinforced by repetition.[13] This sense of lineal framing contributes to the ease with which the study of ritual is turned into that of ritualization.[14] Any negotiation over the lineal frame focuses on its epistemological intent, since the contents within the frame are keyed inevitably to its higher-level meta-message.

As a consequence, ritual is perceived not to change from within itself, for example, through innovations in ritual practice done while ritual is practiced. Instead, the power to change ritual is located out-

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[11] Nevertheless, some allowance is made for changing frames (see n. 7 above), and Bateson discussed boundaries (especially organic ones) that connect rather than enclose, and whose metier is transmission, not opacity. G. Bateson, tape-recording of lecture, "Interfaces—Boundaries which Connect" (Esalen Institute, February 1980). Still, the movements in the Batesonian frame are more akin to lurching than to smoothness.

[12] Bateson, "The Message, 'This is Play'", 158, 197, and 207; Bateson, "A Theory of Play and Fantasy", 188–189.

[13] See Rappaport 1999; Moore and Myerhoff 1977, 7.

[14] Bell 1992.

side the ritual frame. Ironically, ritual then is analyzed as highly sensitive to political shifts in the broader social order and therefore as quite politicized. This turns ritual into just one more gauge of whatever is happening in the wider social order.[15] No less, frames *within* ritual also are conceptualized in this way and are made to nest within one another. Nested framing continues the logic of hierarchical metamessaging that characterizes lineal framing. If we assume that frames are nested, then ritual action is made to have clear-cut sequencing; while normativity controls any subversiveness in nested framing—for example, if play appears, it is made to nest within and controlled by ritual framing. This normativity demanded by lineal framing is challenged to a degree by the epistemological intent to make ritual cognition looser (and fuzzier).[16] Further on I will argue that hierarchy need not be so prominent in framing, but that this depends on opening conceptions of framing to greater flexibility.

A major effort in this direction was that of Erving Goffman. Goffman, influenced by Bateson, understood frame as a schema for the interpretation and organization of all experience. A frame "allows its users to locate, perceive, identify, and label seemingly a infinite number of concrete occurrences defined in its terms".[17] The passage to ritual, as to all frames, is done through his concept of 'keying', "the set of conventions by which a given activity . . . is transformed

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[15] For a perspective that relates the sensitivity of ritual to changes in social order, yet conditioning this on the kinds of ritual organization involved, see Handelman 1998, xxix–xlii; Handelman 1990, 22–62.

[16] A recent study of neo-shamanic ritual in Sweden shows how ritual may be constituted through fuzzier framing. Neo-shamanic ritual is deliberately constructed as playful in the sense that ritual plays with framing itself. The epistemological intent of these rituals is to make cognition fuzzy, loose, local, less certain, obviating the idea of snug frames comfortably nesting within one another. Neo-shamanic ritual is reflexive with regard to its own performance (during its performance). The participants recursively are both the artists and critics of their own imaginaries as they perform their inventions, and to a degree these rituals are made to alter themselves while they are performed. See G. Lindquist, *Shamanic Performances on the Urban Scene. Neo-Shamanism in Contemporary Sweden* (Stockholm Studies in Social Anthropology 39; Stockholm, 1997). See also D. Handelman, "The Playful Seductions of Neo-Shamanic Ritual", *History of Religions* 39 (1999), 65–72. This deep recursiveness of framing, and its relationship to alteration within ritual, can be identified in other rites. This is my understanding, e.g., of the City Dionysia ritual complex practiced in Fifth Century B.C.E. Athens. See D. Handelman, "Designs of Ritual. The City Dionysia of Fifth-Century Athens", *Celebrations. Sanctuaries and the Vestiges of Cult Activity* (Athens, in press).

[17] Goffman 1974, 21.

into something patterned on this activity but seen by the participants
to be something quite else".[18] Through this process, an existing frame
is keyed into systematic alteration. Keying may make only minor
alterations in activity, yet utterly change what a participant would
say is going on.[19] For Goffman the power of framing lies in its prin-
cipled capacity to introduce disjunction within and separation between
practices of living, enabling these to become different practices, even
as they are transformations of one another.

Goffman's formulation of 'lamination' deepened the topology and
recursiveness of framing. Each systematic alteration of a frame adds
"a layer or lamination to the activity".[20] Goffman argued that frames
change through time, becoming re-keyed, and thereby acquiring
different patterns in their framing of meaning. Each accretion
through re-keying is another lamination of the frame. The frame
thereby contains within its laminations its own archeology and his-
toricity of framing.[21]

Lamination adds complexity of meaning to the meta-communica-
tion of framing. Lamination implies a multiplicity of possibilities
within the chronospace of the frame. Given that frames also are his-
torical in their laminated accretions, this lessens to a degree the hier-
archical ordering of these laminations in relation to one another. For
Goffman the qualities of the frame's innermost lamination can be
made distinct, analytically, from its outermost layer. The innermost
layer is most engaged in engrossing the participants, while the out-
ermost layer, the rim of the frame, informs about the status of the
framed activity in the mundane world.[22] However, since all layers
within the same frame are connected through re-keying, Goffman

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[18] Goffman 1974, 43–44. Goffman's approach to framing is rooted especially in
his earlier conception of the 'encounter'. See E. Goffman, *Encounters. Two Studies in
the Sociology of Interaction* (Indianapolis, 1961). In my understanding the encounter is
an elemental structure of social interaction, coming into existence with the onset of
interaction, going out of existence as interaction closes, yet cumulative in its effects
and consequences. See D. Handelman, *Work and Play Among the Aged. Interaction,
Replication and Emergence in a Jerusalem Setting* (Assen, 1977).

[19] Goffman 1974, 45.

[20] Goffman 1974, 82.

[21] For one perspective on the history of a frame, influenced by Goffman, see
M.M.H. Bax, "Ritual Discord and the Contractual Framework. An Essay on a
Paradoxical Framing Device of the Early Modern Theatre and its Foundation in
Oral Tradition and Mimetic Culture", *Semiotica* 132, nos. 1–2 (2000), 25–74.

[22] Goffman 1974, 82.

echoes Bateson in arguing that "[t]he assumptions that cut an activity off from the external surround also mark the ways in which this activity is inevitably bound to the surrounding world".[23] The ritual frame is always orientated in both directions, towards its outside, towards its inside. So to some degree the organization of the frame recursively guides its own laminating. As Goffman put it, "It is in the nature of a frame that it establishes the line for its own reframing".[24]

Though lamination deepens the frame, this entails more the complexity of layering than it does flexibility in framing through this layering. The re-keyed, laminating frame shapes action, though this action within the frame apparently does not reshape what contains it. In this respect the laminated frame is still lineal and hierarchical in its composition. Each lamination is a kind of shallow frame in its own right, projecting levels and their separation. Each layer has its own boundedness in relation to others, and information moves lineally, up and down, between statically positioned layers. Laminated frames have additive and taxonomic qualities—layers may be thought of as categories keyed to one another to enable their piling onto one another.

In more Batesonian terms, the interior logic of the ritual frame gains in complexity and in the power to relate what is outside the frame to what it contains. Nonetheless, the conceptualization of lamination still lacks any dynamism of its own, and the Batesonian perspective, the categorical separation of one kind of reality from another, remains central to this idea. In the case of ritual framing, this categorical rupturing of realities is no less the exact separation of logics of the fantastic and the phantasmogoric from those of the everyday—a clean-cut victory for the rational ordering of social life as this is understood in the human sciences.[25]

Nonetheless, to theorize framing further, it becomes incumbent on one to envisage theoretical alternatives to the lineal. One challenge

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[23] Goffman 1974, 575. The problem of aligning individuals and frames is tackled (though not with respect to ritual) by D.A. Snow, E.B. Rochford, Jr., S.K. Worden, and R.D. Benford in "Frame Alignment Processes, Micromobilization, and Movement Participation", *American Sociological Review* 51 (1986), 464–481.

[24] Goffman 1974, 249.

[25] See J. Vernon, *The Garden and the Map. Schizophrenia in Twentieth-Century Literature and Culture* (Urbana, 1973), ix–xiv and 10–14; M.I. Spariosu, *Dionysius Reborn. Play and the Aesthetic Dimension in Modern Philosophical and Scientific Discourse* (Ithaca, 1989), 199.

is to loosen and open the conceptualization of framing, making this more dynamic, perhaps by thinking further about how the 'sides' of the frame may interpenetrate and intermingle. This is a more compatible approximation of the relationship between social order and ritual order in many societies.

Fuzzier Framing

The idea of the Moebius surface (or ring) is used to argue for a frame that relates to the problematic of being inside and outside the frame, as a function (to a degree) of the organization of the frame itself. The ritual frame opens to the outside while enabling itself to be practiced as relatively closed. Through such framing, the outside is taken inside and integrated with the ritual. No less, the inside is taken outside of itself and thereby made part of the frame. Therefore, the frame is 'in process' within itself, and in an ongoing relationship to its inside and to its outside.

The topology of the Moebius ring constitutes a single surface both external and internal, outside and inside itself.[26] The Moebius surface is twisted on itself so that the inside of the surface turns into its own outside, its outside into its inside. If the Moebius form is conceptualized as a frame, then this framing is inherently dynamic, relating exterior to interior, interior to exterior. Changing and recursive, the Moebius frame enables exterior and interior to interpenetrate, while keeping them separate.[27] Moebius-like framing questions the stability of the hierarchical relationship between meta-message and its content; it places in doubt whether framing must depend for its very existence on meta-communication. Since Moebius framing is polymorphic within itself, it is the product of the multiple perspectives of any given ritual, which among and through themselves, through time. Topologically, the Moebius frame is a spheroidal twister,

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[26] S.M. Rosen, *Science, Paradox, and the Moebius Principle. The Evolution of a 'Transcultural' Approach to Wholeness* (Series in Science, Technology, and Society; Albany, 1994), 7–12.

[27] This quality of Moebius framing is argued for in the framing of play in D. Handelman, "Postlude. Framing, Braiding, and Killing Play", *Focaal. European Journal of Anthropology* 37 (2001), 145–156; see also D. Baecker, "The Form Game", D. Baecker (ed.), *Problems of Form* (Stanford, 1999), 99–106.

whose epistemological intent is more that of a shifter, scooping, trans-forming, moving content between inside and outside and back, eschewing the lineal and the layered, with their propensity for reifying the cognitive 'thingness' of the frame.[28]

One brief example of framing within ritual may help us to think about its more Moebius-like possibilities. The Tewa (Pueblo Indian) Dance of Man is an annual rite of renewal during which the deities enter the ritual underground chamber to visit the assembled Tewa, bringing to them blessings of fertility and well-being.[29] Of interest here is how movement in this ritual, from phase to phase, is accomplished. The guides of the ritual are two clownish figures whose interior constitution is composed of contrary, fuzzy qualities. So their characters are unlike what their names connote (thus a priest-warrior is named a coward); they are silly as fools but wise as the deities, inconstant and flighty as butterfly wings yet deeply grave, and so forth; and their interior composition moves fluidly among contraries. Earlier I referred to Moebius-like framing as in process within itself. So, too, these figures are in process, in movement, within themselves. Their major task is to bring the deities to the people, to move the rite from one phase into another, and to accomplish the deities' departure. Frames must go, and others must come in their stead. The dynamism built into the cultural design of these figures is also that of de-framing and re-framing.

In this ritual, frames are not treated as set-pieces, to be removed and inserted, as if this were a Western theater piece consisting of acts in which the rise and fall of the curtain (a *deus ex machina* convention) signifies openings and closings. The Dance of Man, like so many traditional rituals, is an organic design, its components interacting synergistically to generate the holism of the event. So, too, the movement from one frame into another is done from within this organicism. The clownish guides accomplish this by dissolving the frames between ritual phases. They do so by activating themselves, their own embodiment of fluid contrariness, spinning through themselves, Moebius-like. They dissolve each frame by being themselves and by acting counter to the reality of this frame, making fuzzy its grip on the ritual, thereby externalizing and ejecting the frame from

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[28] The meaning of 'shifter' in linguistics is not intended here.
[29] Handelman 1990, 256–263.

the ritual, scooping the inside outside. Through overlapping dura-
tions, Moebius-like, they scoop the outside (the next frame) inside
(into the ritual), where it orientates the participants by its own real-
ity. The figures are themselves homologues of ritual process. Just as
they are fuzzy beings in themselves, recognizing no permanent bor-
ders (and perhaps no permanent hierarchies, cosmic nor social), so
they make ritual frames fuzzy—one frame is made to fade away and
the next to enter through this very fuzziness.

Fuzziness in ritual framing may seem a contradiction in terms.
Yet this quality of topological openness enables a *melange* of frames
(with their varying perspectives) to entangle with one another in more
Moebius-like ways. Fuzzier frames overlap, intersect, intertwine, open-
ing depth within which they slide through one another, generating
polymorphism.[30] Fuzzier, Moebius framing slides into braided fram-
ing and yet greater complexity. As frames move through one another,
they entangle and intertwine, looping around one another, shaping
a braiding of ongoing movement through which framing loses its
vestiges of stasis.

Each frame or strand is like a Moebius circle, and each may index
an aspect of cosmology, symbolism, ritual practice, ritual practition-
ers, and so forth. Braided together, these strands constitute the rit-
ual. In this sense the braiding is composed of the ongoing relationships
between 'inside' and 'outside', all the strands connected through their
braidedness. As the strands braid with one another, they turn inside-
out, outside-in, appearing and disappearing together in different com-
binations and rhythms. The braided strands that are appearing
constitute the ritual frame during a particular phase or ritual moment.
As these braided strands disappear, other aspects of their braiding
appear, becoming the ritual frame, and so forth. The frame is simul-
taneously inside and outside, appearing and disappearing from view,
always in movement, always becoming, as of course are rituals that
lend themselves to such conceptualization. If the topology of braided

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[30] I am not entering philosophical debates on the value of 'fuzzy logic'. I am
introducing messiness into the theorizing of ritual framing on the grounds that the
lineal separation of realities is relevant to some ritual frames but not to others.
Ritual framing is, in a variety of places and times, a messy matter. On *pro* and *con*
fuzzy logic in information-processing and in analytic philosophy, see B. Kosko, *Fuzzy
Thinking. The New Science of Fuzzy Logic* (New York, 1993); S. Haack, *Deviant Logic,
Fuzzy Logic. Beyond the Formalism* (Chicago, 1996), 229–258.

framing is spheroidal, then, for that matter, there may not be any 'inside', any distinct content, that frames a braid, since the entirety of chronospace within the ritual may be densely braided, through and through.

Consider Hindu temple rituals in South India. Prominent are colors, smells, sounds, movements, flowers, fruits, incense, flames, blood, lights, drums, wind instruments, offerings, sacrifices, voice, words, tempos . . . together (more or less). Scholars may discuss these 'elements' discretely and as orchestration, embodiment, choreography, syncope, context, background and foreground, and so on. Each 'element' may be analyzed as a semiotic system, or all as components in a semiotic system, or in terms of part–whole relations. However, closer to the existential realities of these rituals is that all of the 'elements' are braided together in different patterns, the braids changing, becoming thicker, thinner, denser, shallower, the elements moving into and through one another . . . and for these braidings of what we think of as 'elements' discretely unlike one another we still lack a conceptual language. Accustomed to separating out elements, to distinguishing between modes of expression, in order to discuss them in discrete categories, we are at a loss when facing their intricate, fluid braidings.

This is distant from Bateson and Goffman, and is no longer framing in any conventional sense. The notion of frame as meta-communication is gone; and that of framing as the cognitive bracketing and orientation of activity is de-emphasized. Ironically, the more conceptions of framing are made more dynamic, the more the self-organizing, autopoietic complexity of frames rises into prominence, and this definitely would have been of interest to Bateson and Goffman. The more interactive perspective of fuzzier framing suggests that ritual practice recursively generates its own framing that frames ritual practice. The ritual frame is not an *a priori*—the frame does not exist until the frame comes into existence through the practice of framing. Yet in order to practice framing the frame must exist, which it does not. This is the paradoxicality of the existence of something that does not exist until it exists, yet that must exist in order to come into existence. Such paradox is problematic for the framing of ritual only when the logic of ritual practice is made dependent on hierarchical meta-communication, so that the distinction between not-ritual and ritual is understood as unambiguous, as monothetically clear-cut.

Theorizing ritual framing leads one to question the universal validity of the Durkheimian separation of the sacred from the profane. The Durkheimian distinction, one fitting well with the Theory of Logical Types and one essential to the modern study of ritual in anthropology and religious studies, issues from the more monothetic premises of monotheistic theologies. This likely is no less so for other of the clean-cut distinctions that have gained great prominence in ritual studies, like those of the Van Gennepian tripartite scheme of *rites des passage*, especially as adapted by Victor Turner.[31] Lineal framing, premised on hierarchical ordering and the surgical incising of outside from inside, has validity for many instances of ritual analysis. Yet this framing fits much too neatly within monothetic ideas of ritual organization. The ways in which lineal framing is formulated limit, skew, and reduce our comprehension of how change in ritual emerges from ritual practice itself, and draw attention away from complexities of the interpenetration of the interior and exterior of ritual. Seeding ritual framing with fuzzier qualities, more Moebius-like and braided, may enable the whole concept to flourish in ways more compatible with the complexities of ritual phenomena.

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[31] V.W. Turner 1969.

LANGUAGE

Carlo Severi

"To us anthropologists, the meaning of any significant word, sentence or phrase is *the effective change* brought about by the utterance in the context of the situation to which it is wedded." "Now, a magical formula is neither a piece of conversation, nor a statement or a communication. What is it? We were led to the conclusion that the meaning of a spell consists in *the effect of the words within their ritual context*."[1] Since Bronislaw Malinowski made these famous remarks in *Coral Gardens and their Magic*, the analysis of ritual action and the study of language have been closely related in the field of anthropology. Language has been seen as a paradigmatic model in three respects: as a way to study the construction of meaning in the ritual context, as an image of the internal order that structures ritual actions, and eventually as a pragmatic context for understanding the effectiveness of ritual.

Ritual, Language, and the Construction of Meaning

The study of the construction of meaning in ritual generally depends on two very different 'paradigms'. The first could be described as intellectualist and is based on a conception of religion inherited from Edward B. Tylor and James G. Frazer.[2] Rituals, like other manifestations of religion, are considered to be the expression of 'world pictures' or 'theories' about the world, either of a cosmological kind[3] or comparable, at least in their function, to scientific theories.[4] Ritual

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[1] B. Malinowski, *Coral Gardens and their Magic* (London, 1935), II, 214 and 241.

[2] See E.B. Tylor, *Primitive Culture. Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Art, and Custom*, 2 vols. (London, 1871); J.G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough. A Study in Magic and Religion* (London, abridged ed., 1923).

[3] E.g., M. Griaule, *Dieu d'eau. Entretiens avec Ogotemmeli* (Paris, 1948).

[4] E.g., J. Skorupski, *Symbol and Theory. A Philosophical Study of Theories of Religion in*

action is then seen as merely the translation into acts of this con-
sistent and explanatory 'discourse', which is said to be bound up
with each culture. In contrast to the intellectualist interpretation,
developments in structuralist anthropology have led many anthro-
pologists to propose a semiological view of ritual action. For the
description places emphasis on the way in which each symbol is
included—through metaphor and metonymy—in networks of arbi-
trary signs.[5] The field of ritual symbolism is thus described as the
reorganization by analogy or contrast of notions present in other
areas of tradition, such as myths and proverbs.

   Where the study of meaning is concerned, the two approaches—
intellectualist and semiological—deny or minimize certain properties
of ritual which in the eyes of the participants are essential. Thus
most rituals carry obscure or contradictory messages and sometimes
use formulas and enunciatory situations that impede communication,
contrary to what is assumed by an intellectualist approach. As for
the semiological approach, by neglecting the specific form of ritual
symbolism—the particular way in which it unites gestures, words,
images, and objects—it not only disregards the ritual's emotional and
cognitive dimensions but also fails to define what distinguishes ritual
from any other aspect of a culture. Ritual is considered as masked
speech. When we follow this path, we turn ritual action into the
redundant accessory of a socially regulated discourse or the impov-
erished version of a cosmology.

   In short, the specific complexity of ritual cannot be fully accounted
for by looking into the discourse it implies or into its social func-
tion. In both cases the concern is always with the premises or con-
sequences of ritual. What is really necessary, however, is to consider
the organization of ritual action itself.

   From this perspective, the reference to language for the study of
ritual becomes even more essential. It ceases to focus solely on the
processes of the construction of meaning and becomes a full episte-
mological model. Like any linguistic phenomenon, ritual possesses a
form. A fundamental approach to the problem of ritual form was
offered by Claude Lévi-Strauss in the concluding section of *The Naked*

Social Anthropology (Cambridge, 1976); R. Horton, "Tradition and Modernity Revisited",
M. Hollis and S. Lukes (eds), *Rationality and Relativism* (Oxford, 1982), 201–260.
   [5] E.g. Leach 1976 and Fernandez 1972.

Man.[6] Over and above the standard question of the relationships to be established between myth and rite, the main part of his criticism concerns the very nature of mythology:

> [M]ythology exists in two clearly different modalities. Sometime it is explicit and consists of stories which, because of their dimensions and internal organization, rank as works in their own right. Sometimes, on the contrary, the mythic text is fragmentary, and is made up, as it were, only of notes or sketches; instead of the fragments being brought together in the light of some guiding principle, each remains linked to a particular phase of the ritual, on which it serves as a gloss, and it is only recited in connection with the performance of ritual acts.[7]

Yet, he continues, "contemporary theoreticians of ritual",[8] including first and foremost Victor W. Turner, approach ritual by illegitimately mixing into it elements of "implicit" mythology, with the result that "they find themselves dealing with a hybrid entity about which anything can be said: that it is verbal and non-verbal, that it has a cognitive function and an emotional and conative function, and so on".[9] Lévi-Strauss proposes that ritual be studied "in itself and for itself",[10] and that, accordingly, "we should on the contrary begin by removing from it all the implicit mythology which adheres to it without really being part of it, in other words, those beliefs and representations which are connected with a philosophy of nature, in the same way as myths . . .".[11]

How, then, is ritual to be defined? For Lévi-Strauss the movements that compose ceremonial activities "serve *in loco verbi*; they are a substitute for words",[12] in order, through action, to actualize a mythology: "ritual condenses into a concrete and unitary form procedures which otherwise would have had to be discursive".[13] It is precisely this supplementary function that on his view distinguishes

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[6] Lévi-Strauss 1981.
[7] Lévi-Strauss 1981, 669.
[8] Lévi-Strauss 1981, 669.
[9] Lévi-Strauss 1981, 669. Meyer Fortes advances a similar position when he says that "it is but a short step from the notion of ritual as communication to the non-existence of ritual *per se*" (M. Fortes, "Religious Premises and Logical Technique in Divinatory Ritual", *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London* 251 (1966), 409–422; cited after Rappaport 1979, 178).
[10] Lévi-Strauss 1981, 669.
[11] Lévi-Strauss 1981, 669.
[12] Lévi-Strauss 1981, 671.
[13] Lévi-Strauss 1981, 671.

ritual acts from similar operations in everyday life. From this stand-
point the specificity of ritual lies primarily in the particular way in
which it enacts mythology. In other words, ritual is distinguished not
by what it says but by how it says it. Lévi-Strauss then identifies
two complementary 'procedures': repetition and fragmentation, or to
use the term adopted by his English translators, 'parceling'. The sys-
tematic application of these procedures, he argues, may be thought
to lead to a certain type of communication specific to ritual. More
precisely, he considers that these procedures have the effect of reduc-
ing to a minimum in the experiential content of the ritual itself the
critical distinctions established by the classificatory thought charac-
teristic of mythology. Whereas myth by definition *distinguishes* between
opposing pairs of terms, ritual cultivates the illusion of a reconcilia-
tion of opposites: "Ritual, by fragmenting operations and repeating
them unwearyingly in infinite detail, takes upon itself the laborious
task of patching up holes and stopping gaps, and it thus encourages
the illusion that it is possible to run counter to myth, and to move
back from the discontinuous to the continuous."[14] A number of
authors, including Turner himself, have seen in the establishment of
such a transcendent context a liminality that 'revitalizes' society or
the conditions for the participants' adherence to the actions they
undertake. Lévi-Strauss sees the ritual form in a completely different
light: it is a "desperate, and inevitably unsuccessful, attempt"[15]. Thus
he continues:

> When Turner[16] states that religious rites "create or actualize the cat-
> egories by means of which man apprehends reality, the axioms under-
> lying the social structure and the laws of the moral or natural order",
> he is not fundamentally wrong, since ritual does, of course, refer to
> these categories, laws or axioms. But ritual does not create them, and
> endeavours rather, if not to deny them, at least to obliterate, tem-
> porarily, the distinctions and oppositions they lay down, by bringing
> out all sorts of ambiguities, compromises and transitions between them.[17]

Hence, these two authors consider the place of ritual from radically
different viewpoints. For Turner it is *because* the calling into ques-
tion of the social structure during the ritual is first and foremost

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[14] Lévi-Strauss 1981, 674.
[15] Lévi-Strauss 1981, 675.
[16] V.W. Turner 1967, 7.
[17] Lévi-Strauss 1981, 680.

symbolic that it may be regarded in positive terms as an essential generative force. For Lévi-Strauss, who gives obvious precedence to the construction of meaning on the basis of a linguistic model, the starting-point is a mental structure that corresponds to universal patterns. Considering that actions have only an expressive role, then, the calling into question of this structure during the ritual can be viewed only from a destructive angle. For one, ritual is the "quintessence of custom"[18]; for the other, "a bastardization of thought, brought about by the constraints of life".[19] However, at a more general level these two authors are in agreement since both view ritual action as the expression of a disorder: the distinctive feature of ritual action lies precisely in a relative lack of structure.

While perceiving ceremonial activity in a perhaps more positive light than Lévi-Strauss, a number of authors have pursued the analysis of ritual along lines similar to those he has suggested. We find, for example, an equivalent standpoint, developed in a more systematic fashion, in the writings of Roy A. Rappaport, who pleads in a seminal article of the same period for a study not of the "mysterious, symbolic or functional depths" of rituals but of the various formal properties that constitute their "obvious aspects".[20] This shared perspective, then, sees ceremonial behavior in terms of a set of special 'procedures' or characteristic morphological features: conventionality, repetition, fragmentation or 'parceling', fixity, framedness, condensation or fusion of meaning, numinous experience, etc.[21]

Confronted by the highly stylized and often obscure or non-expressive nature of ritual utterances, most of these authors have looked once again to the study of language for inspiration. Some[22] have sought to adapt to the analysis of ceremonial phenomena the concept of 'performativity' derived from the work of J.L. Austin:[23] regarded in the aggregate as performative statements, rituals are held to realize the very actions they describe (linguistic examples of performatives include 'promising', 'condemning', and 'baptizing'). The limits

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[18] V.W. Turner 1967, 50.
[19] Lévi-Strauss 1981, 675.
[20] Rappaport 1979, 173–174.
[21] See, e.g., Moore and Meyerhoff 1977, 7–8; Tambiah 1981, 119; and Grimes 1990, 14, for sample lists of such attributes.
[22] E.g., Finnegan 1969; Bloch 1974; Tambiah 1973; Grimes 1990.
[23] J.L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (Oxford, 1962).

of such a perspective, however, are soon reached: if Austin's concepts can be rigorously applied at all, then only to a small portion of ritual activity (certain types of speech), whereas metaphorical applications of these concepts, insofar as they leave the mechanisms of their performative effects unexamined, are of little theoretical interest.[24] The conclusion drawn from this state of affairs is that the analogy between ritual and linguistic phenomena is not satisfying, at least insofar as its application is restricted to semantics. For many authors, another crucial aspect of language has to be taken into account instead: syntax.

Language as an Image of Order

One attempt to develop such an approach within the framework of an analysis of "ritual in itself and for itself"[25] has been provocatively advanced by Frits Staal, who has drawn on an extensive study of Vedic ceremonial.[26] Both music and ritual, Lévi-Strauss has remarked, especially when considered in their 'pure' forms—instrumental music and ritual action—clearly lie outside the realm of language.[27] However, he seems to suggest that, whereas it is possible to recognize in music envisaged as a particular system of sounds certain overall structural qualities,[28] ritual as a simple aggregate of acts has no global form. By contrast, Staal takes a more positive stance, arguing that ritual and musical forms are basically of the same kind:[29] in ritual, acts and sequences of acts are composed (and re-composed) in much the same way as are sounds (notes or musical phrases) in music, that is, according to definite syntactic rules.

The ritual (and musical) structures generated by such rules, however, have no necessary link with a semantic component: they "do not mean anything apart from and beyond the structural complexity they display".[30] They are in this regard 'meaningless' and must

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[24] See Gardner 1983 for a critique.
[25] Lévi-Strauss 1981, 669.
[26] Staal 1979; F. Staal, *Agni. The Vedic Ritual of the Fire Alter*, 2 vols. (Berkeley, 1983); Staal 1989.
[27] Lévi-Strauss 1981, 670–671.
[28] Lévi-Strauss 1981, 646–647.
[29] Staal 1989, 165–190.
[30] Staal 1989, 182.

therefore be analyzed in formal rather than symbolic terms. Indeed, ritual, Staal suggests, is best viewed not as consisting "in symbolic activities which refer to something else"[31] but as "primary activity" governed by explicit rules and pursued for its own sake.[32] Although highly organized, it "is pure activity, without meaning or goal".[33] Thus,

> It is characteristic of ritual performance . . . to be self-contained and self-absorbed. The performers are totally immersed in the proper execution of their complex tasks. Isolated in their sacred enclosure, they concentrate on correctness of act, recitation and chant. . . . There are no symbolic meanings going through their minds when they are engaged in performing ritual. . . . The important thing is what you do, not what you think, believe or say.[34]

As a consequence, Staal's analysis of ritual is essentially modeled on linguistic syntactic structures. His account of ritual form is essentially combinatorial: ritual sequences are explicated in terms of other ritual sequences, where ritual episodes are envisaged solely as composed of and/or as components of other ritual episodes. As a result, the distinctive characteristics of ritual actions as such, that is, beyond their formal associative features and their supposed lack of intrinsic meaning, remain unspecified. Indeed, on Staal's view the structure of any ritual act, whatever the level of aggregation one cares to consider, is always exactly equal to the sum of its parts.

This may be partly because Staal's theory of ritual is in the end basically a theory of ritual recitation. Action as such clearly occupies a subordinate role. He treats structure and performance as distinct domains, where performance is something of an epiphenomenon as far the formal properties of ritual activity are concerned. Thus for Staal the purely theoretical ceremonies constructed by Indian ritualists (the *sattra* rituals) and those rituals actually undertaken are indistinguishable from a structural point of view: they are equally amenable to being described in terms of explicit syntactic rules.[35]

A 'cognitive' account of religious ritual, similar in some respects to the syntactic approach proposed by Staal, has recently been put

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[31] Staal 1989, 115.
[32] Staal 1989, 131.
[33] Staal 1989, 131.
[34] Staal 1989, 115–116.
[35] Staal 1989, 88.

forward by E. Thomas Lawson and Robert N. McCauley.[36] Their
aim, which is also informed by a close analogy with generative lin-
guistics, is to provide a theory of ritual competence: they set out to
identify in abstract terms the type of (largely implicit) knowledge that
idealized participants must have in order to evaluate the 'well-formed-
ness' of their religious rituals. From this perspective, then, a religious
ritual will be recognized as well-formed if it obeys the syntactic rules
of the 'action representation system' and if it incorporates the par-
ticipation of a superhuman agent.

Competence schemas such as those advanced by Staal and Lawson
and McCauley are able to provide a formal account of ritual events
as particular totalities. However, such accounts are not without a
number of problems, many of which derive from a disregard of
actual ceremonial interaction as a possible source of structure. In
light of this, it is worthwhile to confront these global 'syntactic' per-
spectives with a number of new approaches introduced in recent
years which, by contrast, look at the organization of performance
itself in order to identify certain formal characteristics of ritual action.

Language and Ritual Interaction

In a recent work, Caroline Humphrey and James Laidlaw have put
forth the interesting claim that a body of religious doctrine, and
indeed the entire symbolic universe of a religion, may be largely
founded upon inferences drawn from ritual action.[37] They strongly
underline the pre-eminence of action as the crucial clue for under-
standing the nature of ritual. Inverting the form of a traditional argu-
ment about religious ceremonies, they suggest that if we want to
understand religious discourse as a social practice and grasp the struc-
ture of religious experience, it is necessary to stop considering actions
in a religious context as mere illustrations of an established set of
ideas. The appropriate task, they maintain, is instead to understand
how the internal organization of a sequence of ritual acts may pro-
vide the grounds for a continuous exercise of personal interpreta-
tion. Religious experience, in other words, involves drawing relatively

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[36] Lawson and McCauley 1990.
[37] Humphrey and Laidlaw 1994.

free inferences from a sequence of traditionally fixed actions. From this perspective, the reference to the study of language changes again. Ritual ceases to be seen as an analog to a linguistic form. Rather, it becomes similar to a special pragmatic context in which a number of speech acts are performed.[38]

In other words, the linguistic model, which has been based successively on semantic and syntactic structures, leads now to another approach, one based on the construction of a special pragmatic context of communication. Seen from this perspective, ritual is characterized by the particular kind of pragmatics that is illustrated by the conventional form imposed to ritual action.

From a similar perspective Michael Houseman and I have claimed that the anthropological analysis of ceremonial enactments should focus on the organization of ritual action itself.[39] According to this view, ritual form refers to the special system of relationships acted out in performance. We have developed this perspective in detail in an analysis of a ritual of the Iatmül of Papua-New Guinea: the *naven*. Conditioned by the relational form of the ritual, the ritual symbolism is based, first, on constant reinvention and, secondly, on the construction of a particular kind of interactive context.

Actually one of the essential clues for understanding the context of ritual communication is the way in which, through the establishment of a particular form of interaction, a special identity of the participants is constructed. Drawing on this conclusion, I have recently outlined a pragmatic model for ritual communication which aims to generalize some of the conclusions of our study of ritual action in the *naven* and to extend it to the analysis of other ritual situations, where action seems to play a less important role.[40] This pertains, for instance, to American Indian shamanistic recitations, where ritual action is replaced through the recitation of chants by a special use of language. This new perspective focuses on the pragmatic definition of the ritual enunciator as well as on the perlocutionary effect of ritual communication.

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[38] Humphrey and Laidlaw in this volume.
[39] Houseman and Severi 1998; Houseman in this volume.
[40] Severi 1993a; Severi 1993b; C. Severi, "Cosmology, Crisis and Paradox. On the Image of White Spirits in kuna Shamanistic Tradition", M. Roth and C. Salas (eds), *Disturbing Remains. A Comparative Inquiry into the Representation of Crisis* (Los Angeles, 2001), 178–206; Severi 2002.

In the anthropological study of ritual symbolism much attention
has been devoted to the various ways in which language as it is used
in ritual performances transforms the usual representation of the
world and constructs its own universe of truth. A typical way to do
so in American Indian shamanism, for instance, is to establish a
metaphorical link, a set of analogies, or a group of 'mystical' rela-
tionships between ritual objects and living beings. From this per-
spective (as, for instance, in the Kuna shamanistic chants) a newborn
boy or girl can be ritually defined as a 'fruit', and as a 'pearl'. His
or her mother will be called in this context 'a tree'. Consequently,
the childbirth will be referred to as the 'growing of a bleeding fruit',
etc.[41] Here as elsewhere, the linguistic instrument of these meta-
morphoses is parallelism, a "way to thread together verbal images",
as Graham Townsley has called it,[42] which is virtually omnipresent
in American Indian shamanism. In this context, for the shamanistic
chant to refer to a 'bleeding fruit' is to refer to the real experience
of the woman giving birth to a child and simultaneously to a myth-
ical Tree-Mother bearing fruit. I have argued that the same instru-
ment, parallelism, can be used in a reflexive way in order to define
not only the *world* described by the ritual language but also *the iden-
tity of the person enunciating it.*[43] The image of the shaman, being made
of contradictory yet non-exclusive and simultaneous identities (such
as a tree, a deer, a monkey), *entertains a doubt* about the always-
possible assimilation of his ordinary identity into a supernatural one.
His image progressively becomes paradoxical and therefore raises
unanswerable questions: Is he a 'vegetable' (positive) or an 'animal' (neg-
ative) spirit? Is he a boar, a deer, a monkey, or a jaguar? Was he
really transformed into a spirit during the recitation of his chant?
Will he be able, as he claims, to perform that transformation again
and again? Ritual action builds a particular kind of fiction, a spe-
cial context of communication, in which any positive answer will
imply doubt and uncertainty, and vice versa. Everybody is supposed
to believe it, and yet no one can really be sure.

This complex definition of the enunciator has an immediate per-
locutionary effect: here a certain kind of uncertainty is always gen-

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[41] Severi 2002.
[42] G. Townsley, "Song Paths. The Ways and Means of Yaminahua Shamanic
Knowledge", *L'Homme* 33 (1993), 449–468, here 457.
[43] See Severi 2002.

erated. If we follow Pierre Smith's suggestion that we should con-
sider 'real' rituals to be only those ceremonies that lead to the estab-
lishment of a belief,[44] we can conclude that linguistic communication
becomes ritualized when a particular way of elaborating a complex
image of the enunciator unleashes that particular tension between
belief and doubt that defines a ritual-reflexive stance. The pragmatic
analysis of shamanistic recitation shows that the context of the rit-
ual use of language is not defined solely by the use of any specific
linguistic form but by the reflexive elaboration of the image of the
speaker and by its perlocutionary effect: that particular tension between
faith and doubt that characterizes any belief.

We have seen that a large proportion of the anthropological the-
ories of symbolism are explicitly or implicitly based on the transla-
tion into linguistic utterances of the many modes of expression used
in ritual. Sounds, gestures, images, etc., are always considered, as
Lévi-Strauss puts it, *in loco verbi*. It is possible to move beyond an
expressive conception of ritual symbolism to a perspective in which
language ceases to act as a model in order to understand the way
in which a tradition operates. We have thus proposed that the move
be made from the study of actions *in loco verbi* to the study of *verba
in loco actus*. From the (sociological or semiological) interpretation of
symbolism to the establishment of a model that accounts for its per-
sistence in time in terms of the organization of a sequence of acts.
From this new perspective—once the analogy of linguistic structures,
syntactic or semantic, has shown its limits—the 'internal form'
of ritual action becomes a matter of context, identification, and
pragmatics.

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[44] Smith 1982.

MEDIA

Felicia Hughes-Freeland

This chapter focuses on mass-media based on technology, in particular the products of broadcast and print technologies, and revisits the interface between ritual and media previously explored in relation to performance.[1] It asks what contexts produced by media use ritual theory, how this theory is used, how effectively it does so, and what, if anything, have analyses of media contributed to the understanding of ritual?

Ritual and media are similar because they both generate realities that are surprising, special, and outside everyday routines, or in contrast to sensate everyday realities, mediated by technologies, be they embodied or external to us, magical or mechanical. Ritual and media are also similar for the opposite reason, given the penetration of everyday life by ritual, such as Erving Goffman's case for the sacrality of saving face,[2] and by the media. For instance, the live television broadcast of Princess Diana's funeral and its aftermath in subsequent media commentaries and everyday gossip could be understood as a ritual process that was wholly inscribed in everyday practice that became interwoven with it,[3] thereby breaking the boundaries of the ritual category understood as limited to a specific time-space continuum.

Despite these similarities, media and ritual are not of the same conceptual order, and each has its own set of problems. Media is initially problematic because of what it includes and emphasizes. Its first and broadest use includes any means that enables different modes of communication[4] and would thus include the role of texts,[5] sound,[6]

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[1] Hughes-Freeland 1998.
[2] Goffman 1967.
[3] Hughes-Freeland and Crain 1998, 2.
[4] R. Finnegan, *Communicating. The Multiple Modes of Human Interconnecting* (London, New York, 2002).
[5] Blackburn 1988.
[6] Sullivan 1986.

and so forth in ritual events. The second use refers to technological
mediation in communication, ranging from embodied techniques in
the form of song and dance to electronics, chips, and fiber optics,
print, cinema, and broadcast media.[7] The third most common use
is the *mass* media, which often means television.

Ritual theory used in media analysis comes mostly from struc-
turalism and structural functionalism. Two themes predominate: Émile
Durkheim's classic opposition of sacred and profane, with ritual clearly
located in the sacred; and Victor W. Turner's neo-Durkheimian
model of ritual process, which centers on liminality, the temporary
removal of an individual or group from the ordering norms of social
structure in tribal societies, which produces *communitas*.[8] Social inte-
gration remains central here and in his concept of 'social drama' in
which social conflict is acted out and resolved in a four-part dra-
matic structure (breach, crisis, redress, and reintegration or separation).[9]

The analysis of media has exploited the extension of ritual's con-
ceptual efficacy beyond the domain of the sacred and the emphasis
on its transactional and dynamic qualities. Ritual itself is a contested
concept. It originated as a social phenomenon in the domain of the
sacred, but the concept of 'secular ritual'[10] removed ritual from
the sphere of the sacred and made it possible for Turner to develop
the concept of 'liminoid' to explain what becomes of 'liminality' in
modern large-scale societies.[11] Without this controversial development
it is unlikely that media analysis would have been able engage with
ritual theory. It has also been helped by the generalizing (and con-
troversial) concept of 'ritualization', defined as "a way of acting that
is designed and orchestrated to distinguish and privilege what is being
done in comparison to other, usually more quotidian, activities".[12]
Ritualization applies to social practices that are situated and per-
formed, and generates the possibility of bringing together ritual and
media with reference to the diversification of contexts and audiences,
the framings of relationships between realities and illusions, and how

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[7] J.B. Thompson, *The Media and Modernity* (Oxford, 1995).
[8] Turner 1969.
[9] Turner 1974a.
[10] Moore and Myerhoff (eds) 1977.
[11] Turner 1982a; V.W. Turner, "Liminality, Kabbalah, and the Media", *Religion*
15 (1985), 205–217.
[12] Bell 1992, 74. Bell herself is reluctant to apply ritualization to two case stud-
ies of television viewing with which she is familiar (Bell 1992, 171, 205).

these alter our roles, self-images, and identities.[13] It allows 'ritual' to be used as an odd-job word, a contingent category that is subordinate to the larger category of social practices that can be understood to be situated in a particular context.[14]

There is a wide range of approaches to media, many of which do not invoke ritual theory. In the discussion that follows, I identify four broad approaches to media which use ritual theory. The neo-functional, which focuses on social integration and the collective; the neo-Weberian, which focuses on modernity; the post-Foucaultian, which focuses on socially diffused power relations; and methodological particularism, which focuses on situated ethnographic analyses and prioritizes data over models. I will show how media analysts have often played fast and loose with concepts from ritual theory developed by anthropologists, and how anthropologists are now analyzing media without any recourse to ritual theory at all. It might be that the application of ritual theory to media analysis which was made possible by the secularization of the concept of ritual is now producing the restoration of the domain of the sacred and the reaffirmation of ritual as a distinctive aspect of human experience.

Neo-Functionalism

Neo-functional approaches apply ritual models to events that enter society through the mediation of technology. Most studies focus on mass media, such as television and radio, as the means of producing rites of integration that contribute to the sustainability of the status quo. An influential article by David Chaney explained the British Broadcasting Corporation's representation of a number of civic ritual and ceremonial festivals in Britain after the end of the Second World War as 'affirmatory rites'.[15] Crucially, the broadcast of the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in 1953 "marked a turning point between symbolism articulating constitutional relationships and ritual as dramatic spectacle" by *making visible* mysterious parts of the

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[13] Hughes-Freeland and Crain 1998, 2–3.
[14] Hughes-Freeland 1998, 1.
[15] D.C. Chaney, "A Symbolic Mirror of Ourselves. Civic Ritual in Mass Society" (1983), R. Collins and J. Curran (eds), *Media, Culture, and Society. A Critical Reader* (London, 1986), 249–251.

ritual.[16] Chaney's article sets the tone for event-centered analyses that focus on television broadcasts of civic festivals and ceremonies, although his starting point was how programming can "run counter to the social content of each particular festival".[17] Overall, the coronation did not involve a disjunction. Instead, ritual form became more consistent with social content than before by asserting the right to be present—"quasi democracy of intimate access", it also changed civic rituals into "media occasions rather than occasions to which the media has access".[18]

Chaney begins with functionalism, but moves beyond any simple celebration of collective integration; however, others regard the affirmation produced by television-mediated public events as media's most important role. Daniel Dayan and Elihu Katz's seminal study argues that live television broadcasts make history and reaffirm the sense of the collective.[19] It is these "high holidays of mass communication"[20] that "integrate societies in a collective heartbeat and evoke a renewal of loyalty to the society and its legitimate authority".[21] Dayan and Katz contextualize these media events as "the anthropology of ceremony" following Don Handelman,[22] but they are also "rituals of coming and going".[23] They analyze the 1982 wedding of Prince Charles and Lady Diana Spencer as having a ritual-like efficacy, as being able to create an image of things as they should be. They note that this is what Turner referred to as 'subjunctive' reality in the liminal domain, in which the participants (audience

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[16] Chaney, "A Symbolic Mirror of Ourselves", 258. 'Television came of age', and captured 56% of the audience over radio's 32% (Chaney, "A Symbolic Mirror of Ourselves", 261).

[17] Chaney, "A Symbolic Mirror of Ourselves", 262.

[18] Chaney, "A Symbolic Mirror of Ourselves", 262.

[19] D. Dayan and E. Katz, *Media Events. The Live Broadcasting of History* (Cambridge, Mass., 1992).

[20] Dayan and Katz, *Media Events*, 1.

[21] Dayan and Katz, *Media Events*, 9. There are three kinds of 'script': contests (U.S. presidential elections, Olympics); conquests (funerals); and coronations (Sadat goes to Jerusalem to get the Nobel Peace Prize, the Pope's first trip to Warsaw). Scripts can transform, as in the case of Czechoslovakian revolution in 1989, from conquest to contest, when "television itself enacted the revolution before the crowd and the cameras . . . and the business of democracy began" (Dayan and Katz, *Media Events*, 53).

[22] Handelman 1990; Handelman 1998.

[23] "The principals make ritual entries into a sacred space, and if fortune smiles on then they make ritual returns" (Dayan and Katz, *Media Events*, 119).

included) are liberated from the structures of everyday life.[24] It is recorded images of the event that help the audience to adjust to 'indicative reality' or structure. The broadcasts also stress what was worth remembering and in so doing "organized forgetting":[25] by "modeling involvement in, then disinvolvement from, the 'other' reality constituted by the event".[26] In this way the media contribute to Durkheim's 'conscience collective'. Overall, there is a disjunction between the use of ritual and their claim that within the transformation of the theatrical mode of publicness to one based on the separation of performers and audiences produces "cinematographic ceremony" in which "these modern rituals display the texture, internal coherence, narrative 'beat' and visual gloss which is used to characterize Hollywood spectaculars".[27] Despite this spectacular quality, media events nonetheless generate shamanic-like transformations on a symbolic level.[28]

Turner had recognized that the ritual process might be applicable to the media context, but he very carefully distinguished between liminality as a phase in a ritual clearly defined in time and space and the liminoid, which is a metaphorical extension of the original metaphor to post-tribal contexts.[29] It is striking that Dayan and Katz acknowledge that liminality can be "a laboratory of forms"[30] and yet ignore Turner's elaborations on liminality. They neutralize (or avoid) both the danger that is crucial to ritual liminality, and they also ignore the sacrificial dimension of ritual. They apply a model developed in order to explain rites of passage to other kinds of ritual, without recognizing, as Turner himself did, that liminality cannot be used indiscriminately and that there are different kinds of *communitas*.[31]

This kind of analysis has been extremely, even overly, influential, but does not necessarily contribute to our understanding of ritual or ritualization, nor does it offer the scope of some earlier analyses, which were more scrupulous about the use of ritual theory both with regard to the manifestation of power relations and the constitution

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[24] Dayan and Katz, *Media Events*, 104.
[25] Dayan and Katz, *Media Events*, 107.
[26] Dayan and Katz, *Media Events*, 108.
[27] Dayan and Katz, *Media Events*, 118.
[28] Dayan and Katz, *Media Events*, 147.
[29] Turner 1974a; Turner, "Liminality, Kabbalah, and the Media".
[30] Turner 1974a cited in Dayan and Katz, *Media Events*, 117.
[31] Turner 1974a; Turner, "Liminality, Kabbalah, and the Media".

of particular media contexts. This variation on the neo-functionalist approach pays more attention to the political implications of media as a ritualized institution and is thus a more complex elaboration of the integration model with regard to conflict in the discussion of how political events are reported by the mass media. Were the examples not all from the USA, they might usefully be classified as neo-Marxist.

Here we find Turner's concept of social drama used to show how the reallocation of power results from changing relationships produced in part by symbols as well as the manipulation of ideas. Following Carey,[32] Elliot argues against information-centered analyses of the media which assume that audiences respond rationally. He asks that we take "ritual seriously as a way of understanding the role of the media in modern society".[33] Radio and television cast and script a performance that plays on the emotions of audiences and can be understood as "the site of the ritual enactment".[34] He identifies two 'genres' of 'media rituals': 'rites of cauterization' (the presentation of threats) and 'affirmatory rituals' (to describe "when society is under threat, overcoming threat, or simply celebrating the structure of authority which provides it with routine security against threat").[35]

Useful as the claim is that the "press rite is an exercise of press power", both Carey and Elliot have been criticized for using ritual theory to produce too simple a polarization between audience and producer, and between good and bad.[36] A less binary account of the ritual character of politics examines the Cokely affair. In 1988 a mayoral aide made anti-Semitic remarks to black nationalists in Chicago. The ensuing media responses showed that social life's "grinding contradictions as well as its orderly sequences can be produced within and through the process of mass-mediated ritual".[37] These political rituals "may be seen to have served certain political inter-

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[32] J.W. Carey, "A Cultural Approach to Communication", *Communication* 2 (1975), 1–22.

[33] P. Elliot, "Media Performance as Political Rituals", *Communication* 7 (1982), 115–130, here 115.

[34] Elliot, "Media Performance as Political Rituals", 121.

[35] Elliot, "Media Performance as Political Rituals", 121.

[36] J.S. Ettema, "Press Rites and Race Relations. A Study of Mass Mediated Ritual", *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 4 (1990), 309–331, here 312–313.

[37] Ettema, "Press Rites and Race Relations", 328.

ests and undermined others" in a process characterized as a "painfully discordant social drama".[38] Turner's model suggested that an outcome is consensual, albeit temporary, but "reality produced within and through ritual can be conflictual as well as consensual".[39]

Other functionalist 'neo-Marxist' critiques have focused on how television broadcasts represent presidential elections in the United States. In a style reminiscent of Maurice Bloch,[40] Walter Bennett argues that media ritual dramatization produces mystification and limitation.[41] Campaigning broadcasts play on underlying mythic understanding, reduce ideas to personalities, and generate intolerance of options outside "the range of myth-sanctioned choices", thereby limiting "possibilities for political change, broad interest representation, or effective political action".[42] In a study of the processes of the 1992 presidential campaign, James McLeod uses the concept of 'ritual sociodrama' to explore politics and its ritualization.[43] The process takes a single myth or 'drama' centered on the personality of a central actor. In Bill Clinton's 1992 campaign, the necessity for economic change was the plot.[44] Paradoxically, as media ritualistically *diminish* the range of political options, voters feel that they are *more* part of the process of the selection by being linked through communications technology to the press. Like Bennett, McLeod feels that the ritual processes in this manifestation of media works operates to deceive in a "teledemocracy" where "the media coverage is not a simulation of real events, but the actual election process itself. . . . The power of political rhetoric in presidential campaigns lies in the ritualization of political authority".[45]

Socio-drama is also used to analyze media practices in a more positive way. Movie-going in Cairo is understood as a secular ritual with carnivalesque spectatorship, and the movies have ritual efficacy with the power to transform attitudes. Film events are liminoid (*not*

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[38] Ettema, "Press Rites and Race Relations", 327.
[39] Ettema, "Press Rites and Race Relations", 327.
[40] Bloch 1974.
[41] W.L. Bennett, "Media, Ritual, and Political Control", *Journal of Communication* 4 (1980), 166–179.
[42] Bennett, "Media, Ritual, and Political Control", 171, 178.
[43] J.R. McLeod, "The Sociodrama of Presidential Politics. Rhetoric, Ritual, and Power in the Era of Teledemocracy", *American Anthropologist* 101 (1999), 359–373.
[44] McLeod, "The Sociodrama of Presidential Politics", 370.
[45] McLeod, "The Sociodrama of Presidential Politics", 369–370.

liminal) interfaces between cultural subsystems that help middle class Cairenes to cope with modernity and status change.[46] This contrasts with an earlier theory that modern mass-media provide stories that compensate for the 'overdistanced' alienation of modern secular society so as to allow us to get in touch with our emotions.[47] It rejects the hegemonic view of the media and the generalized psychologism of catharsis theory. This application of social drama and the ritual process to the experience of social transformation leads us to the second general approach to media and ritual.

The Neo-Weberian Approach

The second general approach, the neo-Weberian starts from the position that modernity is with us (all) and makes a major difference. This view emphasizes changes arising from mass communication, which are understood to produce social fragmentation in the form of diverse audiences and split publics. Postmodern ritual is when an experience of ritual itself becomes altered and ritual becomes a means to something else.[48] The diversity of experiences within a fixed site in media becomes subject to the variables of time and space: unlike a ritual event, the media event is decontextualized, disconnected, diffused, re-diffused, and raises questions about methodological procedures for understanding it.

In an influential overview of the media, Thompson argues that modernity involves a de-ritualization of society that in turn produces a re-traditionalization and re-ritualization through the media.[49] The shift from orality to media as *literacy* produced a deritualization of tradition.[50] Tradition was disrupted, and its symbolic content was no longer tied to enactment, and social relations become depersonalized ('non-reciprocal intimacy at a distance'), delocalized ('free from integration into communities'). Orality was re-embedded in "networks of territorial unit that exceeded the limit of shared lives".[51]

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[46] W. Armbrust, "When the Lights Go Down in Cairo. Cinema as Secular Ritual", *Visual Anthropology* 10 (1998), 413–442.

[47] Scheff 1977.

[48] Gerholm 1988.

[49] Thompson, *The Media and Modernity*.

[50] Thompson, *The Media and Modernity*, 180.

[51] Thompson, *The Media and Modernity*, 197.

At the heart of his argument is that modernity implies a difference in degree of mediation and distance. There are three kinds of interaction: face-to-face (co-presence), mediated (technical medium), and mediated quasi-interaction (social relations established by the media of mass-communication). The third is exemplified by the television interview and differs because it is produced for 'distant others' and is largely, though not necessarily, monological.[52] Overall, media combine *all* these forms of interaction,[53] but tradition was dislodged, and a different scale of participation became possible, with a new kind of mediated publicness and visibility emerging as a non-localized, non-dialogical, open-ended space.[54] Finally, tradition was re-ritualized through migrations of peoples into Europe, the modern form of nomadism.[55]

Thompson's study raises some questions. Although his analysis draws on ritual theory, he uses the word 'ritual' descriptively, with the result that the account of re-ritualization is rather weak. The model is also cast in the social evolutionist style, so that the arrival of non-Europeans on the largely European stage of modernity then necessitates a volte-face in the Weberian scheme. Pluralism is internal and cannot accommodate 'the other'. In a similar vein, the notion of the person is also understood according to Western norms. Finally, Thompson's discussion of publicness lacks a theoretical connection to ritual that might have strengthened his argument.[56] In summary, he under-theorizes the equation between ritual and tradition, and he overstates the homogeneity of modernity and the uses of media (from books to televisions to personal computers), rather than recognizing that these cannot be generalized across all cultures due to differing concepts of personhood and situational variations.

Some have attempted to address the relationship between media, ritual, and religion as "an interrelated web within society"[57] to balance these generalized views of modernity and under-theorized assertions

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[52] Thompson, *The Media and Modernity*, 83–86.
[53] Thompson, *The Media and Modernity*, 117–118.
[54] Thompson, *The Media and Modernity*, 246.
[55] Thompson, *The Media and Modernity*, 202–206.
[56] For an argument that links the two see D.C. Chaney, *Fictions of Collective Life. Public Drama in Late Modern Culture* (London, 1993).
[57] S.M. Hoover and K. Lundby, "Introduction. Setting the Agenda", S.M. Hoover and K. Lundby (eds), *Rethinking Media, Religion, and Culture* (London, 1997), 3; see also Fischer 1971.

about the processes of resacralization in a disenchanted world. Religious symbols and values enter the modern marketplace "largely [as] a function of the cultural commodification practices of the media industry".[58] Media do not constitute religion, but "there are aspects of modern social and cultural embedment in the media that necessarily imbue the media's powerful symbols, icons, values and functions with religious significance".[59] The analysis of religion cannot ignore the mediation between religion and culture precisely because of the importance of technical media in exchanges in society.[60] The media provide new contexts for religious activity, such as televangelism, analyzed as a 'redressive ritual' within the larger social drama or social conflict.[61] Media communicate religion through news broadcasts and disseminate new forms of spirituality. Not everyone who contributes to this book feels that this is a good thing.[62] The comparability of ritual and media is critiqued on the grounds that timespace is different in the two spheres, and self-transcendence is not the same everywhere.[63] Turner had similarly questioned the universality of 'flow',[64] and again we are reminded of the difficulty of making cross-cultural generalizations on the basis of categories that originate in the cultural West.

Not surprisingly, the neo-Weberian strand includes a wide range of views. For instance, one theory argues against the generalization of ritual through ritualization and draws a hard line between real ritual from traditional societies and public events.[65] Where 'bureaucratic logic' is 'a dominant paradigm of modernity', spectacle is its public mask,[66] concealing vacuity but also operating within the domain

[58] Hoover and Lundby, "Introduction. Setting the Agenda", 5.
[59] Hoover and Lundby, "Introduction. Setting the Agenda", 7.
[60] Hoover and Lundby, "Introduction. Setting the Agenda", 10.
[61] B.C. Alexander, "Televangelism. Redressive Ritual within a Larger Social Drama", Hoover and Lundby (eds), *Rethinking Media, Religion, and Culture*, 194–208, here 196.
[62] "The mediation of social relations and the emergence of the simulacrum apparatus is seen as one of the major factors in the crisis of the ritual and the triumph of the spectacle" (Gabriel Bar-Heim, "The Dispersed Sacred. Anomie and the Crisis of Ritual", Hoover and Lundby (eds), *Rethinking Media, Religion, and Culture*, 133–145, here 145).
[63] G. Goethals, "Escape from Time. Ritual Dimensions of Popular Culture", Hoover and Lundby (eds), *Rethinking Media, Religion, and Culture*, 117–132.
[64] Turner 1982a, 59.
[65] Handelman 1998, xvii.
[66] Handelman 1998, xxxiv.

of Foucaultian surveillance in the capillaried modernity of the social body. A contrasting view claims that media play a critical role in modern society because they tell us stories, which, like play, are 'subjunctive' or 'as-if' realities that resemble rituals. The key difference between media and ritual is in relation to community. Rituals construct communities, whereas media 'do' community in various ways: by expression (radio, nation-building), by refraction or reversal (carnival, the Jerry Springer Show), and by critique (community radio).[67] Only refraction, where "values and ideas of a community are reflected in reverse"[68] has a truly ritual function. Modernity means a change in the symbolic expression of community, but the media themselves include ritual functions that contribute to modernity.[69] Similarly, it has also been argued that while civic or secular ritual may lack real liminality, they gain their spectacular status precisely *because* they are performed *as* ritual.[70]

The neo-Weberian approach, then, is less uniform in its metaphorical application of ritual to media than the neo-functionalist approach. It raises questions about categorical continuity, whether ritualization and mass-mediated modernity are mutually exclusive, or whether their transformations allow of more accommodations than the Weberian view of modernity would predict.

The Post-Foucaultian Approach

The third approach is the critical post-Foucaultian approach, in which neo-Weberian caution is thrown to the wind. Everything must give way to something new and strange. Walter Benjamin's 'auratic' era[71] is well and truly history: politics has been aestheticized, and power is everywhere in neo-ritual forms—we inhabit the world of the simulacrum or spectacle remorselessly divorced from any ritual

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[67] R. Silverstone, *Why Study the Media?* (London, 1999), 99–103.

[68] Silverstone, *Why Study the Media?* 100.

[69] Silverstone, *Why Study the Media?* 104: "*all communities are virtual communities*: the symbolic expression and definition of community, both with or without electronic media, has been established as a *sine qua non* of our sociability".

[70] Chaney, *Fictions of Collective Life*, 23.

[71] W. Benjamin, *Illuminations*, ed. and intro. Hannah Arendt, trans. H. Zohn (London, [1968] 1992).

power.[72] This is a post-discursive and post-epistemic world, a post-duration world, where it is information, and not culture, society, or language, that marks the new limit of consciousness. All theory (and explanation) will be embedded in mediated information. Media theory is thus more than technology in a communication process: it has subsumed and transformed it.[73]

However, although everything is new and strange, the concept of ritual can still be galvanized to explain the brave new world where media operates. The concept of 'media rituals' is used to elucidate "the nature of contemporary 'social order' and media's place within it".[74] This strategy is written against previous explanations of media as an integrative homogenizing process functioning as a Durkheimian 'sacred center'. Media rituals are 'patterned actions' that make sense only through the wider landscape by means of ritualization. They include "the way we act in the presence of a media person or celebrity, the way a media event or television studio is organized", "media pilgrimages" (such as journeys to Hollywood or the Granada studios), reality TV, and self-disclosure on shows such as Oprah Winfrey.[75] The stretched and uneven nature of social space is the landscape across which such behaviors are deployed, ranging in scale from personal performances to the "seeming banality of people turning round to look at a celebrity. . . . Both—and everything that lies between them—are part of how we live out as 'truth' the myth of the mediated center."[76] At the heart of this argument lies the mystification hypothesis, cast in the idiom of Bourdieu's 'symbolic violence': media allocate resources unequally, but conceal the fact that they do so.[77] The 'media events' of Dayan and Katz are here revealed as media-focused narratives that intensify the myth of the mediated center.[78] As in Dayan and Katz, 'liveness' serves as "a ritual category which contributes to the ritual space of the media",[79]

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[72] MacAloon (ed.) 1984.
[73] S. Lash, *Critique of Information* (Theory, Culture, and Society; London, 2002).
[74] N. Couldry, *Media Rituals. A Critical Approach* (New York, London, 2003), 15.
[75] Couldry, *Media Rituals*, 12–13.
[76] Couldry, *Media Rituals*, 52.
[77] Couldry develops Thompson's argument (Thompson, *The Media and Modernity*, 12–18) about the importance of symbolic power, but criticizes him for ignoring unevenness in concentrations of this power (Couldry, *Media Rituals*, 39).
[78] Couldry, *Media Rituals*, 67.
[79] Couldry, *Media Rituals*, 97.

and in so doing 'naturalizes' the idea that through the media "we achieve a shared attention to the realities that matter for us as a society".[80] So, unlike the 'integrative' model of media based on events, we are offered instead a critical account where a talk show is understood as "a naturalized version of the real inequalities in society's distribution of its symbolic resources".[81] This anti-democratic effect will only change if media practices change.

This process is, of course, not unique to media contexts, but Couldry usefully corrects over-generalizations about media effects. Ultimately, though, 'ritual' is used only *rhetorically* in what is ultimately an essay about power. He combines a neo-Marxist approach to ritual as a form of domination, not a form of expression, with Turner's expressive view of ritual in which liminality produces a temporary liberation from structure. Liminality is associated with disruption,[82] but it is defined differently from Turner, bringing in De Certeau's opposition between tactic and strategy, where 'tactic' refers to opportunistic improvisational action, which contrasts with the centrism and legitimacy of strategy.[83] In this way the ritual analogy is replaced entirely by a political model, and the analysis reveals more about media's mystificatory role in the symbolic construction of groups than about ritual, although Marxists would argue that in this role media performs the same function as ritual and works against consciousness. In these terms, the post-Foucaultian, critical approach looks very similar to the Marxist approach to ritual and brings us back to the relationship between ritual and politics in the 1980s discussed above.

Methodological Particularism

The fourth approach is methodological rather than theoretical, other than in a qualified neo-empirical style, and allows different analytical engagements between technologically mediated events and socially embodied action. It relies on extensive fieldwork and a holistic knowledge of the group being studied, the approach most commonly used

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[80] Couldry, *Media Rituals*, 99.
[81] Couldry, *Media Rituals*, 122.
[82] See Silverstone, *Why Study the Media?*
[83] Silverstone, *Why Study the Media?* 72.

by anthropologists. Concepts like 'communication' and 'symbolism' are used, but the notion of ritualization is considered appropriate for dealing with ways in which new forms of action are incorporated. This approach takes up where Couldry leaves off, but avoids neologisms like 'media events' and 'media rituals'. It starts instead with situated practices and elicits theoretical formulations from these situations in their own terms. By preserving behavior and action as the root notions, rather than 'event', the relevance of ritual need not be swallowed up by the second and third approaches to media. This may sound neo-functional, but the ritual is assumed to be neither collective nor productive of harmony.

Recent studies based on ethnographic research have proposed connections, rather than contrasts, between events mediated by technology and those attended in a specific time and place. Paul Little has explored the dislocation and relocation by the media of the Rio Earth Summit to challenge and redeploy anthropological perspectives on ritual.[84] Here he employs a conceptual framework for ritual that anthropologist Stanley J. Tambiah has termed 'indexicality':[85] ritual efficacy rests on a dual instrumentality, engages with the political as well as the cosmological (or imaginative) dimensions of social experience, and is closely linked to performance. This conceptual duality is a useful way out of the deadlock between the dichotomization of ritual into escapist irrationality versus political machination, and the dichotomization of structure and anti-structure are also broken down. The effect of this is perhaps to re-present the ritual process as a form of practice in which agency, creativity, structure, and constraint become simultaneous rather than distinguished in time and space, whether real or metaphorical.

Particularism is crucial, given the problems that arise from over-generalization. Case studies about uses of the media and its interaction with ritual action and theory help to counter this. For instance, attention to how two Balinese men respond to television performance in contrast to live performance provides evidence that neither television watching practices nor modernity are uniform. Watching television can act as a rite of affirmation of identity that is transformative and polyvalent, inflected according to specific situations. While this

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[84] P.E. Little, "Ritual, Power, and Ethnography at the Rio Earth Summit", *Critique of Anthropology* 15 (1995), 265–288.
[85] Tambiah 1981.

analysis emphasizes the agency of the viewers, it also recognizes that long-term structural processes need to be taken into account. In understanding local appropriation of global technologies, the conscious reasoning of local subjects is itself the result of structuring factors.[86] Particularism in these terms must be methodological.

This fourth approach treats modernity as an uneven process, not a uniform one.[87] Comparative ethnographic analysis of media and ritual practices can also demonstrate a refutation of any universal notions of the constitution of the self. Eric Hirsch argues that culturally based forms of identity construction are demonstrated in particular local instances of media and ritual practice.[88] This argument has also been made about responses to television viewing in Tonga[89] and Papua.[90] Like ritual, media also produce alternative frames that militate against fixity, reification, and essentialization. Realities and roles become constituted by our variable agency in the situations in which we find ourselves. The relations between media, ritual, performance, and sociality reveal the common ground between different situations.

Localized content analysis of media can provide insight into how they might influence religious practice. In an analysis of radio and television in Benin City, Nigeria, Andrew Lyons shows that in televised religious services, songs, the style of sermons, and the doctrine is influenced by the USA, but the *content* of the sermons is 'quintessentially' shaped by sermons broadcast on the local 'Radio Bendel' station. One media context comes to influence another.[91] Lyons

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[86] F. Hughes-Freeland, "From Temple to Television. The Balinese Case", Hughes-Freeland and Crain (eds), *Recasting Ritual*, 44–67.

[87] Elliot's analysis was distinctive because it argued against presupposing a social evolutionist model in the analysis of media, and argued that the tendency to make contrasts between traditional and modern mentality has more to do with "the stratification of cultural capital than with changes in social type over time" than inherent differences (Elliot, "Media Performance as Political Rituals", 129–130).

[88] E. Hirsch, "Bound and Unbound Entities. Reflections on the Ethnographic Perspectives of Anthropology vis-à-vis Media and Cultural Studies", Hughes-Freeland (ed.), *Ritual, Performance, Media*, 208–228.

[89] E. Hahn, "The Tongan Tradition of Going to the Movies", *Visual Anthropology Review* 10 (1994), 103–111.

[90] D. Kuhlick and M. Willson, "Rambo's Wife Saves the Day. Subjugating the Gaze and Subverting the Narratives in a Papua New Guinea Swamp", *Visual Anthropology Review* 10 (1994), 1–13.

[91] A.P. Lyons, "The Television and the Shrine. Towards a Theoretical Model for the Study of Mass Communications in Nigeria", *Visual Anthropology* 3 (1990), 429–456.

explores the whole broadcast scene in Benin City and emphasizes the need to break down the sacred and the profane and also to recognize the different forms media takes when it co-exists with ways of thinking that also exist in the West, but to a less prevalent extent. These insights also inform a later study in Benin City of how real time video documentation has become a new option for engaging in status play in shrine rituals in Benin City. Localized strategies and individual choices shape practices at these shrines. Videotaping and televising initiations are being integrated into these status games, without undermining the ritual status of the event.[92]

Media may transform a ritual event into something else. The mass media, tourist agencies, and municipal authorities transformed the El Rocio pilgrimage in Spain from a ritual into a spectacle.[93] The televisation of bullfights in Spain has enhanced the possibility for women to enter the top ranks of the sport, while at the same time fragmenting the ritual structure of traditional 'live' bullfights (and the time-space continuum deemed essential for ritual by Parkin),[94] producing a transformed cultural commodity that is consumed at home by active spectators.[95] This line of argument might seem close to the neo-Weberian, which suggests that modernity and ritual are somehow at odds. Having said that, Turner's last writings argued that the liminoid can be understood as a commodity: this is the manifestation of a ritualized space for freedom within the bureaucracies of late/high capitalism, which Turner would argue *still* maintain a special distinguishing feature that contrasts to the routinization of work, and that might more appropriately be generalized as play rather than sacral ritual.

Ethnographic research into the way particular groups use modern technologies provides strong evidence against the claim that media

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[92] C. Gore, "Ritual, Performance, and Media in Urban Contemporary Shrine Configurations in Benin City, Nigeria", Hughes-Freeland (ed.), *Ritual, Performance, Media*, 66–84; see also M. Fugelsang, *Veils and Videos. Female Youth Culture on the Kenyan Coast* (Stockholm Studies in Social Anthropology 32; Stockholm, 1994).

[93] M.M. Crain, "Pilgrims, Yuppies and Media-Men. The Transformation of an Adalusian Pilgrimage", J. Boissevain (ed.), *Revitalising European Rituals* (European Association of Social Anthropologists; London, 1992), 95–112.

[94] D. Parkin, "Ritual as Spatial Direction and Bodily Division", D. de Coppet (ed.), *Understanding Rituals* (European Association of Social Anthropologists; London, New York, 1992), 11–25.

[95] S. Pink, "From Ritual Sacrifice to Media Commodity. Anthropological and Media Constructions of the Spanish Bullfight and the Rise of Women Performers", Hughes-Freeland (ed.), *Ritual, Performance, Media*, 121–140.

function as a form of authority. Important studies of indigenous models of politics and communication among Australian Aborigines show that Western media technologies do *not* inevitably override local ritual categories and practices.[96] In particular, access to cameras is not uniformly possible: media technology does not *necessitate* visibility. Ritual boundaries still have the power to resist what has so often been identified as a marker of modernity produced by media. And where critical theorists might argue for media's propagation of social inequality, others have demonstrated that trans-national media products have a potential leveling effect and may provide local viewers with access to 'global time',[97] while the messages and imagery they convey may undermine the legitimacy of official national discourses. What matters is not so much local versus global, or local versus the center, but the articulation of power across communities, in an arena of negotiation in which the stakes are high: people have choice, but some have more power to choose and better access to the means of communication than others. Ritual contexts often become the site of struggle for domination through the incorporation of media, particularly through the wider audiences made possible through technological mediation. Thus in Ecuador, the festival of San Juan is a contested arena in which both cosmopolitan elites and *indígenas* engage in globally-informed performances of their identity politics.[98] In sub-Saharan Africa, Wodaabe nomads exploiting stereotypes of their male beauty displayed in widely-photographed and documented dance festivals to fight against governmental sedentarization policies.[99]

These examples recognize different determinisms, without privileging one above the other theoretically. They also recognize different power differentials and different possible outcomes. They recognize interconnections. Just because a study is small-scale does not mean that it should remain culturally particularistic. The so-called 'cup of

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[96] E. Michaels, "A Primer of Restrictions on Picture-Taking in Traditional Areas of Aboriginal Australia", *Visual Anthropology* 4 (1991), 259–275.

[97] R.R. Wilk, "Colonial Time and TV Time. Television and Temporality in Belize", *Visual Anthropology Review* 10 (1994), 94–102.

[98] M.M. Crain, "Reimagining Identity, Cultural Production and Locality under Transnationalism. Performances of *San Juan* in the Ecuadorean Andes", Hughes-Freeland and Crain (eds), *Recasting Ritual*, 135–160.

[99] M. Bovin, "Nomadic Performance—Peculiar Culture? 'Exotic' Ethnic Performances of WoDaaBe Nomads in Niger", Hughes-Freeland and Crain (eds), *Recasting Ritual*, 93–112.

culture' has long been broken, and interconnections and appropria-
tions must be recognized in the analysis. But the situatedness of expe-
rience is a starting point for understanding, hence the label '*methodological
particularism*'. Insofar as these examples resist prediction and gen-
eralization, some would deny that they are theoretical. But that judg-
ment would be made from a theoretical perspective which methodo-
logical particularism itself would reject.

Conclusions

My discussion of the conceptual relationship between ritual and media
could be summarized in two paradoxes. First, that the recognition
of 'secular ritual' has made media open to ritual analysis, but such
analyses tend to restore ritual to its sacred status as 'other' or 'different'.
Second, that the claim that social relations in modernity are increas-
ingly mediated through technology, thereby becoming more disem-
bodied and virtual, is accompanied by a theoretical emphasis on
performance and experience from ritual theory. There is also a third
paradox.

In a survey of anthropological approaches to mass media ten years
ago, Debra Spitulnik pointed out that when anthropologists research
the social, cultural, political, and linguistic aspects of mass media,
they tend to bypass current debates in media studies because they
"implicitly theorize media processes, products, and uses as complex
parts of social reality . . . and expect to locate media power and value
in more a diffuse, rather than a direct and causal sense".[100] The
foundation of this interest is identified with the Chicago school of
urban anthropology,[101] and the relevance of concepts from symbolic
anthropology is not addressed. Paradoxically, whereas media analy-
sis outside anthropology uses of ritual models developed within anthro-
pological frameworks, anthropologists themselves are bypassing these.
For example, James Lull scrupulously avoids the use of 'ritual', even
when he explores the mutual constitution of symbolic power and
popular culture in media and everyday contexts.[102] The same absence

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[100] D. Spitulnik, "Anthropology and Mass Media", *Annual Review of Anthropology*
22 (1993), 293–315, here 307.
[101] Spitulnik, "Anthropology and Mass Media", 299.
[102] J. Lull, *Media, Communication, Culture. A Global Approach* (Oxford, 1995; 2d ed.,
2000).

of 'ritual' may be found in a recent collection of papers on anthropology and media.[103]

This raises a number of questions. Could it be that we are in transition and that ritual theory will soon be subsumed by media? Or is media theory set to provide the foundation for transformation of future approaches to ritual? Or could it be that transactional approaches in anthropology are overriding the need for ritual or media categories? What people do with resources is more useful in dealing with counter-hegemonic issues in both media and ritual than a structural approach à la Turner. For example, a study that might not appear in a search on media and ritual but that is highly enlightening for an understanding of both is Arvind Rajagopal's holistic approach to print and broadcast media in the political scene in India in the 1980s and 1990s.[104] Material conditions drive the analysis, rather than a model, and the conceptualization of religion as "flexible congeries of symbolic practices that may interbraid with nationalistic discourse"[105] also breaks down any implicit sacred/profane dualism. Rajagopal draws on exchange theory, not ritual theory, but in so doing explains the engagement of religion, politics, and media in a particular context.

Perhaps there is something within ritual experience that cannot be recontextualized as media, a general ritual quality that concerns feeling part of something bigger, of something of a different scale in terms of significance and temporality compared to personal experience and life span, creating a link with historical time and cosmological space captured in Tambiah's concept 'indexicality'. There is strong evidence for the claim that ritual cannot be subsumed or reproduced through media representations.[106] Although symbolic communication brings ritual and media into the same analytical frame,

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[103] K. Askew and R.R. Wilk, *The Anthropology of Media. A Reader* (Blackwell Reader in Anthropology; Oxford, 2002).

[104] A. Rajagopal, *Politics after Television. Hindu Nationalism and the Reshaping of the Indian Public* (Cambridge, 2001).

[105] Rajagopal, *Politics after Television*, 299 n. 50.

[106] There may be more contexts for representation due to media technology, but if "[t]he simulacra of mass media are as much simulations as any of the more pedestrian forms of representation encoded in ritual activity, the arts, performance and narrative traditions . . . we should not be surprised if anthropological analyses of mass media resemble studies of these more conventional forms" (V. Caldarola, "Embracing the Media Simulacrum", *Visual Anthropology Review* 10 (1994), 66–69, cited in Hughes-Freeland and Crain 1998, 5).

ritual has an instrumentality that most media representations do not have. Ritual is really real, not symbolic.[107] It may be the case that ritual is presented through the mediation of technology to the extent that it is participated in at-a-distance, but it can still work on the audience. However, ritual contrasts strongly with media if understood as involving emergence and risk, unlike the textual view of ritual with which this chapter opened. It could be argued that risk is increasingly part of the television experience, with game shows and reality TV gaining popularity in the polls. However, if these are *not* broadcast live, risk is pure illusion. The comparison with media stands for theorists who regard ritual as illusion, but not those for whom ritual exists by virtue of its true instrumentality.[108]

When ritual meets media, it determines the explanation of media, rather than the other way round. The interface of ritual and media's performative dimension in particular allows of further reflection on ways of analyzing and framing of social action. It is the case that what media theorists call 'ritual' could equally well be analyzed as performance. Ritual-as-play or ritual-as-performance deals not just with the world of facts, but with the world of possibilities. The resistance of ritual to becoming mere spectacle or simulacrum is also represented by a small but telling insight. In contemporary British culture, media and ritual and/or performance represent an oppositional moral scheme. Ritual is classed as healthy, while media (the broadcast or visual technologies at least) are bad for you.[109] This suggests that media as an analytical concept still operates in a very different domain from the cognitive and experiential world of social actors which informs ritual theory. As a result of ritual being desacralized and employed metaphorically across different domains, it has re-emerged as a distinctive category with its own boundaries and characteristics.

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[107] See Sullivan 1986.
[108] This is implied in a useful discussion of rituals in relation to history. Although the conclusion that rituals make history could easily be connected to media events as a form of secular ritual, but media is never discussed (Kelly and Kaplan 1990).
[109] Hirsch, "Bound and Unbound Entities".

PARTICIPATION

Edward L. Schieffelin

This paper is a reconsideration of the meaning and usefulness of the notion of 'participation' for the study and understanding of ritual processes. Most discussions of participation or cognate concepts (since Lucien Levy-Bruhl) have followed Émile Durkheim in confining themselves to ritual or celebratory contexts. One of my aims will be to examine the role participation plays in ordinary social contexts and to see what light its presence there may shed on its place in ritual. This paper cannot pretend to cover the ground fully, but I hope it will suggest some interesting avenues for further investigation.

I will begin by specifying what I take to be the common or fundamental characteristics of participation. In its more or less classical statement, participation is generally taken to be a particular state of consciousness or experience characteristic of a group under conditions of emotional arousal and collective effervescence while engaged in ritual activity. It is characterized by the group members' sense of 'abandoning themselves to' or 'being submerged in' or 'overcome by' a kind of external force, a larger compelling process, group identification, or superior (sacred) presence.

Particularly in the older literature,[1] participation was seen as a dramatically unusual and irrational state of mind that, it was claimed, had important lasting consequences that carried over out of the ritual situation into everyday life (though the two thinkers came to opposite conclusions as to what these consequences were).

While the notion that participation is 'irrational' is old-fashioned and reflects the assumptions about emotionality and rationality prevalent at the end of the nineteenth century, the issue still remains problematic. This is because it still transgresses more modern assumptions about rationality that posit differentiated or separated individual consciousnesses. Participation problematizes the separateness of

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[1] E.g., É. Durkheim, *Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (1912), trans. J.W. Swain (New York, 1915); L. Lévy-Bruhl, *Primitive Mentality* (1931), trans. L.A. Clare (Boston, 1966).

individual consciousnesses and raises questions as to whether it entails a particular form of consciousness that is foreign to the processes of rationally differentiated thought.

From the beginning, participation has been viewed as a group experience, especially as an experience of group-ness in which individuality, or consciousness of individuality, is submerged in a larger 'shared' consciousness of the group. This is why individuals in the state of ritual participation are frequently said to 'lose themselves' in the process or 'feel they are part of a larger whole' or to be 'subject to a greater force than themselves'. In modern parlance, ego boundaries become fuzzy, the self is experienced as merging with others, the ego-center moves outside the individual to a larger encompassing domain of meaningfulness, or one feels submitted to a larger presence. All of these seem rather alarming to the central values of individualistic rationality in Western culture and, of course, look dubious as mental states in psychiatry. Moreover, the radically different posture of the individual towards the world while in the state of participation would seem to entail a quite different epistemological attitude towards, or mode of addressing, reality than that of everyday life, where the individual generally perceives him/herself as differentiated from and surrounded by a wider separate world of others.

On my view the association of participation with loss of individuality is not the best way to approach what is really at issue here. Viewed from an epistemological perspective, participation can be taken to entail a manner of human encounter with the world which moves in an epistemologically different, perhaps even opposite direction from the epistemology of analysis or 'successive differentiation' widely privileged in Western modes of understanding. If Western modes of understanding (particularly positivist and postmodernist) privilege differentiation and alterity in the domain of human understanding, participation privileges resonance, identification, and *engagement*. What this means will become clear in due course.

We may perhaps more usefully look for participation in those moments of 'knowledgeably-being-in-process' (as in deeply engaged effort) wherein one experiences oneself as 'flowing with' the activity rather than directing it. This is cognate in many ways to 'deeply embodied knowledge', such as that of a musician who finds he plays music 'with his fingers' rather than his head. At the same time, this kind of process appears to entail something like a loss of personal agency. Moreover, there is a real difficulty in knowing how to talk about it.

What makes it particularly difficult is the dominant strain in Western epistemology that privileges language and logico-categorical rationality as the major vehicle of human thought and cultural-individual identity. The difficulty is not that participative knowledge is irrational, nor that it is located in the socialized body, but that the language used to describe it is itself a mode of articulating knowledge that is opposed to the way participative knowledge is 'had', experienced, and expressed. All languages tend to objectify, categorize, and reflect upon experience by the very nature of articulation. But to the degree that language remains in this mode, it is inadequate to the task of articulating the kind of knowledge one 'has' by participation[2] because it is the vehicle of an alternative epistemology. Moreover, the general privileging of reflective and representational understanding in Western culture results in the fact that the presence of participation in our everyday lives goes relatively unnoticed or at least is ignored in the presumed 'naturalness' of everyday activity.

What I would like to do now is to approach participation again, starting from the point of view of its relation to 'alterity'. Alterity is the product of the process of differentiation. As an anthropologist, I take 'alterity' to refer to that aspect of the relation between the self and the world (as knower and known) in which they are constituted as different and separate entities from each other. In knowing something as 'alter', I perceive it as 'not me', as standing over against me in the sense that it has its own nature, that is, its own way of operating independently of what I may do or desire, and of resisting my efforts to understand and deal with it.[3] I also take alterity to refer to the relation between objects and entities in the world that are differentiated from (even if related to) each other—at least in human understanding.[4] But, of course, this image of knowledge, is far from being the whole story.

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[2] Though arguably language may go some way towards *evoking* participatory knowledge poetically. But this is different from articulating it.

[3] In the last twenty years, postmodernists have classically put enormous emphasis on alterity, valorizing the differentiation, fragmentation, and incommensurability between beings in the world—but alterity is never the whole story, or even the main story, nor is it ever complete, otherwise, the elements of this world would be wholly other than each other, and the knowledge we have would be impossible.

[4] The creation of alterity, that is, the differentiation of the world into knowable entities and categories, is figured as the primordial act of creativity in many human cultures and expressed in innumerable images of origin: the separation of order out

As we cognitively and culturally differentiate the world and shape it through our bodily practices, what is less visible is the effect of our *commitment* to what we have done and the shape that this commitment imposes upon us. In effect, every time we constitute an idea, object, institution, or practice within the larger scheme of meanings, schemas, projects, and practices that make up our cultural world, that which we have constituted acts back on us through the very schemes of cultural (or individual) meaning and practice through which we have constituted it. But this is not simply a matter of our being 'confronted' with what we have constituted in the world (though it is also that). It is also a matter of our being penetrated by and incorporated in the world we have constituted—at the very moment we constitute it. To the degree that we commit ourselves to a certain kind of world being as we understand it, that world is incorporated in who we are and becomes part of us. In effect, we are submitted to the categories that govern our language or practices as much as the objects we constitute through them.

These ideas are not particularly new in anthropology. They run closely parallel to Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckman's notions of the social construction of reality,[5] and a good deal of what Pierre Bourdieu has written in his theory of practice.[6] My purpose is to draw attention to their possible relationship to participation. Moreover, it is my purpose to show that participation lies next to the constitution of alterity and that both are necessary epistemological moves for constituting and inhabiting the world. A way forward in this discussion is provided by reference to Maurice Merleau-Ponty's theory of 'habit' or 'skill',[7] which can be interpreted as a blurring of the line between agent and object.

Merleau-Ponty's notion embodiment refers not only to the actual shape and innate physical capacities of the body, but also to the characteristics of the human world, for those characteristics (in large

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of chaos, the sky from the earth, Braman from Atman, the Many from the One. It is always a matter of creating some kind of otherness out of an identity.

[5] P.L. Berger and Th. Luckman, *The Social Construction of Reality. A Treatise on the Sociology of Knowledge* (Garden City, New York 1966).

[6] P. Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, trans. R. Nice (Cambridge Studies in Social Anthropology 16; Cambridge, 1977).

[7] For an extended discussion of Merleau-Ponty's theory of skill acquisition see H. Dreyfus and S. Dreyfus, *Mind Over Machine* (New York, 1982).

part, culturally given) are *correlative with our bodily capacities and acquired skills*. That is, as our knowledge of and capacities for coping with the world increase, so do the possibilities we are afforded by the world. With an increase in our knowledge and skill, more things show up in the world that solicit our knowledgeable and skillful responses. Trees solicit explorations in climbing for ten year-olds. Bicycles afford 'a-quick-way-to-town' or 'an-afternoon's-exercise' or 'fun' or 'exploration-of-new-places', even 'a-way-to-enjoy-the-fresh-air'. These possibilities are 'afforded' to us by the world in virtue of our knowledge and skills. In this way, the natural and cultural worlds become correlative with our bodies and knowledge, and the body is our general medium for having a world. Our skills and capacities determine how things show up for us as requiring our responses. Thus, as we acquire skills, we ourselves, our relations to the world, and the world itself increasingly expand, deepen and accommodate to each other—and our 'sense of the situation' solicits more responses and affords more invitations, possibilities, and opportunities.

This view of the mutual acquisition of skill and affording of possibility draws human beings and the material world together in increasing intimacy. This idea is developed in Merleau-Ponty's discussion of coping. Skillful coping does not require a mental representation of its goal. It can be purposive without the agent entertaining a purpose. A movement is learned when the body has understood it, that is, when it has incorporated it into its 'world', and to move one's body is to aim at things through it; it is to respond to their call, which is made independently of any representation.

It is this *lack of distance between purposive agent and skillful act*, wherein *the agent is absorbed in the act*, that constitutes his 'being-in-the-situation'. In other words, 'being-in-the-situation' is constituted by acting through participative knowledge or, in other words, in the mode of participation. This is not automatism, for the agent is fully and consciously there, though not as an observer but as a participant: as a part, and facilitator, of the ongoing situational process. It is where the movements of a couple dancing are the movement of the dance, not two people trying to dance together.

The point to be made here is that the provenience of participation lies not in the center of high ritual activity but in the midst of ordinary, committed, and unselfconscious activity in everyday life, though it lives there mostly unnoticed. In one sense this should come as no surprise, but it provides an interesting avenue of approach to

the problem of ritual from outside ritual itself—for if participation is a fundamental aspect of our everyday, what is the significance of its evocation in ritual?

Before we pursue this, however, let us note that the focus on individual material skills in Merleau-Ponty's discussion would seem to neglect the social or group aspect of participation that Durkheim and others considered fundamental—yet this is not so. Sociability itself entails multiple skills—and the fundamental necessity to deal closely and cooperatively with others in the human world ensures that modes of sociality must be developed no less than material coping skills. But there is more to it than that. Human beings are *partners* in situational process as well as instrumentalities for one another, and true social cooperation is a situation in which several people's knowledgeable activity is so timed and paced, and their moves so temporally and spatially anticipated and served by one another, that the individual participants for the moment of the activity know each other as parts of the process. Indeed, many highly complex processes involving organized coordination of different functions, sequencing of operations, synchronization, and rhythmicity entail participation among its members even without everyone's fully understanding what is going on. They are held in place in the process through a sense of mutual participation in what their own and their adjacent partners' tasks entail. One thinks of examples such as ships crews, surgical teams, fire brigades, acting smoothly under pressure. Participation is likewise deeply involved in competitive contexts ranging from conversational repartee to sports such as football or tennis, where participant's moves are coordinated to anticipate, surprise, or counter the moves of the opposition. As coordinated activity becomes mutually assumed, synchronized, and shared, everything happens, as Bourdieu has put it, like a "conductorless orchestra".[8]

Lack of space forbids pursuing this account of participation in everyday sociality further here. Instead, I wish to move the discussion on in the direction of ritual. I have argued that the experience of participation in everyday contexts is generally left in the background and overlooked as people's main focus is placed on getting on with their lives. It is only under unusual circumstances that peo-

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[8] Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, 80.

ple become aware of participation 'in itself' and attend to it as a special experience. In the anthropological literature, the special circumstances that evoke this kind of 'deep participation' are classically found in ritual.[9] Although this is by no means the only place it appears, I will take it as a useful first approximation in addressing two questions: First, what is it that brings on, that evokes deep participation? Second, why is it so special?

As I have noted, it is only in special circumstances that we become aware of participation 'in itself' and attend to it as a special experience. The question to address here is not what contexts or circumstances these are so much as what specifically characterizes them and by what practical or performative means they are brought to engage social groups so that they enter deep participation.

Three characteristics of groups in deep participation are: deep focus, deep commitment, and intensity. Deep focus is a state or condition of mental concentration (or fascinated attention) so turned to an activity that one loses reflective awareness of self and any other thing that is not germaine to, or part of, the present activity itself. This kind of concentration is entailed in many individual skilled tasks as we have described above, but it is by no means necessarily individualistic or solitary. Football teams in the midst of play, or their fans watching from the stadium, often evidence this kind of focused attention.

Deep focus is not to be confused with deep commitment, though they are frequently associated. If deep focus is a matter of concentration of attention, deep commitment is its partner in the domain of directed motivational energy—which lends a tireless and determined direction to deep focus. Frequently found sources of motivational energy are aggression or anger, envy, desire, compassion, and curiosity—often topped up with such factors, as racism, romanticism, a hunger for 'meaningfulness', love of color and light, etc.

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[9] This is not to imply there is a 'break' between everyday, unacknowledged participation and 'deep participation'. On the contrary, there is undoubtedly a continuity. The issue, at least to some degree, turns on when the depth of participation becomes so intense that participants can become aware of it as an aspect of their experience. Where this particular threshold lies, the circumstances under which it is crossed, or, indeed, the degree to which it may be possible to be in deep participation without being fully aware of it, are important questions, though ones that space prevents me from pursuing here.

Both focus and commitment are subject to degrees of intensity—or *amount* of emotional energy put into them, which may, in principle, be intensified by social and performative means which lie, strictly speaking, outside the boundaries of the committed activity (this, for example, is what public relations companies do).

These three aspects of process can in principle be differentiated from one another, but in practice, in the flow of the moment, they are inseparable—each carrying the other in determinate group activity. The issue of evoking deep participation, then, resolves, at least in a crude sense, into asking what elements of practice or performance most encourage or facilitate the development of deep focus and deep commitment (out of which participation emerges) and increase their intensity.

In fact is that the range and variety of actual performative means for doing this is enormous, as any person involved in performance (actor, dramatist, theater director, etc.) will acknowledge. These performative moves, strategies, and techniques are the grist of therapeutic group work, theater, politics, and much else, including ritual—even if most of the time they are not aimed at producing a focus as powerful as deep participation. It is not my intention to review these here. But it is worth looking at one common musical means of promoting participation as it leads to my final questions.

What I have in mind is rhythmic engagement—where the emphasis is on sequencing and coordinating activity according to a periodic timing pulse that drives and regulates it. Traditional Japanese rice planting with drum and singer suggests one activity of this sort. Military marching is another. Archetypically the form here is music and dance. Although one can play music and dance without being in participation, these are activities that can easily become deeply focused. It is possible to distinguish several forms of rhythmic engagement, which have quite different consequences for participative consciousness. To further discussion we will talk about two.

The first represents actions like those mentioned above where the action is synchronized through a timed measure. For traditional Western art music, the pace of playing and the entry of instruments is coordinated through keeping time. The participants may play different parts, entering or leaving play at different times, but all have a sense of moving together by following the same underlying timing pulse. In this form of rhythmic coordination, the basic track of the musical piece is laid out for the players in advance by the

score and honed during orchestral practice, while the realization of the piece in performance is reliant on everyone keeping the same rhythmic time.

The second kind of rhythmic engagement, more improvisational and social in spirit, is encountered in African polyrhythmic drumming or in a musician's jam session and is improvisational and social in spirit. Here a timing pulse is attended to, but so is what the other musicians are doing in their improvisational play. To participate, to insert oneself into the flow, a musician must pay close attention to what others are doing (or about to do) in order to locate those spaces in the musical flow where he may enter or acceptably place his beat. The emphasis here is on sensing a number of overlapping rhythms that 'work with' each other and on inserting one's own musical contribution in a way that 'works with' or 'plays off' them—even if it moves the playing (or even the rhythm) in a new direction.

While these two types of rhythmic participation are probably not ultimately mutually exclusive, the experience of following a score in a symphony is undoubtedly significantly different from jamming with a bunch of friends. Would these produce two quite different experiences of deep participation in the musicians? It is hard to believe they would not.

The discussion of rhythmic engagement raises an interesting question: What are we to make of the different modalities of experience of deep participation that seem to depend on the means by which it is evoked, the degree to which it is experienced as an active or passive state, and the emotional quality of the accompanying social process? The rhetoric and performativity of group occasions can evoke many different qualities of feeling and attitude even as they evoke a sense of deep participation so that the experience of deep participation can appear in many different guises. It may surround and deepen a sense of awe at a religious ceremony; it may encompass and ratify the sense of mutual intimacy and moral equivalence with others, as in Victor Turner's *communitas*.[10] It inhabits the fierce unity of aroused aggression and determination of a football crowd. One can think of many different occasions of deep participation of this sort.

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[10] Turner 1969, 131–165.

Given the many radically different qualities these occasions can have, where does the special quality, or significance of deep participation lie, then? Here we can turn to that curious and troubling aspect of deep participation that disturbs notions of rationalistic individualism—namely, the idea that those in the midst of deep participation experience themselves as subject to an external 'force'. This may not be the way everyone who has experienced deep participation would put it, but the image of being submerged in or carried along by or being part of 'something', a larger process, that seems more powerful and compelling than oneself is widespread.

How do we approach this issue of power and identity head on? When people are intensely engaged together in the same process, the shape, organization, pace, and rhythm of the process *ipso facto* governs their attitude, action, and purpose. They cannot but move to its rhythm, and thus are carried by its energy. At the same time the process or activity itself becomes their mode of mutual sociality—the (for the moment) shared reality that governs them. It is here that deep participation may crystallize and render the situation a compelling consensual reality. Moreover, it is often all the more compellingly real for its intensely shared focus—compared to reality under the various and shifting modes of attention of the same individuals at their various activities in daily life.

It is as if the parts, the participants, experience the embrace of the whole that is the greater than the sum of its parts. It therefore has at that moment, for them, more meaning—indeed, more *reality*—than they do, and their sense of reality is derived from the larger process in which they are engaged. Deep participants are steeped in a sense of reality, and this intense experience achieves a kind of ontological grounding—a sense of the 'touch of being'—which often reverberates to inform everyday life long after the event is past. Participants often remember these times as times when they were especially deeply, confidently, and (usually) joyfully *alive* or uplifted.

More than this, with such an ontological grounding comes empowerment. The real issue here is not the submission (or submergence or overcoming) of the moral-rational individual in the larger 'force' or 'flow' of deep participation, but rather the steeping of the participants in a deeper sense of reality than they normally inhabit, a reality upon whose power they can comfortably draw.

It is important, by way of conclusion here, to distinguish between ontological grounding in deep participation (on the one hand) and

what it is that is intensely experienced as real. Deep participation by itself carries no meaning or significance. Rather, as a mode of engagement with the world it grants and grounds the meaningfulness and reality of whatever we are doing (in participation). It is the intensely focused activity or process in which we are engaged that provides the structure and moral-cultural content. Deep participation provides the ontological grounding for the confident and empowered address of that content to the world. Deep participation is thus the guarantor (or at least a principle one) for the social construction of reality.

This is perhaps the most disturbing finding of this paper, for—as should be clear, and as every dramatist knows—deep participation is a shaman's gift.[11] Under the right performative conditions, it can just as easily grant social ontological grounding to a speech by Adolf Hitler as to the Sermon on the Mount. It is the vehicle of the ontologization of any evocable human world.

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[11] That is, it provides power for either good or evil. Sometimes the use of such a gift for the promotion of one, automatically also activates the other.

REFLEXIVITY

Michael Stausberg

From a common, conventional, and pre-theoretic point of view, 'ritual' tends to be conceptualized as being of a non-reflexive and non-reflective nature. Even some of the most prominent approaches to the study of ritual implicitly seem to subscribe to that view. This is so because it is, or was, assumed that rituals

- merely 'act out' a given (mythic) structure;
- simply reaffirm the common ground of societal consensus by evoking effervescent emotions;
- represent a form of compulsive action with a excessive attention to details;
- are a form of pure, meaningless activity that is concerned with, if not obsessed by, following explicit rules;
- are a species of typically 'mute' form of practice characterized by a misrecognition of what they 'really' are doing;
- are ecstatic, or traumatic, events; or
- are fixed, standardized, formalized, and repetitive acts.

Whatever option one prefers, it seems evident that rituals are diametrically opposed to reflexivity. More recent theoretical approaches, however, have challenged that view. Once more, possibly influenced by Richard Schechner, it was Victor Witter Turner who took important steps in new directions, followed by some of his students, who elaborated on those lines and provided a body of literature full of fresh theoretical insights.[1] This development is part of a wider trend in the humanities, where 'reflexivity' has turned from an avant-garde notion into something akin to an intellectual dogma.[2] Many of the

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[1] See the items provided with the keyword RFL in the annotated bibliography.

[2] For useful surveys, see G.E. Marcus, "Reflexivity in Anthropology", *International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences* (2001), 12877–12881; M. Ashmore, "Reflexivity, in Science and Technology Studies", *International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences* (2001), 12881–12884; M. Lynch, "Against Reflexivity as an Academic Virtue and Source of Privileged Knowledge", *Theory, Culture, and Society* 17 (2000), 26–54. Reflexivity played a crucial role in early ethnomethodology, but

moral and epistemological claims of the stronger versions of the 'reflexive programs' and their rhetorical *mise en scène* have in the meantime been strongly criticized[3] and occasionally even ridiculed.[4]

The term 'reflexivity' is by now standard fare in a wide range of discursive settings, including literature and the visual arts, and in such academic disciplines as sociology, social theory, anthropology/ethnology, science and technology studies, philosophy, and cognitive neuroscience.[5] While the wide range of applications of the term has been commented upon,[6] the question of whether the different ways in which it is used merely mirror different 'varieties', 'versions', or 'styles' of reflexivity[7] or whether they instead attest to different underlying concepts has rarely been addressed. In other words, do the different phenomena referred to by the term in different discursive contexts point to one single concept of 'reflexivity',[8] or do we actually encounter different 'reflexivities'[9] that eventually turn out to have very little in common?

Like 'ritual', 'reflexivity' has therefore become

> . . . an odd-job word; that is, it serves a variety of more or less disparate uses, yet we are tempted to describe its use as though it were a word with regular functions . . . It cannot be relied upon for any precise task of identification, interpretation, or comparison . . . but this does

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that changed once ethnomethodology became a more established branch of sociology; see M. Pollner, "Left of Ethnomethodology. The Rise and Decline of Radical Reflexivity", *American Sociological Review* 56 (1991), 370–380.

[3] See, e.g., Lynch, "Against Reflexivity".

[4] P. Pels, "Reflexivity. One Step Up", *Theory, Culture, and Society* 17 (2000), 1–25, e.g., comments that "[r]eflexivity often parades in a show of confessional virtues . . ." (1) and he comments on "[t]he romance of reflexivity" (2).

[5] In the study of religion, however, reflexivity as yet has a shadowy existence. The exceptions confirming the rule are B.A. Babcock, "Reflexivity", *The Encyclopedia of Religion* 12 (1987), 234–238; G. Flood, *Beyond Phenomenology. Rethinking the Study of Religion* (London, 1999), 35–38.

[6] See Babcock, "Reflexivity", 234: "The term is problematic because it is so popular today; it is used in several different disciplines to refer to a wide variety of mental, verbal, and performative phenomena".

[7] For an analysis of different 'styles' of reflexivity, see G.E. Marcus, "On Ideologies of Reflexivity in Contemporary Efforts to Remake the Human Science", *Poetics Today* 15 (1994) 383–404; reprinted in G.E. Marcus, *Ethnography through Thick and Thin* (Princeton, 1998), 181–202.

[8] Babcock, "Reflexivity", 234–235.

[9] For a useful "inventory of reflexivities", see Lynch, "Against Reflexivity", 27–34 (1. "mechanical reflexivity"; 2. "substantial reflexivity"; 3. "methodological reflexivity"; 4. "metatheoretical reflexivity"; 5. "interpretative reflexivity". There are sub-categories for each of these categories.)

not mean that it can have no serious use. What follows, rather, is that it has a range of uses, not a strict application corresponding to some peculiar character in the phenomena that it denotes.[10]

From this observation, Needham infers the necessity of constructing a polythetic definition[11] of the concept in question ('ritual' in his case, 'reflexivity' in ours). This is not the aim of the present chapter, however, because taking that approach would imply a decision of the issue in question. And this is not intended here. In contradistinction to the bulk of the existing literature, this paper will not try to, implicitly or explicitly, impose one reading of the term. The ambition of the present chapter is much more modest: it is to create awareness of some of the various ways by which 'reflexivity' has been, and can be, employed in ritual theories and theorizing rituals. This is, in turn, what may characterize a 'reflective' and 'reflexive' attitude to ritual theory. The latter remark paves the way to a reflection on the semantics and etymologies of these terms.

Between Reference and Reflection

Contrary to most, if not all, of the scholarly terms and concepts discussed in this volume—'ritual' to begin with—'reflexivity' does not have much of an emic prehistory to build on (or to move away from). In other words, 'reflexivity' is not a part of common, 'ordinary' language, and even such a major dictionary as the *Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary* (www.m-w.com) has nothing to say about the term apart from its pronunciation and the fact that it is a noun. The main entry here is 'reflexive', an adjective that is assigned four meanings.[12] Two of these refer to grammatical categories.[13] The fourth meaning listed by *Merriam-Webster* is: "characterized by habitual and unthinking behavior". This refers to behavior as a knee-jerk,

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[10] Needham 1985, 156 (on ritual).

[11] For the difference between nomothetic and polythetic definitions, see the paper by Snoek in this volume.

[12] Dictionaries tend to treat 'reflexiveness' and 'reflexivity' as synonyms. This chapter will mainly follow that usage.

[13] "2: of, relating to, characterized by, or being a relation that exists between an entity and itself <the relation 'is equal to' is *reflexive* but the relation 'is the father of' is not>; 3: "of, relating to, or constituting an action (as in 'he perjured himself') directed back on the agent or the grammatical subject".

an automatic reflex, as it were. It is evident from the list of gener-
ally held assumptions about 'ritual' sketched at the outset of this
paper that 'rituals' have actually been perceived to exemplify this
kind of behavior. As a matter of fact, ritual events and performances
can be designed in such a way that they trigger reflexive reactions
among the participants, for example, by means of spatial and aes-
thetic arrangements, such as exposure to strong light (or extreme
darkness) and music (or noise).

As self-evident as this understanding of 'reflexivity' appears to be,
this application of the term runs in the opposite direction of the
many ways in which ritual is understood and in which the term
'reflexivity' is used in ritual studies in particular and the humanities
in general. For this wide range of applications of the term, mean-
ing 1 in the list from *Merriam-Webster* is relevant:

> a: directed or turned back on itself b: marked by or capable of reflection

It is exactly in these shadings between the semantic poles 'a' and
'b'—between instances of self-reference and (self-)reflection—that
much of the terminological conflation prevalent in different con-
temporary discourses can be located.

While self-reference may be considered to be the obvious aspect
of 'reflexivity', what about 'reflection'? Is 'reflexivity' a form, style,
degree, or variety of 'reflection'; is it just the inverse; or are these
two (entirely) different processes? The available literature points to
different solutions.

Barbara Babcock, who did much to establish the concept within
anthropology, the study of literature, and comparative religion,[14] pro-
poses the following distinction (which will serve as a starting point
for the subsequent discussion):

> To be reflexive is to be reflective; but one is not necessarily reflexive
> when one is reflective, for to reflect is simply to think about some-
> thing, but to be reflexive is to think about the process of thinking itself.
> In its present usage, *reflection* does not possess the self-referential and
> second-level characteristics of reflexivity.[15]

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[14] A seminal paper is B.A. Babcock, "Reflexivity. Definitions and Discriminations",
Semiotica 30 (1980), 1–14.
[15] Babcock, "Reflexivity" (1987), 235.

Babcock casts these distinctions in terms of mental operations,[16] and the way it is phrased seems to recall a well-established figure in Western philosophical thought, the 'thinking of thinking' (or 'reflection on reflection'; Greek *noesis noeseos*).[17] In the way Babcock states her argument, 'reflexivity' is a "second-level" reflection. At first sight, then, the difference between 'reflexivity' and 'reflection' appears to be merely one of degree, not of kind, in different forms of self-reference.

When it comes to the subject matter of this book,[18] this distinction can be applied in the following terms: While 'ritual theory' typically *reflects* on (the properties of) ritual and hence is a *reflection* on ritual (discursively and rhetorically framed and marked in the parameters of 'theory'), as a *reflexive* project 'theorizing rituals' is a second-order reflection on theories—including their value, use, implications, modes of construction and operation, etc.—with the point of reference shifting from 'ritual' to 'ritual theory'. More than a mere disinterested meta-reflection, however, reflexiveness can easily radicalize itself and turn into a critical instance questioning the very rule of the game.[19] Before exploring this a bit further, it is worth recalling that the relevance of the concepts 'reflection' and 'reflexivity' (and their different shadings) is not restricted to the realm of theory/theorizing alone, for reflection and reflexivity are also inherent in the very objects of the study—in rituals.

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[16] See M.D. Lieberman, R. Gaunt, D.T. Gilbert, and Y. Trope, "Reflexion and Reflection. A Social Cognitive Neuroscience Approach to Attributional Inference", *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology* 34 (2002), 199–249, for a recent attempt to distinguish "the phenomenological features, cognitive operations, and neural substrates of two systems that we call the X-system (for the 'x' in *reflexive*) and the C-System (for the 'c' in *reflective*). These systems are instantiated in different parts of the brain, carry out different kinds of inferential operations, and are associated with different experiences. The X-system is a parallel-processing, subsymbolic, pattern-matching system that produces the continuous stream consciousness that each of us experiences as 'the world out there'. The C-system is a serial system that uses symbolic logic to produce the conscious thoughts that we experience as 'reflections on' the stream of consciousness. While the X-system produces our ongoing experience of reality, the C-system reacts to the X-system. When problems arise in the X-system, the C-system attempts a remedy." It would be tempting to take this approach into account in ritual theory, but that shall not be attempted here.

[17] On the history of this concept, or conceptual figure, in the history of (Western) philosophy, see H.J. Krämer, "Noesis Noeseos", *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie* 6 (1984), 871–873.

[18] See the introductory essay.

[19] In social anthropology, this is what has happened in the context of the debate on 'representation' and 'reflexivity'.

Reflection and Reflexivities within Ritual Settings

To begin with, there is much reflection on rituals going on in rituals. Rituals may be designed in such a way as to inhibit reflective processes, but one should not underestimate the aptitude for reflection among ritual participants, even if they (seen from the outside) may appear to mechanically/reflexively act as a mass of people. Against a tendency in ritual studies and ritual theories to describe rituals as essentially attractive, even thrilling and emotionally dense events, everybody knows that many rituals can be boring.[20] When attention is diverted from the ongoing process or event, it may be vested in reflections of different kinds and on different things, including details of the ritual (such as the color of the clothes or the music). While reflection can emerge from performative boredom by accident, other rituals are clearly designed to stimulate reflection, for instance, by the use of 'deep' symbols that require decoding and 'make people think'. Other rituals integrate explicit instances of reflection in the sequential order of the public event. In a sermon, for example, the preacher may comment, and indeed reflect, upon the meaning and significance of the very ritual performance. This form of reflection is self-referential and thereby comes close to reflexivity.

Rituals can also contain different sorts of *reflexive* instances—that is, elements that (implicitly or explicitly) turn the actors, participants, and spectators (listeners) back upon themselves.[21] This can be achieved by linguistic means, for instance, when performers refer to their own ritual performance in ritual formulae ("We perform this ritual"; "By performing this ritual we . . .") or short self-referential accounts;[22] or

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[20] Cognitive theories of rituals have devoted some attention to what they refer to as the 'tedium effect'; see McCauley and Lawson 2002; H. Whitehouse, *Modes of Religiosity. A Cognitive Theory of Religious Transformation* (Cognitive Science of Religion Series; Walnut Creek, 2004), 130–135.

[21] For this meaning of the term, see also Babcock, "Reflexivity" (1980), 2: "The terms reflexive, reflexivity, and reflexiveness have been used in a variety of disciplines to describe the capacity of language and of thought—of any system of signification—to turn or band back upon itself, to become an object to itself, and to refer to itself. Whether we are discussing things grammatical or cognitive, what is meant is a reflex action or process linking self and other, subject and object."

[22] For an example see C.K. Højbjerg, "Inner Iconoclasm. Forms of Reflexivity in Loma Rituals of Sacrifice", *Social Anthropology* 10 (2002), 57–75, here 66: "The true agent of the causal agent is revealed through a divination ceremony. Referring to the sick child for whom the sacrifice is carried out, the sacrificer explains: 'We have asked the diviner about the child's illness. The diviner answered that it is nei-

when a communicative ritual such as prayer refers to its own com-
municative structure,[23] when the very performance is itself verbally
addressed in the chanting (and thereby transposes the position of the
chanter to a different level);[24] or in cases in which divine partners
(counterintuitive agents) are held to perform rituals on their own
behalf, such as the gods who are held to sacrifice to themselves or
even to sacrifice the sacrifice itself (e.g. Ṛg-Veda X,90,16 *yajñéna
yajñam ayajanta devā́s*—("the gods sacrificed the sacrifice with sacrifice").[25]

One 'obvious' self-referential, reflective visual medium that can be
employed in rituals is the mirror, in which actors can watch them-
selves and perceive themselves as being part of the respective ritual
event/process. As Maurice Merleau-Ponty once remarked:

> The mirror itself is the instrument of a universal magic that changes
> things into a spectacle, spectacles into things, myself into another and
> another into myself. . . . The mirror appears because I am seeing vis-
> ible [*voyant-visible*], because there is a reflexivity of the sensible; the mir-
> ror translates and reproduces that reflexivity.[26]

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ther witchcraft (*motaiti*) nor sorcery (*saleiti*), but *angbaiʾ*." Højbjerg refers to such
sequences as "ritualised, autobiographical accounts". The self-referential account
continues by spelling out the reasons for the ceremony (p. 67, a passage I would
hesitate to call a "ritual prayer", as Højbjerg does). The self-referential accounts, it
seems to me, serve the purpose of repositioning, performatively restructuring, and
determining the relationship between the human subject/objects and non-human
agents in the ceremonial set-up.

[23] Prayers often comment on the relationship between the person who prays and
his or her deity, or the deity's attitude towards him or her. Ritual communication
such as prayer can itself be made the object of further (preparatory) acts. This
reflexive twist is nicely commented upon in the following anecdote of the Rabbi
who, when asked what he would do before praying, replied that before praying he
would pray that he would be able to pray in the right manner; see R.-E. Prell-
Foldes, "The Reinvention of Reflexivity in Jewish Prayer. The Self and Community
in Modernity", *Semiotica* 30 (1980), 73–96, 78, quoted from A.E. Millgram, *Jewish
Worship* (Philadelphia, 1971), 29 (non vidi).

[24] I am here alluding to Lévi-Strauss's famous analysis of a (Cuña) shamanic
chant of incantation describing the voyage of the shaman-healer to the inside of
body of the (female) patient, all the way into her vagina and uterus, unfolding a
'mythic anatomy'—without ever physically touching her body. The chant is reflective
since the shaman performatively refers to/reflects on the very act of chanting. See
C. Lévi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology* (1958), trans. C. Jacobson and B. Grundfest
Schoepf (New York, London, 1963). The reflective dimension of the event has
recently been stressed by Severi 2002.

[25] K.C. Patton, in "Juggling Torches. Why We Still Need Comparative Religion",
K.C. Patton and B.C. Ray (eds), *A Magic Still Dwells. Comparative Religion in the Post-
Modern World* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, 2000), 153–171, 158, calls this phenomenon
"divine reflexivity".

[26] M. Merleau-Ponty, *The Primacy of Perception and Other Essays on Phenomenological*

Merleau-Ponty here points to several issues relevant to theoretical approaches to ritual. One is the fact that all social action places the agents simultaneously in the situations of (passive) objects and (active) subjects (and as objects for themselves as subjects); obviously, rituals can build on that kind of 'reflexiveness'[27] and play with the taking and inversion of the roles of the self and the other, thereby constructing social worlds in their own right. Secondly, and related to the first issue, Merlau-Ponty refers to the transformative power of the rituals. As a matter of fact, there are several examples of rituals that achieve transformations by making use of mirrors, such as the painting of the eye (and final act of vivification) of a statue in Sinhalese Buddhism and the neighboring Hindu tradition: this final act is not performed eye to eye by the artist; rather, he has to turn his head and achieve enlivenment of the artistic object (which then turns into a ritual subject) with the help of a mirror, and his own eyes will be bound subsequently.[28] Another telling example is an initiation ritual of the Fang in Central Africa. Here the candidate is given a hallucinogen, and when the drug starts to have its effect, the candidate is taken into the forest, where he is placed in front of a platform on which one places the skulls of the ancestors. Thereafter, the candidate is brought to consciousness, and one holds a mirror in front of him—in such a manner, however, that he does not at first see himself, but the skulls. This transposition of the self into the other, and the other into the self, gains a reflexive dimension, when the candidate afterwards plays his part in the washing of the skulls.[29]

These observations further resonate with several relevant issues in

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Psychology, the Philosophy of Art, History and Politics, edited and with an Introduction by J.M. Edie (Evanston, 1964), 168 (from the essay "Eye and Mind").

[27] This is the term G.H. Mead uses in order to refer to "the turning back of the experience of the individual upon himself", as the foundation of the social process and the development of mind; see G.H. Mead, *Mind, Self, and Society. From the Standpoint of a Social Behaviorist*, edited and with an Introduction by Ch.W. Morris (Chicago, 1934), 134.

[28] The classical study is R. Gombrich, "The Consecration of a Buddhist Image", *Journal of Asian Studies* 26 (1966), 23–36; see also I. Nākacāmi, C. Patmanātaù, P. Schalk, and Ā. Vēlupiᵒᵒai, *Buddhism among Tamils in Pre-Colonial Tamiˀakam and Īˀam. Part 2: The Period of the Imperial Cōˀar. Tamiˀakam and Īˀam* (Uppsala, 2002), 746.

[29] For this ritual and further illuminating reflections on the use of mirrors, see J.W. Fernandez, "Reflections on Looking into Mirrors", *Semiotica* 30 (1980), 27–39. For the use of mirrors in Masonic rituals (which are an interesting example for the processes described here), see J.A.M. Snoek, "De spiegel in de tweede graad. Een historisch overzicht", *Acta Macionica* 8 (1998), 359–386.

recent ritual theories. To begin with, there is the concept of 'framing': More often than not, a mirror is framed, and rituals are likewise framed events. This leads to the question of the relations of what is inside the frame to its outside and to the permeability of the frame: while there may be clear-cut (linear) distinctions, there may also be fuzzier, intersecting frames,[30] and in like manner it may be difficult to ascertain what is 'real' and what is in the mirror—and what ultimately 'mirrors' what. Does a sacrifice 'mirror' the sacrifice of the gods *in illo tempore*? Or is it the other way round? To what extent does a public event 'mirror' its context? Here it should be recalled that the act of 'mirroring' is more than a mere duplication or 'representation' of the event, for it simultaneously achieves an (almost invisible) transformation of the world—without the latter "being turned upside down",[31] even when the horizontal plane is inverted.

A well known form of (reflexive) inversion is found in such playful or dramatic public events as festivals and carnivals and such cultural performances as parody, satire, masking, clowning, and theater that give rise to reflexivity in that they re-modulate and counterpose different sets of object-subject relations.[32] A 'masking' of a different kind also appears in instances of simulation that can occur in ceremonies.[33] In initiations among the Gbaya Kara in Central Africa, the day after they had officially left their village, the candidates are seemingly executed within the range of vision of their (female) relatives (mothers), before they are entrusted to the initiators. The novices are not told what is going to happen with them, but they are instructed that they must act as if they were dead—and that they may 'really' die should they not do so. A complex *mélange* of uncertainties and ambiguities arises that brackets ontological certainties:

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[30] See also Handelman's chapter on framing in this volume.

[31] Fernandez, "Reflections", 32.

[32] See, e.g., V.W. Turner 1977; Turner 1988; Turner 1990; D. Handelman, "Reflexivity in Festival and Other Cultural Events", M. Douglas (ed.), *Essays in the Sociology of Perception* (London, Boston, Henley, 1982), 162–190. Handelman's basic interpretation of the 'freeing of the self', however, fails to convince, for the 'self' is invariably constructed in between different object-subject relations, and while the 'self' is freed from the strictures of one order, it is subject to the rules of another order. On the reflexivity of clowning, see Ohnuki-Tierney 1987, 228.

[33] For a fuller account of the following, see Houseman 2002 (who also introduces a second category: ritual 'dissimulation', or perhaps more to the point, manipulation).

the candidates are dead and they aren't, the uninitiated women know that and they don't, the candidates know that the women know it and at the same time they don't. The 'real' effects are achieved by apparent 'falsehoods'—and it is only by carefully keeping up appearances that the 'real things' happen.[34] The social set-up of the ceremonial arrangement is based on reflexivity: different modulations of "the recognition of another's perception of oneself".[35] Reflexive performance assures the performativity of the event.[36]

   All this having been said, however, the impression should be avoided that reflexivity/reflexiveness only occurs in such extraordinary ceremonial settings as initiations, festivals, and parodies. For, with Rappaport[37] and Schechner,[38] it can be argued that, rather than being restricted to special occasions, reflexivity is part of the very logic of performance of each and every ritual that is based on some sort of script or prototype.[39] In these cases, the practitioners need to appropriate, in one way or the other, the respective models, scripts, roles, or 'strips' of prior or ideal performances for the upcoming or current performance that they are undertaking. There is a wide range of possible modes of appropriation, including attempts to copy prior or ideal performances as closely as possible, and quotations from or allusions to heterogeneous materials that are rearranged in new performances. Be that as it may, the fact remains that the performance (inter-ritually) 'reflects' other performances; the ritual and its practitioners reflectively refer thereby to something else.[40] Moreover, every performance is invariably reflective because the practitioners are well aware that they are not merely the subjects of their own performances, but that their performances are the objects for other subjects—

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[34] For a similar case of ritual deception and unveiling (with reference to masks) see Højbjerg, "Inner Iconoclasm", 69, who likewise stresses the "belief-generating effecting" of "the reflexive stance intrinsic to ritual action". Furthermore he argues: "In this case, reflexivity consists in the capability of recognising a mask or a shrine, as an artefact, but also as something more when circumstances may so require."

[35] This is the 'definition' of reflexivity proposed by Houseman 2002, 78 n. 1.

[36] While Houseman's example may strike the reader as rather 'bizarre', one should not forget that milder versions of this model are to be found in quite common ceremonial elements, such as the 'kidnapping' of the bride in weddings.

[37] Rappaport 1980.

[38] Schechner 1982.

[39] The following argument is loosely based on Schechner, whereas I find Rappaport's approach unhelpful, and even questionable. For Rappaport's theory see also Kreinath's chapter in this volume.

[40] On 'ritual quotations', see Gladigow 2004, 60–63.

that they are heard or seen by an audience, even if that audience is not empirically verifiable (such as those deities or spirits who are addressed in prayers and other rituals).[41]

Apart from reflexive media, reflexive ceremonial and behavioral patterns, and the reflexivity inherent in the practical logic of performance, rituals may take other reflexive turns. To name but two examples: In cases of ritual boredom, participants may not only start to reflect on the rituals (see above), but they also can develop a reflective understanding of their situation—see themselves as 'others' (object-subjects), be turned back upon their own participation, performance, and commitment. That generates a space for ritual criticism[42] and critique. Other instances of developing reflexive attitudes include situations of participant observation in fieldwork, or any participation in 'other' rituals ("what the hell am I doing here"?).[43]

Types of Self-Reference

Niklas Luhmann has advanced an instructive attempt to distinguish 'reflection' and 'reflexivity'.[44] Luhmann distinguishes between three types of self-reference:[45] basic forms of self-reference, reflexivity (*Reflexivität*), and reflection (*Reflexion*).[46] In what follows, the third form will be ignored, since it is not strictly relevant to the concept under discussion here.

The first form of self-reference refers to elements within systems, or processes. For a chain of (e.g., ritual) actions to proceed as a fixed chain of actions, for example, it will need to refer to itself as such (otherwise the later steps would not be understood as belonging to the same sequence of events in the first place). Hence, self-reference

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[41] With Fernandez, "Reflections", 35, this obtaining "a sense of ourselves as object—as something to be seen by others" can be termed "self-objectivation".

[42] See Grimes 1990.

[43] See also Grimes 1988b.

[44] Luhmann understands self-reference as a property of all social systems. He regards 'reference' as an operation designating ('referring to') something in the context of distinguishing it operationally from something else; see N. Luhmann, *Soziale Systeme. Grundriß einer allgemeinen Theorie* (Frankfurt, 1987 [1984]), 596.

[45] According to Luhmann, self-reference is a form of reference in which the very operation of referring (or referencing) is included in that (something) what is being referred to (or designated); see Luhmann, *Soziale Systeme*, 600.

[46] On what follows, see Luhmann, *Soziale Systeme*, 599–623.

is elementary for the very operation, constitution, and further development of any unit (system, process, etc.), including rituals. However, this form of self-reference operates on the level of elements and their interrelations—and not yet on the level of systems. This is what distinguishes this form of self-reference from the other two.

Luhmann devises 'reflexivity' as a kind of self-reference in which the ongoing process itself becomes the target of the operation. In communication, for example, one can now communicate about why something has remained unsaid (not communicated about); or having power, one can decide not to employ it. That makes 'reflexivity' potentially disruptive to these ongoing processes. At the same time, it is an agent of controlled change. The question arises as to how much 'reflexive' communication (that is, communication about communication) a communicative process can possibly cope with without loosing its efficiency? To prevent an overflowing of 'reflexivity' (which may turn out to be a burdensome affair), there may be techniques of inhibiting 'reflexivity'. Interestingly, Luhmann regards rituals as such a technique of curtailing the beginnings of reflexive communications.[47] According to Luhmann, rituals fulfill this function because they are rigidly fixed sequences that can neither be modified nor questioned; hence, they represent a form of communication that avoids communication about communication.[48] As Luhmann acknowledges in a footnote, this view of ritual is informed by the theories of Mary Douglas, Roy Rappaport, and Maurice Bloch.[49] Luhmann's approach thus mirrors a rather narrow understanding of ritual that was prominent in the early 1970s, but is no longer generally shared today. Luhmann's view of ritual is a typical example of theoretical

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[47] For an application of Luhmann's theory of communication to ritual theory, see the paper by Günter Thomas in this volume; Thomas—like Luhmann—also draws heavily on Rappaport. For an attempt to apply Luhmann's notion of 'system' to ritual theory, see Stausberg 2003.

[48] See Luhmann, *Soziale Systeme*, 613: "Man kann *Rituale* begreifen unter dem Gesichtspunkt aller Coupierens für reflexive Kommunikationen. Die Kommunikation wird als fixierter Ablauf versteift, und ihre Rigidität selbst tritt an die Stelle der Frage, warum dies so ist. Die Element des Prozesses und ihre Reihenfolge werden unauswechselbar festgelegt, Worte wie Dinge behandelt, die Gegenwart zählt und ist weder im Hinblick auf die Zukunft noch an Hand jeweils angefallener vergangener Erfahrungen korrigierbar. Das Risiko des Symbolgebrauchs wird so gering wie möglich gehalten. Rituale sind vergleichbar den fraglosen Selbstverständlichkeiten des Alltagslebens."

[49] Luhmann, *Soziale Systeme*, 613 n. 34. See the abstracts to Douglas 1970, Rappaport 1971, and Bloch 1974 in the annotated bibliography.

discourse on 'rituals' that makes no attempt to look at them in their own right, in their own terms, from their own premises, but rather uses them to exemplify a point in a different discursive setting.[50] Rituals are dealt with as a special case, as something that is simultaneously familiar and 'other'.

From a theoretical perspective, Luhmann's perspective may possibly be employed more fruitfully when turned against his own premises. Luhmann states that despite all ritualizations, it will hardly ever be possible to avoid the occurrence of communication about communication. As a matter of fact, there are cases regulating this process within functionally specialized spheres of communication, and reflexivity may have been a factor in the functional differentiation of these spheres. 'Love', for example, has in Luhmann's view become a reflexive process: there are no proofs for the occurrence of 'love' apart from communicating about love (and that includes bodily behavior). Another example cited by Luhmann is education: As soon as education becomes a functionally differentiated social system (of communication), even the educators have to be educated.[51] The question arises as to whether we can (pace Luhmann) observe the occurrence of similar processes with regard to rituals? While it may be claimed that rituals communicate about culture or society—Geertz's Balinese cockfight, to quote/cite the most famous modern example of that theoretical stance, "provides a metasocial commentary", is "a Balinese reading of Balinese experience, a story they tell themselves about themselves"[52] (and already in that sense are reflexive!)—it may also be maintained that professionalized rituals tend to become ritualized affairs; rituals may not only in themselves be rigid, fixed, rule-governed behavior (if we were to adopt that position for a moment), but the way in which one deals with rituals—for example, in preparing for a performance—may also require ritualized forms. When ritual turns into a differentiated sphere, the life of the

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[50] I propose calling this sort of theoretical instrumental appropriation of a subject/object 'hetero-discourse': theoretical 'hetero-discourse' is not primarily interested in the matter at hand, but merely uses it to illustrate a point within a specific theoretical setting. Further examples of theoretical 'hetero-discourse' include theories of evolution that assign ritual an importance for specific stages of the evolutionary process. This type of theoretical appropriation of the topic ('ritual') has not yet reached the stage of ritual theory.

[51] See Luhmann, *Soziale Systeme*, 614–615.

[52] Geertz 1973, 448.

professional practitioners has to become ritualized. Moreover, to what extent is communication about rituals (in theory and practice) ritualized?[53]

Reflexive Theories and Reflexive Theorizing

Luhmann's analysis of reflexivity leaves room for the investigation of reflexivity in science, and that is an issue that has been debated to quite some extent in sociology. Here a few selective remarks will have to suffice. A seminal study by Bruno Latour and Steve Woolgar investigates the way, how 'facts' are "constructed in the laboratory" and how a sociologist can "account for this construction".[54] Apart from introducing several main concepts for their arguments that illustrate how 'facts' are fabricated, Latour and Woolgar advance their basic "notion of the construction of order out of disorder"[55] as the main feature of what goes on in a scientific laboratory. Consequently, this leads them to the observation that this notion "applies as much to the construction of our own account as to that of the laboratory scientists."[56] Their knowledge is "neither *superior nor inferior* to those produced by the scientists themselves."[57] This is the lesson of reflexivity (in this sense): to remind the reader "that *all* texts are stories",[58] including those that propose this very message. The claim "that scientific facts are not so much reflections of the world as persuasive texts",[59] and that there is a 'politics of explanation', has lead some sociologists (who came to be known as the 'reflexivists') to produce full-blown reflexive texts that experimentally explore the prac-

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[53] Interestingly—now we again move on the reflexive level of theorizing—it has been argued (with respect to Mauss, Durkheim, and Bourdieu) that the observation (study) of rituals proceeds in ritual forms: W. Gephart, "Rituale der Ritualbeobachtung. Von Émile Durkheims 'effervescence' über Marcel Mauss' 'fait total' zu Pierre Bourdieu's 'acte d'institution'", *Forum Ritualdynamik* 6 (2004); accessed on January 24, 2005, from http://www.ritualdynamik.uni-hd.de.

[54] B. Latour and S. Woolgar, *Laboratory Life. The Construction of Scientific Facts. With a New Postscript and Index by the Authors* (Princeton, 1986 [1979]), 40.

[55] Latour and Woolgar, *Laboratory Life*, 252.

[56] Latour and Woolgar, *Laboratory Life*, 254.

[57] Latour and Woolgar, *Laboratory Life*, 257.

[58] Latour and Woolgar, *Laboratory Life*, 284.

[59] St. Woolgar, "Foreword" to M. Ashmore, *The Reflexive Thesis. Wrighting Sociology of Scientific Knowledge* (Chicago, 1989), xvii.

tice inherent in their own production of 'knowledge'.[60] In retrospect, while it has become clear that reflexivity is a useful "corrective to a kind of methodological overconfidence",[61] one of the main exponents of the group frankly admits that "[r]reflexivity gets you nowhere. It is not a useful thing to do and its results cannot be used. It is impractical."[62]

Ritual theory, it seems to me, is in serious need of reflexive theorizing. Attempts in that direction, such as Catherine Bell's "analytical exploration of the social existence of the concept of ritual",[63] and her reflexive analysis that "talk about ritual may reveal more about the speakers than about the bespoken",[64] did well to stir some attention, but it seems that it did not succeed in giving pause to the machinery of the theorists (and to some extent that holds true of her own theory). Occasional critiques of the epistemological value of the category and concept of 'ritual' seem to have effectively trailed off—and our volume will possibly do its humble share to create the

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[60] Ashmore, *The Reflexive Thesis*, plays with the genre 'thesis' and Ashmore, "Reflexivity, in Science and Technology Studies", plays with the genre of writing in encyclopedias. An important collection of essays from prominent 'reflexivists' is S. Woolgar (ed.), *Knowledge and Reflexivity. New Frontiers in the Sociology of Knowledge* (London, 1988). The essay by T. Pinch ("Reservations about Reflexivity and New Literary Forms or Why Let the Devil Have All the Good Tunes") in that volume (178–197) discusses these new literary form—and does so in a reflexive fashion (in the form of a dialogue, which is why the name of the author is duplicated as Trevor Pinch and Trevor Pinch). In the vein of the so-called writing culture debate, reflexive modes of writing have also been extensively explored in social anthropology. An early classic is V. Crapanzano, *Tuhami. Portrait of a Moroccan* (Chicago, London, 1980).

[61] Ashmore, "Reflexivity, in Science and Technology Studies", 12883.

[62] Ashmore, "Reflexivity, in Science and Technology Studies", 12883. By contrast, the version of reflexivity in the study of science provided by Pierre Bourdieu is much more confident and result-oriented. It is a critique from within, an auto-analysis, that, by objectifying the subject that objectifies 'facts', i.e. by reflecting on and sociologically analyzing the social preconditions of the respective scholarly praxis, aims at improving the quality of the scholarly work. Its aim is to go beyond the scholarly bias and to avoid the danger of confusing one's own way of thinking with that of those whose actions and behavior are being analyzed. See P. Bourdieu, *Science de la science et réflexivité. Cours du Collège de France 2000–2001* (Paris, 2002). A concise summary of his position is P. Bourdieu, "Narzistische Reflexivität und wissenschaftliche Reflexivität", E. Berg and M. Fuchs (eds), *Kultur, soziale Praxis, Text. Die Krise der ethnographischen Repräsentation* (suhrkamp taschenbuch wissenschaft 1051; Frankfurt, 1999 [1993]), 365–374. For a (reflexive) critique of this model of reflexivity, see Pels, "Reflexivity", 11–15.

[63] Bell 1992, ix.

[64] Bell 1997, xi.

impression that there is *something* out there that is worthy and in serious need of being theorized. But how are these 'facts' produced in the first place? The modes of the (theoretical) construction of the very 'fact' of ritual are most effectively passed over in silence.[65]

Most (but far from all!) theoreticians still seem to operate with the category of 'ritual' as a means of othering in their discursive narratives: 'ritual' is the non-ordinary *par excellence*. 'Rituals' are mostly homogenized in a general category that leaves room for very little internal differentiation. Statements to the effect that "rituals are" and "ritual does"—as if they were the agent(s)—generally presented in the timeless present and based on one key example (paradigm) are still the order of the day. Moreover, much of the current theoretical impasse may be the result of the semantic extension and diffusion of the concept, and theoretical discourses about 'ritual' seem to have reached a stage where everything can at the same time be included and excluded: everything can be perceived as if it were 'ritual', and since 'ritual' can be anything, there is an abundance of examples and counterexamples for everything.

Rituals under the Conditions of Reflexive Modernity

Catherine Bell has made some pertinent observations on the consequences of the reification of ritual achieved by theoretical discourse for contemporary ritual practice.[66] Among others, she notes that "the concept of ritual has influenced how many people . . . go about ritualizing today."[67] Moreover, "scholarly studies of 'ritual' that demonstrate the evolution and variation of ritual practices over time have been used by components of the larger public as authoritative justifications for making fresh changes in their traditional practices."[68] Bell convincingly describes this as a two-fold process.

On the one hand, the study of ritual and the emergence of RITUAL (as a reified, ontologized meta- and mono-category)[69] may have

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[65] See also Latour and Woolgar, *Laboratory Life*, 240: "The result of the *construction* of a fact is that it appears unconstructed by anyone".

[66] Bell 1997, 253–267.

[67] Bell 1997, 262–263.

[68] Bell 1997, 263.

[69] See also Handelman's chapter on conceptual alternatives in this volume.

"the effect of subordinating, relativizing, and ultimately undermining many aspects of ritual practice, even as they point to ritual as a powerful medium of transcultural experience."[70] This observation points to the more general fact that modern scholarship by nature, as it were, challenges traditional authorities, and no study of any ritual will ever be able to avoid this inherent challenge. To be sure, that does not exclude the opposite effect: that the study of ritual occasionally also has the effect of bolstering traditional authorities, even if unintended—this support of traditional authorities, however, is always valid only until revoked by further scholarship. The design of any study of any ritual has therefore to take account of its feedback on the subjects/object of its study, for it can no longer be ignored that "the observer becomes part of the object he is describing."[71]

On the other hand, Bell observes the emergence of "a new 'paradigm' for ritualization".[72] Among other things, this new ritualistic paradigm is characterized by "rather nontraditional ways" of locating its authority: "Most common, perhaps, is an implicit appeal to the authority lodged in the abstract notion of ritual itself."[73] The very belief in the primal social and psychological importance and efficacy of ritual "gives ritualists the authority to ritualize creatively and even idiosyncratically."[74] These creative or idiosyncratic processes are 'reflexive' because the new 'rituals' (or 'ritualizations') are designed *as* 'RITUAL'—act(ion)s are projected onto the conceptual frame of 'RITUAL', and these 'rituals' are thus held to achieve 'effects' or 'functions' that ritual studies and ritual theories ascribe to 'RITUAL' (such as the creation of communitas or emotional comfort).

In a previous paper,[75] I have tried to link the emergence of some of these new forms of 'reflexive' rituals to the ongoing debate about 'reflexive modernization' in sociology.[76] This debate introduces further concepts of reflexivity. For Anthony Giddens,[77] the fundamental trait of modernity is its radical turning away from and its inherent

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[70] Bell 1997, 263.

[71] Houseman and Severi 1998, 8.

[72] Bell 1997, 264.

[73] Bell 1997, 263.

[74] Bell 1997, 264.

[75] M. Stausberg, "Reflexive Ritualisationen", *Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte* 56 (2004), 54–61.

[76] See, e.g., U. Beck, S. Lash, and A. Giddens, *Reflexive Modernization. Politics, Tradition, and Aesthetics in the Modern Social Order* (Cambridge, 1994).

[77] See A. Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity* (Cambridge, 1990).

antagonism towards 'tradition' (and, intimately connected to that, religion and ritual). In modern societies, Giddens argues, all social practices are constantly reviewed and improved in the light of incoming information about these very practices, for example, by modern institutions. The knowledge produced (mostly by experts) under the prevailing circumstances of modernity is no longer 'certain', but merely valid until cancelled. This knowledge of the world contributes to its instability. Moreover, the knowledge that is produced and processed by the (observing) experts returns to the fields of knowledge themselves which are thereby constantly transformed. This (risky) circulation of knowledge is what Giddens describes as modernity's reflexivity. While he regards ritual as part of the routine of tradition that is antagonistic to modernity, Giddens's theory can nevertheless—contrary to its own premises—be read as a fairly accurate description of some elements of the process described above: the knowledge about rituals is no longer vested in traditional authorities, but possessed and processed by experts (many of whom contributing to this volume), whose knowledge leaves imprints on and contributes to changes in the field of ritual practice.[78]

While Giddens claims that reflexivity is part and parcel of modernity as such, Ulrich Beck (and colleagues) has come up with a theory of 'reflexive modernization', namely a second phase of modernization that undermines the very structures of (first/simple) modern society: "Simple modernization becomes reflexive modernization to the extent that it disenchants and then dissolves its own taken-for-granted premises."[79] 'Reflexivity' is not an instance of mastery, but instead points to a loss of control.[80] This is not a planned development but

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[78] Perhaps the most prominent example of the conscious dissemination of knowledge about "the power of rites" by "a major scholar who has spent years writing and teaching about ritual" and who will now "help us reclaim the power of rites and understand their effect on our lives" (all quotes from the dusk-jacket) is R.L. Grimes, *Deeply into the Bone. Re-Inventing Rites of Passage* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, 2000).

[79] U. Beck, W. Bonss, and C. Lau, "The Theory of Reflexive Modernization. Problematic, Hypotheses, and Research Programme", *Theory, Culture, and Society* 20 (2003), 1–33, here 3.

[80] Therefore, 'reflexivity' in this sense is on the opposite side of 'reflection', for the latter implies a situation of hegemony and control: "To reflect is to somehow subsume the object under the subject of knowledge. Reflection presumes apodictic knowledge and certainty", S. Lash, "Reflexivity as Non-Linearity", *Theory, Culture, and Society* 20 (2003), 49–57, here, 51.

is rather induced by unintended side effects (= consequences) of 'simple' modernization.[81]

> Reflexive modernization seems to be producing a new kind of capitalism, a new kind of labour, a new kind of global order, a new kind of society, a new kind of nature, a new kind of subjectivity, a new kind of everyday life and a new kind of state.[82]

The classical institutions retreat. To read the theory once again against its own (hidden) premises: Does 'reflexive modernization' also give way to new kinds of rituals (or 'ritualizations') in Western society? As we have seen above, this may in fact be the case. It may have to do with the positioning of the (quasi-) subject and the public institutions in reflexive modernization. For when reflexive modernization, on the one hand, points at the outsourcing and globalization of institutions and at the same time at "an offloading of functions onto private instances",[83] this clearly has an impact on the institutional frameworks of ritual practice: as much as Yoga as a 'spiritual practice' can be employed in a wider range of social organizations, the churches have (albeit unwillingly) offloaded many of their ritual functions (such as burials) onto more private bodies. The field of ritual practice has not been spared the "de-normalization of roles".[84] And as much as the second-modern subject is 'nomadic', he or she is so with respect to the ritual tradition he or she is part of. As Lash puts it: "Now the subject must be much more the rule-finder him- or herself."[85] That is exactly what many contemporary ritual practitioners do.[86] Second-modern biographies "become the biography of the 'self-employed' in every sense of the term"[87]—and this again holds true of many a 'self-employed' contemporary 'ritualization'.

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[81] Beck, Bonss, and Lau, "The Theory of Reflexive Modernization", 8: "Our central thesis is that side-effects of modern Western society eventually put its touchstone into question."

[82] Beck, Bonss, and Lau, "The Theory of Reflexive Modernization", 2–3.

[83] Lash, "Reflexivity as Non-Linearity", 53.

[84] Lash, "Reflexivity as Non-Linearity", 53.

[85] Lash, "Reflexivity as Non-Linearity", 53.

[86] In his fieldwork Grimes has encountered "two models for ritual creativity", which he calls "the ritual plumber's model" ("Someone needs a divorce rite? Well, you sit down with a couple and find out what needs doing"; "a committee commissioned to revise a liturgy") and the model of the ritual diviner (waiting for "the moving of the spirit") respectively, Grimes, *Deeply into the Bone*, 12.

[87] Beck, Bonss, and Lau, "The Theory of Reflexive Modernization", 25.

Inconclusive Conclusions

This chapter has (in a conventional literary form) briefly introduced
and worked with different concepts of 'reflexivity'—different reflexivities
as it were—and it has sketched their range of applications to the
realms of 'ritual' and 'ritual theory'. The suspicion that the ubiquity
of the term 'reflexivity' in current discourses obstructs our insight
into the fact that there are actually fundamentally different concepts
of 'reflexivity' at work seems to be the more likely option. Experience
predicts that attempts either to ban the term or to index its usage
are doomed to failure. Probably it will be used as long as it helps
people to reflect on rituals and on reflecting on them—and possibly
even after it has ceased to fulfill these functions. The reader and
future students of rituals will have to decide if that stage has already
been reached.

RHETORICS

James W. Fernandez

*On Persuading Practical People: The Rhetorical Approach
to Understanding Ritual in Culture*

In reputedly or reportedly practical minded societies such as the ones
most of us now live in in the modern world, focused as they are on
bottom lines and measurable inputs and outputs, any interest taken
in rhetoric, not to speak of ritual, has to be recurrently explained
and justified to 'street smart' and skeptical men and women of that
world. Of what use are they? What do they have to do with every-
day problem solving? In taking up our topic we find ourselves imme-
diately in the contestedness that constantly characterizes human
relations and that the rhetorical perspective takes as primary in the
human condition.

   The answers to these hard headed questions in this case almost
all have to do with the place of culture in creating those 'definitions
of situation' in which practice takes place and obtains any meaning
at all and which set the 'conditions of possibility' in which the 'purely
practical' can be exercised and its effects judged. Attendance to these
'definitions' and these 'conditions' has been the cultural anthropo-
logist's way of responding to this persistent skepticism. It has been
his or her way of seeking to persuade the practical minded that
beyond pragmatics lies culture itself, which in final analysis and in
so many ways is the presentation and putting into effect of a per-
suasive view of the world with its accompanying evaluations of what
should be taken as normal in behavior and experience. Culture, one
might say, is a complexly interesting form of persuasion. And one
of the most interesting and powerful forms of persuasion is ritual
itself. Indeed, in ritual we find, as Roy Rappaport argued,[1] the mak-
ing of our humanity. And rhetoric plays an important role in that
'making'.

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[1] Rappaport 1979; Rappaport 1999.

If rhetoric, as practically any dictionary tells us, is "the art and science of persuasion which effectively influences thought and conduct", we want to understand ritual in these terms. How does it persuade and what are the effects of its persuasions? The argument of anthropology, or at least cultural anthropology, with the realities apparent to practical mindedness in the utilitarian sense has ancient roots. In the Western tradition the argument goes back to the Sophists' argument with the Platonists. The Sophists understood society and culture as something in constant negotiation and saw how fundamental argument itself and public debate was to the foundations and dynamics of community; they pursued the understanding of those dynamics through the study of rhetoric, that is, through understanding the arts of persuasion in social situations of constant contestedness. For the Platonists, understanding aimed beyond contestedness to the grasp of formal and enduring truths. This argument between those who seek to understand the dynamics of community in terms of human argumentativeness and persuasiveness and those who pursue enduring formal truths has persisted.

After centuries of prejudices against the 'reality'-creating potential and, indeed, everyday 'truth value' of rhetoric, in the late twentieth century there was a resurgence of the relevance of the rhetorical disciplines to the understanding of the dynamics of social life and also of ritual. This was confirmed through the work of structural linguists interacting with anthropologists. Roman Jakobson was influential with his emphasis on the poetics, which is to say the imaginative play of figurative thought expressed in language which accompanied and both expressed and influenced social life and social interaction.[2] This suggested that ritual should itself be treated as a kind of poetics of persuasion. In interaction with Jakobson and other linguists, the structuralist anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss from the 1950s on laid emphasis on the fabulations, the mythological background of social life,[3] which could be deployed as narrative accompaniments in shamanic curing rituals, for example, so as to suggest other and more convincing and accommodating orders of reality to the patient.[4] In

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[2] R. Jakobson and M. Halle, *Fundamentals of Language* (Berlin, New York, 1971).
[3] C. Lévi-Strauss et al., *Results of the Conference of Anthropologists and Linguists* (Baltimore, 1953).
[4] C. Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind* (London, 1966); C. Lévi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology*, trans. C. Jacobson and B.G. Schoepf (New York, 1963).

general, it might be said that Lévi-Strauss's 'science of the concrete' was a method attentive to the structuration of figurative thought seen as a form of problem-solving for those recurrent dilemmas of everyday life that faced 'the savage mind', whether in its archaic or its modern form. It was an attempt to understand how, through rhetorical processes, the structure of myth and rituals could be persuasive in resolving these 'unwelcome contradictions' of everyday life in society.

Kenneth Burke was a twentieth-century figure, with mainly literary roots, who was influential in American anthropology's turn towards rhetoric. In two books, most notable for our interests here, *A Rhetoric of Motives* and *The Rhetoric of Religion*,[5] Burke argued for the central place of rhetoric in social theory and expounded a theory of symbolic action centrally attentive to verbal action and its inciting and resolving effect in social relations, that is, in the construction or destruction, acceptance or rejection, formation or reformation, of community. Burke focused on the relation between persuasion and identification—hence his focus on rhetoric—and sought to understand how religious language and symbol motivated social action with consequences for one's own or one's group's identity and sense of substantial place in the world. He had a strong sense, later found in Victor Turner,[6] of the drama of social relations, and Burke's method is often called *dramatistic* based on an analytic pentad of act, scene, agent, agency, and purpose, by which all expressive acts and institutions, including rituals, could be parsed and understood in symbolic-rhetorical terms.

Clifford Geertz described his writings mainly of the late 1950s, '60s, and early '70s, as focused on ethnography as 'imaginative interpretation'.[7] He examined the imaginative resources with which, ethnographic texts were composed and by means of which they persuaded their readers of their 'factuality', 'cogency', and 'pertinence'—that is, the way in which the ethnographer convinced his or her reader that the ethnologist had 'been there'. The interpretivist approach necessarily involved attention to the rhetorical elements in ethnographic narrative. But it also involved a view of the dynamics of culture as—

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[5] K. Burke, *A Rhetoric of Motives* (New York, 1950); K. Burke, *The Rhetoric of Religion. Studies in Logology* (Boston, 1961).

[6] V.W. Turner, *Schism and Continuity in an African Society. A Study of Ndembu Village Life* (Manchester, 1957).

[7] Geertz 1973.

in large part—lodged in the rhetoric of everyday life. This view of the centrality of rhetoric was also present in the 'writing culture' movement of the 1980s,[8] which followed Geertz's interpretivist emphasis. This movement focused, in effect, upon the rhetoric of ethnographic writing in an ideologically vectored world, and this focus inevitably posed the problems of choices in ethnographic presentation always with political and moral implications. 'Writing culture' was thus inevitably 'culture critique'[9] and was in turn, like any motivated critique of styles of argument, rhetorical.

In the last quarter of the twentieth century, a number of works and collections appeared that were sensitive to the understanding of culture in rhetorical terms. A notable collection of articles that focused directly on the rhetoric of everyday life—particularly on the place therein of one of the key rhetorical devices, metaphor[10]—was David Sapir and Christopher Crocker's *The Social Use of Metaphor*,[11] which was based on work done in the late '60s. This volume featured an essay by the present author entitled "The Performance of Ritual Metaphors" which, along with his essay "The Mission of Metaphor in Expressive Culture", focused on what came to be called 'the play of tropes in culture' or tropological theory in anthropology.[12] Sapir and Crocker employed a method of understanding social thought

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[8] J. Clifford and G. Marcus, *Writing Culture. The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography* (Berkeley, 1986).

[9] G. Marcus and M. Fischer, *Anthropology as Cultural Critique. An Experimental Moment in the Human Sciences* (Chicago, 1986).

[10] By 'metaphor' is meant the clarification of our understanding of a difficult subject of interest in a given domain of understanding (the unclear *focus* or *target* of our interest) by reference to a better understood subject or object of understanding taken from another domain of understanding (called the *vehicle* or *source*) which, when targeted or focused upon the difficult subject, increases our understanding of it: 'The Devil (*target*) is the Serpent of Temptation (*vehicle*)', or 'Lucifer (*target*) is the sulfur-stinking goat (*vehicle*) of desire'. Metonym is the transformation of understanding of the focus or target, not by appealing to other domains (the animal domain as, e.g., in the case of the devil), but by playing within the domain of the subject of interest, taking the part for the whole or the whole for the part, the effect for the cause or the cause for the effect, the container for the contained or the contained for the container, etc. A sinner (the *effect*) is a devil (the *cause*) incarnate. Irony is the trope of reversal, where our understanding is stimulated by saying just the reverse of what is to be understood as intended: 'What a sweet companion is the Devil!'

[11] J.D. Sapir and J.C. Crocker (eds), *The Social Use of Metaphor. Essays on the Anthropology of Rhetoric* (Philadelphia, 1977).

[12] Fernandez 1977; Fernandez 1974; Fernandez 1986.

and social interaction nurtured by a sense of the contestedness of everyday life and the rhetorical and poetical practices by which that contestedness was managed. Lévi-Strauss and Geertz had been attentive to the role of metaphor in *fabulation* in culture and in the interpretive task, but it was Stanley Tambiah's earlier work on the persuasive power of metaphor in Trobriand magical spells that had the greatest influence on the concentrated work on metaphor in the 1970s.[13] In the same period, Stephen Tyler began his own work on the centrality of rhetoric and the figurative as a constant, if unseen and often implicit, sub-text to the creation of meaning in culture.[14]

Subsequently, these efforts at centering attention on the rhetoric of 'communicative interaction' led to further work by psychological anthropologists, social and cultural anthropologists, and cognitive linguists. A good example of the first is the work of Thomas Csordas,[15] who formulated an interpretivist approach to the ritual healing process as a form of discourse. This discourse was seen as embodying a cultural rhetoric that performed three persuasive tasks. It created: (1) a predisposition to be healed, (2) the experience of spiritual empowerment, and (3) the substantial perception of personal transformation. Csordas showed that this threefold transformative process anchored in the rhetoric of the ritual acted to create both a new phenomenological world, and a new self for the supplicant. In many ways, Csordas's work echoed and enriched Anthony Wallace's work on the stages of ritual learning as a dissociation and re-association process, as the separated initiate sensorially deprived or over-stimulated by the rituals fell under the powers of suggestion of new cognitive structures.[16]

Social and cultural anthropologists under the influence of the rhetorical turn developed the congruent idea of a 'poetics' of social science understanding, whether this be defined as 'social poetics',[17] the study of the rhetorical put ups and put downs of male daily life in Greece, for example or as 'cultural poetics', the study of the

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[13] Tambiah 1968.

[14] S.A. Tyler, *The Said and the Unsaid. Mind, Meaning, and Culture* (New York, 1978).

[15] Csordas 1983; T.J. Csordas, *Language, Charisma, and Creativity. The Ritual Life of a Religious Movement* (Berkeley, 1997).

[16] Wallace 1966.

[17] M. Herzfeld, *The Poetics of Manhood. Contest and Identity in a Cretan Mountain Village* (Princeton, 1985); M. Herzfeld, *Cultural Intimacy. Social Poetics in the Nation-State* (New York, 1997).

categories of 'belonging within' or 'belonging without', by which group identities are figuratively claimed or ascribed between Anglos and Hispanos in social life on the Texas border[18] or in the constant identity regenerations of an itinerant American life style generally.[19] In these works, which focused on the 'dynamics of the categorical' in the ritual process,[20] it was assumed that no meaningful ethnographic description and analysis could be done without attending to the rhetorical energies at work in seeking to constantly reshape the categorical configurations of contested social relationships. The basic meanings of social situations of interaction were constantly subject to claims and counter claims in ongoing enactments.[21] And this, of course, would include ritual activity as well.

Even more support for a rhetorical point of view towards the human condition was provided by cognitive linguists. They took up this renewed interest in the role of metaphor in everyday life in the 1980s and '90s, arguing by formal demonstration against the idea that metaphoric reasoning was simply an accessory and incidental to thought, but rather that it was a body anchored, everyday forms of conceptualization by which humans lived in communicative interaction. In the figurative, they argued, one finds embodied the very physical 'propositional statements' and the convincing 'truth values' that condition daily life, much more than do the 'meta-physical' propositions of conventional philosophy.[22] Experientially, the body is always in the mind and everyday thought is inevitably embodied. By this argument, and being attentive to the tropes so closely linked to bodily experience, the cognitive linguists were persuaded to abolish the body–mind dichotomy once and for all.

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[18] J.E. Limon, *Dancing with the Devil. Society and Cultural Poetics in Mexican American South Texas* (Madison, 1994).

[19] K. Stewart, *A Space on the Side of the Road. Cultural Poetics in an "Other" America* (Princeton, 1996).

[20] J.W. Fernandez, "Culture and Transcendent Humanization. On the Dynamic of the Categorical", *Ethnos* 59 (1994), 143–167.

[21] See P. Friedrich, *The Language Parallax. Linguistic Relativism and Poetic Indeterminacy* (Austin, 1986); J.W. Fernandez and M. Herzfeld, "On Meaningful Methods", J.R. Bernard (ed.), *Handbook of Methods in Cultural Anthropology* (Thousand Oaks, 1998), 89–129.

[22] G. Lakoff and M. Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago, 1980); G. Lakoff and M. Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh. The Embodied Mind and its Challenge to Western Thought* (New York, 1999).

A Poetics of Ritual Action: The Persuasive Play of Tropes in Ritual

If the cognitivists proposed a rhetorical theory of philosophy and a rhetoric inevitably nurtured by ongoing bodily experience, social and cultural anthropologists had moved away from the essentials of an ontologically fixed view of the human situation and had proposed a view of culture as, in everyday experience, a constantly contested phenomenon, ever dialogical if not dialectical, full of arguments and pronouncements and endless negotiations and the swirl of moral energies and moral claims. They proposed to look at the rhetorical strategies in play at the very heart of this contestedness of culture. They proposed, in short, a 'rhetorical theory of culture'[23] in which social life is seen as much more than a code of or template for behavior. It is seen not only as regularly mediated by rhetorical strategies but also, in fact, as something kept vital by that continuous negotiation. Thus they regarded social life as a rhetorical achievement, a recurrently persuasive deploying of poetic resources for both community formation and socially transformative purposes.

And so ritual itself has also to be seen as a persuasive process with transformative consequences for personal and social identity. Transformation can, of course, occur in two directions: towards a *status quo antes* in the case of 'rites of intensification and reintegration', to use the old dichotomy, or towards a new *status quo* in the case of rites of passage. And transformation can be accomplished by many techniques, from intense rhythmic associative techniques of group inter-coordination and category confirmation of the kind emphasized by biogenetic theories[24] and highlighted in Durkheimian theories of 'collective effervescence' to theories of dissociation by means of bizarre and paradoxical anti-structural stimuli and category reversals such as in putting gender distinctions at play.

The idea of ritual as transformation is canonical, of course, dating back to Arnold van Gennep's original work on rites of passage.[25] It is present in the notion of *the initiate*, who is separated, transitioned, and reincorporated *as the initiated one*, reemerging into a new

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[23] U. Demmer, *Verwandtschaft und Sozialität bei den Jenu Kurumba. Vom Arbeiten, vom Teilen und von (Un)gleichheit in einer südindischen Sammler- und Jägergesellschaft* (Stuttgart, 1996).

[24] D'Aquili, Laughlin Jr., and McManus (eds) 1979.

[25] A. van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage* (1919), trans. M. Vizedom and G. Caffee (Chicago, 1960).

social state. And it has received the illuminating attention and enrichment of Victor Turner's symbolic morphology, which concentrates particularly on the betwixtness and betweenness of Van Gennep's transitional or liminal state and the anti-structure or *communitas* achieved therein.[26] Turner also offered students of ritual a creative theory of the meaning of core or master ritual symbolism, a theory based on very grounded and painstaking ethnographic inquiry. It was a theory grounded in a recognition of the complex and challenging learning task of the anthropologist and his or her need to add to the limited *exegetical* capacities of the informant, regarding the meaning of ritual symbols by noting, through the closest and most attentive ethnographic participation, the *operational* and *positional* deployment of the symbols.

The rhetorical approach to ritual has sought in turn and from the first to enrich previous contributions to ritual studies, and particularly Turner's symbolic morphology,[27] by attending as closely as possible both to what is being rhetorically predicated upon whom and to what purpose in the ritual process. It focuses, one might say, on the symbolic process as one of predication of meanings across the copula between subjects and objects rather than focusing on a more virtuoso interpretation of the meaningful content—exegetical, operational, and positional—of the symbol itself. It thus looks closely at the figuration of ritual thought and the ways that the various tropes, metaphors, metonyms, synechdoches, and ironies are deployed in ritual. It seeks to understand ritual as a strategy for the transformation of social relations and a strategic reformation of community in which a persuasive rhetoric is very much at play. In recent years, it has thus sought to take advantage of the awareness in the 'rhetorical theory of culture' of the constant contestedness of life in culture and the ways in which ritual represents self and others in both bounded and unbounded terms as part of that contestedness. Ritual is therefore to be understood as a particularly interesting and ordered instance of 'the play of tropes' in culture and social life and social argumentation[28] and as a play of associations and dissociations between

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[26] Turner 1969.
[27] J.W. Fernandez, with response by V.W. Turner, "Analysis of Ritual. Metaphoric Correspondences as the Elementary Forms", *Science* 182 (1973), 1366–1367.
[28] Fernandez 1986; J.W. Fernandez (ed.), *Beyond Metaphor. The Theory of Tropes in Anthropology* (Stanford, 1991).

domains of belonging (as in metaphor) and within domains of belonging (as in metonym). The approach is particularly attentive, as regards ritual actors and ritual actions, to the reciprocal play of categorical relations, which are so frequent in rhetorical strategies, between content and container, subject and object, agent and patient. It is attentive, one might say, to the ways in which ritual rhetoric seeks to make agents out of patients, subjects out of social objects, and content-filled instruments out of empty containers. Of course, the opposite can, ironically, occur as well! And therefore the rhetorical approach to ritual must also attend to the ironies involved in ritual celebrations.[29] In any event, the rhetorical approach to ritual, together with its awareness of the dynamics of the categorical in human relations, is especially attentive to these transformations.[30]

In addition to the increased understanding obtained by treating ritual as a strategic and predicative process of social figuration and re-figuration, there is also an increase in the reflexivity of the rhetorical approach upon itself. Also subject to our inquiry therefore are the various tropes by which anthropologists organize their understanding of ritual, whether it is the many chambered house metaphor so basic to Van Gennep's work or the drama metaphor so basic to Victor Turner's understanding. In general, we might say that the rhetorical approach is very much aware of the transitory 'subjunctive mood' of so much of ritual, to use Turner's own characterization of the liminal state, and thus seeks to avoid over-commitment to a settled and essentialist ontology. But lest that cautious attitude so condition the study of ritual itself as to lend credence to the skepticism of the 'practically minded' (to return to our opening thoughts

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[29] J.W. Fernandez and M. Huber (eds), *Irony in Action. Anthropology, Practice, and the Moral Imagination* (Chicago, 2001).

[30] This is not the place to examine in any detail the specifics of this approach although one can refer the reader to the analysis by this author of the rhetorical use of paths and pathways, and particularly 'the path of life and death' in the Fang religious movement of *Bwiti* (J.W. Fernandez, *Bwiti. An Ethnography of the Religious Imagination in Africa* [Princeton, 1982]). This trope, when its associations are examined ethnographically in the Fang social-cultural context, is seen as a crucial organizing metaphor for both the ritual procedure itself and for the figurative understanding of the transformation achieved through the entire rituals. Or, in the same way, in Christianity one can see how the 'lamb of god' (*Agnus dei*) serves as a rhetorical lead-in to a re-figured understanding of liturgical organization and theological belief by reference to the foundations of religious ritual in pastoral society and the husbandman's sense of pastoral obligation' to the well being of his flock (Fernandez 1974). See also Fernandez and Herzfeld, "On Meaningful Methods".

about the challenge offered to students of ritual by pragmatism), we conclude with a rhetorical observation that Mircea Eliade, employed in his teaching. He argued, if I may years later render here words I recall from his lectures, that "initiation rites of one kind or another lay at the heart of any genuine human life, and rites of intensification at the core of any genuine life in community."

TRANSMISSION*

Harvey Whitehouse

Like any other cultural phenomena, ritual actions and the meanings with which people invest them are *distributed* across populations. To ask how and why these distributions come into being is to ask for an account of the mechanisms of *transmission*. At one time, at least in some parts of the academy, the dominant framework for under-standing cultural transmission was *diffusionism*. According to diffusionists, the distribution of cultural traits (including rituals) resulted from his-tories of contact between populations. In explaining similarities in the ritual practices of contemporary populations, perhaps separated by immense distances and natural barriers, diffusionists sought to unveil *either* common origins *or* ancient paths of culture-contact that might account for indirect transmission of shared traits.[1] A major limitation of some versions of this approach, however, was their lack of any detailed account of the mechanisms of transmission. Moreover, the emphasis of diffusionism was on the spread of material culture rather than of procedural and semantic knowledge, with which the present discussion is primarily concerned.

Diffusionist approaches were, in any case, soon eclipsed, at least in Britain, by the rise of functionalism. A key doctrine of the latter was that resemblances among cultural phenomena in diverse popu-lations were superficial and misleading.[2] Rituals, for instance, that looked the same might in fact play very different roles in the social lives of the different populations currently sustaining them. A focus on the functional integration of social institutions in local settings

[1] See, e.g., F. Graebner, *Methode der Ethnologie* (Heidelberg, 1911); W. Schmidt, *The Culture Historical Method of Ethnology*, trans. S.A. Sieber (New York, 1939); E.G. Smith, *The Diffusion of Culture* (London, 1933); W.H.R. Rivers, *Social Organization* (London, 1924); and A.C. Haddon, *The Wanderings of Peoples* (Cambridge, 1911).

[2] See B. Malinowski, *A Scientific Theory of Culture and other Essays* (Chapel Hill, 1944).

rendered the study of historical and inter-cultural transmission largely irrelevant. A prominent heir to this way of thinking in social and cultural anthropology has been the postmodern preoccupation with 'local appropriations' of what seem (again, it is alleged, only superficially) to be diffused traits, such as those associated with 'globalization'. It would seem that a concern with qualitative research in small populations, regardless of the analytical perspectives supporting it, encourages the impression that the mechanisms driving cultural transmission are distinctive to the local group under study *rather* than being more widely generalizable. At least two recent, cross-disciplinary initiatives in the study of cultural transmission now challenge that trend: the emerging science of memetics and the cognitive science of culture. The latter, as we shall see, is now making an especially rich and detailed contribution to our understanding of the transmission of *rituals* and of *ritual meanings*.

Memetics, although currently encompassing a wide range of perspectives,[3] rests on some shared premises with regard to a fundamental comparability of distributions of biological and cultural traits respectively, and the selectional mechanisms of transmission that govern both kinds of processes. But like earlier diffusionists, very few (if any) memeticists have yet presented a detailed account of the cognitive dynamics that might bias transmission in specifiable ways.[4] Largely for this reason, memetics has had little to say about how mechanisms of transmission might differ within and across specified *domains* of culture—for instance, how religious transmission might differ from the transmission of scientific concepts and, even more important for present purposes, how ritual transmission might differ from the transmission of non-ritual knowledge. This is where cognitive approaches come into their own.

The cognitive approach to cultural transmission proceeds from the assumption that specifiable features of the way human minds acquire skills and information serve systematically to bias transmission of such knowledge and hence can help to explain which kinds of traits in

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[3] See R. Aunger (ed.), *Darwinizing Culture. The Status of Memetics as a Science* (Oxford, 2000).

[4] See D. Sperber, "An Objection to the Memetic Approach to Culture", Aunger (ed.), *Darwinizing Culture*, 163–173; P. Boyer, "Cultural Inheritance Tracks and Cognitive Predispositions. The Example of Religious Concepts", H. Whitehouse (ed.), *The Debated Mind. Evolutionary Psychology versus Ethnography* (Oxford, 2001), 57–89.

human populations are capable of achieving cultural levels of distribution. There are currently two main strands to this work, which are ultimately compatible. First, there are cognitive approaches to transmission which are concerned with the impact of universal intuitive (or minimally counterintuitive) mechanisms of thought on the selection of cultural representations. This work was initially pioneered by Dan Sperber,[5] E. Thomas Lawson and Robert McCauley,[6] and Pascal Boyer,[7] but has subsequently given rise to a minor industry of further research that both supports and embellishes the original paradigm.[8] Second, there are cognitive approaches to transmission that emphasize the consequences of variable activation of memory systems and other mechanisms of *explicit* mental processing under specifiable conditions of transmissive frequency, emotional arousal, and prior learning. The latter approaches stem largely from my own work,[9] which is in turn built on eclectic foundations.[10] Research in this area now involves the inputs of a wide range of scholars in the

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[5] D. Sperber, *Rethinking Symbolism* (Cambridge Studies in Social Anthropology 11; Cambridge, 1975); D. Sperber, "Anthropology and Psychology. Towards and Epidemiology of Representations", *Man* n.s. 20 (1985), 73–89; D. Sperber, *Explaining Culture. A Naturalistic Approach* (London, 1996).

[6] Lawson and McCauley 1990.

[7] P. Boyer, *Tradition as Truth and Communication. A Cognitive Description of Traditional Discourse* (Cambridge Studies in Social Anthropology 68; Cambridge, 1990); P. Boyer, "Explaining Religious Ideas. Outline of a Cognitive Approach", *Numen* 39 (1992), 27–57; P. Boyer, *Cognitive Aspects of Religious Symbolism* (Cambridge, 1993); P. Boyer, "Cognitive Constraints on Cultural Representations. Natural Ontologies and Religious Ideas", L.A. Hirschfeld and S.A. Gelman (eds), *Mapping the Mind. Domain Specificity in Cognition and Culture* (Cambridge, 1994), 39–67; P. Boyer, *The Naturalness of Religious Ideas. A Cognitive Theory of Religion* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, 1994); P. Boyer, *Religion Explained. The Evolutionary Origins of Religious Thought* (New York, 2001); P. Boyer, "Review of *Arguments and Icons. Divergent Modes of Religiosity* (H. Whitehouse, Oxford, 2000)", *Journal of Ritual Studies* 16 (2002), 8–13.

[8] See J.L. Barrett, "Exploring the Natural Foundations of Religion", *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* 4 (2000), 29–34; I. Pyysiäinen, *How Religion Works. Towards a New Cognitive Science of Religion* (Cognition and Culture Book Series 1; Leiden, 2001); S. Atran, *In Gods We Trust. The Evolutionary Landscape of Religion* (Evolution and Cognition; New York, 2002); J. Slone, *Theological Incorrectness. Why Religious People Believe What They Shouldn't* (Oxford, New York, 2004).

[9] E.g., H. Whitehouse, "Memorable Religions. Transmission, Codification, and Change in Divergent Melanesian Contexts", *Man* n.s. 27 (1992), 777–797; H. Whitehouse, *Inside the Cult. Religious Innovation and Transmission in Papua New Guinea* (Oxford Studies in Social and Cultural Anthropology; Oxford, 1995); H. Whitehouse, *Arguments and Icons. Divergent Modes of Religiosity* (Oxford, 2000); H. Whitehouse, *Modes of Religiosity. A Cognitive Theory of Religious Transmission* (Walnut Creek, 2004).

[10] See Whitehouse, *Inside the Cult*, chap. 8.

fields of anthropology, archaeology, historiography, and cognitive science, and is leading to increasingly precise and testable hypotheses.[11] Both of these current strands in the cognitive science of culture have resulted in detailed accounts of ritual transmission which have important consequences for each other. And both assume that at least part of the challenge in explaining the transmission of rituals is to identify how these units of action are remembered and what motivates people to pass them on.[12] Let us begin with the activation of universal *implicit* mechanisms of cognition.

We now have a wealth of evidence that much of human behavior presupposes the activation of mechanisms that are normally inaccessible to conscious inspection—in other words, that operate at an *implicit* level.[13] Some of these implicit mechanisms, such as the embodied skills required to drive a car, are manifested as culturally specific

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[11] For reviews of Whitehouse, *Arguments and Icons* see esp. the following contributions to *Journal of Ritual Studies* 16 (2002): F. Barth, 14–17; P. Boyer, 8–13; B. Malley, 5–7; L.H. Martin, "Rituals, Modes, Memory, and Historiography. The Cognitive Promise of Harvey Whitehouse", 30–33; H. Whitehouse, "Conjectures, Refutations, and Verification. Towards a Testable Theory of Modes of Religiosity", 44–59; as well as McCauley and Lawson 2002; H. Whitehouse and L.H. Martin (eds), *Theorizing the Past. Historical and Archaeological Perspectives* (Walnut Creek, 2004); H. Whitehouse and J. Laidlaw (eds), *Ritual and Memory. A New Comparative Anthropology of Religion* (Walnut Creek, 2004).

[12] Note that the claim here is *not* that memory and motivation are the *only* aspects of cognitive processing that need to be taken into account in the transmission of explicit cultural knowledge—for instance, I have elsewhere emphasized the role of analogical reasoning in religious reflexivity, which involves the creation of novel source-target pairings as well as acts of recall (H. Whitehouse, "Religious Reflexivity and Transmissive Frequency", *Social Anthropology* 10 (2002), 91–103), and of course many other candidate mechanisms might be involved, including certain features of extended cognition. A prime example of the latter is the use of technologies of inscription, although some pioneering work on that topic (e.g., J. Goody, "Introduction", J. Goody (ed.), *Literacy in Traditional Societies* (Cambridge, 1968), 1–26; J. Goody, *The Logic of Writing and the Organization of Society* (Studies in Literacy, Family, Culture, and the State; Cambridge, 1986); J. Goody, "Is Image to Doctrine as Speech to Writing? Modes of Communication and the Origins of Religion", Whitehouse and Laidlaw (eds), *Ritual and Memory*, chap. 3) may have tended to overestimate the impact of literacy on cultural transmission (see Whitehouse, "Memorable Religions"; Whitehouse, *Arguments and Icons*; Whitehouse, *Modes of Religiosity*). But for any of these other mechanisms to have widely distributed and lasting effects on people's thoughts and actions, systems of memory and motivation are necessarily implicated. Factors influencing the operation of these systems must therefore occupy a central position in any attempt to explain cultural transmission.

[13] For a lively discussion of that evidence, see R.S. Steele and J.G. Morawski, "Implicit Cognition and the Social Unconscious", *Theory and Psychology* 12 (2002), 37–54.

competencies. Others, such as the inference that animate beings are driven by invisible intentional states, are more or less invariable the world over. Ritual transmission obviously involves both kinds of implicit thinking. When a Polynesian commoner adjusts his posture in the presence of a chief or an Indian Brahmin observes certain taboos surrounding food preparation, these people are exhibiting culturally specific skills of a largely unconscious, procedural nature but are also responding to environmental cues in ways that presuppose the presence of complex evolved cognitive architecture activated in much the same way in *all* human populations. One quite well-supported hypothesis is that at least some aspects of ritualization are expressions of evolved neural equipment dedicated to detecting and avoiding hazardous contaminants in the environment. Just as we have an adaptive susceptibility to the acquisition of elaborate rules and prohibitions dealing with blood, corpses, excrement, and so on, so we seem to be prone to learning and applying seemingly arbitrary rules *in general*. Fiske and Haslam argue, more specifically, that there is a recurrent tendency in human societies for such rules to emphasize themes of cleanliness, neatness, pollution anxiety, and boundary maintenance.[14] Although finding extreme expression in the pathological condition known as 'obsessive compulsive disorder', much the same repertoire of concerns is manifested in many (if not all) of the world's ritual traditions.[15]

The idea that rituals activate evolved contamination-avoidance mechanisms might help to explain why ritual scripts are so compelling and easily spread. But, at best, this could only be part of the explanation for the successful transmission of rituals. On the one hand, not all rituals activate concerns about pollution, at least not to the same degree, and any sense of compulsion to repeat the actions in question would also seem to be variable (and in many cases ritual participation seems to require institutional sanctions or incentives). On the other hand, it is obvious that rituals activate a wide range of *other* implicit mechanisms of cognition besides those concerned with the avoidance of contamination. An especially rich and

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[14] Fiske and Haslam 1997.
[15] See Fiske and Haslam 1997, 216–220; see also Boyer, *Religion Explained*; Boyer, "Review of *Arguments and Icons*".

detailed body of work, focusing on such mechanisms, has been initiated by Lawson and McCauley.[16]

They are concerned with types of implicit cognition entailed specifically in 'religious rituals', by which they mean those forms of ritual action which presuppose the involvement of a supernatural agent (or agents). Variations in the way such agents are implicated in the *formal* aspects of religious rituals have wide-ranging consequences for our intuitive expectations regarding the efficacy, repeatability, and reversibility of various kinds of ritualized actions, and even affect our implicit judgments of what might constitute appropriate levels of sensory stimulation occasioned by participation in the rites. A fuller account of these arguments is set out in this volume by Lawson.[17] The models and evidence advanced by Lawson and McCauley suggest that the cross-cultural recurrence of particular categories of rituals (for instance, blessings, sacrifices, rites of passage) is a result of much more varied and complex cognitive causes than simply the natural inclination to defer to procedural prescriptions per se. What humans *also* find particularly compelling is the idea that supernatural agents are implicated in certain stereotyped actions through their associations with the subjects, objects, or instruments of these actions.

Although rituals may conform in various ways to implicit intuitive expectations, there are also aspects of ritualization that would seem rather directly to *challenge* certain of these expectations. Insofar as ritualization entails prior stipulation of the procedures to be carried out, ritual actions are not the spontaneous expressions of actors' intentions. According to Caroline Humphrey and James Laidlaw, rituals are actions that lack "intrinsic intentional meaning".[18] In a recent embellishment of that path-breaking argument, Maurice Bloch has argued that rituals violate expectations delivered by implicit "theory of mind" mechanisms.[19] The latter drive humans to draw inferences

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[16] Lawson and McCauley 1990.

[17] See Lawson in this volume. See also McCauley and Lawson 2002, who build their argument substantially around a critique of some of my earlier work. For a detailed reply, see Whitehouse, *Modes of Religiosity*, chap. 8.

[18] Humphrey and Laidlaw 1994; see also Humphrey and Laidlaw in this volume.

[19] M. Bloch, "Ritual and Deference", H. Whitehouse and J. Laidlaw (eds), *The New Comparative Ethnography of Religion. Anthropological Debates on Modes of Religiosity* (Lanham, 2004), chap. 4.

about the intentional meanings lurking behind *all* actions. In the case of ritual actions, however, the search for intentional meaning is inevitably frustrated because the actions in question do not originate in the intentions of the ritual actor. If there is an intentional agent behind it all, then who is it? And why did he or she insist on these particular procedures rather than any other? This is the point at which explicit processes of exegetical thinking can come into play. My own research focuses primarily on the different ways in which conscious reasoning about the meanings of rituals is elaborated and on the consequences of this for ritual transmission more generally.

In contrast with those features of ritualization discussed above that are somewhat automatically activated, regardless of the conditions of transmission, the development of more complex bodies of ritual exegesis depends on varying levels of transmissive frequency and arousal. Extensive surveys of ethnographic and historiographic sources suggest increasingly that rituals associated with complex exegesis (as distinct from the simpler, more implicitly intuitive kinds of ritual traditions alluded to above) tend to be clustered around contrasting attractor positions, associated with low-frequency, high-arousal rituals and relatively low-arousal, high-frequency rituals respectively.[20] Over the course of the last century, a great deal of scholarship has wrestled with the causes and ramifications of this bifurcation. Think, for instance, of Max Weber's distinction between "routinized" and "charismatic" religiosity,[21] Ruth Benedict's distinction between "Appolonian" and "Dionysian" traditions,[22] Ernest Gellner's "pendulum-swing theory of Islam",[23] and of course many other well-known examples could be cited.[24] As Scott Atran has observed,[25] it is very difficult to find clear examples of low-frequency rituals that evince low arousal, unless

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[20] In particular, a wide range of evidence recently presented at British Academy Networks conferences at the Universities of Cambridge and Vermont is now available in print (Whitehouse and Laidlaw (eds), *Ritual and Memory*; Whitehouse and Martin (eds), *Theorizing the Past*.

[21] M. Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. T. Parsons (London, 1930).

[22] R. Benedict, *Patterns of Culture* (London, 1935).

[23] E. Gellner, "A Pendulum-Swing Theory of Islam", R. Robertson (ed.), *Sociology of Religion. Selected Readings* (Harmondsworth, 1969), 127–138.

[24] For a fuller discussion, see Whitehouse, *Inside the Cult*, chap. 8; J. Peel, "Modes of Religiosity and Dichotomous Theories of Religion", Whitehouse and Laidlaw (eds), *Ritual and Memory*, chap. 2.

[25] Atran, *In Gods We Trust*, 158.

these are constructed from a collage of more frequently-performed rites.[26] And there is similarly strong evidence that all ritual traditions associated with conceptually complex, verbally-transmitted exegesis are heavily *routinized*. A major challenge for the cognitive science of religion is to explain *why*.

Some of the solutions to these puzzles seem to lie in the strengths and limitations of human memory. Rituals that are highly arousing, personally consequential, and rarely performed are remembered as distinctive episodes in one's life experience. Activation of vivid episodic memories of this kind is, in general, liable to set off a search for deeper significances and portentous qualities in the episodes themselves.[27] But this is especially true when these memories relate to *ritual episodes*. Rituals are potentially puzzling forms of behavior at the best of times. Not only are the intentional states that gave rise to them difficult to infer from the actions themselves, as noted above, but rituals are also irreducible to a set of technical motivations.[28] Indeed, they seem to be characterized by a plethora of "aesthetic frills",[29] which could potentially mean anything (or nothing). Such mysteries are unlikely to elicit much of a response from most people, most of the time, unless some rather special conditions are present. Vivid episodic memory for ritual episodes would seem to provide one such special set of conditions. In reflecting consciously on their memories for low-frequency, high-arousal rites (such as initiations, climatic millenarian ceremonies, ritual homicide), people seem unable to resist the urge to speculate on the 'hidden' or 'deeper' meanings of their experiences of participation, resulting over time in the elaboration of highly personalized interpretive frameworks. Such knowledge takes a very long time to generate, via processes of spontaneous exegetical reflection, and so it is typically seen as the province of ritual experts and elders. But there is also another way in which exegetical knowledge can be created and transmitted, and this involves contrastingly high-frequency and *relatively* low-arousal patterns of ritual activity.

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[26] See also McCauley and Lawson 2002.
[27] E.g., see D.B. Pillemer, E.D. Rinehart, and S.H. White, "Memories of Life Transitions. The First Year in College", *Human Learning* 5 (1986), 109–123.
[28] Sperber, *Rethinking Symbolism*.
[29] E.R. Leach, *Political Systems of Highland Burma. A Study of Kachin Social Strucutre* (London, 1954).

As a general rule, levels of arousal *and* the rate and volume of spontaneous exegetical reflection correlate inversely with frequency of ritual performance.[30] The more routinized a ritual tradition becomes, the less surprising and emotionally stimulating its procedures will typically be, primarily because of familiarization. This is not to say that high-frequency rituals are necessarily emotionless (on the contrary, ritual repetition can be profoundly satisfying and pleasurable—or indeed highly irritating and unpleasant!) but only that the extremely high levels of arousal and shock that may be elicited in low-frequency rites are more problematic to sustain in a routinized regime. At the same time, the processing of ritual actions as embodied habits in procedural-implicit memory has the effect of reducing the need for explicit processing of ritual scripts and consequently has the effect of inhibiting explicit rumination on the meanings of these things. Nevertheless, routinization presents optimal conditions for the verbal transmission of ritual exegesis, often of an elaborate and complex nature. People can learn and recall standardized information of this sort if it is subject to regular rehearsal and consolidation. This is the main reason why all religious orthodoxies are also relatively routinized traditions.

These divergent trajectories with regard to frequency, arousal, and exegetical thinking also have consequences for other aspects of ritual transmission. In the case of low-frequency, high-arousal rituals, these tend to produce intense cohesion within small communities of participants, but are difficult to spread to wider populations. Part of the reason for this is that cohesion is established only among those who experience the rituals together—and who are capable of recalling this fact with reference to overlapping episodic memories. Since the rituals are rarely performed (and, for instance in the case of initiations, might be experienced once only in the patient role) there are few opportunities for extending the ritual community thereby established. If the ritual spreads, this is likely to occur via contact contagion at the level of groups, which is a relatively costly and inefficient method of cultural dissemination. Rituals can and do spread by this method,[31] but as they travel the details of the rituals and

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[30] The phrase 'as a general rule' carries considerable weight in this theoretical approach—we are dealing with culturally and historically distributed tendencies rather than invariable laws or mechanistic principles.

[31] For detailed examples, see Whitehouse, *Arguments and Icons*.

certainly the traditions of exegetical knowledge they sustain are prone to *mutation*. This has to do with the fact that the rituals in question are seldom subjected to centralized regulation and the small-scale ritual groupings they instantiate tend to favor the elaboration of distinctive markers of identity consistent with their locally-based cohesion. I have dubbed this complex of interlocking features the "imagistic mode of religiosity".[32]

In the case of high-frequency, low-arousal rituals, the rapid spread of standardized versions of both othopraxy and orthodoxy, and thus the homogenization of a regional tradition, is much easier to bring about. Since participants in routinized regimes are at once susceptible to the learning of verbally-transmitted exegesis and doctrine and yet relatively immune to the appeals of spontaneous exegetical reflection, the stage is set for the emergence of an authoritative canon. Reliance on verbal transmission of teachings places the corpus of religious knowledge in the hands of more talented orators (messiahs, prophets, evangelists, missionaries, etc.) who are able to carry the message over great distances to larger populations. This is a vastly more efficient method of transmission than group-level contact contagion. As orators rise above their fellows in virtue of their skills and are able to establish their own ideological outputs as authoritative, the potential for standardization of their teachings and practices may come to be backed up by centralized and hierarchical systems for monitoring and policing the tradition. I have dubbed this complex of similarly interlocking features the "doctrinal mode of religiosity".[33]

It is clear that the transmission of rituals in both of the above scenarios (that is, imagistic and doctrinal) involves the construction of traditions of explicitly religious knowledge that is highly motivating. In the imagistic mode, such knowledge tends to be restricted to the more experienced members of the ritual community—those who have ruminated on the hidden meanings of major rituals over years of private contemplation. Such persons tend to be viewed as the guardians of esoteric mysteries. Less experienced members of the ritual community may aspire to such a level of understanding but can

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[32] Whitehouse, *Inside the Cult*; Whitehouse, *Arguments and Icons*; Whitehouse, *Modes of Religiosity*.

[33] Whitehouse, *Inside the Cult*; Whitehouse, *Arguments and Icons*; Whitehouse, *Modes of Religiosity*.

only get there by undergoing a parallel mystical journey of their own, rather than through assimilation by word of mouth.[34] But, having been learned, this knowledge amounts to a body of profoundly valued revelations, felt to be superior in every way to the supposedly 'superficial' understandings of ordinary laymen (or non-initiates), and it carries great motivational force. For rather different reasons, the explicit teachings of a doctrinal orthodoxy are also highly motivating insofar as they too are upheld as 'higher' truths, marked with the stamp of collective authority and the legitimation of (often largely imagined) history. There are not all that many domains of human thought and behavior in which explicit forms of knowledge exercise such a great influence as this. Modes of religiosity, unlike other regimes for the creation and transmission of ideas, produce explicit knowledge of a highly compelling sort.

Nevertheless, the implicit mechanisms supporting ritual transmission, discussed earlier, are never far away. Although religious authorities in the doctrinal mode may insist on rather difficult-to-grasp patterns of ritual action and exegesis, for instance, there will always be a tendency for people to construe these imperatives in ways that accord more closely with their intuitive ideas about ritual form or supernatural agency. Thus, there is always a delicate tension between the demands of 'theologically correct' discourse and more easily processed versions.[35] In the case of low-frequency rituals, any serious reduction in levels of arousal could result in a collapse of imagistic dynamics, the loss of major bodies of revelatory knowledge, and the establishment instead of simpler patterns of ritual transmission that derive their appeal from implicit cognition. The doctrinal mode is especially vulnerable to such patterns of degeneration. If the orthodoxy is policed too heavily and the demands of routinization and discipline taken to extremes, this is liable to provoke demoralization and perhaps even to stoke rebellion as followers become susceptible to more enlivening forms of religious experience. If, on the other hand, the duties of religious authorities are taken too lightly, and the orthodoxy is not subjected to an adequate level of rehearsal and

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[34] See F. Barth, "The Guru and the Conjurer. Transactions in Knowledge and the Shaping of Culture in Southeast Asia and Melanesia", *Man* n.s. 25 (1990), 640–653.

[35] See J.L. Barrett, "Theological Correctness. Cognitive Constraint and the Study of Religion", *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* 11 (1999), 325–339.

reiteration, then this can lead to a reformulation of the complex doc-
trinal system in the direction of more intuitive versions, thus open-
ing the way for projects of renewal and reformation. Such are the
broad patterns of historical transformation in all the 'great religions'.
Partly for this reason, modes dynamics 'on the ground' tend to wax
and wane in intensity and we may observe a continually shifting bal-
ance in the dominance of imagistic and doctrinal modes in partic-
ular traditions across space and time, including patterns of oscillation
between them, as described at length in my work on Melanesian
religions.[36]

   The above arguments might be readily expressed within an epi-
demiological framework, of the kind originally proposed by Sperber.[37]
The transmission of rituals is a process driven and regulated by selec-
tional mechanisms rooted in cognitive operations and their condi-
tions of activation. On the one hand, humans are prone to acquiring
and passing on rituals that minimally conform to the implicit biases
and expectations of evolved cognitive architecture (activated by default
in all societies). People are seldom able to tell us in any detail *why*
such rituals are important to reproduce—and, even if they were,
such statements would be of limited value because the cognitive func-
tions that *really* motivate participation largely operate outside of con-
scious awareness. On the other hand, there are also types of ritual
activity that generate a great deal of elaborate exegetical knowledge
that genuinely contributes to people's motivations to carry out (and
perhaps to spread) the rituals in the future. The mysterious, often
esoteric knowledge of ritual experts operating the imagistic mode
compels them to orchestrate repeat performances within relatively
elongated cycles of transmission. And, in rather different ways, the
verbally (and often scripturally) standardized explicit knowledge of
religious authorities in the doctrinal mode drives people's participa-
tion in more routinized regimes of ritual action. These last two strate-
gies for ritual transmission result in contrasting patterns of spread:
the one localized or regionally fragmentary (imagistic mode), and the
other expansionary and homogenizing (doctrinal mode). Often we
find that both modalities of transmission are activated within a sin-
gle religious tradition, as distinct domains of operation, and both are

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[36] Whitehouse, *Inside the Cult*; Whitehouse, *Arguments and Icons*.
[37] Sperber, "Anthropology and Psychology".

susceptible to distortions motivated by implicit cognitive mechanisms activated by default. These dynamics are central to historical patterns of reproduction and transformation in all ritual traditions. They are proposed as cardinal points for any general theory of ritual transmission.

VIRTUALITY

Bruce Kapferer

In this discussion I wish to pursue the proposition that much ritual can be understood primarily as a dynamic in and of itself with no necessary immediate relation to external realities. Moreover, I am concerned with how some rites may come to influence experience and affect the structuring of relations outside the domain of ritual performance through processes that are not directed to the representation of such realities, hitherto a dominant aspect of much analysis of ritual. Rituals in many respects are totalizations, or what Susanne K. Langer refers to as significant formations, in which all or most of that which is included within them is intentionally inter-related internally.[1] But to grasp them as totalized symbolic formations of the world around them, albeit highly selected ones, may in certain instances lead to misunderstandings of their import and dynamics, and, indeed, of how some rituals come to have interventional force in ongoing personal and social realities.

There has been considerable work on how rituals change or are (re)invented. But a key assumption is that it is by changing that rites sustain their relevance to socio-historical realities. There is no doubt that this is so. But it is also possible that it is their relative lack of change—or even their irrelevance to contemporary socio-historical realities—that may hold a clue to the way some rites maintain their import. Moreover, for some rites, at least, there is a built-in imperviousness, or obliviousness, to history and to change. If they change in the structuring of their action, which they almost certainly must, it may not be the way in which they change that is crucial to comprehending their appeal and force. Clearly, in numerous contemporary realities there are political and social pressures (for example, nationalism, ethnic communalism) for the (re)invention of rituals as representational of dominant values. As such, ritual is often given a

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[1] S.K. Langer, *Feeling and Form. A Theory of Art Developed from Philosophy in a New Key* (New York, 1953).

primordialist and foundationalist import of a historical nature, i.e., its current representations are continuous with the values of the past. Rather than pursue this line of thought, I wish to reconsider an earlier orientation to ritual as a technological dynamic for the (re)creation, (re)generation, (re)production, redirection, or intervention within the circumstances and continuity of personal realities and social and political forms of human life. While this may have primordialist and foundationalist aspects, they are not of a historicist character.

The view of ritual as a technology (*techné*) for bringing-forth, or *poeisis,* is at least a potential of earlier anthropological orientations from James G. Frazer up to Bronislaw Malinowski and Claude Lévi-Strauss. The former two draw a strong equation between the technology of science and the technology of rite. From the perspective of Frazer's and Malinowski's rationalism, scientific technology and rite stand alongside each other as different methods of doing the same thing. Thus in their modernist thinking, they contend that ritual and magic must give way to science and technology. For Lévi-Strauss they are not so replaceable or transposable or located along such a linear line of evolutionary development.[2] Ritual practice (and especially myth) manifests the general (universal) scientific curiosity of human beings with their realities and their (technological) concern to control or harness the forces of nature and transmute them into distinct formations of a humanly constituted existence. Here I am in agreement with Lévi-Strauss. Ritual, or at least some events defined as rituals, can be grasped as technological apparatuses, not necessarily for the transmutation of nature into culture in Lévi-Strauss's sense, but as artifices or technologies designed to work within the elements and fabric of human constructive existence (physical, mental, material, relational, etc.) so as to (re)generate their personal, social, and cultural continuities and possibilities.

What is stressed in the present argument is ritual as a technical practice rather than a representational formation. This is not to deny the representative function (the constitutive potency of representation) of ritual but to suggest that in certain ritual practices the representational process of rite is a secondary process organized in the technical interest of ritual to create, constitute, and, to a degree, control the realities that are through and through those of human

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[2] C. Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind* (London, 1966).

construction and circumstance. The concept of the virtual developed here is an attempt to expand the notion of the technological, or what might be referred to as the machinic, dimension of ritual.

The concept of virtuality used here draws predominantly on the work of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari,[3] but is also influenced by Langer's notion of the virtual.[4] They develop the term in a way that parts with views that maintain that the virtual is somehow less than real or in one way or another a model of reality or else an ideality. Such conventional approaches cling to representational/reflectionist forms of argument and therefore drive analysts to discover the meaning of ritual action either in subterranean psychologies or in extra-political and social existences. The virtual is no less a reality, a fully lived existential reality, than are ordinary realities of life. Yet it is substantially different. Let us consider two aspects.

First, I stress the virtuality of rite as a kind of phantasmagoric space.[5] That is, as a dynamic that allows for all kinds of potentialities of human experience to take shape. It is, in effect, a self-contained imaginal space—at once a construction, but a construction that enables participants to break free from the constraints or determinations of everyday life, and even from the determinations of the constructed ritual virtual space itself. In this sense, the virtuality of ritual may be described as a form that is anti-determinant but paradoxically enables new kinds or forms of determinations to emerge. That is, it overcomes those determinations that may inhibit or prevent the capacity of human beings to act and to constitute their realities. The phantasmagoric space of ritual virtuality may be conceived

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[3] G. Deleuze and F. Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?* Trans. H. Tomlinson and G. Burchell (London, 1994).

[4] Langer's usage of the concept of virtual appears to be distinct from that of Deleuze and Guattari; this is especially so because of her emphasis on symbolism and symbolic meaning. But, as with Deleuze and Guattari, she tries to avoid metaphysics and draws explicitly on physics and esp. optics. The virtual, for her, is a dimension of the real, or the actual, insofar as it describes the dynamics, lines of force, etc., on which human perceptions and meaningful constructions of reality depend. Aesthetic forms achieve their specific potency in their organization of a particular dynamic perceptual field. My own development of the notion of the virtual elsewhere is along the lines of Langer's analysis (Kapferer 1997; B. Kapferer, "Introduction. Outside all Reason—Magic, Socery and Epistemology in Anthropology", B. Kapferer (ed.), *Beyond Rationalism. Rethinking Magic, Witchcraft, and Sorcery* [Oxford, 2003], 1–30, here 22–25).

[5] See Kapferer, "Introduction", 22–25.

as a space (or a space opened by means of the virtual) whose dynamic not only interrupts prior determining processes but also is a space in which participants can reimagine (and redirect or reorient) themselves in the everyday circumstances of life.[6] As a phantasmagoric space, the virtual is a plane of immanence and emergence.

The virtuality of such ritual spaces, and the kinds of dynamics that can be produced in them, might be seen as similar to the virtualities of contemporary technologically produced cyberrealities. These are by and large mimetic attempts to reproduce the experience, for example, of flying, falling, fighting, dancing, and to match reality in many other ways. This is not what I conceive as virtuality, and especially ritual virtuality. It is not a mimetic process (although, of course, mimesis is likely to be part of many ritual processes). What I refer to as ritual virtuality is a reality space *sui generis*, in and of itself. Insofar as it can be described as involving copies or simulacra of other events or objects, they are for all intents and purposes the same (as technological artefacts—sewing machines, cars, etc.); hence my use of the concept 'machinic'. The elements of ritual virtualities *are* what they represent.

But the crucial aspect of ritual virtuality is that it is *simultaneously its own reality* (not reducible to any other reality that is independent of the one it represents to itself), and *an opening up within ongoing existential realities*. Ritual is frequently described in terms of a dramatic performance, and indeed, much that is described as being ritual has such qualities. Thus ritual operates dynamics of framing, staging, what some describe as the 'suspension of disbelief', a movement out of paramount or quotidian realities. However, my usage of virtuality implies something other than this. 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 representations it engages being a technology for doing so.

The virtual and what is defined here as ritual virtuality can be grasped in relation to what Deleuze and Guattari refer to as *actuality*. In effect, actuality is what is available to representation but is in

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[6] See also Williams and Boyd 1993.

excess of any attempt to represent it. Actuality is chaotic, but not in the sense of chaos/order, as this is conceived culturally or in many theoretical ideologies of the social sciences. It is not something fixed or stable, but is always in process, subject to forces that are always extending beyond any human knowledge of them. The actual is the complex mass of singularities (of diverse structuring and interpenetrating, though not necessarily logically interconnected aspects of existence) of which human being and its own manifold processes of formation are at once part of and continually emergent within. The actual, or aspects of it, is what science attempts to enter and come to know directly. This is what scientific practice and technology are designed to do, and one of the ways it does this is through virtualizing actuality.

Scientific technology creates a virtual opening in actuality. This enables a descent into actuality within which certain dimensions of the chaotic flux of actuality are suspended or slowed down—the virtualizing process—so as to facilitate the examination and manipulation of aspects of actuality. My central point here is that the virtual is a dimension of the actual *in its process* with some of its formational flux suspended or radically slowed down. The technologies of science aim to break into dimensions of reality (be it an atom, light, a rock, a human body), but also to slow down or suspend aspects of its motion, its speed, so that it can be explored and, perhaps, reconfigured or restructured. Virtuality, then, is a dimension of actuality, both an intrusion into it (a direct confrontation with it) and an alteration of critical dimensions within it. Virtuality, or the establishment of a virtuality, is an unmediated engagement with actuality. This is so in the sense that it is not at a distance from the actual, such as is created by modeling actuality or other ways of imagining or representing it (all of which, of course, are part of scientific, technological, and humanistic inquiries into the nature of existence).

Insofar as ritual can be conceived as a technological virtualizing practice, a virtual reality machine, it is a device for entering into human actualities and is an opening and slicing into actuality. Human actuality is a chaosmos of extraordinary complexity and flux that engages as no less integral to its actuality the perceptions, senses, constructions, representations, shifting orientations, structurations of human beings. In constant motion, such an actuality, such a complex of continual differentiation, folding, and interpenetrating structurating and rhizomatic spread, of manifold singularities, is ultimately

beyond any totalization of it. In other words, actuality is always in excess of any attempt to represent it.

Ritual as a virtual reality machine can be envisaged as a kind of scaffolding erected at particular moments and sites within the chaosmic flow of human actualities, the motioning of quotidian sensory, relational, shifting, forming and reforming, constructional life. Ritual erected upon and within this flow and operating in the actual, facilitates a descent into it (a penetration into the working depth of the surface). It does so by interrupting the flow of human actualities, slowing down its flux and speed. Much that has been written on ritual time as circular or repetitive[7] might be reconceived as methods for both slowing the flux that time is and enabling an entry into the compositional dynamics of processes within which a temporality is integral. The music and dance of many rituals are virtualizing, the sound and music of rite often announcing[8] and developing a movement into the temporality of living actuality (a visceral consciousness of it) and also frequently engaging such temporality or timing with that of the body in dance, the dynamic generative flow, motioning and spatializing of time.[9] The virtualizing machine of ritual holds certain dimensions of actuality in abeyance while exposing the formational processes of other aspects of actuality, *while in the midst of it*, to exploration, manipulation and, perhaps, to reconfiguration.

An aspect of the virtualizing is the totalization of rite. This is one of its machinic qualities of abeyance, not a modelling of reality so much as a framework for direct engagement with particular aspects of it. Ritual as machinic, as a virtualizing technology, is shaped according to the type of interruption and intervention into human actuality that it intends. Thus it is organized to stem certain aspects of its flow and concentrate on what is particularly vital or critical. Ritual descending into the actual focuses on its central constructs and experiences (entering within them, as in masking or in trance). It opens up the core values of everyday existence and social formation and plays with the very processes of the construction of human actuality while living them, working, for example, with language and exchange (with their dynamics of composition) and a host

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[7] E.g. Leach 1976; Lévi-Strauss 1981; A. Gell, *The Anthropology of Time. Cultural Constructions of Temporal Maps and Images* (Oxford, 1992).

[8] See Needham 1967.

[9] See Kapferer 1983, 178–206.

of elements of actuality generation (for example, elements and essences of the body, sex and reproduction, food).

The ethnographic record is full of examples to which this recognition of ritual as virtual might apply, meaning that it can be strongly conceived as a working *within* human actuality and not simply a modeling or play upon it. I have in mind, for example, the wide array of material on initiation rites whose constitutive force to change status, or as Audrey I. Richards noted long ago,[10] to grow the girl into a woman, has to do with the virtuality of ritual not to represent (or to operate as a performative, a more up-to-date version of the potency of representation)[11] but to engage the initiands (bring them into immediate manipulative and operational contact) with the forces and processes of their positioning in actuality formation and to embody such processes in them.[12]

The Virtuality of Ritual: A Sinhala Buddhist Example

My own analysis of anti-sorcery Sinhala healing rites among Buddhist Sinhalese[13] explicitly engages the notion of ritual as virtuality in the twofold sense of an imaginal space and as a technical site for descending within the dynamics of the reality formation of actuality. The particular rite I discuss, the Suniyama, is performed over a twenty-four hour period; it addresses a variety of illnesses and misfortunes attributed to sorcery (*huniyam, kodivina, vina*). Broadly speaking, sorcery is a consequence of both of the conscious or unconscious action of others to cause harm and/or when different life trajectories accidentally or purposefully cross so that the separate life paths are effectively blocked. In the latter instance, the result is understood as sorcerous for the continuation of personal projects and capacities to act in the world are prevented or in some way upset. Thus sorcery is an effect of the ordinary lived complexities of actuality. Furthermore, sorcery is, in Deleuze's terms, a singularity of potentially cosmic

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[10] A.I. Richards, *Chisungu. A Girl's Initiation Ceremony among the Bemba of Zambia* (London, 1956; 2d ed., 1982).

[11] See Rappaport 1999; Kapferer 2004.

[12] See P. Clastres, *Society Against the State. Essays in Political Anthropology*, trans. R. Hurley and A. Stein (New York, 1987).

[13] Kapferer 1997.

proportion. Sorcery manifests itself in experience as a particular anguish within which forces in the overall scheme of things have come to have a specific malevolent focus. The victim of sorcery in a Suniyama rite is conceived of as being particularly vulnerable in an astrological sense. That is, the exposure of the victim (and, by extension, of household and extended kin) to recurrent misfortune is connected to the victim's birth-time and location at a specific inter-section of planetary effects. The Suniyama is therefore a major inter-vention, and one of its principal objectives is to adjust the victim's coordinates in space/time. In effect, the project of the rite is to re-birth and to reorient the victim within the actuality flows of ongo-ing existence.

The ritual action as a whole focusses on a ritual building known as the Mahasamatta Palace. This is the main reference point of the whole rite, and in the terms of this discussion it may be conceived as a virtual reality machine. It is the instrument through which the victim descends into virtuality, wherein the vital readjustments in space/time and a critical reorientation are effected. The victim in the action centred upon the Palace is also instructed in those prac-tices at the heart of self constitution and the construction of human realities within actuality.

The song, poetry, dance, and the Palace (in fact the aesthetics of the rite as a whole) are presented as exact repetitions (copies) of the original performance of the Suniyama. Songs repeated throughout the rite, for example, declare that the palace measurements and dec-orations accord with the way it was built as an artifice of rite at the very first performance.

The entire ritual scene is referentially self-enclosed (it is a total-ization in and of itself) and united in theme through its foundational myth. This myth specifically asserts that the realities of human life—their orderings—were imagined into existence. The palace itself is a representation of this imaginative act (in fact, one of human self-re-creation), which was built by the ritualist/sacrificer who invented the Suniyama to heal the first victim of sorcery: Queen Manikpala, the wife of King Mahasammata, who instituted the orders of human reality within existential actuality. The palace in the conception of the ritualists is a technical artefact, a machine, which is the means by which sorcery victims can repeat the act of self- and reality con-stitution (as an imaginal act) and exercise those practices that enable the emergence of human realities that are subject to their control.

The palace encloses a space, the axial and cosmic center of existence, which is figuratively represented as the world *mandala*. It is the chthonic site of existential and human emergence, of the formation of self-consciousness, and of the transcendence of self, which in the Buddhist context of the rite is the conditionality for the orderings of human realities and the overcoming of suffering. The rite throughout focuses on the progress of the victim towards the palace and his ultimate entry into it. Here the victim is seated upon the world *mandala* to be cosmically recentered (reborn), reoriented towards existential realities, and finally completed as a world-maker (after Mahasmmata) capable of self-actualization and able to act freely and independently, as any other human being, in the realities of human construction.

The ritual progress of the victim into the palace may be conceived as a descent into the virtual space of the rite, a space, incidentally, that is in the midst of actuality in much of its chaotic possibility and tension. The audience or ritual gathering, for example, at ritual events like the Suniyama is engaged in a great diversity of activities—some are watching, others are playing cards, some are preparing food for visitors, others are stopping by on their way to or from work. The world of everyday life is bustling constantly around the space of the rite.

The descent into virtuality *within* actuality (a descent to the core or site of emergence) is effected by a series of practices based in what is the perfect gift, selfless giving with no expectation of return— the Buddha ideal. This practice within the teleology of the rite as a whole conditions all other interested gifts, which give rise to the differentiated and hierarchialized relations of existence.[14] These and other ritual acts that are part of the progress (indeed, that impel the victim's journey according to ritualist understanding) involve practices of breaking down forms of matter into their essences and recomposing them. They are life-forming and sustaining exercises integral to human existence in the flux of actuality. These are part of an extended sequence of acts (the *hat adiya*, or seven lights or steps) that simultaneously retrace the life-course resulting in the ensorcelment and erasing this life course and its effects, so that life can begin anew.

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[14] See Kapferer 1997.

Significantly, the events are an entry within time. They are a going
back upon and a slowing down of time (the events are performed
painstakingly over a four-hour period in normal time, that is, time
as a human construction), a moving into temporality itself, both the
duration of that flash of an instant and the eon of the cosmos. As
I have said, here the victim, seated on the axial world *mandala*, is
realized as a singularity within the cosmic immensity. The victim is
understood to be in the womb (*garbha*) space, here to be turned
around and reoriented back into the life-world, and prepared to
ascend into the chaotic actuality of the everyday.

In a vital sense, acting from within the virtuality of the palace,
the victim brings forth the constructed realities of everyday life and,
most importantly, an active capacity and positionality within them.
The victim does so by taking over the work of ritualist or sacrificer.
Engaging in sacrificial acts, the victim who is now invested with the
potency of the re-originating sacrificer constitutes, *acts* ('sacrifice' as
the total act in Hubert and Mauss's terms), and does so for *the first
time*. The victim effects a self-ascent out of virtual space back into
the world. (Until the victim's entrance within the palace, the victim
is in a condition of non-active determination, but in passing through
the palace the victim is freed of sorcery's constraints and becomes
active and self-determining.)

As the victim starts to act (begins the ascent out of the virtual),
the everyday world bursts into life through a series of comedic
episodes (the *vadiga patuna* and *chedana vidiya*)[15] during which the palace,
the technical apparatus for entering into the virtual, is torn down.
The ritual ends, and the quotidian chaotic world might be said to
close over the virtual space created through the machinery of the rite.

There are two related observations that I would like to make in
relation to this very abbreviated description. First, the Suniyama, like
so many rites, is a totalization but in virtuality. It does not refer to
external realities, but rather is directed to the critical dynamics
through which human beings construct their realities both within
themselves and around them. It is outside historical time but thor-
oughly engaged in temporality and with the underlying plane of exis-
tential formation. Any attempt to interpret the actions by referring
to events in historical time would seriously misunderstand this rite,
at least in terms of its own logic.

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[15] See Kapferer 1997; Kapferer 2004.

Yet, and this is the second observation, the rite is intended to have effect on outside realities. This it does, but not through a discourse of representing or re-representing quotidian realities or in some way or another modeling them as much anthropological analysis might have it.[16] It is concerned to act on the way victims (and their households, for the victim often stands for the collective) are oriented towards their realities and to give them the capacity to act within them. There is no attempt in the virtuality of the rite to change the world around it. This the ritualists themselves would regard as an absurdity and, indeed, a hopeless totalizing and essentializing project. The ritual works on a singularity, on a particular individual positioning, restoring potency and the capacity to insist on a trajectory in the chaotic complexity of life. Thus this ritual, and perhaps many rituals, are able to sustain their relevance for the changing historical contexts of existence without necessarily altering or changing their organization and content of practice. As a virtual reality machine, the Suniyama does not impose a conformity of thought and practice upon the world within which it has effect. Moreover, it is always already relevant to continually changing historical reality.

Some Implications of Approaching Ritual as Virtuality

The approach to rite just outlined as a process in virtuality obviously does not apply to all events that may be defined or recognized to be ritual. Furthermore, it does not obviate already well-established approaches although it does suggest a limit to their applicability. Thus representational and symbolic analyses that concentrate on ritual as a reflection on the political and social realities in which ritual is founded may not be always relevant and may be radically misleading about how the ritual establishes its effects.

The Suniyama, for example, is distinctly out of historical time. It is likely that the Suniyama was invented in the precolonial world of Sinhalese medieval society, for it incorporates symbolic events that are relevant to the annual rites of the renewal of kingship.[17] But

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[16] See, e.g., Geertz 1966; Handelman 1990.

[17] See H.L. Seneviratne, *Rituals of the Kandyan State* (Cambridge Studies in Social Anthropology 22; Cambridge, 1978).

even then such rites (of cosmic kingship, of sorcery, of healing) oper-
ated by means of a virtualizing, a dynamic that was (re)generatively
within, behind, or underneath the dynamics of a potent singularity
that is self- and world-constitutive. Given present fashions, it would
be easy to grasp the Suniyama (or the regenerative rites of cosmic
kingship to which the rite is related) as an apparatus in the hege-
mony of power (and this is undoubtedly an aspect in the past and
in the present). However, the translatability of the kinds of practices
that the rite incorporates (for example, the use of rites of purifying
the king for healing or overcoming everyday problematics) is con-
nected to its totalizing virtuality: it does not reflect a particular actu-
ality but rather processes relevant to a great many problematics
relevant to distinct singularities (persons and positionings) and their
potency for the construction of realities within an always changing
and shifting actuality. Kingship is the dominant metaphor of the
rite—indeed, a totalizing metaphor that indicates the virtuality of
the rite as the inner reality of a great variety of contexts that are
otherwise irreducible to one another. Paradoxically, the historicity of
the Suniyama is in its ahistorical virtuality. This is not primordial-
ist, at least in the sense that the rite reduces the present to a par-
ticular point of origin at some moment in a lived past. The virtuality
of the rite is one through which a myriad of lived pasts *and* a diver-
sity of futures can be produced. Ritual virtuality exists, as it were,
in the pluperfect tense.

Much of what I have said is clearly related to other well-known
perspectives, such as Hubert and Mauss's discussion of sacrifice (with
respect to the Suniyama example) and especially with Victor W.
Turner's analyses of the liminal dimensions of rite and its triadic or
quadratic structure (after Arnold van Gennep).

The idea of the sacred in Hubert and Mauss (building on Durkheim)
can be interpreted in my terms as being the virtual. In other words,
a space which is quintessentially a dynamic locus for the production
of action and the construction of realities within the actual (the pro-
fane). The difference, perhaps, is that the sacred/virtual is not the
social (Hubert and Mauss and Durkheim are committed to a dis-
course of representations, to ritual as a symbolic process) but the
technology (ritual as a technical dynamic) for personal and social
creation, generation, and production. Hubert and Mauss's perspec-
tive on sacrifice (where sacrifice is the general form of rite in their
understanding and also the total generative act) presented an approach

to rite as a technology but were diverted towards a focus on representation and value. It floundered in Durheimian sacred/profane distinctions that forced separations that the concepts of the virtual and the actual overcome. Thus the sacred is not society sacralized, made transcendent, and held apart from the quotidian. Instead, some ritual processes, at least, can be conceived as a descent into the dynamic crux of reality formation. The reality of rite is a reality within actuality and distinct only in that it constitutes a suspension or slowing down of some of its processes so as to enter within, and thus to concentrate upon or manipulate the generative forces engaged in the creation of human realities.

My outline of the virtuality of ritual processes bears a relation to Turner's discussion of liminality and the structure of life crisis rites.[18] He is strongly critical of arguments that treat ritual as necessarily conformist and reproductive of the world around it. Ritual is about change and concerned with changing and not about repeating the same. Turner's analysis of the liminal periods of rites as reoriginating chaotic moments (a period outside of structure and antagonistic to it) stresses them as generative of new schemes and visions of reality. The liminal is a dynamic of disjunction and new creation operating subjunctively and transitively. That is, it is both a field of imaginal possibilities (as is the virtual) and a conjunctive space that effects the movement from one aspect or structuring of existence (for example, status) to another. But Turner's approach is directed to change in and of the forms of representation and value that exist in the outside world as they pass through the representational and reflexive process of ritual acts.[19] As with the liminal, the virtual operates as a switching, reorienting point, but it does not mediate between one structure and another. It is not a moment within a linear process of transition and transformation in historical realities. Rather, it is a period of intense (re)structuration within such realities, these realities not being open to totalization since they are chaotic.

On Turner's understanding, the chaos of the liminal is a moment out of which order emerges which is very much consistent with Judaic and Christian cosmologies. My approach to the virtual in

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[18] See Kapferer 2004.
[19] Here his position does not deviate from Geertz's far more static understanding according to which ritual is a model *of* and *for* reality (see Geertz 1966).

ritual conceives of it as a totalizing process, but not of external real-
ities. The totalization of ritual is part of a virtualizing wherein the
chaotic formations of actuality are slowed down, certain aspects of
actuality put on hold, as it were, so that ritual can operate machini-
cally on the dynamics of person- and world-formation insofar as
these are relevant to ritual participants. Through the virtuality of rit-
ual, the world is not changed in some totalizing sense; rather, what
changes is the way persons are re-oriented and re-positioned within
the ongoing flux of actuality so that they can participate in its con-
tinuing change and transformation.

   The stress I place on ritual as a virtuality is directed to the dynamic
technology of ritual. It is intended as a corrective to mimetic and
performance perspectives towards ritual. While such perspectives are
extremely important (as Turner's own rich studies testify), there is
an over-use of dramatic and theatrical metaphors in the discussion
of much ritual and there is often a reduction to the terms of a semi-
otic of textual analysis and interpretation (to which Turner himself
was particularly prone as, too, is Geertz) as well. Ritual seen from
such perspectives continues the importance of the phenomenon for
those anthropologists who engage the events they call 'ritual' as a
means for gaining access to realities that are not usually their own.
But these orientations may reduce an understanding of how rituals
operate on those who routinely have recourse to them. Thus an
approach to ritual as a virtuality which concentrates not merely on
the surface as a play of representations but on the dynamics of rit-
ual, on the rules and procedures (what Goffman in his use of the
dramatic metaphor calls the backstage)[20] whereby rituals penetrate
beneath the surface to intervene in the very process of personal and
reality construction.

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[20] Goffman 1967.

PART V

EPILOGUE

AN INVITATION TO 'THEORIZING'
THEORIZING RITUALS: SOME SUGGESTIONS
FOR USING THE INDEXES*

Florian Jeserich

In the introductory essay, the editors of this volume introduce a new meta-perspective on ritual theory.[1] They do not intend to form new ritual theories. They rather would like to 'theorize' already existing theoretical approaches and concepts. The practice of 'theorizing' is thus described as a "reflective and reflexive process";[2] someone who 'theorizes' looks 'betwixt-and-between' theories.[3] In this essay, I will provide some examples to illustrate how the subject index and the index of names can be used as powerful tools for internally 'theorizing' *Theorizing Rituals*. I propose to regard the practice of scrutinizing a particular discourse through the eyes of the index as a special form of 'theorizing' in the sense of the editors. In a way, using the indexes *systematically* can be described as *indexical theorizing*. The indixes are pathways to those discourses which are set up in this book. 'Theorizing' *Theorizing Rituals* thus means to 'theorize' the 'internal discourses', that is, discourses framed and delimited by the pages of this volume.[4] By analyzing and comparing the text passages indicated by a specific lemma, one may discover how different contexts shape a term or a concept, how different approaches are interrelated, and one may ascertain who refers to whom, why this is done, and how this reference is embedded in the particular discursive context. Moreover, such an analysis may also lead to a meta-theoretical critique, namely when not the approach or concept *per se* takes center stage, but rather the way in which it is connected to

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[1] See editors, xxi–xxiii.
[2] Editors, xxii.
[3] See editors, xxiii.
[4] Accordingly, the various other discourses taking place outside of the frame given by the book, in the wider scholarly discourse, can be termed heuristically 'external discourses'.

terms, concepts or discourses of another contribution does.[5] The indexes help to develop such a meta-theoretical perspective. Over and above, they generally facilitate the access to the practice of 'theorizing': they are applicatory and convenient tools.

The following will provide some examples of how the indexes can be utilized for the new project of 'theorizing' as outlined by the editors. In the first section, entitled "Figures and Key-Figures", I will present some statistical data in order to provide some insights into the organization of the overall scholarly discourse. *Theorizing Rituals* is scrutinized as a new 'piece' of the contemporary discourse. As I name the key-figures referred to in the volume, I make a statement about who plays a decisive role in guiding or molding the discourse on ritual theory. In so doing, I illustrate the usefulness of the index of names.

Figures and Key-Figures

Using the index of names, I counted which names are mentioned most frequently. Victor W. Turner clearly heads the list. In this volume, he is mentioned 332 times. Turner is followed by Frits Staal, who is mentioned 188 times, Clifford Geertz (160 times), Émile Durkheim (134), Claude Lévi-Strauss (129), Roy A. Rappaport (127), Catherine Bell (94), Erving Goffman (90), Cornelis P. Tiele (88), Edmund R. Leach (80), and Stanley J. Tambiah (79).

The Dutch religious study scholar Tiele (1830–1902) is doubtless the greatest surprise in this list. However, Tiele is discussed *only* by Platvoet and it is due to the nature of the question the author poses and his writing and citation style that Tiele's name is mentioned 88 times. Alone in the fourth footnote on page 163, the name 'Tiele' can be found 17 times. The reason for this is simply that Platvoet provides us with an extensive bibliography of this scholar. Therefore, the distinction made in the index of names between page numbers in *italics* (mostly just a bibliographic reference) and **bold** type (mostly indicating a detailed review of the person's work) is hoped to be helpful. Similarly, by virtue of Jens Kreinath's intensive discussion of relevant theoreticians, all authors—except Maurice Bloch—who

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[5] For a more in depth discussion of this practice, see Jens Kreinath's "Meta-Theoretical Parameters": Kreinath 2004b, 102.

are of great importance for the semiotic approach are among those ritual theorists that are named most frequently: Turner (mentioned by Kreinath 58 times), Staal (53), Geertz (44), Rappaport (44), Leach (41) and Tambiah (31) number among the list. As a matter of fact, Kreinath's essay on "Semiotics" is significantly shaping the statistics.

Hence, it seems to be more instructive not to count the sheer number of mentions but to determine how many *different* contributors are referring to a theorist. It is not surprising that Victor W. Turner also heads this list thus confirming his already above ascertained prominent position in the discourse on ritual theory. No less than 30 of the 35 authors contributing to this volume mention or quote him. Durkheim is mentioned in 24, Rappaport in 23, Tambiah in 20, both Bell and Geertz in 19, and both Leach and Van Gennep in 18 different essays. The 'broad distribution' of Turner's name in the scholarly discourse is further underlined by the fact that 17 authors refer to his book *The Ritual Process*.[6] The index to this volume thus suggests that *The Ritual Process* remains the single most dominant contribution to ritual theorizing, followed by Bell's *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice*[7] (cited by 15 authors) and Rappaport's *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity*[8] (referred to by 14 authors). It seems that the statistic evidence could render Kapferer's claim plausible who writes in this volume: "The approaches of Victor W. Turner and Roy A. Rappaport together encompass, though with markedly different emphases, much of what anthropologists have to say on ritual dynamics."[9]

Be that as it may, in order to 'theorize' *Theorizing Rituals*, we have to look closer; we have to analyze *the ways* in which the different authors are referring to each other and *the contexts* in which these mentions and citations occur. Are there special mechanisms, implied agreements or rules guiding the discourse? For illustrative purposes, I would like to present two features of the overall scholarly discourse I discovered while I was indexing this volume.[10] The first one, which

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[6] Turner 1969.
[7] Bell 1992.
[8] Rappaport 1999.
[9] Kapferer, 509.
[10] In his dissertation, Jens Kreinath classifies different ways of referencing; he thereby also discusses the practice of quoting. See J. Kreinath, *Semiose des Rituals: Eine Kritik ritualtheoretischer Begriffsbildung*. Dissertation. Ruprecht-Karls-Universität Heidelberg, Institut für Ethnologie (*http://www.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/archiv/6570*, 2005), 12-18. However, he makes no mention of the practice of indexical theorizing.

I call 'The Never-Ending Struggle with Durkheim', illustrates how one can draw conclusions from looking up the entry 'Durkheim, É.' in the index of names,[11] sorting and combining the text passages on the relevant pages. The second one, entitled 'Identity: Contexts, Concepts, and Contests', an analysis of the entry '*identity*', illustrates how powerful a tool the subject index can be. Generally, I suggest that the benefit from using one of the indexes will be particularly great if one consults it *strategically*. In the following discourse analysis, I will try to back up a specific hypothesis advanced by the editors in their introduction.

The Never-Ending Struggle with Durkheim

Twenty-four authors of this volume refer to Émile Durkheim. This significantly high number suggests that Durkheim's ideas are still very influential in various fields of the scholarly discourse on ritual theory. Particularly with regard to Durkheim, the editors assert in their introduction: "Early sociology of religion emphasized the crucial role rituals play in the maintenance of societal coherence" and they further claim that "the contemporary debate still takes its bearings (implicitly or explicitly) by this intellectual legacy."[12] How is this general statement mirrored in the essays that follow? In this section, I will try to answer this question using the index. To that end I will 'theorize' the role Durkheim's view of rituals plays within the discourse indicated. Thus, I am not 'theorizing' the complex and shifting relationship between Durkheim's sociology of religion and different ritual theories in general, but rather I am identifying the ways in which the authors are discussing Durkheim's insights and theses within the limits of *Theorizing Rituals*; that is what I call heuristically the 'internal discourse'. Hence, I do not use any extrinsic sources, that is to say, the following is exclusively based on an interpretative

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[11] Durkheim, É.: *xvin18*, *10n25*, **15**, *15n1*, *15n2*, 19, 35, 43, 108, 137, **144**, *144n2*, 181n56, *181n57*, 182, 185–186, 187, 197n118, 208, *208n5*, **209**, 209n8, **210–211**, 215, 219, *224*, 225, *226*, 227, *228*, *249n11*, **265**, *265n1*, 266, *268*, 271, 364, 366–367, *367n10*, *396*, *396n8*, **475**, *475n9*, *475n10*, *475n11*, 476, 508, 512n14, *517*, *523*, *524*, 528, *536*, *550*, *550n15*, **551**, *551n16*, 551n17, *551n18*, *551n19*, *551n20*, *551n21*, **552**, *552n22*, *552n23*, 553, 553n29, *553n31*, *553n32*, 555n40, **556**, 556n42, 556n43, 557n45, **562**, *562n63*, *562n64*, *562n65*, *564*, 570n88, 573, **582**, **596**, 599, *606*, 615, *615n1*, 620, 640n53, 653, 682.

[12] Editors, xvi.

synopsis and analytical comparison of the relevant text passages I found via the index.[13]

In a passage, which, in a way, echoes the observation made by the editors and cited above, Platvoet writes: "In the anthropology of religions, moreover, ritual's supremacy was strongly fostered by two pre-occupations. One was the 'Durkheimian' functional view of religious ritual as productive of a society's cohesion and expressive of its structure."[14] In this sentence, I believe, we find almost the entire discourse on Durkheim in a condensed form. Three of the four 'congested areas' of discourse I identified are addressed: (1) Durkheim's emphasis of social cohesion (in conjunction with his opposition between 'society' and 'individual'), (2) Durkheim's view of ritual as communication, that is, its expressive function, and (3) Durkheim's emphasis of the essentially religious quality of rituals (in conjunction with his opposition between 'sacred' and 'profane'). The fourth discursive field[15] revolves around the relationship between Durkheim, Van Gennep and Victor W. Turner.

Creation of Social Cohesion

Durkheim's concept of 'social cohesion' is the focus of several critical discussions.[16] Although Dietrich Harth is convinced that Durkheim's insights, "which are part and parcel of any history of the scientific reconstruction", are still relevant for the ongoing scholarly discourse on ritual,[17] he doubts that 'positive' solidarity is the result of every ritual performance. Instead of that, Harth points to "the ambivalence of the norm of solidarity".[18] Jan Platvoet goes even further in his critique stressing that rituals can not only produce a form of

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[13] A comparison between my results and the wider scholarly discourse would be a necessary second step.

[14] Platvoet, 182.

[15] I do not use the term 'discursive field' in a strict Foucaultian sense. With this expression, I simply imply that the overall discourse consists of several interrelated sub-discourses or 'congested areas'. For want of a better terminology, I maintain Foucault's expression 'discursive field'.

[16] Durkheim's fundamental thesis that rituals function as a means for creating 'social cohesion' ('social solidarity', 'social integration') is explicitly mentioned in eight contributions. See editors, xvi; Harth, 15, 15 note 2, 19; Handelman, 43; Rao, 144; Platvoet, 182, 185, 197; Michaels, 249; Lüddeckens, 556; Hughes-Freeland, 596.

[17] Harth, 15.

[18] Harth, 19.

'negative' solidarity (e.g., "the readiness, ritually induced under conditions of tyranny, to sacrifice individual freedom"),[19] but can also be performed "for the explicit purpose of exploding instead of integrating society."[20] With reference to Durkheim and Radcliffe-Brown,[21] Axel Michaels mentions how the controversial notion of 'social solidarity' relates to the equally challenged opposition between 'society' and 'individual'. "Sociological theories", he writes, "often emphasize notions of solidarity, control, hierarchy, order, or rebellion. The ceremonies are then seen as a form of strengthening societies or social groups in order to subordinate ['negative' solidarity *senso* Harth (FJ)] or integrate ['positive' solidarity *senso* Harth (FJ)] individuals."[22] In this context, James Laidlaw and Caroline Humphrey call "the Durkheimians' master opposition between society and the individual"[23] an "awkward duality".[24] One reason for the diagnosed 'awkwardness' is that in Durkheim's model 'society' (subject) acts upon the 'individual' (object) and not the other way around. "In this sense", the authors criticize, "it is a kind of antiaction."[25] Lüddeckens, in writing about 'emotions' and Sax, in discussing the paradigmatic concept 'agency', both struggle with the same problem. Lüddeckens explains: "Durkheim sees in rituals the possibility for the individual to experience feelings that in fact refer to the very existence of the society."[26] 'Society', for Durkheim, thus becomes a sort of being with a personality of its own. Sax is uncompromisingly clear about this issue: "For Émile Durkheim and his followers, Society was a reified agent, which produced and reproduced itself through ritual."[27]

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[19] Harth, 19.

[20] Platvoet, 197.

[21] The name Alfred R. Radcliffe-Brown appears four times in conjunction with Durkheim in this volume. See Rao, 144; Platvoet, 181 note 56; Michaels, 249 note 11 and Sørensen, 524. The latter explains this correlation as follows: Radcliffe-Brown "who introduced Durkheimian theory among British anthropologists, turned his attention exclusively to the social effects or the social function of ritual as the proper object of anthropological study."

[22] Michaels, 249.

[23] Turner, 227. See also 225–226.

[24] Laidlaw and Humphrey, 265.

[25] Laidlaw and Humphrey, 265.

[26] Lüddeckens, 562. See also 570 note 88.

[27] Sax, 475.

The Communication Paradigm

The second discursive field strongly overlaps with the first one, since in Durkheim's functionalist approach, the social and the expressive function of ritual performances coincide. Thus, the essay of Laidlaw and Humphrey ("Action") and Lüddeckens' chapter ("Emotions") again complement one another. Both contributions underline the fact that Durkheim's approach operates with a problematical communication model. While Lüddeckens' essay is rather descriptive, Laidlaw and Humphrey's text is written from an overtly critical-analytical perspective. Lüddeckens clearly shows that Durkheim conceived ritual "as a communications medium for emotions"[28] and Laidlaw and Humphrey proclaim that they—as most recent theorists—want to depart exactly from this "Durkheimian view of ritual as representation or as a means of communication."[29] They argue that ritual is essentially *action* and they abandon the theory that rituals express collective feelings.[30] According to Laidlaw and Humphrey, Roy A. Rappaport still adheres to what they regard as the obsolete Durkheimian communication paradigm.[31] The editors also suggest this connection by referring to Rappaport's *Ecology, Meaning and Religion*[32] in a footnote on scholars who are in debt to the early sociology of religion.[33]

The Religious Dimension of Rituals

Thirdly, some authors mention Durkheim's famous opposition between 'sacred' and 'profane', while others are calling attention to the fact that in traditional Durkheimian thinking 'society' was almost a synonym for 'religion' or 'religious life' respectively.[34] In the words of Sørensen: "The basic theory that guided their studies was that religion was both a representation, almost an image, of society and at the same time a system of belief and practice motivating people to

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[28] Lüddeckens, 556. See also 551–553, 562 and 570 note 88.
[29] Laidlaw and Humphrey, 271.
[30] See Laidlaw and Humphrey, 266.
[31] See Laidlaw and Humphrey, 271.
[32] See Rappaport 1979.
[33] See Editors, xvi, xvi note 19.
[34] Harth, 15, alludes to the fact "that Durkheim preferred to talk of the 'religious life' rather than religion".

maintain their social order."[35] In her essay on "Rituals in Society", however, Ursula Rao points out that most of the studies inspired by Durkheim's writings "departed from the idea that religion and ritual are identical with society".[36] Segal gives an exception that proves the rule: For Jane Harrison, "God was only the projection of the euphoria produced by the ritual", an analysis, which Segal identifies as a direct application of Durkheim's theory of religion.[37] Jan Platvoet deals with the characterization of rituals as 'secular' or 'religious', another revisited classical topic, which is possibly a legacy of the Durkheimian separation of 'the sacred' from 'the profane'. Platvoet argues for abandoning "the Durkheimian exclusive terminological link between 'ritual' and 'religious action' in favor of an inclusive approach."[38] Other authors referring to or discussing the Durkheimian sacred-profane dichotomy include Terence S. Turner,[39] Bruce Kapferer (in his essay on 'dynamics' as well as in his second contribution to this volume, 'virtuality'),[40] Don Handelman[41] and Felicitas Hughes-Freeland.[42]

Interrelating Durkheim, Van Gennep and Turner

The fourth discursive field addresses the question how the sociologist Émile Durkheim, the folklorist Arnold van Gennep and the anthropologist Victor W. Turner are connected. Christoph Wulf distinguishes in his article on 'praxis' four main perspectives within the realm of ritual theory. "The second", Wulf writes, "looks at rituals with a view to analyzing the structures and values of society. Here the relation between rituals and social structure is emphasized."[43] According to Wulf, the paradigmatic examples for this theoretical perspective are Durkheim, Van Gennep and Turner. Thus, Wulf finds the intersection of the three ritual theorists in the way they look at rituals: their perspectives are closely akin to one another;

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[35] Sørensen, 523. See also 528.
[36] Rao, 144.
[37] Segal, 108.
[38] Platvoet, 186. See also 181 note 56, 182, 185 and 187.
[39] Turner, 225-226, 227.
[40] Kapferer, 508 and 682.
[41] Handelman, 582.
[42] Hughes-Freeland, 596.
[43] Wulf, 396.

they all are principally concerned with 'social structure'. However, the relations between these authors are not as unambiguous as it *prima facie* may seem. While the different accounts reach a consensus on assessing the relationship between Van Gennep and Turner— the latter based his theory upon the former, thereby both modifying and popularizing the theory which Van Gennep formulated in *Les rites de passage*[44]—the assessments of the relationship between Durkheim and Van Gennep or Durkheim and Turner remain arguable. First of all, we can state that there *is* a significant correlation between Durkheim's and Turner's ideas. The latter two are, according to Morris, progenitors of an approach which recognizes the resistant potential within rituals;[45] and both are, if we follow Kapferer, progenitors of studies that reflect on the role played by the human body in ritual symbolism and performance.[46] This suggests that their theories must have much in common. Lüddeckens argues "that Turner picked up on the sociological reflections of Durkheim",[47] a fact that is further fostered in a footnote by the editors.[48] Hughes-Freeland goes even further in calling Turner's approach Neo-Durkheimian.[49] Yet Morris' assessment of the relationship casts Hughes-Freeland's ascription into doubt. She rather describes the relation between the two approaches as one of "ironic echoing".[50] In addition to the above cited passage in Wulf's essay, the names of Durkheim and Van Gennep are mentioned in relation to one another in Lüddeckens' and indirectly in Platvoet's text.[51] Terence S. Turner provides the following characterization of the relationship: "Arnold van Gennep was not a student of Durkheim nor a member of the *Année* circle, although he shared many of their ideas and assumptions concerning ritual and the sacred."[52] A brilliant idea how to connect the three theorists or approaches finally comes from Don Handelman. From Handelman's point of view, Durkheim, Van Gennep and

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[44] See Editors, xix note 34; Rao, 148 note 23; Laidlaw and Humphrey, 267; Williams and Boyd, 290; Morris, 363; Grimes, 383; Wulf, 396; Kapferer, 682.

[45] Morris, 366.

[46] Kapferer, 512 note 14.

[47] Lüddeckens, 564.

[48] Editors, xvi note 19.

[49] Hughes-Freeland, 596.

[50] Morris, 364.

[51] Lüddeckens, 550; Platvoet, 187.

[52] Turner, 211.

Turner agree in their preference for *linearity*. In his essay on "Conceptual Alternatives to 'Ritual'", he criticizes that "anthropology is mired in Durkheimian thinking that is the last refuge for linear rationality and that continues to be obsessed with social solidarity as the saving grace of all 'ritual'."[53] In his second contribution to the volume, a discussion of the concept 'framing', Handelman takes up his own thread and explicates the opinion advanced afore. He questions the universal validity and analytical value of such clean-cut distinctions as Durkheim's opposition between 'sacred' and 'profane' and/or Van Gennep's and Turner's breaking down of the process of ritual action into distinct phases that proceed one-dimensional.[54] Handelman claims that Van Gennep and Turner, to some extent, cling to Durkheim's linear thinking in that they use lineal models to describe the framing of the ritual process or the 'social drama' respectively. Van Gennep speaks about separation, transition, and incorporation and Turner argues for a sequential 'dramatic' order of breach, crisis, redress, and re-integration.

With regard to Van Gennep, Terence Turner, in his chapter "Structure, Process, Form", confirms Handelman's observation: "Van Gennep presented his formal model as a linear series of moves or stages on the same level."[55] Just as Handelman, who pleads for replacing lineal framing models with his concept of fuzzy framing, Terence Turner distances himself from Van Gennep's schema and argues in favor of a non-linear understanding of the ritual process. "As I have pointed out elsewhere", he continues the above quoted statement, "the process actually has the form of a vertical mediation between levels of operations of differing logical types."[56] Whereas I cannot find any passages in the present volume which relativize Handelman's critique of Van Gennep, not all authors agree with Handelman's evaluation of V.W. Turner's approach. While Handelman seems to categorize V.W. Turner's model of the ritual process as linear, others understand Turner differently, even contrary. Bruce Kapferer, for instance, places emphasis on the 'virtual' character of V.W. Turner's liminal phase, which disrupts the lineal operation and order of the ritual event:

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[53] Handelman, 43.
[54] Handelman, 582.
[55] Turner, 212.
[56] Turner, 212.

> As with the liminal, the virtual operates as a switching, reorienting point, but it does not mediate between one structure and another. It is not a moment within a linear process of transition and transformation in historical realities. Rather, it is a period of intense (re)structuration within such realities, these realities not being open to totalization since they are chaotic.[57]

Ronald L. Grimes as well does not believe that V.W. Turner was caught up in a form of linear rationality. He describes Turner's way of thinking as follows:

> Turner thinks that the redressive phase of social drama is a primary source of ritual. Since he holds that the liminal phase of the ritual process gives rise to theater, the implied sequence is: social drama, ritual, theater. Turner puts it another way that is perhaps truer to his intentions, because it makes the process sound less linear and more dialectical (...).[58]

Thus, it remains largely unsettled whether 'linear thinking' really is the best way to define the correlation between Durkheim, Van Gennep and Turner. In this respect, the fourth discursive field is open for further 'theorizing'—a playing field for future research. Just one thing seems to be certain: The scholarly conceptualizations of ritual processes become more complex,[59] more reflexive, fuzzier and tend to be non-linear.[60]

Identity: Contexts, Concepts, and Contests

While the preceding section made extensive use of the index of names, the following section exploits findings from the subject index. In this manner, the analytical and theoretical usefulness of both these indexes are demonstrated. Moreover, because of my personal cognitive interests, the respective aims of the two examples are different.

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[57] Kapferer, 683.

[58] Grimes, 386.

[59] Gladigow, 486, for example, writes: "Especially in highly complex rituals, the certainty of a linear sequencing is frequently interrupted by retardations and contingencies."

[60] Kreinath, *Semiose des Rituals*, 191–199 (particularly 196–199), arrives at the same conclusion.

While in the previous example I tried to verify a specific hypothe-
sis which the editors put forward in their introductory essay, I will
now exemplify how one can analyze one of the multi-layered lem-
ma*ta* of the subject index in order to tackle a new theoretical task.
This task was implicitly formulated by the editors in their introduc-
tion. They point out that "[t]he list of concepts and approaches
could well be extended beyond those discussed in this book."[61] In
the corresponding footnote, they further explicate what they have in
mind: "One could, e.g., think of discourse theory, phenomenology,
or cybernetics as further approaches, and of causality, identity, power,
or rhythm as further concepts."[62] Hereupon, I took the challenge to
explore what the subject index tells us about these seemingly neglected
fields of study. I supposed that there are (more or less) tacit dis-
courses on these topics in the volume, which one can locate and
analyze with the aid of the subject index. I decided to concern myself,
as an example, with the concept 'identity'.[63]

The subject index notes the occurrence of the term 'identity' or
'identities' for the following chapters: "Structure, Process, Form" by
Terence S. Turner (28 times), "Ritual and Psyche" by Barbara
Boudewijnse (20), "Gender" by Rosalind C. Morris' (12), "Action"
by James Laidlaw and Caroline Humphrey (6), "Media" by Felicitas
Hughes-Freeland (4), "Rhetorics" by James Fernandez (4), "Language"
by Carlo Severi (4), "Aesthetics" by Ron G. Williams and James W.
Boyd (3), "Participation" by Edward L. Schieffelin (3), "Embodiment"
by Catherine M. Bell (3), "Emotions" by Dorothea Lüddeckens (3),
"Praxis" by Christoph Wulf (3), the "Introductory Essay" by the edi-
tors (2), "Semiotics" by Jens Kreinath (2), "Relationality" by Michael
Houseman (2), "Transmission" by Harvey Whitehouse (1), "Ritual
and Meaning" by Axel Michaels (1), and "Conceptual Alternatives
to 'Ritual'" by Don Handelman (1).[64] The terms are embedded in

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[61] Editors, xxv.

[62] Editors, xxv note 72.

[63] The reason for this decision may be subjective, but I also believe that the
'identity'-concept is of greater general interest. Over and above, the entry seems to
have the ideal length for my purposes. An analysis of the discourse on the concept
of 'power' would have gone well beyond the scope of this preliminary remark, while
'causality', for example, is hardly ever discussed in this volume.

[64] I did not count the terms occurring in titles as in Grimes, 391 note 26 or in
Gladigow, 490, for instance, in which the term 'Identität' appears in a German
publication.

different contexts and, accordingly, the authors don't engage the notion in the same tenor. A glance at the entry '*identity*' of the subject index will help us to identify and specify these differences:[65]

identity	*228*
– ~ of ritual action *senso* C. Humphrey and J. Laidlaw	41, 256, **276–277**, 278, 280
– ~ of signs/tropes	**216**, 216n16, **217**, 221, 227, **238**, 240
– ~ of syntax and semantics *senso* M. Bloch	447, *447n61*
– ~ politics	611
– affirmation/assertion/confirmation/ regeneration of ~	125, 213–214, *370*, 418, 608, 652
– alteration/transformation of ~	213–214, **239**, 301, *303–304*, *365*, *592*, 597, 608, **653**
– biological/physical/sexual ~	**365–366**, 368–369, 370–371
– body ~	403, 533, 541
– classificatory ~	213–214, *652*
– collective/community/group/ social ~	xv, 123, **124–125**, 135, 208, **210**, 214, *216*, **239**, 303–304, 366, 368–369, *371*, 399–**400**, 418, 562, 617, 649, 652–653, 666
– concept of ~	*xxvn72*
– construction/formation/ molding/production of ~	xv, **123–126**, 208, 303–**304**, 365, 368, *371*, *403*, 533, 537, *565*, 567, 591, 609
– definition of ~	541, 565
– desire/pursuit/search for ~	125–126
dissolution/negation/suspension of ~	213, **304**, 567
– everyday/ordinary ~	567, 592
– experience of ~	**135**, **304**, 567, 617, **624**
– gendered ~	366, 370–**371**
– individual/personal ~	xv, **123–125**, 135, 208, *210*, 301, 303–304, 368, *403*, 415, *562*, 565, *609*, 617, 649
– ritual ~	212–*213*, *370*, 415, 418, 591–592
– status ~	**125**, 212–214, 415

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[65] For an explanation of the emphasises used (<u>underlined</u>, *italic*, **bold**) see the remarks preceding the indexes.

First of all, we find that the term 'identity' is seldom used in the sense of something being 'identical' with something else. As a matter of fact, there is only one passage in which such a usage of the term can be determined. The formulation stems from Terence S. Turner and reads thus: "In this respect they [= the paired contrasts of Needham, Dumont and others (FJ)] betray their authors' descent from Radcliffe-Brown and the *Année*, rather than their imputed identity with structuralism."[66]

Judged by the information provided by the subject index, the book's discourse centers on three different contexts in which the concept of 'identity' plays a crucial role: (1) ritual action, (2) structural semiotics, and (3) social psychology.

The Identity of Ritual Actions

In their discussion of the intentionality or, respectively, the non-intentionality of ritual action, Laidlaw and Humphrey use the term 'identity' to explain what exactly they mean by the expression 'intention-in-action': the actors' "intention-in-action is: how they themselves would identify what it is they are doing."[67] Normally, that is, when social actors are engaged in ordinary action, persons have no problem identifying their actions, but in the case of ritual "the identity of the persons' actions may not be at all intelligible on the basis of observing what they do."[68] Humphrey and Laidlaw's action theory is clearly expressed in a text passage in which the importance of the notion of 'identity' is highlighted by the fact that it is printed in italics:

> This then is the sense in which ritual action is non-intentional. This is not to say that it is unintentional. This woman is conscious and aware of what she is doing. It is non-intentional in the specific sense that the *identity* of her action is fixed by prior stipulation, where normally, in unritualized contexts, it would be a matter of her intentions-in-action.[69]

Since the expression 'the identity of action' is part and parcel of Laidlaw and Humphrey's theoretical approach, it is not astonishing

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[66] Turner, 228.
[67] Laidlaw and Humphrey, 276.
[68] Laidlaw and Humphrey, 276.
[69] Laidlaw and Humphrey, 277.

that it effectively becomes a stock phrase.[70] This is further under-
lined by the fact that the expression does not only occur in Laidlaw
and Humphrey's essay. The subject index rather tells us that the
term 'identity'—understood in Laidlaw and Humphrey's sense—is
used in other contributions as well. In his essay on "Ritual and
Meaning", Michaels includes a long quotation of Humphrey and
Laidlaw. In the passage quoted, the theoretical importance of the
expression 'identity of action' is again confirmed by the use of ital-
ics.[71] Handelman, interestingly referring to the same page of *The
Archetypal Actions of Ritual*,[72] also employs the term 'identity' in his
paraphrase.[73] Nonetheless, I would not speak of a distinct *concept* of
'identity', since Humphrey and Laidlaw's notion of 'identity' is first
and foremost an element of their concept of action and is used only
in this context.

The Identity of Signs and Tropes

Kreinath and particularly Terence S. Turner make use of the term
'identity' in structural semiotic contexts. In Kreinath's portrayal of
Maurice Bloch's semiotic approach, the term is used twice on one
page. In both cases, the author refers to Bloch's presupposition of
"the identity of syntax and semantics".[74] Turner, who mentions the
term 28 times in total, employs it 8 times in an explicitly semiotic
context. In his discussion of Russian formalism, Ferdinand de Saussure's
structural linguistics and Lévi-Straussian structuralism, the semiotic
concepts of 'contrast' and 'identity' are of great importance:

> Saussure thus formulated one of the more fundamental ideas of struc-
> turalism, namely that structurally significant contrasts must be bi-dimen-
> sional, combining a dimension of identity with one of contrast. This
> idea was further developed by Jakobson in his conception of 'binary
> opposition', defined as a combination of a foregrounded feature of con-
> trast with a backgrounded dimension of identity which he elaborated
> as the basis of his componential analysis of phonemic systems.[75]

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[70] See Laidlaw and Humphrey, 276–278, 280.
[71] Michaels, 256. See Humphrey and Laidlaw 1994, 89.
[72] Handelman, 41 note 15.
[73] Handelman, 41.
[74] Kreinath, 447 and 447 note 61.
[75] Turner, 217; see also: 216, 216 note 16, 221 and 227.

Inspired by James W. Fernandez' rhetorical analyses of ritual per-
formances, Turner transfuses this semiotic language into a (ritual)
theory of tropes. Alluding to the semiotic concept of 'identity' thrice,
he writes:

> Tropes function as connectors between elements and between levels of
> structure by virtue of their construction as modes of identity and con-
> trast between entities, rather than as individual units like symbols.
> Tropes can be understood as patterns of activity (in other words,
> schemas), that bring into association or transform relations among the
> elements of ritual action. Tropes may also interact with other tropes:
> a trope (for example, a metonymic association) may become an ele-
> ment in a different trope (for instance, a metaphor), and thus undergo
> a transformation of its tropic identity. Such a transformation may
> involve a shift in frames and/or levels or logical types of structural
> relations. J.W. Fernandez has called such processes of shifting tropic
> identities "the play of tropes".[76]

'Identity' is, as we have seen, a crucial concept in Turner's essay.
However, he is not only concerned with a Saussurian 'identity'-con-
cept of sign-elements and a concept of "shifting tropic identities", he
also highlights the socio-psychological dimension of identity. Hence,
Turner uses at least two different concepts of 'identity' side by side.
On page 239, for example, he analyzes the ritual performances of
the Kayapo and Bororo Indians of Brazil by applying both a con-
cept of 'tropic identity' and a concept of 'social identity'. The co-
existence of the two concepts opens up new possibilities for 'theorizing'
and thus poses the following questions: Is his concept of individual
and social identity informed by his understanding of semiotic iden-
tity of signs? If I take, for example, the bi-dimensional character of
sign systems, which combine a dimension of contrast with one of
identity: are social systems structured in a similar way? Most socio-
psychological explanations of 'identity' claim that a social actor is
both distinguished from others and one with the community in some
other respect. Can we speak, then, of a form of bi-dimensionality
or, as Turner does in regard to tropes, of a "synechdochic identity
of part and whole"?[77] However, I leave it to the reader to decide
whether such a comparison and/or blending of concepts might be

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[76] Turner, 238.
[77] Turner, 240.

fruitful or not. Turner, in any case, carefully avoids any confusion of the different 'identity'-concepts mentioned, though he uses them simultaneously. I would like to follow him here and examine the socio-psychological conceptualizations in their own right.

Socio-Psychological Concepts of Identity

The term 'identity' is used 8 times in the sense of Laidlaw and Humphrey in three different chapters (by Laidlaw and Humphrey, Michaels, and Handelman) and 10 times in a semiotic context (Kreinath and Turner), while 14 different authors understand the term socio-psychologically using it 85 times in total. These figures show that the open question of how ritual dynamics are related to different forms of psychosocial identity is clearly dominating the discourse. On closer examination, the "subject index" may also reveal something about how this discourse is organized. The sub-entries of the lemma '*identity*' are arranged alphabetically by this means cloaking the inner relations between them. I suggest that several of them could be arranged in clustered pairs as well. The sub-entry 'affirmation/assertion/ confirmation/regeneration of identity', for instance, is clearly opposed to the sub-entry 'dissolution/negation/suspension of identity'; 'alteration/transformation of identity' possibly is the opposition to a 'definition of identity'; 'biological/physical/sexual identity' (maybe in combination with 'body identity') can be opposed to the entry 'gendered identity'; the entries 'collective/community/group/social identity' and 'individual/personal identity' clearly make up a pair, and finally 'ritual identity' contrasts with 'everyday/ordinary identity'. Based on this observation alone, I would expect many pros and cons—scholarly debates I dare to call figuratively 'seesaw discourses'. Counting the number of the pages indicated furthermore suggests that the main discourse revolves around the ritual 'construction' (on 17 pages) of 'individual' (18) and—in the first instance—'collective' identities (25). Since those passages I considered most crucial can be found on the pages printed in **bold** type and since all of the three above mentioned entries (construction of identity, individual identity, and collective identity) refer to the pages **124–125**, I will start my discussion with Barbara Boudewijnse's essay "Ritual and Psyche", which is, according to the subject index, the focal point of this volume's discourse on 'identity'.

Boudewijnse heavily draws on Platvoet and Van der Toorn's epilogue to their edited volume *Pluralism and Identity*.[78] She recapitulates the findings of the authors as follows:

> In accordance with the general approach of identity in the social sciences and the sciences of religions, they describe how 'identity' is by definition 'social identity'. A person's identity is derived from the group to which that person belongs. The authors state that if the individual acquires identity through membership, the group bestows it by admitting its members to its rituals.[79]

On the next page, Boudewijnse further explicates the consequences of this concept of 'identity'. She explains why "[t]he pursuit of identity is in reality the pursuit of power, honor, and prestige"[80] and she repeatedly speaks of a desire or "thirst for distinction"[81] whereas 'distinction' in this context seems to become almost a synonym for 'identity'. As I already anticipated, her discussion culminates in a paradigmatic shift; a shift away from theorizing 'identity' "as an essentially *social* phenomenon" to a view in which 'identity' is conceptualized as an intra-psychic dynamic. "Notwithstanding the importance of the social context", she writes, "the formation of individual identity ultimately is a *psychological* process."[82] Whereas Platvoet and Van der Toorn tend towards a form of sociologism, which nonetheless presupposes psychological underpinnings of the ritual process, Boudewijnse underscores the role played by the individual participant's psyche in the ritual formation of identities. Conceptually as well as terminologically, she switches from "*social* identity" to "individual identity".[83]

But not only Boudewijnse, almost every author struggles (explicitly or implicitly) with this fundamental question. Most authors agree

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[78] Platvoet and Van der Toorn (eds) 1995.
[79] Boudewijnse, 124.
[80] Boudewijnse, 125. Power and status struggles in relation to 'identity' are also touched on in: Houseman, 415, and Turner, 212-214. Elsewhere, Turner, 208, regards the theoretical occupation with 'identity' and 'power' even as a new paradigm in ritual studies: "The new work on the whole is less concerned with ritual as a religious phenomenon affording insights into the nature of the sacred than with ritual as a social process concerned with the production of social identities and powers."
[81] Boudewijnse, 125.
[82] Boudewijnse, 125 (all italics by the author herself).
[83] Boudewijnse, 125.

to a compromise. The editors, for example, speak of "personal and collective identities".[84] A similar expression is used by Fernandez ("personal and social identity").[85] Williams and Boyd allude to "personal identity" on one page,[86] to "shared collective identity" on another,[87] and finally they arrive at the same—obviously the most popular—conclusion: "personal and social identities".[88] However, I do not think that the 'and' solves any problems. Far from it. The conjunction 'and' accounts for the dichotomization. Do we really have a personal *and* a social identity? If so, which one of our identities is (trans)formed in the course of the ritual performance? Schieffelin and Morris provide a method of resolution. Schieffelin simply speaks of "cultural-individual identity".[89] By leaving out the 'and', he—at least terminologically—paves the way for a socio-psychological concept of 'identity'; a concept that faces the complex interaction of the two dimensions squarely. Morris, on the other hand, proposes something completely different. In her essay, the 'and' is justifiable. On the basis of the difference between biological sex and socially constructed gender, she—probably unconsciously—solves the problem of dualistic identity-concepts. In her use of the terms, the expression "social and personal identities"[90] is the equivalent of the expression "biological and social identities"[91] in that personal identity is the same as "sexual identity",[92] while "gendered identity"[93] seems to be one of our "complex social identities".[94] Therefore, it seems to be reasonable to subdivide the overall concept of 'identity' into a notion of biological/personal identity *and* a notion of shifting social identities (in the plural). It is needless to say that this proposal does not wear out the sheer endless number of possibilities for theorizing identity.

There is a latent affinity between the (internal) discourses on socio-psychological identity and the first and fourth of the (internal)

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[84] Editors, xv.
[85] Fernandez, 653.
[86] Williams and Boyd, 301.
[87] Williams and Boyd, 303.
[88] Williams and Boyd, 304.
[89] Schieffelin, 617.
[90] Morris, 368.
[91] Morris, 371.
[92] Morris, 366.
[93] Morris, 370.
[94] Morris, 369.

discursive fields on Émile Durkheim outlined above. As we have seen in the preceding paragraph, the distinction between 'individual identity' (as an essentially psychological process) and 'social identity (as an essentially social process) governs the scholarly discourse. Some text passages—found by comparing the pages indicated by the entry 'Durkheim, É.' in the index of names and the entry '*identity*' in the subject index—suggest that the dichotomization of identity (individual *and* social) is an intellectual legacy from Durkheim's master opposition between 'individual' and 'society'. Terence Turner, for instance, describes how Durkheim conceptually separated the profane sphere of individual activity from the sacred sphere of collective ritual.[95] Therewith, Durkheim created at least three corresponding oppositions: profane vs. sacred, individual vs. collective, and ordinary action vs. ritual action. Turner writes: "The profane world and its individual members, however, periodically need to get access to the powers of the sacred to renew their lives, *identities*, and social institutions."[96] Are these identities, then, by definition ritually renewed *social* identities? Rituals affirm/construct social identity, theorists of 'identity' claim;[97] rituals affirm/construct social cohesion, followers of Durkheim claim.[98] Are notions like "group identity",[99] "group identities",[100] "group identifications"[101] or "community identity"[102] conceptual reincarnations of such Durkheimian notions as 'social cohesion' or 'collective effervescence'?[103] Is 'society', a reified ritual agent in Durkheimian thinking, conceptually comparable with 'community identity'? At least Lüddeckens, who uses the term 'community identity' in the context of her discussion of Durkheim, implicitly suggests such an interconnection.

Likewise, I noticed a similar latent affinity between a sub-discourse on 'identity' and the fourth discursive field. In both cases, Van Gennep and Victor W. Turner take center stage. As we remember,

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[95] See Turner, 210.

[96] Turner, 210 (my italics).

[97] See the sub-entries "affirmation/assertion/confirmation/regeneration of ~" and "construction/formation/mol-ding/production of ~".

[98] See my description of the first discursive field.

[99] Wulf, 399.

[100] Fernandez, 652.

[101] Schieffelin, 615.

[102] Lüddeckens, 562.

[103] See Fernandez, 653, for a brief discussion of 'social identity' and 'collective effervescence'. See also the sub-entry "'collective ~' *senso* É. Durkheim" in the subject index to find more relevant passages on this topic.

Handelman criticizes Van Gennep and Turner for overly one-dimensional theorizing of ritual processes. A similar critique comes from Terence Turner, though he does not address the possible link to Durkheim's linear rationality. However, Terence Turner does link the discourse on Durkheim-Van Gennep-Turner with the discourse on 'identity':

> The 'passage' of the person, group or season undergoing the ritual, leading to his/her/its 'aggregation' to the new status or condition, consists in formal terms of transformations. As such, it comprises more powerful operations of a higher logical type than the simple negation or confirmation of the *classificatory identities* that comprise the initial and final phases of the ritual process.[104]

> Between these two points, the initiands or other entities undergoing transitions or passages *become identified with the transformational processes* of the medial or liminal phase of the ritual.[105]

Based on these quotations, I would construct the following schema:[106]

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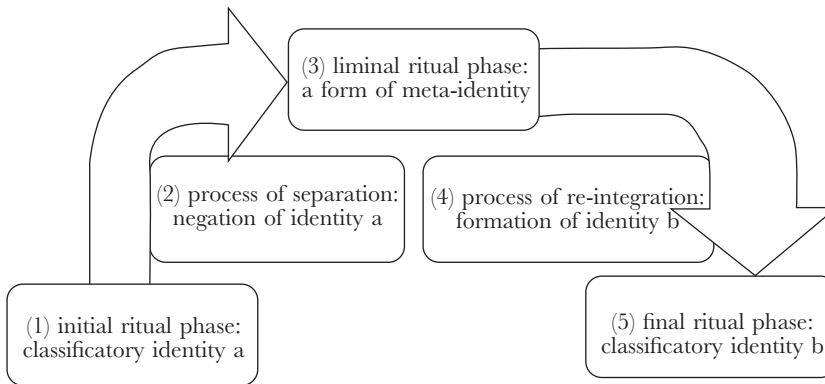
[104] Turner, 213 (my italics).
[105] Turner, 214 (my italics).
[106] Snoek (see 1987, 149–150; especially Table 6.1 on page 150) points to the (terminological and conceptual) necessity of re-interpreting Van Gennep: While most theorists have—explicitly or implicitly—described Van Gennep's schema of rites of passage as a threefold process, Snoek argues instead for describing the processual structure of initiations (a subclass of rites of passage) in five steps (initial state, pre-liminal phase, liminal phase, postliminal phase, final state). In the context of his discussion of Stanner's work, Snoek underlines the fact that 'state' and 'process' alternate. He (1987, 131; see also the figures and the table on the pages 132-134) claims that "[a] precise structural analysis of such a ritual [i.e., a *rite de passage* (FJ)] requires the distinction of . . . *all* the states and processes that form the alternating sequence of events, building up the ritual."

Without doubt, the ritual phase described by Van Gennep and Turner as 'liminal', is both the most enthralling and the most problematic moment for theorizing the (trans)formation of identities. As I interpret Terence Turner, the ritual participant *is identical* with the very process of transformation, that is, he/she temporarily adopts a kind of 'unidentified meta-identity'.[107] It is a 'ritual identity' as opposed to the ordinary identities of the initial and final phases.[108] However, the supposed ritual meta-identity *is* a complex psycho-physical dynamic: the participants' *experience* bodily, emotionally and mentally.[109] Every attempt to theorize the *experience* of ritual meta-identity poses a serious challenge. For meeting this challenge, I think, we need to (a) consider the participant's point of view, and (b) to develop a more adequate descriptive language.[110]

Are there possible identities that are neither a feeling of individuality nor a feeling of being a member of a larger group ("deep participation")?[111] A feeling of being some-one, but neither one-self nor a social entity? A feeling of being a transformation or, maybe, a sort of *unio mystica*? Of course, this is virtually impossible to determine for a participant observer. But thinking about this extreme state of mind—often paradigmatically excluded from scholarly discourse by reason of (valid) epistemological objections—gives rise to a general question of methodological importance: How can we theorize ritual identities? How can we know what kind of ritual identity someone has/feels? The experiences and self-perceptions of ritual participants remain a closed field for theoretical reflection, unless we undertake intensive qualitative research and pay close regard to the *emic* dimension of ritual theory Michael Stausberg called 'ritualistics'[112] Until then, any scientific concept of 'identity' (not built in vacua) can only

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[107] The neologism 'meta-identity' is modeled on Terence Turner's notion of 'meta-structure'.

[108] See the pages indicated by the sub-entries "ritual ~" or "everyday/ordinary ~" respectively.

[109] See the pages indicated by the sub-entry "experience of ~".

[110] For this problem, see Schieffelin, 616-617. Schieffelin (617 note 2), who is very sensitive for the limits of our descriptive language, alludes to the possibility of "*evoking* participatory knowledge poetically". A fascinating 'poetical conceptualization' of ritual experience has been formulated by Georges Bataille and is quoted by Williams and Boyd, 304, in this volume.

[111] Schieffelin, 624, touches on the relationship between 'deep participation', 'power', and 'identity'.

[112] See Stausberg 2003.

refer to an etic perspective of supposed socio-psychological processes of identity (trans)formation. The participants' point of view is not only hard to grasp; it remains unapproachable unless etic reseach about statements which participants make and/or 'ritualistic' research on the link between 'ritual' and 'identity' is conducted.[113]

Secondly, I shall give a summary of some observations I made of *how* some authors have written about the dynamics of identity, that is, I will provide a brief rhetorical critique.[114] Though terms like 'construction',[115] 'production',[116] 'molding'[117] or 'mechanism'[118] are, in the meantime, largely disposed of their pristine technical-mechanical implications (as a result of their common usage in the humanities?), they still, I suppose, indicate a mechanical view of the ritual process. The ritual process is implicitly conceptualized as a 'process of manufacture'. This view gets along consummately with a functional paradigm: In these sorts of explanations, the main function of all ritual action is seen precisely in the fact (or better: premise) that ritual action 'produces' or 'constructs' some-thing.[119] Even the verb 'to convey', innocently used by Barbara Boudewijnse,[120] can be (mis)interpreted mechanically. I am deliberately exaggerating to make my point: Knowledge, values, identities—actually abstractions—become, in a way, reified products provided by ritual (a push button factory) on a fully automatic *conveyor belt*. Of course, I shall not overestimate the results of this rhetorical analysis of the language in which scholars write about the (functional) relations between 'ritual' and 'identity'. In many cases, I suppose, the respective scholar is aware of the rhetorical problems but there is just a lack of more accurate vocabulary. Though I cannot solve the problem, I would

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[113] For the need of "evidence-based knowledge" and a "methodologically sound approach to ritual behavior" see also Boudewijnse, 140.

[114] In his essay on "Reflexivity", Stausberg, 641, diagnoses that "[r]itual theory (. . .) is in serous need of reflexive theorizing." By criticizing ritual theoreticians "for taking rituals as timeless agents" (642), he exemplifies the usefulness and effectiveness of rhetorical meta-analyses for the practice of 'reflexive theorizing'.

[115] See Editors, xv; Boudewijnse, 123; Williams and Boyd, 303 and 304; Lüddeckens, 567; Severi, 591; Hughes-Freeland, 609.

[116] See Turner, 208; Morris, 365, 368 and 371.

[117] See Bell, 533 and 537.

[118] See Editors, xv; Boudewijnse, 123, 125, and 126; Morris, 371.

[119] See, for example, Boudewijnse, 126, 135; Turner, 213, 239; Williams and Boyd, 303.

[120] See Boudewijnse, 123.

like to increase the awareness of the fact that the complex relationships between the performance of ritual actions and the participants' feelings and perceptions of identity—at least in my opinion—should not be described and/or theorized in mechanical terms. Especially when it comes to intra-psychic phenomena—and I consider 'identity' as such a phenomenon—I would try to avoid all (explicit and implicit) allusions to technical processes and/or all mechanical metaphors. However, it is likely that others have a different idea of the human psyche and that some experienced social psychologists come to the conclusion that the 'functionality' of mental dynamics, like identity, is much more mechanical than I presume.

A Prospect of Linking Internal and External Discourses

By analyzing the lemma '*identity*', I pinpointed and discussed the different contexts in which the term 'identity' occurs. However, 'theorizing' concepts of 'identity' by means of the indexes inevitably narrows the perspective: the analysis solely focuses on internal discourses. Such a *modus operandi* has its advantages and disadvantages. One virtue of this practice certainly is the possibility to pay attention to details otherwise simply overlooked. Furthermore, it is not only a discursive but also a creative adventure.[121] Comparing and combining the indicated passages is not merely a form of reproducing the discourses; it demands a certain amount of analytical creativity that possibly leads to the development of new ideas. New questions, problems or perspectives may emerge from the very process. The single disadvantage I can account for—and which is actually a logical self-restriction—is that the internal discourses cannot be linked to the external discourses. A side effect of this restriction is that the character of the analysis is rather 'synchronic' than 'diachronic'. It represents the state-of-the-art discourse rather than the historical depth of it. The synchronic perspective, which zooms in on this volume, is widened and adjusted only if the volume's authors incorporate a historical perspective in their 'discursive adventures'. Hence, there are certain limits to the value of my evaluation of the reception of Émile Durkheim as well as my discussion of the different concepts of 'identity' employed by the authors of this volume. Hopefully, they

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[121] The editors, xxiii, speak of a "discursive adventure".

will inspire both further research and the practice of 'theorizing'. In order to enhance their explanatory power, they need to be associated with the wider scholarly discourse on Durkheim and 'identity' respectively.

The second volume resulting from the project of 'theorizing' rituals—an extensive annotated bibliography that is already announced in the "Introductory Essay"[122]—can provide the solution. I believe that the analytical indexes and the annotated bibliography are perfect complementary tools for 'theorizing'. While the indexes are guides to the analysis of internal discourses, the annotated bibliography is a guide to the multiplicity of external discourses since 1966. Thus, the bibliography is not only the 'missing link' but also an effective means for developing a more diachronic perspective on ritual theory. All of the underlined terms in the subject index—like *identity*— recur in the bibliography as so-called keywords. All the keywords used have been assigned a three-letter abbreviation. In the case of *identity*, this is 'idn'. The reader has the possibility to easily find all the items (articles, monographies, edited volumes) that are indicated with the keyword 'idn', that is, all the scholarly works that discuss or allude to the concept of 'identity', through an index on keywords preceding the bibliography. This is a foretaste on the plethora of information held ready by the bibliography: The term 'identity'/'identities' occurs in 44 abstracts of the annotated bibliography. The authors of the respective abstracts assigned the keyword 'idn' in 40 cases.[123] The name of Émile Durkheim, to return to my first example, is associated with 55 items of the bibliography.[124] Moreover, we

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[122] See Editors, xvii. As the editors remark, an introduction in which the peculiarities of the bibliography will be explained in much detail can be found in the second volume. Nonetheless it seems useful to familiarize the reader also here with at least some of the bibliography's special features.

[123] In order to reinforce the complementary diachronic perspective, I now will not arrange the scholarly works alphabetically—that is, synchronically—but rather in their chronological succession: Goffman 1967; Hockings 1968; Bocock 1974; Honko 1975; Erikson 1977; Moore and Myerhoff 1977; Handelman 1979; Honko 1979; Kapferer 1979; Bird 1980; Handelman 1980; Lewis 1980; Rappaport 1980; Bourdieu 1982; Smith 1982; Crumrine 1983; Kapferer 1983; Fernandez 1986; Girard 1987; Blackburn 1988; Kertzer 1988; Bell 1990; Grimes 1990; Kelly and Kaplan 1990; Drewal 1992; Harrison 1992; Driver 1994; Houseman and Severi 1994; Platvoet 1995; Snoek 1995; Emigh 1996; Davies 1997; Hoëm 1998; Hughes-Freeland and Crain 1998; Wimmer and Schäfer 1998; Crapanzano 2000; Shell-Duncan and Hernlund (eds) 2000; Houseman 2002; Handelman 2004; Kreinath 2004a.

do not only learn *who* refers to Durkheim; it is also indicated in the abstracts *how* the authors think about the French sociologist.[125] Mary Douglas, for example, strongly relied on Durkheim's ritual theory. That is why Jens Kreinath annotates in the field called "References": **Durkheim** (+).[126] Exactly as in the index of names, the use of **bold type** signifies here that the scholar is discussed at length. The '(+)' means that the overall attitude towards Durkheim is overtly positive, '(+/−)' indicates an appraising examination of Durkheim's work, while a '(−)' would show that the author criticizes or even discards Durkheim's theory. In 6 abstracts **Durkheim** is printed in **bold type**, (+/−) was applied 2 times, (+) 5 times, and (−) 12 times. Although these figures may reflect a tendency to slowly give up on Durkheim's ritual theory, they also seem to suggest that there was/is an external discourse comparable with the internal discourse, which I called the 'Never-Ending Struggle with Durkheim'.

Mary Douglas' *Purity and Danger* was one of the several classics published in 1966. For specific reasons, the editors of this volume consider the year 1966 as "a watershed in the scholarly study of ritual".[127] Hence, her book is not only the starting point for my attempt to sketch the nexus between the internal and external discourses on Émile Durkheim but it seems to be a seminal study for the overall scholarly discourse on ritual theory as well. In the first chapter of *Purity and Danger*, Douglas "develops the concept of ritual uncleanness by using the notions of sacred and profane". Yet Kreinath, who wrote the abstract in this case, also remarks that "the approach to uncleanness through order does not imply a clear-cut distinction between sacred and secular." Thus, in 1966, (more or less) critical

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[124] Douglas 1966; Geertz 1966; Needham 1967; Leach 1968; Cohen 1969; Turner 1969; Bocock 1970; Douglas 1970; Jackson 1970; Cazeneuve 1971; Nagendra 1971; Crocker 1973; Munn 1973; Bloch 1974; Bocock 1974; Grainger 1974; Rappaport 1974; Turner 1974c; Honko 1975; Moore and Myerhoff 1977; Ahern 1979; Honko 1979; Bourdieu 1982; Miller 1982; Turner 1985b; Bloch 1986; Smith 1987a; Cheal 1988; Kertzer 1988; Lang 1988; Staal 1989; Wiedenmann 1989; Lawson and McCauley 1990; Wiedenmann 1991; Baumann 1992; Bell 1992; Campany 1992; De Coppet (ed.) 1992; Reeves and Bylund 1992; Driver 1994; Bird 1995; Platvoet 1995; Grimes (ed.) 1996; Strenski 1996; Auffarth 1999; Etzioni 2000; Buc 2001; Csaszi 2001; Stark 2001; Warfield 2001; Marshall 2002; Bellah 2003; Holm 2003; Handelman 2004; Neubert 2004.

[125] This opens up undreamt of possibilities for studying reception history.

[126] See the abstract of Douglas 1966 in the forthcoming bibliography.

[127] Editors, xvii.

discussions of Durkheimian axioms, like the sacred-profane-dichotomy, circulated in the field of ritual theory. Evidently, the third discursive field I determined in this volume ('The Religious Dimension of Rituals') was already present in Douglas' work. Moreover, some other keywords used in the abstract—e.g., 'function', 'society', and 'expression'—suggest that there are also interrelations between the discursive fields I called 'The Creation of Social Cohesion' and 'The Communication Paradigm' and Douglas' analysis. Based on this representative sample, I wonder whether the discourse on Dukheim has at all changed significantly over time. Further research guided by the bibliography seems to be a promising scientific endeavor.

I hope that my preliminary considerations will stimulate the practice of 'theorizing' by means of both the index of names and the subject index (*indexical theorizing*). As my two examples illustrated, a multitude of theoretical questions can be tackled by using the indexes as a tool for the analysis of the current state of ritual theory as mirrored by the internal discourses in the present volume. As soon as the second volume (comprising the annotated bibliography) is published, the indexes are supplemented by another tool that is as powerful as it is mandatory for the novel project of 'theorizing'.

INDEX OF NAMES

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Please note the following forms of emphasis:
- underlined = the person is the author of the text on the indicated pages.
- **bold** = the person's work is discussed extensively on this page and/or it is important for the author's argument.
- *italic* = the person's name is just mentioned in the text once or it is simply a matter of bibliographic information.

INDEX OF SUBJECTS

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Please note the following forms of emphasis:
- <u>underlined</u> = on these pages, the heading (term, concept) is the author's subject matter.
- **bold** = on the page indicated, the heading (term, concept) is discussed in detail and/or is important for the argumentation of the author.
- *italic* = on this page, the heading (term concept) is mentioned rather casually.

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The style of referencing is adapted to the full bibliography provided in Volume II. Hence, occasionally an "a" is added to the year, despite there being no "b" (or viceversa) in this reference list. While this may look odd in the present context, it is indispensable for those readers who wish to directly go to Volume II for tracing references.

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