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THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF RELIGION AND SPIRITUALITY IN SOCIETY

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Scope and Concerns

The International Journal of Religion and Spirituality in Society sets out to describe, analyze and interpret the role of religion and spirituality in society. The journal is cross-disciplinary and neutral with respect to the agendas of particular religions or explicit counterpoints to religion such as agnosticism or atheism. The Journal is intended to provide a space for careful, scholarly reflection and open dialogue.

Not that religion or spirituality can, in their very nature, ever be neutral subjects of discussion. In fact, religion is one of the most interest-laden of all discussions. Religion supplies meanings-in-the-world, nothing less. Spirituality is an ultimate source of interest. Religion provides an account of human origins, responsibilities and destinies. It sets out to explain the nature of being. And it creates a framework for interpreting human action according principles of good and evil.

Religion's stance is not only interest-intensive. It is also transcendental. Religion strives to reach beyond the lifeworld, grasping deeper meanings that may not always be self-evident in the ordinariness of everyday experience. This much can be said of religion-in-general. As for religions-in-particular, the range is as wide as the cultural experiences of human-species-being.

'First nations' or indigenous peoples practiced a broad range of immanentist religions, including variants of totemism, animism, nature worship, shamanism and ancestor worship—perhaps, in one perspective, for as long as one hundred thousand years or most of our existence as a species. Religion then was less a separate institutional, spatial and temporal space than in subsequent moments of human history. Religious meanings were deeply and integrally layered into the material and social worlds, thus representing a belief in the pervasive immanence of spiritual powers in natural circumstances and human affairs.

From about five thousand years ago, religious modes take a radically new textual-narrative form in conjunction with parallel revolutions in agriculture, the domestication of animals, village or city dwelling, the invention of writing and institutionalized economic class inequality. The new religions are rarely unequivocally monotheistic (monotheistic systems of deity mostly have multiple personalities and deified prophets or saints). Nor are they simply polytheistic (polytheistic systems of deity mostly have hierarchies of major and lesser deity). Their key features are the progressive solidification of religious expression into sacred texts, sanctified buildings and the institutional formation of a class of priestly interpreters and intermediaries. The common modes of meaning of these second phase religions are even signified at times to the extent of sharing historic origins or exemplary persons and narratives.

Religious meanings take a third paradigmatic turn with the arrival of modernity. Or, more to the point, a new mode of spirituality emerges in a parallel universe of meaning alongside the persistence of the first two. For the first time in human history, modernity provides an alternative meaning system which is areligious—based on mixes of the epistemes of science, civic law, economic progress, vernacular materialism and human reason. At the same time, atheism and agnosticism emerge as engaged counterpoints to religion.

Religion, nevertheless, powerfully persists in forms characteristic of all three of these world-historic moments of meaning-ascription. Modern, liberal reinterpretations of second phase world religions recast sacred cosmologies as metaphorical, and not incompatible with science. They perform re-readings of sacred narratives in the light of modernity's ethical aspirations such as for gender equality, human biomastery, non-

violence, and material wellbeing for all. The shift is so profound that these modes of religiously themselves might be characterized as third phase.

Meanwhile, others insist on holding to the truths of second phase religiosity. In practice they do this by means of textual literalism, religious fundamentalism and didactic religious education. The chasm between liberal and fundamentalist religiosity in modernity at times seems as great as that between religionists and anti-religionists. And to add an original layer to our contemporary complexity, first nation religions persist and at times thrive, while revivals of immanentist religion are found in 'new age' and other such spiritualities.

Today, the search for meaning-grounds can only be described as a scene of unprecedented pluralism. To this, we can react in several ways. We can adopt pluralism as a modern value and strive for shared meanings and harmony-in-difference on earth. Or we can regard pluralism as force undermining the integrity of religion and with it, the communal distinctiveness of specific religious ways of life—in this frame of reference pluralism is an aspect of modernity that should be resisted.

The scope of this journal is as broad as possible in the field of religious studies, seeking to create a space for the representation of any and all perspectives on the role of religion and spirituality in society. We also welcome a wide variety of disciplinary practices. The perspectives captured in these spaces range from committed within-religion views, to comparative or pan-religious views, to a religious empirical or theoretical readings of the role of religion and spirituality in society. Above all, they provide spaces for open dialogue on the sources of foundational or essential meaning.

The Religion and Spirituality in Society Community
This knowledge community is brought together by a common concern for religious study and an interest to explore the relationship between religion and spirituality in society. The community interacts through an innovative, annual face-to-face conference, as well as year-round virtual relationships in a web blog, peer reviewed journal and book series–exploring the affordances of the new digital media. Members of this knowledge community include philosophers, theologians, policymakers, and educators.

Conference
Members of the Religion and Spirituality in Society Community meet at the international conference, held annually in different locations around the world, each selected for the particular role education is playing in social, cultural and economic change. The Inaugural Conference was held at University Center, Chicago, USA in 2011 and in 2012 the Conference will be held at Robson Square, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada.

Our community members and first time attendees come from all corners of the globe. The Conference is a site of critical reflection, both by leaders in the field and emerging artists and scholars. Those unable to attend the Conference may opt for virtual participation in which community members can submit a video and/or slide presentation with voice-over, or simply submit a paper for peer review and possible publication in the Journal.

Online presentations can be viewed on YouTube.

Publishing
The Religion and Spirituality in Society Community enables members to publish through three mediums.

First, by participating in the Religion Conference, community members can enter a world of journal publication unlike the traditional academic publishing forums – a result of the responsive, non-hierarchical and constructive nature of the peer review process. *The International Journal of Religion and Spirituality in Society* provides a framework for double-blind peer review, enabling authors to publish into an academic journal of the highest standard.

The second publication medium is through the book series Religion in Society, publishing cutting edge books on religion in print and electronic formats. Publication proposals and manuscript submissions are welcome.

The third major publishing medium is our news blog, constantly publishing short news updates from the Religion Community, as well as major developments in the fields of religion and spirituality. You can also join this conversation at Facebook and Twitter or subscribe to our email Newsletter.

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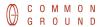Glenna Barlow, Virginia Commonwealth University, VA, USA

Abstract: It is said that in India, Hinduism is not a religion but a way of life. Sati, a wife's self-immol-ation on her husband's funeral pyre, is certainly one of the most complex, and polemical, issues facing India in recent years. Such instances that have occurred in the last few decades have been surrounded by controversy that has attracted global attention. Outside India the reactions have largely reflected Western misconceptions and a lack of understanding, characterizing the practice as a barbaric ana-chronism. Within India there have been strong responses from feminist groups as well as pious devotees and Hindu fundamentalists. Certainly the issue of sati is plagued with complexities. The connection between sati as a practice and Sati, the Hindu goddess, is problematic, indicating that sati is not a religious imperative but a practice that developed from the framework of a patriarchal society. This source can be extended to the art and iconography of sati as it appears in the form of memorial stones. My research, drawing upon ancient texts as well as current scholarship and my personal field research in Rajasthan, will address these issues, with the ultimate understanding that the practice of sati is re-flective of a patriarchal society that can be traced back to both religious and social sources and is reflected in the iconography of the goddess as well as the continued practice.

Keywords: Hinduism, Sati, Suttee, India, Ritual, widow burning

SINCE THE BEGINNING of its contact with the West, India has been exoticized and stereotyped. Perhaps nowhere was this more evident than in Western depictions of religion. Early accounts and paintings of travelers from medieval Europe are fraught with images of bloodthirsty multi-limbed deities demanding human sacrifices. And so in the West, Hindu deities became associated with the Christian notion of demons and pagan worship.[1] Western images from the time reflect the power these perceptions had over even actual visual representations of the gods themselves. These types of preconceived ideas about Indian society persisted well into the period of British rule during which certain religious practices were called into question.

Religious rituals and practices are all too often misunderstood by outside observers. In India the subject of *sati*, or what is commonly known in the West as widow burning, has been one of the most polemic religious issues facing the country in recent years. Amidst this international controversy there have been outspoken proponents on either side as well as misconceptions and a lack of understanding not uncharacteristic of the Western perception of India. In my research I have addressed both how *sati* has been conceived within the Western understanding of India as 'other' as well as the practice within the context of Hindu societies. How does the so-called act of *sati* relate to the goddess of the same name? What are the implications of her continued veneration? Or is this a ritual that has largely moved from the realm of religious to social practice? This paper will address these issues, with the

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[1] Partha Mitter, *Much Maligned Monsters: A History of European Reactions to Indian Art*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), 2.

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ultimate understanding that the practice of *sati* reflects aspects of a patriarchal society that can be traced back to both religious and social sources and is reflected in the artistic iconography of the goddess as well as the continued practice and worship.

Before delving into the complex topic of *sati* it is absolutely essential to understand the complete meaning of the concept itself. Sati is, first, a Hindu goddess. An earlier incarnation of Parvati, Sati was the first wife of the god Shiva, as established in the Puranic texts. It was only many years later that the term *sati* became associated with the practice of self-immolation. Subsequently 'committing *sati*' (or suttee, in British terminology) came to refer to the act of a widow sacrificing herself on her husband's funeral pyre. Yet even this interpretation is inaccurate and betrays a Western perspective. Scholars continue to point out that a woman who chooses to join her husband is never referred to as a widow; she remains a wife as she goes to join her husband in the next life.[2] Secondly, a woman does not 'commit *sati*'; rather, she becomes *sati*. The Hindu understanding is that as she joins her husband on the funeral pyre the wife herself becomes a goddess, referred to as *sati*. These are just some of the complications surrounding the issue, a topic that encompasses both religious and social spheres. As Courtright reminds, "We need to see sati as a whole. To reduce it romantically to the religious is to obscure the violence and manipulation that inevitably seem to be involved; yet to disregard the religious element is to fail to grasp sati's appeal, power, and persistence."[3] It is only with a full understanding of this difficult subject that we may begin to appreciate its complexities and only then perhaps pass judgment on its continued practice and veneration.

Sati as Goddess

As with tales centering on most any Hindu deity, it is difficult to arrive at one universally accepted version. Due to the oral nature of early Hindu traditions, there were often multiple variations of the same fables. Sati is mentioned in several early texts, such as the ancient *Puranas* and the *Mahabharata*. In each she is portrayed as the daughter of Daksha, an ancient creator god and son of Brahma, and the first wife of the god Shiva, though her fate differs slightly in each telling. Today one of the most universally accepted accounts is as follows. Sati, against her father's wishes, marries Shiva. When Daksha does not invite her husband to an important sacrifice, Sati attends and, rather than bear the insults spoken against her husband, falls down in a swoon and dies. (Significantly, in some versions Sati throws herself on the sacrificial fire to end her life.) Shiva then kills Daksha in a violent rage and traverses the world with Sati's body, mourning the loss of his beloved wife. As he travels and her body falls away, these pieces of the goddess become sites of veneration.[4] While each of the stories have significant differences in the details of the plot, the essential quality of Sati remains, that is her status as the ever-dutiful wife.

Accordingly, the word *sati* literally means 'a good woman' or 'a true wife'.[5] Each of her later incarnations shares this characteristic. Sati and her later manifestations, Parvati and

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[2] Linsey Harlan, "Sati: The Story of Godavari," in *Devi: Goddesses of India*, eds. John S. Hawley and Donna M. Wulff, 227-249. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 236.

[3] Paul B. Courtright, "The Iconographies of Sati," in *Devi: Goddesses of India*, eds. John S. Hawley and Donna M. Wulff, 27-49. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 48.

[4] Sukumari Bhattacharji, *Legends of Devi*, (Calcutta: Orient Longmans, 1996), 46-47.

[5] Harish Chandra Upreti, *The Myth of Sati: Some Dimensions of Widow Burning*, (Bombay: Himalaya Publishing House, 1991), 1.

Uma, are seen as synonymous.[6] The term *sati* is also used as an adjective to describe other important figures. Sita, the wife of Rama, for example, is identified as the highest model of the concept of *sati*. Sita, furthermore, is the quintessential embodiment the concept of *pativrata*, or ultimate devotion to one's husband, which points to another aspect of the patriarchal construct of Hinduism. Another such woman is Savitri, who came to be known as Sati Savitri. She, like Sati, faced death for the sake of her husband.[7] In doing so she, too, transformed from a laywoman to one with the power of a goddess. These various representations of the idea of *sati* came to represent the ideal model for women in the form of fierce loyalty and absolute devotion to their husbands. That these three figures all represent the same ideal is in keeping with Hindu theology. While these women exemplify *sati*, they are ultimately embodiments of the Devi, the Great Goddess. The *Devî Gita* proclaims, "O Devî! … Thou art the S'aktî Sarasvatî of Brahmâ. Thou art Aditi, the Mother of the gods and Thou art Satî, the daughter of Daksa."[8] Each goddess is a singular version of the Great Goddess, giving meaning to the oft-repeated adage that 'all goddesses are one'.[9] Thus, while Sati may be understood in her own right, she is more completely understood as one aspect of Devi.

Sati as Practice

Over the years the personage of Sati has come to be identified with the practice of *sati* (or, more accurately, suttee, referring to the act of immolation). Yet it is not immediately clear how the two became connected. This interrelation becomes even more puzzling in examining the original texts, none of which is consistent with the current understanding of the practice. Sati first appears in the *Mahabharata* (that date to the fourth century CE); yet in this version she does not die. In the contemporaneous *Vayu Purana* it is written that Sati throws herself onto the fire, but it is not to join her husband in death, since he remained alive. Later, in the *Kalika Purana* (dating to the tenth or eleventh century), she is introduced in the episode in which Shiva travels the earth with her corpse, though it had not been burned but remained intact.[10] While the stories differ, the shared notion of Sati's submission points to a patriarchal construction of the female. Feminist scholar Gayatri Spivak points out that the authors of the *Puranas* were invariably male, and "it is therefore not surprising that, in the pores of these authorized versions of Sati's dismemberment, there are efforts at controlling the feminine as female."[11] While a feminist reading of traditional Indian texts is certainly valid, in considering *sati* we must take into consideration various social and cultural aspects as well.

The first recorded instances of suttee (henceforth used to refer to the practice of 'becoming' *sati*, the womanly ideal embodied by goddess Sati) appear in the later passages of the *Mahabharata*. These occurrences are portrayed as exceptions to the rule rather than the norm,

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[6] Stella Kramrisch, "The Indian Great Goddess," *History of Religion* 14, no. 4 (May 1975), 260.

[7] Upreti, 2. Notably, Savitri does not actually die for her husband; she faces Yama in order to save her husband from death.

[8] "Devî Gita," *Srimad Devî Bhagavatam*, translated by Swami Vijnananda (Hari Prasanna Chatterji), 701-740. Allahabad: Panini Office, 1921), 704-705.

[9] Stanley N Kurtz, *All the Mothers Are One: Hindu India and the Cultural Reshaping of Psychoanalysis*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 14.

[10] Vidya Dehejia,"Comment: A Broader Landscape," in *Devi: Goddesses of India*, eds. John S. Hawley and Donna M. Wulff, 49-53. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 50.

[11] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Moving Devi," in *The Great Goddess: Female Divinity in South Asian Art*, ed. Vidya Dehejia, 181-200. (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1999), 184.

and it is not until the sixth century CE that the practice began to take place with some regularity.[12] Even as it was described in the *Mahabharata*, the practice was designated as one aspect, but not a necessary part of *Sthri Dharma*, or a woman's duties.[13] Given that suttee was not prescribed as a necessary practice in sacred Hindu texts, we must assume that there were other factors, perhaps social or political, that led to the incidence of suttee among Indian women.

Indeed there were several factors that seem to contribute to the increasing occurrence of suttee. Particularly during India's medieval period there seems to have been an attempt at legitimization of the practice. Scholars have pointed to factors that led to the frequency of the ritual act, including the difficulty of protecting women in wartime and even Brahmans' intentional mistranslation of sacred texts.[14] It is in the seventh century that suttee began to be praised and that evidence of suttee began to appear in the form of sati stones, memorializing the women who had undergone the act itself.[15] The likelihood is that the most influential factor contributing to the incidence of suttee was the worsening conditions for Indian widows. Upreti points to the declining status of widows, and women in general, as an impetus for the increasing numbers of suttees, which he contrasts with women's status in the earlier Vedic period. In this period women enjoyed a relatively high status, and the occurrence of suttee was accordingly rare. As time went on and women were denied education, expectations of women became stricter and suttee became more common.[16] Indeed widows came to be not only considered inauspicious, but often lost their possessions, ties to their families and even their very identity (as Indian women were invariably identified with their husbands). For these reasons Upreti concludes that "the practice of widow burning grew out of a social system rather than scriptural support, and the social system proved stronger than scriptural support in context of widow burning."[17] While the practice of suttee is theoretically based on a Hindu theological framework, the connection between the two appears to be flimsy, more of a perversion of the religious aspect than dogmatic imperative.

Though there have always been those who denounced suttee, there were few attempts to put a stop to the practice until the arrival of the British. Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries there were numerous accounts recorded by Westerners that almost invariably described the event with an air of shame or pity for what they saw as the actions of a barbaric civilization. This sentiment is captured in James Pegg's 1830 image[18], which depicts Western onlookers covering their faces in shame from the ritual before them. These images and descriptions of suttee became so widespread in the West that even in the eighteenth century "the Sati model of an ideal Hindu married woman was exclusively identified with the ritual of widow burning by the British."[19] There are countless such accounts, generally identifying the woman as a helpless victim to be pitied and characterizing India as a land of savage people whom they themselves would step in to civilize. They made the first steps to

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[12] Dehejia, 50, 52.

[13] Upreti, 4-5. The author goes on to explain that two early authorities on the duties of woman, Manu and Kautilya do not prescribe the rite of *sati* for widows.

[14] Ibid., 6.

[15] Dehejia, 52.

[16] Upreti, 7.

[17] Ibid., 10.

[18] All images are in a separate powerpoint point document that can be provided upon request.

[19] Ibid., 6.

do so in 1829 when the British colonial government outlawed the practice and abetting of suttee.[20]

Despite the legal restrictions imposed by the ruling British, suttee continues even to this day. The Institute of Oriental Studies has estimated that since Indian independence in 1947 there have been more than 40 official recordings of suttee, though it is likely there were many more undocumented cases.[21] Certainly the most infamous is that of Roop Kanwar. In 1987, in spite of her family's attempts to dissuade her, the eighteen year-old bride of eight months joined her husband on his funeral pyre in Deorala, a village in the state of Rajasthan. Despite a gathering crowd that numbered into the thousands, onlookers and authorities made no attempt to stop the proceedings as her brother-in-law lit the ritual fire.[22] Though this was hardly the only such instance, it was widely publicized and quickly provoked an outcry of international proportions; the story reached American readers in publications such as the *New York Times* and *Time Magazine*. In attempts to shift blame from what appeared to be a failure on the part of the authorities, the Indian parliament quickly passed the Commission of Sati (Prevention) Act that allowed the government to close and even remove temples and sacred shrines devoted to *sati* goddesses.[23] Rather than merely discouraging the practice of suttee itself (which remained illegal), the act was an attempt to discourage sati by preventing people from worshipping those *satis* who had already committed it.

The Roop Kanwar incident and the subsequent controversy delineates the sides of the *sati* debate. While the press in the West largely condemned the incident as simply a remnant from a barbaric past[24], the issue in India demonstrated a clearer grasp of its inherent complexities. Proponents of *sati* worship, mostly Marwaris (people of Rajasthan), maintained that the worship of these women had nothing to do with the actual (contemporary) sacrificial practice. Furthermore they insisted that this worship is an essential part of their religion and cultural identity.[25] Opponents of the practice, principally feminists, claimed that the celebration of these acts "glorified widow immolation and was against the dignity and democratic rights of Indian women."[26] The crux of the matter, then, seems to be whether the worship of *sati* is connected to, or causes, the practice of suttee itself.

The Roop Kanwar incident highlights another important aspect of the debate concerning *sati*. It is difficult for many (principally Western) onlookers to imagine that women would willingly sacrifice themselves for the sake of a dead spouse. Yet all accounts seemed to indicate that Roop Kanwar did just that, willingly sacrificing her life even when her in-laws tried to dissuade her. This event brings us to another dichotomy in the discussion of *sati*. Leslie crystallizes this argument asking whether the *sati* is 'victim or victor'.[27] This distinction centers on the notion of choice. A woman forced into suttee (and certainly there have been

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[20] Ann Hardgrove, "Sati Worship and Marwari Public Identity in India," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 58, no. 3 (Aug. 1999): 747.

[21] Lorens P. Van de Bosch, "A Burning Question: Sati and Sati Temples as the Focus of Political Interest," *Numen* 37, no. 2 (Dec. 1990): 177.

[22] Ibid., 174.

[23] Ibid., 179-180.

[24] Interestingly, some have compared suttee with the idea of Christian martyrdom. See Fudernik.

[25] Hardgrove, 724. In addition to being a cultural institution, the worship of *sati* has become very lucrative. The Rani Sati temple (of which there are hundreds) in Jhunjhunu is the second wealthiest temple trust in all of India. See Hardgrove, 733.

[26] Ibid., 725. This remark was made by the People's Movement Against the Oppression of Women.

[27] Leslie, 175.

many instances of just that) becomes the victim of what many have equated to 'social murder'.[28] On the other hand, a woman who chooses the path of *sati* almost paradoxically is empowered. Though she loses her life, in making the choice of *sati*-hood she gains the power of a goddess. In stories of *sati* the funerary fire serves not only as a transition from life to death but of deification, which the *sati* expresses in the power to grant boons to grateful onlookers.[29]

In examining this aspect of power we must remember that this notion of power exists within the framework of suttee, a practice that grew out of social circumstances rather than religious imperative. So that "a *satimata* comes into possession of her motherhood, her *mata*-ness, because she sustains the framework of a culture (*dharma*) whose language, rules, and procedures are firmly patriarchal."[30] Even as a woman is understood to gain agency in becoming *sati*, she is nevertheless reinforcing the ideals of a patriarchal system. Some have extended this to the worship of *sati* as well, arguing that "of the neighboring modes of worship that are synthesized in 'sati' worship, many are specifically grounded in the everyday maintenance of patriarchies–in a form in which many women themselves consent to their own oppression."[31] Therefore it is not just *sati* but its continued veneration that contributes to the propagation of these patriarchal paradigms.

Iconography of Sati

As established earlier, there is little connection between the goddess Sati and the concept of *sati* worship. Though there are some images of Sati either dying or already dead, these images are primarily paintings, not typically used for worship in the Hindu context. Much more prevalent is the use of sculpture for veneration of deities. In the case of sati these come in the form of sati stones, or *satikals*, that have been found all over India dating as far back as 500 CE. These carved stones serve as memorials for the *satis*, sometimes called *satimatas*, and are often patronized by the woman's descendents or members of the same local caste. Sati stones belong to the larger group of memorial stones, which also include *sati-virakals* (that depict a hero and *sati*), *virakals*, or hero stones, and suicide memorials.[32]

The first type of sati stone is figural. The examples vary in complexity (in forms that have one, two or three panels), each depicts the *sati* or *satis* alone or with her/their husband. The identifying iconographic aspect of a *sati* is her right arm bent upward displaying her bangles and her hand in the open *avhaya mudra*, the gesture of blessing. The *mudra* is indicative of the blessing a *sati* would offer the onlookers before entering the fire (and continues to offer in the form of the stone memorial). The bangles, broken upon widowhood, are representative of marriage; that the bangles are intact indicates the continued married status of the wife/*sati*. The *sati*'s left hand is generally shown downward, sometimes holding a lime, which can signify fertility or at times serve as a substitute for a human sacrifice.[33] In this example, the

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[28] Upreti, 15.
[29] Harlan, 230. The story of Sati Godavari that Harlan discusses bears a closer consideration that unfortunately falls outside the scope of this research. In many ways the story turns the paradigms of *sati* on their head, characterizing *sati* as an agency of power.
[30] Courtright, 41.
[31] Vaid, Sudesh and Kumkum Sangari. "Institution, Beliefs, Ideologies: Widow Immolation in Contemporary Rajasthan." *Economic and Political Weekly* 26, no. 17 (Apr. 27, 1991): WS15.
[32] Anila Verghese, "Memorial Stones," *Marg* 53, no. 1 (Summer 2001): 40.
[33] Ibid., 41.

husband is depicted larger and in the center, indicating his importance even while memorializing the *sati* who gave up her life for his sake. This practice does not appear to be unusual among *satikals*; in fact, Verghese notes that, among the many memorial stones at Vijayangara, one is notable for depicting a woman without her husband.[34] The *satikal*, then, which is supposed to honor the woman's sacrifice, instead emphasizes the importance of the husband while retaining the *sati's* restorative blessing, thus again reinforcing the central position of the patriarch in Indian society.

This patriarchal slant becomes even more evident when considered in concert with other memorial stones. The *sati-virakals* commemorate both the heroic death of the husband and the wife's self-inflicted immolation.[35] Typically the main panel (hieratically, the largest) depicts the husband in the midst of some heroic action, frequently in battle or in the hunt for a wild beast. The wife, (seen in the middle panel), on the other hand, is either depicted in worship or, as here, on a palanquin. Unlike her husband, the *sati* is not depicted in her bravest moment, facing death. Rather, her role is relegated to that of a consort for her husband who commands the attention of the viewer with his large size, central location, and dynamic action. Additionally, the importance of the man is once again reinforced with the appearance of the *virakal*, a stone memorializing a man's heroic action that inevitably ended in his own demise. Once again the hero takes the central focus, and while women are occasionally depicted, the focus is invariably on the man. This phenomenon may seem only natural in a memorial devoted to a hero, yet in returning to the depiction of *sati*, the disparity becomes more apparent. While the heroic male is clearly the most important figure, the woman as *sati* is often marginalized, overshadowed by the husband for whom she gave up her life.

The sati stone, or *satikal*, has another variation as well. In this type the woman's figural form has been reduced to a depiction of the right arm, always bent at the elbow displaying her bangles and gesture of blessing. One reading of this is as dehumanizing; the woman has been disembodied, condensed in order to get rid of the extraneous elements and retain only the essential: the gesture of blessing and bond to her husband (in the form of the bangles). Yet it would be remiss to accept this interpretation without considering it in the context of Hindu theology. After all, the most potent symbol of Shiva is in his non-figural form as a *linga*. Just as the *linga* represents Shiva's phallus, the depiction of *sati* has been reduced to the source of her power. In fact, the link between the two may run deeper. Harlan suggests, "the iconography at some *sati* memorials appears to suggest a homology between the *sati* who sacrifices herself for her husband and the goddess (represented in the form of a *yoni*) who sacrifices herself for Siva (represented in the form of a *linga*)."[36] Similarly, in some sati stones the arm is more clearly associated with the *yupa*, a pillar used in Vedic sacrifices. This idea is further extended with the appearance of memorials that commemorated mass suttees of the wives and concubines of powerful rulers. In this type the female form has been reduced to just a hand, though the tradition of using the right hand is preserved. These types of memorials attest to the continued veneration of *satimata* figures, as demonstrated by the garlands that frequently adorn them. Even in light of the context of Hindu ritual traditions, the association of the *sati* in her form as goddess, rather than human wife, is a means of distancing the viewer from the reality of the woman's sacrifice.

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[34] Ibid., 42.
[35] Ibid., 43.
[36] Harlan, 233.

Conclusion

The topic of *sati* worship is one that has attracted attention on an international level, provoking strong reactions from both proponents and opponents. Though its supporters are adamant in their defense of what they see as a cultural and religious tradition, the reality of it is not quite so simple. The connection between Sati the goddess and the act of becoming *sati* is dubious, and upon closer inspection, points to the ritual of suttee as a social practice that grew up independently of religious doctrine. Regardless of whether *sati* worship leads to the actual act of immolation, the fact remains that glorification of the goddess cannot be separated from the ritual. "Because of the location of beliefs and ideologies in contemporary patriarchal values, the 'sati' cannot exist at a purely symbolic or mythic level: the human widow appears to be central to the pedagogy of both."[37] Even as memorials such as sati stones attempt to disassociate the visual representation with its actual practice, the issue is inevitably, and inextricably, linked to the *sati* herself. Ultimately the concept of *sati* is relevant as a reinforcement of the larger framework of patriarchy within which it exists, and, more importantly, as an issue on which human lives depend even today.

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[37] Vaid and Sangari, WS2.

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Colonialism and Textualisation of Cultures: A Critical Analysis of Christian Missionary Writings in India

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Abstract: The Gutenberg Revolution, which replaced the oral tradition, entered the North Eastern region of India through the initiative of the early British missionaries. Colonisers and Missionaries were among the first outsiders to make contact with the indigenous peoples, and their writings frequently contain accounts of local culture and society, oral tradition etc., which, whatever their deficiencies, have a vital documentary value precisely for standing right at the beginning of modern cultural change. The missionaries were foreigners, on the outside, looking in. Even in their most scholarly work, when dispassionate objectivity was a primary goal, factors in their background, education and European perspective would determine not only what they noticed or looked at, but also the way they interpreted or explained what they saw. Today, the colonial spectre continues to haunt the present day intellectual consciousness though the colonisers and missionaries departed the region many years ago. A form of re-colonisation is evident in literatures written by the local inhabitants who continue to reproduce the derogatory description given by the colonial ethnographies while narrating their history. Therefore, though the native have started writing today, it is a perspective or a sense of reality seen through the lens of the colonisers.

Keywords: Colonialism, Missionaries, Ethnographies, Textualisation, Culture, Local, Deconstruction, Binary Opposition, Mimicry, Domination

Introduction

T**HE ARTICLE IS** an effort to understand the transnational encounter between two different societies, which was made possible by the experiences of British colonialism in India, particularly the North Eastern part of India. The North East of India comprised of eight states—Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim and Tripura of which the state of Sikkim has been a recent addition. The paper will focus on four states where the degree of proselytisation were most affective namely, the state of Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Manipur and concentrate on the experiences of the American Baptist and the Welsh Presbyterians. For the purpose of this article, the Mizos or Lushais are ethnic groups in Mizoram state of India. Likewise, the Angamis, Tangkhuls and Aos are names of different sub groups of the Nagas of Nagaland state in India. The Khasis and Garos are two dominant groups of people in Meghalaya. In Manipur state, the paper focuses on the experiences of the Kukis and the Nagas.

There is a story from another continent, which shares a similar colonial experience with the North Eastern part of India. This story concisely reflects what the article is trying to say:

There was a little boy in an African village. Every day, he came home from the mission school excited about what he had learnt on that day. But, on one particular day, he came home with a look of puzzlement on his face. His father inquired as to what happened.

> The little boy said, "Father, I don't understand this, I go to school everyday and the teacher often tells us the story about this lion who they say is the king of the jungle. However, this ferocious and strong beast always seems to get killed by the hunter in the story. I don't understand it. If the lion is so strong, why does the hunter always kill the lion?" The father responded, "Well, son, until lions learn how to write books, that's the way the story will always end (Dharmaraj, 1993, p. XV)."

The expansion of the European imperialists became conspicuous in different parts of the old world outside Europe during the 19th century (Sarkar, 2006, p. 7). The beginning of Christian movement in North-East India can be earmarked by the Treaty of Yandabo concluded at the end of the first Anglo-Burman war, between the East India Company of the British Imperialist and the kingdom of Burma on 24th February, 1826 (Downs, 1992, p. 6). The passing of the Charter Act of 1813, Clause XXXII, permitted missionaries to preach the Gospel in India. The Welsh Presbyterians and the American Baptist Mission were the major Christian missions in the region throughout the nineteenth century. The American Baptist Missionary Union arrived on March 1836 (ibid, 1971, p. 69), whereas the Presbyterians Church of India traces its origins to 1841 (ibid).

The spirit of missionary enterprise is inherent in Christianity whenever and wherever a man or a community has grasped the meaning and felt the power of Christ's salvation, the desire to "tell it out among the heathen" has always been evident (Morris, 1996, p.11). Likewise, the activities of the different missionary organisation in North East India were geared towards achieving this goal. The means adopted to achieve these were: preaching and dissemination, education and inclusion of Christian doctrines to the school curriculum (Visvanathan, 1998); literature, journalism, printing and translation of the Bible to local script and language; and humanitarian services, also called "works of mercy" (Sahay, 1986, p.8) like running orphanages, relief work, village development and health care facilities.

The contribution of the foreign missionaries in the field of education and literature made a lasting impact in the history of development of the North Eastern people of India. It also plays a significant role in the acculturation process of the local convert. Prior to that, the society was largely an oral society in which the politics, culture, customs, myth and folklores were passed down by words of mouth. There were two forms of colonial agencies that were operational in North East India—the Administrator and the Missionary. The administrators did not interfere in the day-to-day life of the natives and were influential only at the policy making level. Colonizers and missionaries were among the first outsiders to make sustained contact with indigenous peoples, and their writings frequently contain accounts of local culture and society, which whatever their qualities have an indispensable documentary value precisely for standing at the beginning of a society in transition.

The missionaries would begin with the translation and the production of portions of the scripture: first translation of the gospels, then other New Testament books, and finally the whole Bible. If there was no written language, then one would have to be created. The emphasis on this need was so strong that a great amount of the missionary's time was allocated for the purpose. The literature produced by the missions became the basis of all subsequent literary developments in the hills areas (Downs, 1992, p. 192). While missionaries reduced their languages to a written form and produced the first literature, several generations were to pass before the people themselves began to reduce a literature of their own (ibid, p. 10). The missionary's histories and accounts are still shaping the etic and emic views of academ-

icians and social scientist. Keeping in mind the magnitude of their influence on the present generation's understanding of their historical past, it would be beneficial to reassess the missionary writings in North East India. It is important to understand their aims and consequences in writing.

Types of Missionary Writings

Colonial rule in North East India, as elsewhere, was very prolific in producing documents, books and information on disparate subjects and questions. A steady stream of military memoirs, official reports, scholarly journals and ethnographic writings were published in Calcutta, during the British rule. The mission printing press in Guwahati, Shillong, Jorhat, etc., also were used for the production of school text books and the basic works like the dictionaries, grammars, and secular literature. They began to write about the land, politics, culture and custom of the various people who inhabit North East India. Though they wrote about different topics and their objective might not actually be alike, however, they gave us information, description and commentary from their own perspective. The sources available to us can be broadly divided into at least four types as under on the basis of the writers (Zou, 2002).

1. The first sources of Colonial ethnography are the official writings. This includes government reports, military or topographical reports, gazetteers, administrative reports, archival materials, ethnographic and academic monographs written by colonial administrators.
2. Second, we have personal and unofficial writings in the form of autobiography, diary, private letters, memoirs, accounts from close associates of the missionaries or the first convert, travelogues etc.
3. Thirdly, we have a significant body of missionary literature in the form of field reports, Christian literature, autobiographies and discussion papers of missionary conference, etc.
4. Lastly, we have the scholarly interpretation and analysis of colonial ethnographies in the form of research works and published books as secondary materials.

Missionary Writings: Different Views

With post-colonial theory, gaining momentum in the intellectual circle, scholarly attitudes and views on the missionaries have become ambivalent. Some scholars and local writers in the areas have glorified the missionaries and their work as extreme in benevolence and self-sacrificing for the non-believers. They are considered responsible for civilising and developing the tribals of North-East India. At the other extreme pole are those writers who have critically characterised missionaries as merely or strongly advocating it as a tool of western colonial expansion and an expression of the colonisers' dogmatic assertion of their racial superiority.

S. P. Sinha speaking on 'The Tribal Situation of India' says "[missionaries] are responsible for fanning the basic distrust and fear among the Hillman for the plainsman". He continued that Christian missionaries are there not for advancing a faith but for keeping imperialism alive (Downs, 1994, p. 24). Still, other writers have held a more moderate view in characterising missionaries as simultaneously both inhibiting and liberating. The work of Homi Bhabha,

among others, has made the case that the relation between the coloniser and colonised is characterised by ambivalence (Bhabha, 1994). Views on the colonial impact on a society are markedly different from a missionary or coloniser's point of view to those of the colonised native as also amongst the scholars. 'The objective of colonial discourse," writes Bhabha (1994, pp. 66- 84) is to construe the colonized as a population of degenerate types' on the basis of racial origin, in order to justify conquest and to establish systems of administration and instruction. The discourse of colonialism would have it that the colonized subject is the 'Other' of the Westerner, essentially outside Western culture and civilization (ibid).

Padel wrote that missionaries' fundamental bias in outlook polarises people, in the idea that Christianity is superior to other religions and that only Christians can be 'saved'. Behind a mask of meekness, there is thus an enormous arrogance and violence in the missionary enterprise: a fundamental 'closed ness' and prejudice against other cultures and religions (Padel, 1995, p. 185). B.S. Cohn differentiates ethno-historians from colonial historians. The ethno-historian tries to perceive historical events from the position of the aborigines rather than that of European administrators (Mackenzie, 2007, p. 12). Colonial historians are those who are chroniclers of events, which are relevant from the point of view of colonial administration of the time (ibid, p. 13). Uncritically viewing the world through the mission prism can be profoundly misleading (Bickers et al., 1996. p. 2). For Oddie, if one is to understand missionary social comment, it is not only important to gain some insight into how and where missionaries gained their information, but also to understand something of their aims in writing (ibid, p. 207). Susan Visvanathan wrote about the diverse forms of relationships present in colonial discourses: missionaries and colonial administrators; and natives and the missionaries (Visvanathan, 2007). The work of the missionaries often ran parallel to that of the colonial government (ibid, p.128). In explaining the dialogue between the natives and the missionaries, she wrote that the engagement to Christianity sometimes requires that the converts be in denial of their former lifestyles and ideologies in order to conform to the colonizer's understanding of the world (ibid, p. 160). The native convert usually play an important role in the missionary's enterprises and assisted the missionary in all activities of proselytisation (ibid).

Reflections on Colonial Writings

A far neglected aspect of the impact of the missionaries' creation of a literature for the tribal peoples of the North East relates to a legend that is variously represented among many of them. The story goes that at one time, they had a written language, but that knowledge of it had been lost, due to misadventure or carelessness, on the part of some primeval ancestor. The manuscript had fallen in a fire or in a deep hole, it was left where pigs, dogs, or some other animal ate it, it had been lost while swimming a river, etc. While this tradition is widespread among tribes of quite different backgrounds—Nagas, Mizos, Khasis and Daflas to mention a few, very little attention has been given to its significance (Downs, 1992, p. 193). Lloyd refers to it, several times, as having been a factor in the Mizo receptivity to the gospel in its written form:

> The Mizos venerated their forbears and have always been profoundly conscious of their links with the past…From the past they have inherited a fund of stories, proverbial sayings and poetry expressed in special poetical language called "upa tawng" (old lan-

guage). But their past is largely unknown for they had no written language. They share, by the way, with the Daflas, Khasis and other tribes far removed from each other but living in North East India and North West Burma, the legend that they once had a written language, which they unfortunately lost (Lloyd, 1991, p. 3).

Cultural Colonisation

Christianity is framed in universal terms, which ideally should override ethnicity, nationality, class, and income. Theoretically, missionary activities might be expected to reflect similarities, regardless of these variables. Yet missionaries often encourage certain stereotypes about themselves and their work in order to secure recruits. Missionaries demand that converts reject cultural forms in no way opposed to Christian tenets: traditional dress, grooming, music, diet, and naming (Beidelman, 1982, p. 11). Christianity often requires that the converts be in denial of their former world and worldview in order to conform to the colonizer's understanding of the world. Early converts were given biblical or English names in place of the old one. Similarly, among the Garos of Meghalaya, the early converts construct a new village in order to protect themselves from the old ways of life at *Rajasimla*, and *Nishangram* (Sangma, 1987, p. 189) respectively. Mary Mead Clark, the wife of Dr. E. W. Clark, the pioneer missionary in Nagaland wrote about the planting of a new colony name, '*Molung*,' for the local convert (Clark, 1978). It was determined to abandon aggressive warfare and to be known as a peaceable, Christian village (ibid, p. 24). These Christian villages, which were formed with the sole purpose of maintaining Christian discipline, came to be known as "reduction" (Neill, 1966, p. 61) was also built in some areas of the Manipur field.

For Bhabha, the objective of colonial discourse is to construe the colonized as a population of degenerate types based on racial origin, in order to justify conquest and to establish systems of administration and instruction (Bhabha, 1994, pp. 66-84). Throughout the readings of colonial ethnography, in whatever form, we find that the discourse of colonialism is frequently populated with terrifying stereotypes on the natives as 'savages', 'wild', 'untameable' and 'heathen tribe'. The comments by a Mizo native convert about his own people that 'the Mizos were nothing but vicious marauders and head hunters'(as cited in Lloyd, 1991, p. 1), shows that the Mizos seems to have internalized the Colonisers description that they were 'nothing' but 'vicious marauders and head hunters'. Their customs, their way of living do not correspond to the concept of the missionaries or the colonial administrators. They began to inculcate into the minds of the Mizos what they think about them. This in turn makes the Mizos looked upon themselves through the lens of the colonisers. Rev. V.L. Zaithanga in his writing gave credit to the missionaries for transforming them from 'head-hunters' to 'soul-hunters' (Zaithanga, 1981). He concluded by re quoting taken from a book, 'Baptists in Assam,' which states,

> The mountains that formerly echoed with blood-curdling war cries are now re-echoing the harmony of Christian hymns. Their fore-fathers were head-hunting animists and used to sing their head-hunting chants but they have now exchanged for the hymns of fraternal love. The children of the head-hunting people have now become the children of God" (ibid, pp. 47-48).

Instances like this are present all over the writings in North East India, where the writings of colonisers and missionaries. Were the Mizos 'nothing' but marauders and head-hunters?

In an expedition in 1871, the Mizos killed a British tea planter named James Winchester at the Alexandrapore Tea Estate in Cachar District of Assam. They took his little daughter (Zaithanga, 1981, p. 10). Mary Winchester wrote a full account of her life among the Mizos. She was taken captive by the Mizos and lived among them for a year (Lloyd, 1991, pp. 6-7). She was made to live with on old woman whom she grew very fond of. Lloyd writes, 'It is said that she soon adjusted herself to her new life in the villages, shared in work and play with the other small girls and smoked a pipe as they did.' Tradition also says that Mary wept bitterly when she was released and taken from the village a year after her capture, and she wrote "...Then I was fetched with grief, I left my friends, and felt far from happy or settled till I had been six months in Elgin (ibid, p. 7)". Thus, the colonisers description reflects only a one sided view of reality.

Coincidentally the most common reason for British annexation of a hill tribe, be it Nagas (Nagaland), Garos (Meghalaya), Mizos (Mizoram) or Kukis (Manipur) was to stop them from raiding the plains or their stations. Indeed, it was in order to prevent such practices spilling over into the British territories on the plains that the "forward policy" of annexing the hill areas had been adopted (Downs, 1994, p. 172). The early narratives of British expansion in North East India (Mackenzie, 1884, p. 7) were replete with reference to the numerous savage and warlike tribes that frequently raided the plains of Assam for slaves and booty.

Head Hunting

Head hunting which was 'barbaric for the colonisers was for the colonized subject a contest for masculinity. It was associated with ultimate heroism and manhood, which were highly valued in most traditional societies in North East India. The principal role of the men and the basic social institution of the village were closely related to raiding and headhunting. Writing about the Angami Nagas, J.H. Hutton confirmed this observation:

> It is agreed by all Angamis, as well as by other Nagas, that head taking was essential to marriage in so far that a buck (young man) who had taken no head, and would not wear the warriors' dress at festivals, not only found it exceedingly difficult to get any girl with pretensions to good looks or to self-respect to marry him, but was held up to ridicule by all the girls of his clan (Hutton, 1921, p. 165).

Though most of the examples cited have referred to the Nagas, the prohibition of inter-village warfare and raiding had a similar impact on all the traditional hill tribal societies in the North East of India. The defeat of the Kukis of Manipur in the uprising of 1917-1919 marked the surrender of this tribe to both the colonial rule and Christianity. Colonial version of the cause of the uprising was the forcible recruitment of volunteers in the Labour corps. However, Gautam Bhadra, by conducting a professional field study among the affected tribes, many years later concluded that the imposition of the colonial bureaucratic structure upon the traditional tribal administration greatly undermined the authority of the Kuki chieftainship system. The forcible recruitment of the Kukis for the second Labour Corps served as an occasion rather than as the cause of an uprising (Bhadra, 1975). The Missionary enterprise was received with mixed response from the Kuki chiefs. Some chiefs sensed it as a threat to their space or domain of territory and authority that they had thought to be exclusively their own. The advent of colonialism and introduction of Christianity undermined the authority of the

chief largely. The chief had to share his rights to authority with the colonial administrator and the missionary. Many chiefs also had serious issues against the new religion, which they felt was a threat to the village community life and besides his influence.

Gifts Giving

Gift given by the missionaries to native is one framework, which the analysis must proceed with. 'Marcel Mauss' work is significant, in terms of the reading of the term "Gift". This anthropological classic deals with the attributes of gift giving as reciprocity, redistribution, contract, chicanery, bribe, taxation, tithe, donation, alms, and blackmail (Mauss, 1970). Clearly, we can also use flattery, fear and withdrawal of privileges, or giving of them as part of the ensemble (Visvanathan, 2006). When the missionaries, Lorrain and Savidge first entered Mizoram, they failed to make any effective contact with the people. This was because the Lushais soon realised that though the two white men belonged to the conquering nation, they were not as powerful as the white officials, partly because of language difficulty. According to V. Hawla, a local thinker, to prove and show that they were powerful, the two missionaries approached the Superintendent to give them permission to issue salt, which was in so much demand among the Lushais, in their name only. It was only when the Lushais could buy salt with the signature of the missionaries that the situation changed favourably for the latter (Hawla, 1969, p. 13). The missionaries were also obliged to give special prizes to ensure regularity in attendance (Sen Gupta, 1971, p.107). Therefore, the missionaries, very often in their zeal to convert, resorted to any means at hand to achieve their goal. Here the goal gains precedence over the means.

Attitude on Native Religion

Colonial ethnographies also reflect both missionaries and administrators attitude on native religion. According to Durkheim, the simplest form of religious life provides the purest examples of the essential elements of religious life (Durkheim, 1912). A.G. McCall[1] stated that before the occupation of their land by the British the Lushais were wholly animists (McCall, 2003, p. 67). While not disputing that the primal religion of the natives' involved a strong emphasis upon dealing with the spirits, there was more to the religion than this "animism". The basic difference between the traditional religion and sacrifices offered to the jungle spirits have not been taken sufficiently into account by most early writers. As early as in 1899, Edwin Rowlands, a missionary in Mizoram wrote,

> During the first tour, we witnessed one of the Lushai feasts in which, as they say, they worship their God. They generally sacrifice to demons, of which they are in great fear; but two or three times a year they worship their God. Two of these feasts are held; one

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[1] Perhaps one method of clarifying some of the implications of the cult of animism is by quoting Mr. Risley in the *Imperial Gazetteer of India* (1907-1909) which summarises the idea of animism current at that time as follows: - 'It conceives of man as passing through life surrounded by a ghostly company of powers, elements, tendencies, mostly impersonal in their character, shapeless phantasms of which no image can be made and no definite idea can be formed. Some of these have departments or spheres of influence of their own: one presides over cholera, another over smallpox, another over cattle disease; some dwell in rocks, others haunt trees, others, again, are associated with rivers, whirlpools, waterfalls or strange pools hidden in the depths of the hills. All of them require to be diligently propitiated by reason of the ill which provides the means for their propitiation (McCall, 2003, p. 67).'

> after the clearing of the land for sowing, and the other after the "harvest home."This was a sight of the degradation of religion not to be forgotten; for two or three days the large village was 'given to drunkenness'; old women and old men would mutter in drunken accents, that they were worshipping God! (The Report of the Lushai Hills, 1899-1900)

Here Rowlands clearly differentiates the Mizos' worship of their god and the sacrifices offered to the malignant spirits, the whole process of which was called '*inthawina*'(Kipgen, 1997, p. 109).

Most of the early Mizo Christians too came to think of their traditional religion in the same light as pictured by the coloniser. Nevertheless, there were a few discerning minds whose views represent a re-evaluation of the traditional religion. Zairema, a prominent Mizo churchman, noted that while the "*inthawina*" (sacrifice) offered to the "*huais*" (demons) were not obligatory; the sacrifices offered to the higher, benevolent gods were obligatory (Zairema, 1985, pp. 15-16). Most local scholars do not deny the fact that sacrifices were offered to the spirits or demons, but that does not necessarily make Mizos worshippers of the evil spirits. The point that is stressed is that the demons were not worshipped as deities. They offered sacrifices to appease them, but once that was done they were not revered, neither were the altars (maicham) or the exorcists (bawlpu) who were, rather, as Zairema puts it, "the butt of jokes" (ibid).

> While missionaries deliberated about the results of their policies, in their repeated protestation that they pursued only sacred ends they under-rated the impact of their deeds. As Baudet puts it, "the complex of motives involved in the European man's relations to non-European man and his world is intricate. The dichotomy of the European soul is an essential part of the complex (as cited in Beidelman, 1982, p. 6)".

Manifest and Latent Impact of Literary Work

The Missionaries encouraged the use of vernaculars through the Roman script instead of the Bengali script that was imposed on the indigene for administrative convenience by colonial rulers. Linguistic diversity is an important feature of the North Eastern hill states. Dialectical differences were facets that thwart both the communication and unification of different groups of people before the intervention of the missionaries. Linguistic link was weak even within a tribe or sub-tribe. In the work of Hudson on the Nagas of Manipur, he noted that the language of the Tangkhuls from the extreme south was totally incomprehensible to those living in the far north. He continued that the dialect of each village functioned like a separate language (Hodson, 1911, p. 81).

Bible translation as well as the procurement of literature and ethnographies contributed towards the unification of the different groups. Of necessity the missionaries likewise, would chose one of the dialect usually the one used in the place where their first mission was located. The government, thus becoming not only the language of education throughout the area inhabited by a tribe, but also the language of administration, in turn accepted the written form of the language adopted by them. Therefore, the chosen standard language gradually displaced the other dialects, especially among the literate. This leads to a kind of linguistic hierarchisation among them. Most early writers in Meghalaya hailed from the place called Cherrapunjee,

and it was the Cherra dialect that had been adopted for writing of Khasi in Roman script (Natarajan, 2002, p. 298). Similarly, the 'Awe' dialect was used for the Garo tribe in Meghalaya, the 'Ukhrul' dialect for the Tangkhul Nagas in Manipur and the 'Changli'' dialect for the Ao Nagas of Nagaland. In Mizoram, Duhlian was the name commonly given to the language (ibid, p. 128).

However, for Khup Za Go, Bible translation became a starting point for the emergence of dialectical identity and widening of the gap of ethnic divides among the various Scheduled Tribes of Manipur (Go, 1996). Jusho observes that another factor for the fragmentation of the Kuki group of tribes in Manipur state has been the publishing of the Holy Bible in 1960, in Thadou dialect. Being the majority tribe and one of the most progressive tribes among the Kukis, the version of the Bible in Thadou dialect was designated as the "Kuki Bible". Other Kuki tribes like the Paites, Gangte, Vaipheis, Zous and other tribes sternly objected this, as they were not happy to call the Bible as the Kuki Bible, because it was written only in Thadou dialect. They therefore, insisted the Bible be referred to as the "Thadou Bible" rather than adding "Kuki" appellation. However, the Thadou being the dominant tribe were adamant to change and they preferred it to be referred as the 'Kuki Bible' or the "Thadou Kuki Bible". Consequently, the resentment over the designation of the Bible became more pronounced after the other tribes brought out their own language versions of the Bible (Jusho, 2004. pp. 39-40).

Local People Contribution Undermined

A common feature in colonial ethnographies is that they were beset with accounts and descriptions of the missionaries' encounter with a hostile tribe; the oppositions they faced initially, but how despite the odds, they were eventually able to triumph over them. In the process, the native contribution or role in the success of their endeavour have been either overlooked or undermined (Sitlhou, 2006, p. 136). In North-East India from the very beginning, the expansion of Christianity has indeed been about such a 'shared enterprise'. Thus, the 'planting' of churches in various parts of the nineteenth century could never have been accomplished without the active initiatives of local people, who freely appropriated the Christian message, for themselves and commended that message both within their own societies and beyond.

The local people were not passive observers to the work done on them. The lack, or almost absence, of address to native agency in the construction of colonial writings cannot be simply taken as an indication of non-involvement of the native informant. The significance of the role of the native interpreter is not difficult to imagine in a region like North East India, which is characterised by linguistic and cultural diversity. Besides the early converts and the *Lambus* (interpreters) who helped in translation works, the native clerks, *Chaparasis* and village chiefs were also involved as informants at various points in the codification of customary laws and textualisation of ethnographic works (Zou, 2002). "Colonial missionary activity was acutely dependent upon the native catechist. He supported the missionary in the work of evangelisation, of pastoral engagements and involvements, in education work as native teacher or master, in medical work as doctor and dresser, as translator and colporteur, and of course in Zenana work, as native bible woman, teacher and visitor (Visvanathan, 1993, p. 9)."

Conclusion

In this context the findings on the native can be generalised under two headings: Firstly, the natives often have their own interpretation of a social phenomenon which is markedly different from the colonial version; even so it is always the colonial account that stands out because of their wider platform and command over a universal language. Secondly, much as the significance of the missionary contribution in the context of North East region cannot be questioned, the limitation in their writings is the marginalisation of the native voice in terms of their contribution and experience. As the natives gradually conformed to the proselytising influence of the missionaries, we find the negative opinion about them changing. It can be suggested that the commonality shared by the missionaries and the natives through a common belief system, lifestyle in terms of dressing and eating habits, world view and culture could have resulted in the change in the earlier stereotype given to the native by the former. The native now became the 'mimic men', or the partial representative of the coloniser.

The uses of the Roman lettering, as well as the introduction of the printing press, helped in preserving the various vernacular dialects of the tribes of the North East. The publishing of secular literature also enabled each tribe to think beyond their area, broadened their worldview and instilled in them a sense of pride in their own culture. The oral tradition was supplanted, but the missionary's and colonial ethnographer's records became the reservoir for saving proverbs, oral verses, folktales and vernacular language that had every possibility of becoming extinct. The translation of the Bible into the tribal languages has had a significant impact on the tribal societies. A new common history was created as they share the same faith and the same story conveyed through the Bible. It also made a significant contribution towards their social transformation.

However, we also find instances of the colonial writings being reproduced by the local writers who uncritically took in whatever was written about them. This is unavoidable as colonisers and missionaries were the first outsiders to make sustained contact with them. Thus, the colonial spectre continues to haunt the present day intellectual consciousness though the colonizers and missionaries departed the region many years ago. Ashis Nandy (1998) has discussed at length the damaging impact of colonialism on the subject people. He continued that 'colonialism' is a psychological state rooted in earlier forms of social consciousness in both the coloniser and colonised. A form of re-colonisation is evident in literatures written by the local inhabitants who continue to reproduce the derogatory description given by the colonial ethnographies while narrating their history. These writings directly refer to colonial ethnographies or make an interpretative analytical version of their own based on earlier writings. Therefore, though the local agencies have started writing today, it is a perspective or a sense of reality seen through the lens of the colonizers.

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Muslims' Relationship with People of the Book in the US: The Avant-garde of Dialogue of Action as an Instrument for Reinforcing Community Spirit

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Abstract: The recent development in the US between Muslims and those who oppose the construction of the Islamic Center near Ground Zero as well as between opponents and supporters of freedom of religion requires deep soul searching by all involved. More importantly, the phenomenon of hate and resentment against Muslims and Islam, which is blamed on the terrorist attack of September 11, need to be critically and constructively addressed. The resentment against Muslims and Islam is often most strongly felt and heard from Christian and Jewish Americans. This paper will examine the principle and focus of the dialogue of action, which recommends that people of different faith traditions collaborate toward projects of common interests and goals for healthy community development and the common good. Working together to accomplish the same social, political, and economic goals will serve to both unite Muslims and people of the book and promote more healthy understanding of each other. This form of dialogue is indispensable for better relationship in today's pluralistic societies; between peoples of different faith traditions but especially to make American Muslims feel less estranged and discriminated against. Muslims in America have an enormous challenge of carving a niche of identity for themselves, which does not compromise either the core values of their faith or core principles of being Americans. Aspiring to become vanguards of the dialogue of action will be beneficial to American Muslims in surmounting the challenge of blending their religious identity with their patriotism to the country.

Keywords: Dialogue of Action, American Muslims, Religious Pluralism, Faith Traditions

Introduction

ENSUING THE SEPTEMBER 11, 2001 terrorists attacks, the relationship between Muslims and people of other religions in the United States, especially Jews and Christians, have continued to be rocky, tempestuous, and at best prejudicial. Incidents like the controversy over Park51 Islamic Center near Ground Zero; public objection to building a mosques at Sheboygan, Wisconsin;[1] and the Oklahoma State Question 755 referendum designed to malign Islam by a constitutional amendment, specifically meant to reject any use and reference to Shariah Law in the jurisprudence of the state of Oklahoma[2] are symptomatic of a nationwide antipathy against Islam and Muslims. This article will critically examine issues of American Muslims' fidelity to Islam and loyalty to their country

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[1] See the editorial opinion from the students' newspaper of University of Wisconsin, Eau Claire, WI. Scott Hansen. "Sheboygan County Bigotry," in The Spectator, 4/8/2010. http://media.www.spectatornews.com/media/storage/paper218/news/2010/04/08/Editorialopinion/Sheboygan.County.Bigotry-3901880.shtml, accessed January 9, 2011.
[2] See Ariame de Vogue (2010). "Shariah Law Outlawed in Oklahoma State Courts, Ignites Debates." Abc News/Politics. November 11, 2010. http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/shariah-law-ban-oklahoma-renews-debate-draws-legal/story?id=12112985&tqkw=&tqshow=. Accessed January 13, 2011.

with the intent of constructively challenging American Muslims to evolve a sustainable and appropriately American Muslim identity. It will also evaluate how the effective application of the dialogue of action[3] will assiduously integrate American Muslims into the American society and ensure a better sense of trust of American Muslims by fellow Americans of all other faith traditions and ideological persuasions.

Notwithstanding the Establishment Clause and Free Exercise Clause of the First Amendment of the United States Constitution, there are people who insist that this country is a Judeo-Christian society. The referendum of November 2, 2010 on Oklahoma State Question 755 authored by State Representative Rex Duncan was meant to safeguard the Judeo-Christian values of Oklahoma State in particular and the United States at large.[4] Seventy percent of the electorate in Oklahoma State voted "yes" on November 2, 2010 for the constitutional amendment requested by State Question 755.[5] The overwhelming support from the electorate for the constitutional amendment in Oklahoma against the application of Shariah Law, because Islam, in their opinion, is a foreign religion, reflects the sentiments and reasoning of many Americans as well as how far those Americans are willing to go to negate and oppose the free practice of Islam in the United States.

It is therefore imperative, for American Muslims, who are certainly aware of the antipathy against them and the Islamic religion from many in the American society, to engage in active but peaceful process to neutralize the negativity and ensure that Muslims are integrated into the main stream of regular American life and can be trusted by other Americans in the society. While it may seem counterintuitive to ask Muslim Americans to work on improving their relationship with the rest of American public, it is necessary that American Muslims leave no one in doubt about their loyalty to their country and willingness to be fully integrated into the life of the American society. Tariq Ramadan (2010) addresses the tendency of a malaise among Muslims in the West actively engaging in supporting life and social activities in their communities. He said, "[t]hey [Muslims] must therefore overcome this 'minority' mind-set and fully participate in citizenship on an equal footing with the majority" (p. 58).[6] Therefore, while this article is not intended to make excuses to justify the marginalization of Muslims or anyone for that matter, it is not condoning the tendency of exclusiveness or withdrawal among some Muslims from actively participating and contributing to healthy social and political life of the United States. It is incumbent on American Muslims to courageously initiate and engage themselves in collaborative activities with other Americans of

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[3] According to the Vatican document *Dialogue and Proclamation*, there are four forms of dialogue, namely: dialogue of life, dialogue of action, dialogue of theological exchange, and dialogue of religious experience. Dialogue of action recommends that people of different faith traditions collaborate toward projects of common interests and goals for healthy community development and for the common good. For details on the different forms of dialogue see William R. Burrows, ed. (1993). *Redemption and Dialogue*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, pp. 108ff.

[4] According to Oklahoma Gazette of October 6, 2010, Representative Duncan insisted that the United States is a country built on Judeo-Christian values and faith tradition. See www.okgazette.com. Also see Douglas, Katrina. "Oklahoma State Question 755 "Save Our State"." *Politics*. Updated October 28, 2010. http://politics.gather.com/viewArticle.action?articleId=281474978643470. Accessed December 26, 2010.

[5] See "Oklahoma State "Sharia Law Amendment", State Question 755 (2010)." *Ballot *Pedia*. Modified December 10, 2010. http://ballotpedia.org/wiki/index.php/Oklahoma_%22Sharia_Law_Amendment%22,_State_Question_755_(2010). Accessed December 26, 2010. Although the electorate overwhelmingly voted in favor of the amendment, a temporary restraining order was put on the state Board of Election ratifying the decision of voters after Muneer Award, a Muslim leader in Oklahoma challenged the outcome of the votes in a US district court.

[6] See Ramadan, Tariq (2010). *What I believe*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press.

other faith traditions (especially Jews and Christians),[7] toward the common good of the society and in keeping with the social moral values of the American society as well as core Islamic principles.

Fidelity to Religion and Country

Some of the questions that every American Muslim needs to ask her or himself, in light of the challenges of negativity Muslims may face in a country that strongly espouses religious freedom and whose very existence is contingent on the social philosophy of the separation of church and state include: does Islam and being Muslim contradict the founding social and political philosophy of the United States? Is being a faithful Muslim averse to being a patriotic America? How does being faithful to Islam conflict with the civil responsibilities and duties of being an America or loyalty to American society? How does an American Muslim maintain his or her American identity and loyalty to the United States when issues of belonging to Islamic *Ummah* may conflict with being a patriotic American?

Different Western schools of thought may be divided on what aspects of Islamic practices and values conflict with being patriotic or loyal to the American civil society. This article will refrain from engaging in controversial theological rhetoric among Islamic scholars and Western scholars. It will rather highlight that certain regulations and religious instructions or values guiding the life of Muslims may need to be re-interpreted and evaluated from the perspective of life, social, religious, and cultural conditions obtainable in the United States. The United States technically, according to some Islamic demographic evaluation, falls into the category of *dar-al-Ahd*.[8] Therefore, Muslims are reminded that although the United States of America is not a Muslim majority country, there is no legal or constitutional objection or rejection of Islam in the United States. Consequently, those Islamic cultural recommendations and regulations that may not be accommodated in an American society may need critical review. Some of the Islamic cultural ethos or injunctions that easily come to mind include: tolerance of polygamy, overwhelming patriarchal preponderance, religious supersessionism and exclusivistic tendencies, marginal tolerance and respect for non-Muslims: objection to Muslim women marrying non-Muslims, adapting to some evolving technological and social developments and paradigmatic shift from traditional or homogenous social structure to postmodern and pluralistic social, cultural, and religious structures.

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[7] Particular reference to Jews and Christians is deliberate, because since the end of World War II Jews and Christians in the United States have been building stronger alliance and understanding, hence ending centuries of persecution of Jews by Christians. Moreover, Jews and Christians have politically been the focus of resentment by Islamic fundamentalists. Therefore, some Christians consider Islam a major threat to their missionary expansion, hence they are hesitant to encourage and accommodate the growth of Islam in the United States.

[8] A reference to countries where Muslims although in the minority are relatively free to practice their faith. This was a term coined to reflect the relationship of the Ottoman Empire with its Christian tributary states (see Webster's Online Dictionary). The term *dar-al-Ahd* literarily means the house of truce or the house of treaty. That status of freedom for Muslims to practice their faith in *dar-al-Ahd* may be in question if Muslims are continually maligned and made to feel insecure about their faith in American society. See John Deputo (2010). Islam…It is equally important to point out that many reformist Muslim scholars consider the use of the terms "*dar-al-Islam*," "*dar-al-kufr*," "*dar-al-harb*," "*dar-al-Sulh*," and "*dar-al-Ahd*" as anachronistic, because current global pluralistic reality, makes the use of such terms redundant. See Tariq Ramadan (1999). *To Be A European Muslim*, Leicester, UK: Islamic Foundation, p.144ff and Abduljali Sajid. "*Dar al-Islam*, *Dar al-Harb*, *Dar al Kufr*, and *Dar al-Sulh* Definitions and Significance: A Discussion Paper." *Muslims Together Building Cohesive Societies*. January 31, 2008. http://worldmuslimcongress.blogspot.com/2008/01/dar-al-islam-dar-al-harb.html. Accessed January 28, 2011.

Carving a Unique American Muslim Identity

Over centuries of active and progressive existence and dominance, in some cases, in different cultural and geographical contexts, Islam has demonstrated its ability to be faithfully practiced and lived with significant degree of pluriform. Writing about cultural diversity in Islam, Ramadan (2010) affirmed the historical reality in Islam of a long standing norm of cultural inclusivism. According to Ramadan:

> The principles of Islam regarding social affairs (*mu'amalati*) have always been very inclusive toward cultures and traditions (recognizing *al-'urf*, sound custom established before Islam): Muslims in Africa or in Asia have largely kept their way of life and habits while respecting the creed, practices, and principles shared by all Muslims. They have simply been selective and preserved what did not contradict any principle of their faith; it has been so for centuries, and this explains the notable differences in mind sets and ways of life among Arab, African, Turkish, or Asian Muslims. (Ramadan, 2010, p. 42).

The social cultural condition in Indonesia, as a country with the largest Muslim population, is significantly different from Islam in the social cultural setting of Saudi Arabia; equally the social, political, and cultural conditions of Iran is different from those of Turkey; just as the Muslims in Senegal are proudly different and unique from Muslims in the Sudan. While all countries mentioned above dominantly consist of Muslim populations, there are remarkable cultural, social, and political differences in the ways each of them respond to their Islamic faith. According to a recent demographic study conducted by *The Pew Forum*, about 300 million Muslims live in countries where Islam is a minority religion.[9] There are sizeable populations of Muslims in India, Ghana, Russian, Macedonia, Cyprus, and Malaysia who have comfortably and consistently maintained their Islamic identity unique to their cultural, social, and political landscape. One thing the countries listed above have in common is that Islam has been a minority religion that has survived formidably by establishing an Islamic culture that blends with the social, political, and cultural order in these countries.[10] This is not to suggest that Muslims in these countries have not had to face or are not facing certain challenges, but being Muslim is not considered antithetical to being a Russian, Macedonian, Indian, or Ghanaian. It is therefore imperative that American Muslims evolve the most convenient and appropriate way to fashion an American Muslim identity that embodies both fidelity to the core values of Islam and loyalty to being Americans or living in the United States of America.

Although Saudi Arabia, with its strong Wahhabi traditional structure, is ultra conservative and practices a very exclusive brand of Islam, Muslims in other cultural, social, and political settings like Tanzania retain their Islamic orthodoxy without necessarily seeking to replicate Wahhabism of Saudi Arabia. In all the pluriform experiences of Islam across the globe, what

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[9] See "Mapping the Global Muslim Population," The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, http://pewforum.org/Muslim/Mapping-the-Global-Muslim-Population.aspx.

[10] During my recent visit to Bangalore, India (January 2011), while getting a tour of the city I came across several mosques. Some of them were adjacent to buildings belonging to Hindus, Jain, and Christian places of worship. One of the mosques I came across had a big billboard with words categorically denouncing any form of compulsion in faith and strongly affirming religious freedom. The verbiage of that billboard is certainly a calculated response to and an affirmation of Indian's secular political philosophy.

is critically important is as Ramadan (2010) rightly said, "there is one religion, one Islam, with various interpretations and several cultures" (p. 42). It is therefore, imperative that American Muslims understand that they have a religious and social responsibility to define who they are. Such self-definition should adequately encapsulate the fundamental principles of their faith and be pertinent to the social cultural conditions of American society. This is not an easy task, especially, after 9/11 where Muslims are under intense pressure and scrutiny, yet, it needs to be achieved, and it is achievable.

American historical development reveals the different struggles by religious, racial, ideological, and sexual orientation groups for integration and acceptance into the mainstream and fabric of the society. Although the gay and lesbian groups are yet to realize all their civil rights requirements from the American polity and society, they have significantly advanced their integration and acceptance by the American public. It is not too long ago when Catholics became fully integrated into the mainstream of political and social life of the United Sates.[11] Therefore, Islam and Muslims are experiencing the same kind of negativity, rejection, and challenges Catholics, Mormons, Jews, African Americans, Japanese and German Americans experienced at different times in the history of the United States. Catholics and other religious minorities like the Mormons and Jehovah Witnesses have their scars to show for years of struggle for acceptance and integration into the American society. Therefore, as many social, cultural, and political historians and other scholars have observed, in many and different publications, what Muslims are experiencing is by no means new.

Obama's presidency would not have been realized this soon if there was no civil rights movement that tackled head-on the racial inequality and immoral social norm that segregated people based on race and treated the non-Caucasian races in this country as inferior people. Many Muslim scholars without a doubt understand the historical trajectories of this country, which are similar to their current experience. Eboo Patel in an interview with *American* magazine alluded to an aspect of such historical development. He said, "[o]ne hundred years ago, the line against Catholics was that Catholics were the 'alien Roman', that they were papists, that their fidelity to the Vatican meant that they could never be loyal Americans" (Weber, 2010, p. 12). And he concludes, "[y]ou literally hear the exact same charges leveled against Muslims. Their fidelity to the Quran means they can never be loyal Americans. Muslims are Islamists. It's the alien Muslims" (Weber, 2010, p. 13).

Just like African Americans, Catholics, Mormons, Jehovah Witness, and Gays and Lesbians worked and are working assiduously toward their integration and full acceptance into the fabric of American life and society; American Muslims have a moral and civic obligation to effectively work toward their integration into the American Society. While Muslims in America have a civil right to practice the faith of their choice, they also have a responsibility to demonstrate that their faith cannot and should not be in the way of being truly American citizens. Their civic responsibilities and duties to the society should find an acceptable tangent with their Islamic faith and values within the context of American society.

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[11] Only recently, John Kerry and Mitt Romney and even President Obama, had to defend their faith affiliations vis-à-vis their patriotic commitment to policies and constitutional stipulations of the United States before the American public because they are Catholic, Mormon, and Black respectively. John F. Kennedy also had to defend his Catholic faith identity in 1960 as he campaigned for his election as president.

The Need for Muslims to be in Collaboration with other Faith Traditions in the US

As American Muslims engage in establishing a uniquely American identity, there is need for a critical appreciation of some outstanding Muslims that may provide the necessary ingredients for carving this new identity. This article will suggest and examine the achievements and roles of three Muslims who demonstrate indispensable ingredients required for carving a uniquely American Muslim identity. They are Tariq Ramadan, Fethullah Gulen, and Eboo Patel.

A genuinely American Islam should consist of Muslims who have sound and critical understanding and appreciation of their Islamic faith. Such understanding of the Islamic faith that reflects intellectual, social, doctrinal, and human developments Muslims of the 21st century must exhibit. In my opinion, a scholar like Tariq Ramadan of Switzerland reflects the kind of intellectual critical thinking needed by the majority of American Muslims. Many American Muslims also need to reflect a spirituality and religiosity which are open to effective and progressive dialogue with people of other faith traditions. Fethullah Gulen, a leading Sufi Muslim, represents such kinds of religiosity and spirituality. Equally, an authentically American Islam should find a way of collaborating socially, politically, economically, and in all other endeavors of life with people of other faith traditions present in the United States. The establishment and maintenance of a truly unique American identity of Islam is needed for Muslims to promote and engage in healthy social, economic, and political collaboration and interaction with fellow Americans of different faith traditions through dialogue of action. The work of Eboo Patel, a leading American Muslim that represents and promotes pragmatic integration of Muslims in the American society, could be extremely instructive in this regard. Patel however describes the same phenomenon (dialogue of action) as the "public language of faith."

Within the intellectual arena, Ramadan is a strong advocate of what he calls "radical reform" among Muslims, especially those living not only in the 21st century but also in Western societies.[12] For Ramadan (2010), at the heart of "radical reform" is the understanding that "fundamental principles (*aqidah*) and ritual practices (*ibadat*) do not change, but one must engage in critical readings and reasoning (*ijtihad*) to find the ways to a faithfulness that is not blind to the evolutions of time and to the diversity of societies" (p. 47). Ramadan, therefore, calls all Muslims, especially Western Muslims, to be critical of their Islamic faith to ensure a healthy balance of what they believe within the contemporary context in which they practice their faith. He equally acknowledges that engaging in "radical reform" requires courage, wisdom, and discipline to evolve the healthiest way of being Muslim in the maze of Islamic law and jurisprudence, the Quran and Sunnah of the Prophet, juxtaposed with the demands of the modern democratic, progressive, secularized, and religiously and culturally pluralistic societies of the West (Ramadan, 2009).

Ramadan recognizes two basic forms of reforms: "adaptation reform" and "transformation reform." He is clearly in favor of the latter because it requires a Muslim to equip her or himself with spiritual, intellectual, and scientific means to actively participate in the varied complex social, political, philosophical, and ethical challenges (Ramadan, 2009, p. 3). The

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[12] A comprehensive focus of Ramadan's "radical reform" is to be found in his work *Radical Reform: Islamic Ethics and Liberation*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.

"adaptation reform" requires religious, philosophical, and legal thought to adapt the evolutions of societies, sciences, and the world (Ramadan, 2009, p. 30f). For clarity of understanding, it is important to recognize the critical difference between the two approaches to reform. While "adaptation reform" is passive with limited scope of effectiveness, the "transformation reform," on the other hand, is active, more exacting, and progressive (Ramadan, 2009, p. 33). The latter requires more creative, constructive, and critical approach than the former. This explains, why for Ramadan, a sustainable transformation reform requires a *radical* approach, hence his preference for the term "radical reform" (2009, p. 34ff). To truly establish a reformed Islamic faith that is conducive to American society and polity, there is need for American Muslims to engage in "transformative reform" or rather "radical reform". Only by embarking on a *radical* reform will American Muslims be capable of evolving an Islamic culture that is pertinent to and sustainable in American society.

The Turkish Sufi Muslim, Fethullah Gülen, currently living in the United States, has been one individual who has richly influenced a significant number of Muslims across the globe. According to *Tribune-Review*, a metropolitan Pittsburgh newspaper,[13] followers of Gülen are estimated at five million. He is renowned for his strong leaning toward education of the youth, non-violence, active religious dialogue, and respect of religious freedom. Consequently, his many achievements make him an ideal model for American Muslims. Gülen is an ardent Sufi Muslim, whose fervent Sufi spirituality propels him to advocate and promote effective interreligious dialogue and respect for other people's religious identity and choice as well as eschew any form of religious bigotry, which reflects the "other" as an object of hate, an attitude prevalent among religious fundamentalists.

However, Gülen has been described by some as controversial, a polarizing figure in his native homeland of Turkey, an enigma, or even "a bit of a mystery."[14] Regardless of these concerns and suspicions about what Gülen represents among Muslim, many non-Muslims who have been in close contact with him describe him as "a border transgressor,"[15] "middle of the road guy" and someone to be trusted (Conte, Nov. 25, 2010, p. A8). In addition, Gülen is described as holding "an inclusive, universalist and transcending Islamic conception. He does not claim ownership to a monopoly of truth" (Esposito & Yilmaz, 2010, p. 11). His worldview is known to reject three major inhibitions, namely ignorance, poverty, and disunity (Esposito & Yilmaz, 2010, p. 12). This explains why he is committed to fighting ignorance and poverty with standardized education at all levels and promotion of charity activities and organizations. He is also firmly committed to the use of dialogue and understanding as remedies for conflict and disunity (Esposito & Yilmaz, 2010, p. 12).

Being a Sufi, it is not surprising that Gülen, a fervent and accredited religious leader, is vehemently opposed to the use of violence in religion and tends toward an inclusive spiritual path, that respects the religious affiliation and orientation of the other as well as being a persistent advocate for religious dialogue between Muslims and people of other faith traditions (Esposito & Yilmaz, 2010, p. 25ff). Based on his renowned record of accomplishments and propensity toward intercultural and interreligious dialogue, it is understandable that currently

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[13] See Andrew Conte. "Imam arouses praise, concerns," in *Tribune-Review*. Sunday, November 28, 2010, pp. A1 and A8.

[14] See good review of Gülen and his followers in a feature story by Andrew Conte. "Imam arouses praise, concerns," in *Tribune-Review*. Sunday, November 28, 2010, pp. A1 and A8.

[15] See John L. Esposito and Ihsan Yilmaz, eds. (2010). *Islam and Peacebuilding: Gulen Movement Initiatives*. New York: Blue Dome Press, p. 11.

Gülen has a strong following both in the United States and globally. This is not only because of the possible political influence he appears to command, especially for Turkish citizens, but also more important because of his style and commitment to healthy dialogic relationship between Muslims and people of other faith traditions. He avoids the binary epistemological approach of "us" versus "them." His Sufi influenced spirituality of one humanity is reflected in his persistent call for Muslims to practice their pure faith with inclusive and loving attitude and relationship with people of other faith traditions. People who describe him as a mystery or an enigma are reflecting their inadequate understanding of Sufism and its spirituality of non-violence and respect for the religious choice of the other. Yet Sufis come from both Shi'ite and Sunni strands of Islam. Therefore, Muslims of both traditions are invited to live out a Sufi spiritual path. It follows that American Muslims can benefit much by advocating and adopting certain Sufi religious and spiritual principles, which are in accord with the democratic principles and religious plurality of the American society. Indeed, American Muslims will build lasting social capital if they emulate the dialogic approach and interest of Gülen, as they carve a uniquely American identity for the Islam practiced in the United States.

In a foreword written by Eboo Patel for *Hearing the Call Across the Traditions: Readings on Faith and Service* (Davis, 2009, p. xi),[16] he states: "Service is not only a bridge between the cosmic and the concrete, but also between Islam and Judaism, Christianity and Buddhism, secular humanism and Hinduism. The diverse community that is humanity is not fated to be divided by the clash of civilizations. We can just as easily be united on the common ground of service. All we have to do is cross the bridge." This statement underscores Patel's interest and fervor for a dialogue of action based interreligious dialogue. He is one American Muslim who has spent a good part of his life from age 22,[17] while in college, promoting practical collaboration between American Muslims and Americans of other faith tradition. He is a co-founder of Interfaith Youth Core, a service oriented organization that operates in about 150 university campuses across the United States.[18] For Patel, the overriding need for effective interreligious dialogue is "not about saying all religions are the same; it's not even about saying all religions are equal…It's about saying that people from different faith backgrounds ought to come together in ways that build understanding and cooperation" (Weber, 2010, p. 13). Hence, from Patel's viewpoint, at the heart of the need and religious justification for American Muslims to engage in dialogue with other Americans of other faith traditions, are "the shared values of service, mercy, and compassion" (Weber, 2010, p. 13).

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[16] See Adam Davis (2009). *Hearing the Call Across the Traditions: Readings on Faith and Service.* Woodstock, Vermont: Skylight Paths Publishing.

[17] The Pluralism Project at Harvard University has the following brief description of Eboo Patel: "Named by *US News & World Report* as one of America's Best Leaders of 2009, Eboo Patel is the founder and Executive Director of *Interfaith Youth Core (IFYC)*, a Chicago-based institution building the global interfaith youth movement. Author of the award-winning book *Acts of Faith: The Story of an American Muslim, the Struggle for the Soul of a Generation*, Patel is also a regular contributor to the *Washington Post*, National Public Radio and CNN. He is a member of President Obama's Advisory Council of the White House Office of Faith Based and Neighborhood Partnerships, and holds a doctorate in the sociology of religion from Oxford University, where he studied on a Rhodes scholarship." See *The Pluralism Project at Harvard University*. "Eboo Patel." http://www.pluralism.org/pages/events/archives/2003/10/interfaculty/participants/patel. Accessed February 10, 2011.

[18] In the light of the disturbing debate on Park51 Islamic Center near to Ground Zero, the October 25, 2010 edition of the Catholic magazine *America* featured Eboo Patel and his interfaith service projects across the United States, especially in university campuses. See Weber, Kerry (Oct. 25, 2010). "The Talking Cure." *American*, pp. 11-14.

It is indeed safe and cogent to say American Muslims like Patel have much to offer all American Muslims in their critical search for identity and full participation in the life and activities of their beloved country and in fidelity to their Islamic faith. Patel advocates what he describes as "public language of faith;" a modality he finds pertinent and necessary in a religious pluralistic society like the United States; he writes: "'public language of faith,' articulates how what makes you a more faithful Jew, Christian or Muslim also makes you a better citizen" (Patel & Brodeur, 2006, p. 20). Expanding further on the value of "public language of faith" in religiously diverse society, Patel writes:, "[t]his public language of faith allows us not only to prevent conflict but also to bridge and multiply the social capital that exists in diverse faith communities, social capital that would otherwise be isolated" (Patel & Brodeur, 2006, p. 21),

Patel, along with many scholars who agree with him, represent the desirable face of Muslims and Islam that will innocuously assimilate into American society. They are prominent Islamic figures who remind other American Muslims that the process of full assimilation and earning the trust of the American public requires a commitment on the side of American Muslims. Building an enduring trust and fully assimilating into the social fabric of the American society will significantly allay fears and promote trust, regardless of the negative image of Islam portrayed by some Muslims around the globe as well as in some communities here in the United States, which are deviously spreading.[19] The efforts Patel puts in his mission and ministry of promoting collaboration in service projects, with strong emphasis on the youth, has an assurance of longevity and longtime benefits toward effective interreligious dialogue between American Muslims and other Americans. In addition, this endeavor is both proactive and reactive (Patel & Brodeur, 2006). More importantly, it puts the fate of American Muslims' quest for full integration and acceptance in the American society in the hands of American Muslims themselves. Such collaborative service projects demonstrate American Muslims commitment to the core social, political, and religious values of the American society as well as afford American Muslims opportunities to promote and effectively support many Islamic social values and principles.

Each of the three Muslims referenced above offer very tangible and indispensable values to American Muslims in their process toward full integration into the American society and will invariably build trust with the American public. Ramadan unquestionably offers intellectual and critical mind-set as a prerequisite for all *bona fide* American Muslims. Gülen provides the social-spiritual elements and components necessary for effectively undertaking enduring dialogue of action between American Muslims and Americans of every faith tradition. Patel, on his part, highlights the social pragmatics through "public language of faith" that are indispensable for social and political integration of people of all faith traditions into a realistically religious pluralistic American society.

Conclusion

Working together to accomplish the same social, political, and economic goals will serve to both unite Muslims and people of the book and promote more healthy understanding of each other. More importantly, it enhances a more positive understanding of Muslims and Islam

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[19] There are growing incidents of American born or naturalized American Muslims indicted or apprehended for planning or manifestly carrying out violent incidents against the American public in the name of Islam.

by non-Muslims in the United States. In its October 25, 2010 issue, the monthly Catholic magazine *America*, alluded to how interfaith activities have helped, especially American Christians, to better understand and appreciate their Muslim neighbors. One of those interviewed for that edition, on the values of interfaith movement, had this to say: "If I hadn't been involved in the [Interfaith Youth Core] movement, I might have been silent in that issue [of discounting Muslims as good Americans]. I've met Muslim people, and I care about them" (Weber, 2010, p. 11).[20]

Muslims engaging in interreligious dialogue activities that promote collaboration and cooperation with people of other faith traditions immensely build healthy community spirit and positive appreciation of Muslims among Americans of other faith traditions. Therefore, a dialogue of action, which those activities and collaborations represent, is an indispensable approach for building better relationships in today's pluralistic societies between peoples of different faith traditions and in particular American Muslims, who will feel less estranged and discriminated against. Muslims in American have an enormous challenge of carving a niche of identity for themselves, which does not compromise either the core values of their faith or core principles of being Americans. Aspiring to become vanguards of the dialogue of action will be beneficial to American Muslims in surmounting the challenge of blending their religious identity with their patriotism.

President Obama in his 2011 State of the Union address specifically alluded to Muslim Americans as integral in the aspirations of the country when he said, "American Muslims are a part of our American family."[21] American Muslims therefore, need to seek to tow the active line of people like Patel and Gülen as well as the orthodox and critical-minded approach of leading scholars like Ramadan. Beyond emulating these leading Muslims, whose philosophical, intellectual, and practical approaches are necessary for developing uniquely American mindset for Muslims, it is important for Islamic communities to be less exclusive and be more collaborative with other faith traditions, especially the people of the book, in their communities. This can be done by sponsoring and promoting many causes that serve the common good, like soup kitchens, shelters, education, advocacy and support for abuse victims, and counseling and therapy for drug addicts as well as for violence and substance abuse victims. The dialogue of action model will provide a durable framework for successful collaboration and integration of multi-religious values in a pluralistic society like the United States. This approach is an indispensable apparatus for ensuring full integration of American Muslims into the polity and social fabric of the United States and needs to be optimally employed by American Muslims.

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[20] The person interviewed and quoted above had responded to an email from a Church organization she and her parents belonged to, with the title "Why Muslims can't be good Americans." See Weber, Kerry (Oct. 25, 2010). "The Talking Cure." *American*, pp. 11-14.

[21] His comment is couched around the broad idea that American Muslims are effectively collaborating with the rest of Americans toward the security, safety, and protection of all Americans against the enemies of the United States. See Office of the Press Secretary. "Remarks by the President in State of Union Address." The White House–President Barak Obama. Released January 25, 2011. http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/01/25/remarks-president-state-union-address. Accessed January 28, 2011.

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Spirituality in Practice: Healthcare Counseling Roles with Chronically Ill Patients

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Abstract: Counseling professionals within medical settings confront life events of chronic illness, death, and deal with the consequences of life decisions made by their clients, patients, families, and significant others. They must be aware of a holistic linkage between patients' psycho-emotional choices of adjustment and their compliance with and to medical intervention. In addition, therapists have also recognized the presence of individual and family created contexts of meanings (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2004) and narratives. Spiritual identity and self-esteem, life evaluation, and culturally diverse health values, and healing beliefs (Van Hook & Aguilar, 2001) can strongly influence the use of positive coping devices relevant to adaptation, well-being, and patient autonomy (Goldstein, Jaffe, Sutherland, & Wilson, 1987). Consequently, today's therapeutic encounter may typically contain concern not only for psychological, emotional, and psychosocial outcomes of intervention but for the spiritual ones as well. However, managed care systems that promote diagnostic, short-term counseling approaches, have required therapists to adjust therapeutic dialogue to center on brief experiential, client-centered and holistically focused interventions in lieu of using more traditional and often longer-term insight and psychoanalytic approaches to therapy. As a result, a collaborative partnership of mutuality and conversation must be established almost immediately between patients and counselors to confront and process together the multi-dimensional impacts of chronic illness and continuing disability on the individual's and family's functioning. Creating a relationship that will successfully generate an exploration of additional strength and spiritual healing factors such as are contained within family perceptions of attached meanings to the occurrence of illness, and mediating factors of spirituality may be disallowed within prescribed healthcare interventions.

Keywords: Spirituality, Practice, Chronic Illness

COUNSELING PROFESSIONALS WITHIN medical settings confront life events of chronic illness, death, and deal with the consequences of life decisions made by their clients, patients, families, and significant others. Medical social workers, for example, have long been aware of a holistic linkage between patients' psycho-emotional choices of adjustment and their compliance with and to medical intervention. In addition, therapists have also recognized the presence of individual and family created contexts of meanings (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2004) and narratives. Spiritual identity and self-esteem, life evaluation, and culturally diverse health values, and healing beliefs (Van Hook & Aguilar, 2001) may strongly influence the use of positive coping devices relevant to adaptation, well-being, and patient autonomy (Goldstein, Jaffe, Sutherland, & Wilson, 1987). Today's therapeutic encounter may typically contain concern not only for psychological, emotional, and psychosocial outcomes of intervention but for the spiritual ones as well.

Spirituality Concepts and Psychological Theories of Transcendence

Therapists, although aware of aspects of faith, hopeful beliefs, and a spiritual sense of purpose by their patients, have been educated to use ethical and validated counseling approaches, supported by recognized theories and the use of appropriate interventions to practice situations. Where have elements of spirituality played a part in theory-based practice? How should counseling practitioners address issues of transcendence related to healing and illness topics within psychological theory?

Sermabeikian (1994) noted that Jungian psychology might support the theoretical inclusion of spirituality as a means of understanding the human drive for transcendence in individual functioning. Perhaps due to personal experience as a cancer victim, Jung proposed the existence of a mind-body-spirit relationship that was contained within the inner psyche. Impacted by loss, the emotional effects echo into the spiritual consciousness that "when conscious life has lost its meaning and promise, it is as though a panic has broken loose" (Jung, 1984, p.205) in the soul. Rolland (1984) also comments on the powerful impact that severe progressive and terminal chronic illnesses can have on patients and their families.

In order to successfully restructure present functioning, people must find ways of compensatory behavioral reactions that will normalize the self and its adjustment to the new situation. In this case, the experience of the onset of chronic illness, would require individual patients and their families to possibly draw off of internalized spiritual perspectives (Canda & Furman, 1999), and rituals, for example through prayer, and healing beliefs (McKee & Chappel, 1992). In a study by Cohen (as cited in McKee & Chappel, 1992), coronary patients who participated in a prayer group "required less ventilation assistance" (p.35), reduced medications, and experienced fewer reoccurring episodes of heart and lung complications. With the reinforcement of protective factors, personal resiliency levels may improve with a strengthened belief in the ability of the self to influence (Kobasa et al. as cited in Mendel, Bergenius, & Languius, 2001) and adapt to the course of the illness.

In a study examining the connection between religious faith, personal satisfaction, and increased happiness (Ellis, 1991), spiritual connection to self, others, and community form an interactive framework through which people make sense of their everyday lives. Thus, Antonovsky's theory of Sense of Coherence (Antonovsky, 1987) includes an additional existential ramification in the individuals' and families' search for and expression of relevant and possibly, reverent, meaning. As McCubbin (1996) has pointed out, family structures, in general, seem to evidence a knack for resilient survival. In addition, they also contain internal reparative processes for regeneration of continuing growth and development in the face of "distress, threat, trauma, or crisis (Walsh as cited in Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2004). This would seem to imply that Jung's acknowledgement of the experiences of the soul may play a role at both the micro and mezzo levels of family functioning - of individual members' spiritual identity in interaction with that of the family constellation as a single cultural unit.

The occurrence and continuation of chronic illness may exemplify this condition as it impacts not only on an individual member but also may impact on family life as well. Thus, the family's "Being-cognition," to use Maslow's term (as cited in Bergman, 1982, p.21), as a group may be characterized by disability and impairment (Standard, Sandhu, & Painter, 2000). From a systemic view, the whole of one's life may be affected by the unity and interrelationship of the parts. Consequently, in traditional psychological terms, the impact of chronic illness as a force of family disruption could impede spiritual self and family actual-

ization. On the other hand, this stage of crisis could serve, in the long-run as an Eriksonian challenge, to further develop spiritual integrity containing health-restoring qualities that may improve functioning in terms of outlook on life, coping with stressful situations, and negotiating relationships (Smith, 2003). How else might the variance in patient and family adjustment with similar chronic illnesses be explained?

The need for justification and explanation of the issue of the meaningfulness of the occurrence in chronic illness seems to be best expressed through patients' "Why me?" questions and families' "Should we have hope?" questions. In regards to the former question, the criticalness of the asking may focus the importance of the patient's need for spiritual resolution of what has happened to him or her. The question seems to resonate the ancient biblical quest of Job in the Old Testament, when he struggles with the affliction that has been cast on him, and perhaps on the very essence of his being-cognition that he has suffered so many losses. Instead of self-pity and the betrayal of his spiritual beliefs and values, he seems to refuse to give up his sense of inner self-respect and dignity that are his ties to the divine relationship and communication that he has to and with God. The "existential certainty" (Ellison, 1991, p.82) of his claim seems to display his sense of coherence of his worldview.

Similar issues come to the fore of the counseling session with patients and their families when trying to find some way of reconciling to the progression of illness. A therapy goal, therefore, is to aid patients to answer this question while at the same time, participate in a process of rediscovery that touches on issues of integrity, self-esteem, quality of life, and a sense of inner spiritual continuity if their personal beliefs contain a tie to a higher power.

If the family had voiced religious faith, evidenced a strong sense of family cohesion, and had a relationship of trust with the therapist, the reply was at times, "If you don't have hope for your loved one, then who will?" Often, the content of counseling sessions can focus more often on discovering ways that the family could transcend the difficult realities of illness and create, instead, behavioral encounters that would enrich the quality of their contact with the patient. The character of their conduct, regardless of personal quandaries and intentions, would through their actions become the defining moments of memories of the family's time together, offering opportunities of separation and closure, and often, the family's well-being can be expressed through the stories they have told about these encounters after the patient's passing.

Spencer (1961) has explained that issues of spirituality deal with how human perception, feelings and dreams of achievement play a part in people's efforts to seek out purpose and meaning through life experiences (Spencer as cited in Hugen, 2001). Canda and Furman (1999) have noted that clients even if they do not participate in organized religion may very well voice strong spiritual beliefs and values.

Thus, therapists need to pay attention to issues of spiritual diversity within multicultural contexts where religious beliefs may also play a strong role in daily life. Intergenerational health values and beliefs, worldview attitudes towards sickness and healing accompanied by appropriate rituals, the use of prayer, and ceremony often come up in the therapy conversation. Often, patients' situational contexts have been shaped by a process of spiritual encoding, transmitted through past childhood influences and external community and environmental interactions. Consequently, the patient's and family's cultural view of the world may influence prescribed behavioral expression and decision making when dealing with internal feelings of vulnerability and resulting discomfort in stress producing situations.

As Holahan, Moos, and Schaefer have noted, both practitioners and their clients/patients during critical stages of adjustment to further deterioration in chronic illness and/or reduced physical functioning can look to "placing emphasis on individuals' adaptive strengths and capacity for resilience and constructive action in the face of challenge" (1996, p.565) that may be derived from spiritual experiences and convictions. Optimum constructive practice alternatives that start with patients and their families' contexts, therefore, are a professional imperative.

From a theistic point of view, psychotherapeutic intervention when focused on spiritual reaffirmation guides clients to get and stay in touch with inner sources of empowerment (Smith, 2003). Due to the shock of diagnosis and onset of the illness to the family's and patient's equilibrium, they may feel that they have lost their capacities to cope, that these abilities have gone away. Reawakening these strengths is a major short-term goal of counseling. An additional major long-term goal of social work intervention is to increase the degree to which clients' may become reacquainted with sources of meaningfulness that may aid them to get on with life. With the onset of chronic illness, patients may begin theoretically "to explore the 'upper levels' of what it means to be 'fully human'" (Cowley, 1996, 6). A technique that this author has used is to ask very simply, "Is this the first time that you (the patient or the family) have ever faced a difficult obstacle?" In thirty years of practice, no client or family has ever answered "No". The following step may very well be to ask the patient and/or family to tell about a time when they overcame a former obstacle.

Narrative theories incorporate a combination of systems, cognitive-behavioral, and psychodynamic elements into the form of "meaningful and coherent life stories, or self-stories" (Smith, 2003). Narrative approaches employed in therapeutic encounters (Combs & Freedman, 1998; Abels, 2000) may reveal the language and texture of the retelling of the event as part of "people's life-worlds" that include their "values and beliefs; informal natural resources; visions and hopes; abilities and gifts; [and] cultural lore and lessons" (Weick & Saleebey as cited in Swenson, 1998, p.530). In effect, the therapist is requesting that the client and/or the family to tell the metaphorical illustration of their strengths, how they faced the event in the past, and consequently, how they got through it. The retelling of the experience may serve to reawaken feelings of empowerment. With some paraphrasing, a partnership may form, between the therapist and the patient/family with the acknowledgement that those inner strengths still exist, much to many clients' and families' relief.

What does the identification of inner strengths have to do with spirituality? Medical social workers have long been orientated towards using holistic, contextually appropriate, empowerment-focused strategies of intervention (Hugen, 2001). These approaches, have, to a large extent, corresponded to the use of a strengths perspective in which problem evaluation and problem solving have been framed and reframed within clients' social, cultural and historical contexts for empowerment. Redirecting clients to become skilled at identifying and mobilizing their abilities and strengths has long been a basic goal of client-centered therapies (Early & GlenMaye, 2000). In addition, the use of a strengths assessment has been linked to what Fraser and Galinsky (1997) have termed "resiliency-based practice" that identify "protective factors" that influence the achievement of client and family aims (as cited in Early & GlenMaye, 2000, p.123).

However, an additional element of the strengths process is that of the attachment of meaning. As Hugen (2001) explains, "human beings are meaning-making creatures" (p.3). It is possible to bear in mind Frankl's reiteration of Nietzsche's (the German philosopher)

words, "He who has a why to live for can bear with almost any how" (Nietzsche as cited in Frankl, 1992, p.84).

Indirectly, the event of serious chronic illness and disability may suggest a reconsideration of the question of the worth of suffering. Victor Frankl in his book, Man's Search for Meaning, quotes from Albert Camus, the French existentialist, "There is but one truly serious problem, and that is…judging whether life is or is not worth living…." Each time that patients with progressive chronic illness experience further deterioration, they find themselves facing this dilemma. How may medical family therapists deal with this issue in the context of the counseling situation?

By facing spiritual challenges through the process of mobilizing inner strengths to cope with making an adjustment to chronic illness, patients and their families may learn that it is possible to expand the parameters of their ability to act, experience and to appreciate deeper levels of richness in the simple accomplishments of life. Frankl, as a Holocaust survivor, lived a reality of daily suffering in a Nazi concentration camp. "Everywhere man is confronted with fate, with the chance of achieving something through his own suffering" (1992, p.77). As a professional psychiatrist, when another inmate lay down to die stating, "Life has no meaning for me." Frankl replied, "What meaning can you give to life" (1992, p.84)? Further, Frankl pointed out "the meaning of life differs from man to man, and from moment to moment" (1992, p.84). Recognition of a human need to create conditions of meaning, empowered through the act of decision-making, translated into action into spiritual significance is a critical underlying premise of therapeutic intervention. Spirituality, health, and empowerment may be all linked as relevant to dealing with chronically ill patients and family functioning.

Spiritually Sensitive Practice and Intervention Techniques

"The most underutilized resource in family therapy today is God."
(Berenson as cited in Anderson, 1997)

In traditional approaches to practice, the role of the therapist is a key element to the success of the therapeutic outcome. Different theoretical approaches have prescribed various therapist stances. These have ranged from the role of the objective expert in psychoanalytic models to that of the structural practitioner who "joins" and uses "accommodation" to facilitate his or her relationship in restructuring the context of family interactions. Within a social constructionist framework, such as solution-focused therapy, a horizontally based partnership is formed between the counseling professional and the client to travel together down a road of empowerment and discovery for new ways to resolve client and family problems (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2000).

Anderson (1997) has noted that the orientation to therapeutic practice has taken place on a three-dimensional level; therapies framed by "time" (chronological periods of events), "space" (the shaping of experience framed by a configuration of relationships), and "story" (narrative styles and language that have transpired in "time and space" evidenced through occurrences of meaning). Anderson has proposed that therapists need to be cognizant of a "fourth dimension," (p.3) that of spirituality.

Acknowledgment of spiritual levels as a form of healing, rather than of pathology, have been explained as a shift upwards from Third Force theories to Fourth Force theories focusing on the:

> Transpersonal level…when dealing with an ego structure that is well integrated or self-actualized…a person would reflect a level of growth and development referred to by Freud (not as superego, but) as "Above I" (From Bettleheim, 1982 in Cowley, 1996, p.7).

The transpersonal approach has been studied in research with women living with HIV exploring their psychological and spiritual growth (Dunbar, Mueller, Medina, & Wolf, 1998). The study's findings have illustrated this patient population's attempts to affirm life through the creation of "transcendent" meaning to their experiences of chronic illness. In addition, through recognition of the role of the illness in the patient's and their family's life cycle, medical counseling practitioners need to partner with these participants so that they may become a unique part of the healthcare team (McDaniel, Hepworth, & Doherty as cited in Hanna & Brown, 2004).

Expectations of professional conduct include therapist compassion, genuiness, and unconditional acceptance of patients and their families (Anderson, 1997). As Canda & Furman (1999) have explained, the real meaning of compassion "literally means 'passion for others' (p.4).

"Communion" between client and therapist also becomes an important aspect of the therapeutic process (Hodge, 2000; McDaniel, Hepworth, & Doherty, 1992). Becoming agents of change through presentation of positive healing approaches may result in a "care-frontation" (Siegel, 1989, p.7) between patients, their families and the counseling practitioner. In addition, if social support networks also join in the process of communion through active caring, love, and sharing of the burden of illness, this display of solidarity and commitment may reinforce the patient's and family's participation and creativity in the therapeutic setting to find avenues of meaningfulness to improve life satisfaction.

Intuition and empathy, too, have been identified as having a spiritual connection. For self-aware therapists, these two factors have played a major part in the quality of their intervention with clients. In a study of private counseling practitioners, intuition was rated the strongest evaluative indicator of their work (Elks & Kirkhard, 1993).

But spiritually sensitive practice requires honest reflection and self-awareness by the counseling practitioner. Patients and families seem to have a built-in radar system for

therapists who dodge close contact, demonstrate inconsistent involvement, and show a lack of empathic commitment. Love and warmth towards others, like spirituality, have long been taboo as a proper element compatible to the client-therapist relationship. A synthetic cover of politeness and professionalism may also cover the real human potential, uniqueness, and talent of the therapist to use him or herself as a key therapeutic tool and model for interaction with the client. For a patient who has absorbed unwanted pieces of a debilitating illness, a therapist who has a strong sense of his or her own truths and strengths will be much more capable of confronting the challenging and sometimes, life-threatening issues that may arise with these chronically ill clients. They may also be better able to "offer spiritual comfort and solace" (Sloan Kreutiziger, 2000, p.78).

Counseling practitioners must be able to recognize and be willing to deal with aspects of social justice when working with culturally diverse patients and families. A therapist's display of conscience and role as advocate are based upon a spiritual focus towards patients. For example, research has shown that increased chronic illness and mortality among children are higher for culturally diverse populations of color (Ell & Northen, 1990). On the one

hand, these clients have been characterized as having strong "family cohesion, …moral and religious orientation" (p.38), factors that may appear in the counseling situation. On the other hand, negative living conditions may have also intensified psychological, emotional, and spiritual responses in the face of acts of environmental discrimination and oppression within and outside the health care system itself. Consequently, experiential impacts of chronic illness may worsen coping mechanisms that have provided little more than survival in the face of poverty. In addition, societal "racism, abuse, and neglect" (Walsh & McGraw, 2002, p.44) may increase feelings of hopelessness and despair that may have brought them to the medical family therapist's office "dis"-spirited and wary of an additional prejudiced contact with another representative of the "system."

Practitioners need to also be aware of models of practice that are holistically compatible to multicultural contexts through which to view the whole person, (McKee & Chappel, 1992), and cultural/religious beliefs that are enacted daily as a meaningful way of life (Doherty, 2003). Indeed, spiritually sensitive medical family practitioners must be not only knowledgeable but also able to demonstrate culturally competent practice.

For example, Harper & Lantz (1996) have created a model illustrating both cultural and spiritual elements of practice, including eight curative factors that may be applied to the majority of major multicultural and religious groups (p.9). Among them, "worldview respect" in which "the healing method" should be one that is "compatible with the client's cultural beliefs" (p.9) involving "hope" (p.10) and the restoration of "control" (p.12) are presented as essential elements of empowerment in the healing process.

In addition, a Rogerian approach to "helper attractiveness" (p.11) creates a communication based on respect, listening to and observing the nonverbal, and mutuality of connection and trust. "Existential realization…helps a client discover, create, and experience meaning or meaning potentials in the client's life" (p.17). Tools that may bring this about might be through the group's particular "rites of initiation" (p.13), and encouragement of and respect for a variety of "cleansing experiences" (p.15). In many cases, the above methods may be combined with "physical intervention" (p.20) involving herbal medications and surgery that are performed "for symbolic, sacred, or cathartic reasons" (p.21). The emotional, psychological and spiritual implications clearly show that motivational resources used in the client's "healing" must contain modes of empowerment and participation that are congruent to the patient's belief system through which to reestablish an inner harmony combined to work with forces of nature.

The implications of spiritual diversity have necessitated a range of creative approaches to intervention techniques to be employed by medical family therapists within the therapeutic setting. Since adjustment to illness, not necessarily psychological dysfunction, may be the defining factor of contact between patients, their families and the counselor, responsibility for knowledge and acknowledgement of the possibility of a unique orientation towards healing, illness, and spiritual beliefs are the therapist's. In fact, flexibility in approach may promote a more positive therapeutic outcome regardless of the professional orientation of the practitioner whether, for example it be as a cognitive-behaviorist or as an experientialist.

With the recognition of spirituality as an assessment factor has come the search for appropriate interventions that may be used within the spiritual contexts of counseling. Two methods of intervention that have been developed have been built on a systemic approach to the ecological environment of clients and their families. One is the use of a "spiritual

ecomap" and the other is that of a "spiritual genogram" (Hodge, 2000; Hodge, 2001; Canda & Furman, 1999). Narrative theory conceptually underlies the facilitation of both.

The focus of a spiritual ecomap that reflects the spiritual resources of individuals and families may be employed as a tool for improving the quality of patient and family relationships contained within surrounding ecological environments. The implementation of this device may be done with the holistic goal of overall increased functioning of the client system. A significant relationship, for example, might be that of a church community that involves the family's membership, participation, and spiritual practices that provide a sense of meaningfulness. Another example might be the impact of an extended relative network in terms of levels of spiritual and social support as they affect the patient's and his or her family's quality of life and daily functioning.

A comparable therapeutic tool is the use of a spiritual genogram. The genogram may provide a time-line that may "track the sequence and timing of multiple stressors" that a family has endured, including that of chronic illness. A study conducted by Schwenk & Hughes (1983) found that episodes of chronic illness occurred more frequently in families that already had a history of chronic illness (as cited in Hanna & Brown, 2004).

Genograms also reveal cultural and historical contexts concerning healing beliefs and values, echoing spiritual and religious family heritage and worldview. For example, culturally diverse minority groups may have historically practiced holistic health approaches that present a view of illness as an imbalance in the spiritual, psychological, affective, and physiological aspects of human functioning. In addition, this diagram may reveal the culturally prescribed resources (Hanna & Brown, 2004), such as spiritual healers within the community for families and individuals who are dealing with illness. In Native American societies this might be the medicine women or man and in Mexican-American culture, the curandero. Traditionally, Native Americans, in particular have sought to restore their patients' well being to a spiritual and physiological condition of "harmony or equilibrium of forces" (Martin, 1981, p.141) through religious and ceremonial rituals, prayer, herbal approaches and other types of natural remedies. "The healer focuses on illness rather than on disease; i.e. his/her attention is on the reaction of the patient, family, and others to disease, rather than just on disease" (Martin, 1981, 141).

Echoes of similar approaches may come to light in the creation of a spiritual genogram in a variety of Christian denominations through the use of prayer, cleansing rituals, and the laying-on-of-hands on patients as methods of healing, combining spiritual aspects with a mind/body/spirit connection. Prescribed practices are contextual approaches to health issues that are culturally based in the patient's belief in the role of the healer and the divinity of the connection between them. "The important thing is whether the patient believes" (Martin, 1981, 142). As Martin further relates:

> Patient faith may be old-fashioned but appropriate, since the task of the healer is to help the patient mobilize psychological and spiritual, as well as body, resources. The hope and faith of the patient in his healer, couples with the healer's use of meaningful symbols and group forces, may contribute more to therapeutic results than is ordinarily recognized (Martin, 1981, 143).

Another interesting approach to spiritual intervention is based on a blending of the psychoanalytic model with a subjective narrative approach. Sheridan (2000) has described the out-

comes of an experiential group work venture with prison inmates from culturally diverse backgrounds. The approach consisted of a "nesting egg," concept titled the "Three-Child Model of Recovery." Briefly, contained within "the adult child" who functions in a grown-up world, it has been proposed that there is a "wounded child" who carries unconsciously or at a preconscious level the traumas of childhood that have repressed the inner "sleeping/awakening child" into silence. This last symbolic womblike image is the fetal core of "all the possible qualities and life possibilities that the individual possesses" (p.35).

This model could most likely serve as a powerful metaphor for patients with chronic illness who have not only been traumatized by the onset and recurring episodes of progressive illness, but who may, as mentioned earlier in this composition, have also carried a past history of abusive traumas that have repressed the innate abilities and spiritual maturation of their personality and personhood. A young child who scrapes his or her knee may very well cry or bottle up and repress the hurt that he or she has suffered. The onset of chronic illness and the event of severe disability may very likely trigger former childlike behavioral responses and feelings of abuse. In turn, therapist awareness of these possibilities is essential during the assessment phase of contact. Are the patient's and his or her family's reactions directly derived from the occurrence of the illness alone or are they a carryover of responses from earlier times in the past?

Therapists who are followers of combined approaches may eclectically use techniques of meditation and other methods of relaxation with spiritually designed interventions in addition to a systems/ecological approach to identification and diagnosis of the imbalance in family structure. This process should not overlook, however, the "subjective experience of medically ill patients" (Druss, 1995, p.3) nor the tremendous spiritual courage and endurance they may exhibit when encountering feelings of "punishment," "helplessness," "a sense of betrayal," "changes in self," and "loss" (p.4). In retrospect, additional issues such as "age, gender, race, and social class" (Maes, Levental, & DeRidder, 1996, p.231) may also influence how patients and families interpret these issues and the manner in which they choose to cope with them over a lifetime.

Because the topic of spirituality, and empowerment are difficult concepts to measure quantitatively, research approaches and techniques that are psychologically based in relationship to intervention with patients with physical chronic illness and their families need to be further developed.. Some scales measuring spirituality, stress, and health concepts have demonstrated high alpha coefficients. However, there is a great need for further study of the implications for medical family counseling practitioners and medical social workers, particularly with cross-cultural groups that represent multicultural and spiritually diverse populations with physical chronic illness and disability.

Conclusion

Professionally competent practitioners, such as medical social workers, are guided by a Code of Ethics that contain a "historical commitment to compassion" and "explicit values, morals, and …[professional] ethics," (Canda & Furman, 1999). The mission statement of the American Counseling Association that includes medical family therapists also promises to "promote[s] respect for human dignity and diversity (ACA, 2002). Both, fundamentally, involve spiritual investment and professional dedication to remain aware of the theories that reinforce the social contexts of spirituality in therapy. At the same time, innovation has

characterized the creation of new and updated modes of intervention that are not only more compatible with the conditions experienced by clients and their families impacted by chronic illness and disability but also to make sense of this occurrence by keeping in touch with issues of spiritual coherence, faith, strengths, culturally diverse strategies of coping, and love. Professional practitioners in healer roles must never forget that the human spirit may be more powerful than any other aspect in the counseling situation and that the "poisoned" apple of illness can be overcome.

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The Sacred and the Transformation of the Self: A Proposed Definition of Religious Conversion

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Abstract: Religious conversion has long intrigued society and will likely continue to do so. The notion that individuals can undergo fundamental changes in their core beliefs, values, relationships, and strivings is fascinating, though questions remain about the circumstances under which such changes are beneficial or detrimental to personal and societal functioning. Scholarly study of religious conversion has produced an array of perspectives, but a consensual definition of this phenomenon remains elusive. This paper reviews and critiques common approaches to defining religious conversion. The author argues in favor of defining religious conversion in terms of identity transformation rather than religious affiliation switching or worldview change. Furthermore, the author explains why it is essential for a definition of religious conversion to incorporate the concept of the sacred (as defined by Pargament & Mahoney, 2005) as an element that sets religious conversion apart from other kinds of personal transformation. Finally, the author notes some implications of the proposed definition for future work on religious conversion.

Keywords: Religious Conversion, Identity, Sacred

D ISCIPLINES THAT INVESTIGATE human experience have devoted a significant amount of effort to understanding religious conversion. However, it is common for students of religious conversion to neglect to define the subject of their inquiry. Among those who do provide a definition, there is not a true consensus on the necessary elements of religious conversion. Some equate conversion with switching one's religious affiliation, whereas others insist that conversion requires the adoption of a different worldview. A third school of thought frames conversion as an identity change. More fundamentally, there is disagreement concerning whether religious conversion belongs in a class of its own, or whether it should be treated as equivalent to non-religious lifestyle changes, the only difference being the theological window-dressing.

Each of these definitional approaches has implications for which kinds of experiences are classified as conversion and which are excluded. Kox, Meeus, and 't Hart (1991) lamented this inconsistency because it makes comparing the results of different studies of conversion difficult, if not impossible. We cannot assume that findings based on a sample of individuals who were selected solely on the basis of having switched their religious affiliation generalize to studies employing a worldview-based definition. The lack of a unifying definition must be addressed in order to facilitate the accumulation of comparable data on conversion, as well as clear and meaningful communication between scholars.

In this paper, I briefly review affiliation-, worldview-, and identity-based definitions of religious conversion, weighing their advantages and disadvantages. I then discuss how the concept of the sacred may help distinguish religious conversion from other experiences. This

paper culminates in the proposal of a definition of conversion, followed by a consideration of what this definition has to offer the study of religious conversion.

It is important to note that most of the work I cite is based on studies of White converts in the United States. Hence, the descriptions of conversion in this paper may not apply equally in other cultural contexts. Future efforts to test the generalizability of the definition of conversion that I offer are warranted.

Religious Conversion as Affiliation Switching

One approach to defining religious conversion focuses on change in religious affiliation. According to most affiliation-based definitions, converts are either formerly non-religious people who become part of a religious community or people who change the religious tradition with which they are affiliated. Defining conversion in this way is conveniently consistent with common usage of the term, such as in the statement, "So-and-so has converted to Sikhism." Further, it has the advantage of being a relatively objective criterion (Kox, Meeus, & 't Hart, 1991). It is particularly useful in conducting large-scale – even international – research because investigators can assess it with a few easily understood questions (e.g., Barro & Hwang, 2007). Rambo (1993) articulated a taxonomy of changes in religious affiliation, suggesting that the nature of the initial and final affiliations matters. In his model, the *affiliation* type of conversion refers to going from having no affiliation to belonging to a religious affiliation of any kind. Another example of conversion in Rambo's model is *intensification*, which occurs when a person remains within the initial affiliation but becomes significantly more emotionally and behaviorally committed to it.

In spite of their clarity and usefulness, affiliation-based definitions lack the element that makes conversion worth studying in the first place: deep personal change. According to these definitions, people who change their religious affiliation without associated transformations in their way of life would be classified as converts. Greil (1977) and Gooren (2007) both stated that formal changes in affiliation are not necessarily linked to personal changes and that the two processes must be distinguished from each other. Travisano (1970) asserted that some form of subjective break with one's former life is an essential part of conversion. Moreover, scholars have noted that the Greek and Hebrew terms for conversion found in seminal writings on the subject entail significant changes in beliefs, values, and behaviors (Paloutzian, Richardson, & Rambo, 1999; Snow & Machalek, 1984). Affiliation-based definitions therefore stray from the conceptual roots of conversion. Scholars who use affiliation-based definitions may assume that switching affiliations results in personal transformation, but, if this is the case, such changes should be explicitly incorporated in the definition of conversion.

Worldview- versus Identity-based Definitions

Others have defined conversion in terms of changes in a person's worldview or ideology (e.g., Lofland & Stark, 1965; Seggar & Kunz, 1972; Snow & Machalek, 1984). A worldview is a global set of beliefs about the nature of the universe that places daily events in a larger context of meaning, provides cause-and-effect explanations, and entails particular values. Snow and Machalek (1984) described four elements of worldview change that may occur as a result of conversion. They stated that converts adopt a new master attribution scheme;

that is, converts begin to use a single causal principle (e.g., God's will) to explain all events. Further, Snow and Machalek claimed that converts strive to maintain the special truth status of their worldview by avoiding speech patterns that suggest similarity to other worldviews. The convert's new worldview becomes so pervasive that he or she reinterprets life prior to conversion, utilizing new terms and concepts and emphasizing personal experiences that are particularly relevant to the worldview while deemphasizing less relevant experiences in a process called *biographical reconstruction* (Snow & Machalek, 1984). Finally, the convert role influences how converts interact with others in every context they pass through (Snow & Machalek, 1984). As illustrated in this approach, placing worldview at the center of conversion begins to capture the life-altering nature of conversion; it is difficult to conceive of a person's understanding of the universe changing without having a significant impact on his or her way of life. Scholars who employ such definitions thereby seem to acknowledge that conversion must involve personal transformation.

As opposed to theorists who focus on changes in worldview, other theorists make a case for conversion as a change in identity. For instance, Staples and Mauss (1987) argued that the biographical reconstruction highlighted by Snow and Machalek (1984) was the distinguishing feature of conversion and that conversion was therefore more of an identity phenomenon than a worldview phenomenon. In a similar vein, Pargament (1997) described conversion as the process of coming to view oneself as having sacred qualities or being connected to the sacred. The identity-based perspective is not inconsistent with worldview-related definitions insofar as an individual's identity is linked to the world (both real and perceived) in which he or she lives. In fact, conversion scholars often address changes in worldview and identity as though they were conjoint (Gooren, 2007; Paloutzian, Richardson & Rambo, 1999; Travisano, 1970). So, if worldview and identity are intertwined, which construct lies at the heart of conversion?

I believe that conversion should be defined in terms of identity because identity is a more comprehensive construct than worldview. Theorists have portrayed identity as multifaceted, including both an internal sense of self and an external persona that exists in relationship with others. The psychologist Erik Erikson (1968) claimed that a person's identity exists both within the individual and within the community and culture of which he or she is a part. A well formed identity serves the psychological function of helping the individual perceive him-or herself as a unitary, internally consistent being in spite of how his or her behavior varies across contexts and over time (Erikson, 1968). With respect to the social facet, Erikson said identity integrates the individual into society by making him or her comprehensible and predictable to others, assuming the identity consists of roles, beliefs, and values tolerable to society. Similar models of identity exist in the sociological literature. For instance, Travisano (1970) asserted that identity is the presentation of the self to others as an entity with defining social characteristics. The individual interacts with others so as to cause them to develop a conception of the kind of person he or she is (Travisano, 1970). Therefore, cognition and behavior are also inextricable in identity; social behavior mediates the connection between the individual's mental self-representation and others' images of him or her (Kerpelman, Pittman, & Lamke, 1997).

One might argue that worldview is equally multifaceted, with personal, social, cognitive, and behavioral components. The individual espouses a worldview he or she personally believes, but the worldview is typically held in common with a particular community (Greil, 1977). The community reinforces the individual's commitment to the worldview and may

promote ideologically based behavior (Greil, 1977). Nevertheless, whereas the personal and social aspects of identity are not dissociable when identity change occurs, this is not the case for worldview. One person's decision to abandon a given worldview is unlikely to have a significant impact on that worldview as it is held by the remaining adherents; in other words, the essence of a worldview does not depend on whether or not any particular person holds it. Nor are cognition and behavior inseparable in worldview. Worldview consists of mental structures. Those structures may result in certain actions, but behavior is not inherent in the definition of worldview. A complete identity transformation, on the other hand, necessarily involves the personal and the social, the cognitive and the behavioral. The individual's new view of self, the behaviors that arise from it, and others' subsequently adapted interactions with and views of the individual all fall within the Eriksonian definition of identity (Erikson, 1968).

Identity-based definitions are also consistent with observations that identity transformation is both a motivation for and an outcome of conversion. According to Kilbourne and Richardson (1984), conversion functions like psychotherapy in that it is intended to give the individual a more positive self-image. A study of 304 female converts to Islam in the US has lent support to this assertion, with 75% of the sample reporting they converted in order to gain a stronger sense of identity (Maslim & Bjorck, 2009). Furthermore, there is evidence that many converts actually gain more adaptive identities. Zinnbauer and Pargament (1998) asked college students who had converted to report on their self-esteem, self-confidence, and self-identity (perception of the self as coherent and integrated) at the time the questionnaire was administered and six months prior to their conversion. They asked students who were religious but denied experiencing any religious change to complete the same measures, reporting their current status and their status six months prior to the date when the questionnaire was administered. Converts showed greater longitudinal increases in self-esteem, self-confidence, and self-identity than these non-converts. These findings suggest conversion serves an identity-development function, which makes sense if the essence of conversion is identity change.

The Role of the Sacred in Religious Conversion

Assuming that identity is the element that changes in conversion, another question arises: how do we distinguish the identity transformation in religious conversion from other kinds of identity change? Following Pargament's (1997) lead, I propose that any definition of religious conversion is incomplete if it does not include the concept of *the sacred*. The sacred has been recognized as a key religious construct by other social scientists, including Emile Durkheim (1912/1915), who highlighted the tendency of religions to divide reality into the two categories of the sacred and the profane. Of course, as Pargament has noted, the social sciences are not suited to determining the ontological status of supernatural forms of the sacred and must therefore focus on perceptions of the sacred. According to Pargament and Mahoney (2005), the sacred consists of a core, which is a transcendent, boundless, ultimate reality, such as the God of theistic religions or the impersonal, all-pervading force of pantheistic religions. Transcendence refers to the quality of being greater than, beyond, or outside the natural order. The sacred core may be boundless in the sense that it lacks physical, temporal, or other kinds of limitations. Finally, religions portray the sacred core as being of ultimate value and importance. People often associate objects they pursue (e.g., career and

marriage) with the sacred core (Pargament & Mahoney, 2005). This may occur when an individual views the object as a gift from God or as possessing qualities similar to those of the sacred core; such objects make up a sacred ring that encircles the sacred core. Pargament (1997) states that the primary function of religion is to establish a connection with the sacred core (e.g., God or some transcendent reality) rather than other valuable (and potentially sacred) but less ultimate goals such as family, work, or pleasure.

Embedding the sacred in the definition of religious conversion will clearly set religious conversion apart as a distinct phenomenon, since secular identity transformations (e.g., political conversion) do not claim to incorporate the sacred. It is important to note that making this distinction contradicts other perspectives that assert that religious conversion is not a unique process (e.g., Greil, 1977; Long and Hadden, 1983). However, there is empirical evidence that the sacred occupies a special place in the human heart and mind (Pargament, Magyar-Russell, & Murray-Swank, 2005). For instance, Emmons, Cheung, and Tehrani (1998) found that when research participants in two community samples were asked to identify the things they strive for in daily life, 28% of them spontaneously reported seeking a connection with the sacred in various ways; participants reported viewing their sacred strivings as more meaningful than their secular strivings. Furthermore, having a higher proportion of sacred strivings was associated with greater purpose in life, marital satisfaction, and life satisfaction (Emmons et al., 1998). Other research has suggested that people invest more time and effort in preserving and protecting things they associate with the sacred or view as gifts from God, including their bodies (Mahoney et al., 2005), their marriages (Mahoney et al., 1999), and the environment (Tarakeshwar, Swank, Pargament, & Mahoney, 2001). This protective instinct may partially be due to a desire to avoid the heightened distress resulting from the loss or violation of sacred objects (Pargament & Mahoney, 2005). The unique psychological power of the sacred may account for the tendency of religious converts to speak about their experience as though it were unlike any other.

Religious Conversion as a Sacred Identity Transformation

In light of the foregoing arguments, I define religious conversion as the creation of a new identity whose foundation consists of a different connection to the sacred core. The primary components of this definition, identity and the sacred core, lend it both specificity and breadth. Including the sacred core ensures religious conversion's status as an unmistakably religious process, yet the sacred core is open to a wide range of interpretations across religious traditions. Additionally, as noted earlier, this identity-based definition requires that an individual undergo significant changes in order to be classified as a convert. At the same time, using identity as a foundational concept can broaden the focus of conversion scholars to address the multiple, interconnected aspects of conversion (i.e., personal, social, cognitive, and behavioral).

For the purposes of this paper, and because my intellectual base is the discipline of psychology, I will elaborate on the personal, cognitive aspect of my definition. This is the level of the self-concept, how the individual perceives him-or herself in connection with the sacred core. American converts often view themselves as existing in relationship with a personal deity, but there are other types of connection; alternatives such as being part of a larger, sacred whole or possessing an inner, sacred spark are consistent with this notion of connection. Consequently, a variety of possible changes in connection exists. A secularist might shift

from a state of complete disconnect from the sacred core to a connection with an impersonal, universal sacred force. A theist who initially views him-or herself as one of God's wayward creatures might attain the identity of a beloved child of God. The following quote, obtained from a college student who participated in a study conducted by the author (Cummings, 2011), illustrates a type of conversion narrative common among Christians:

> "The change I felt encompassed every emotion, every thought, every action I had. As I prayed, I felt the redeeming love of Jesus Christ flood my heart and challenge me to be better, to grow deeper in a relationship with him and to seek Him with all my heart. Before my adult conversion, I had rebelled against God, and brought shame and hurt to myself and to my family. I felt guilty and ashamed and completely unworthy. Yet, since the time of my conversion, God has healed those hurts in me personally and in my family and has taken away the guilt and shame and restored to me a sense of self-confidence in Christ."

The connection with the sacred core must be at the foundation of the individual's new identity in order for him or her to qualify as a religious convert. Converts come to think of themselves first and foremost with respect to their perceived connection with the sacred, such that it takes precedence over and informs other parts of their identity. Snow and Machalek (1984) termed this tendency *embracement of the convert role*. Converts reject roles and relationships believed to compete with or contradict their connection with the sacred, perhaps even cutting ties with friends and family who appear to oppose their new identity (Lofland & Stark, 1965; Rambo, 1993). Converts also strive to express their connection with the sacred through their diverse roles and relationships. For example, those who relate to the sacred as humble servants might seek to be especially productive and courteous in the workplace.

Another feature of this definition is that it allows for people to be considered converts even if they do not adopt a different religious worldview or change their religious affiliation. Early psychologists interested in conversion, such as William James (1902/2007) and Edwin Starbuck (1897), studied people who reported experiencing dramatic personal changes or religious awakenings without officially departing from the religious tradition in which they were raised. Likewise, Rambo (1993) has granted such individuals conversion status within his taxonomy. In addition to precedents such as these, there is a practical reason for a more inclusive definition of religious conversion: if scholars are interested in understanding personally transformative religious experiences, it would behoove them not to overlook the abundance of people in the U.S. who claim to have had such experiences (Smith, 2006) in the absence of a change in worldview or affiliation.

Finally, I believe that the proposed definition can stimulate religious conversion research and theory while bridging the gaps that exist between the different disciplines that study conversion. The concept of identity is familiar to anthropologists, sociologists, and psychologists, yet each discipline approaches it in a different manner and emphasizes different facets. Anthropologists often use ethnographic methods to examine the unique cultural and historical expressions of identity within particular groups. Sociologists also explore the social side of identity, but they focus more on discovering and testing general social processes involved in the creation and maintenance of identity. Psychologists contribute to the discussion by assessing the internal mental processes associated with identity; the field of adolescent de-

velopment research is especially teeming with theoretical models and empirical studies of identity. Adopting the proposed definition would assist members of these disciplines in grounding their study in the theory and methods of identity research particular to each discipline. At the same time, the interdisciplinary exchange of ideas would be more straightforward because these disciplines would be studying the same constructs from different angles. This cooperation would promote balance in our collective understanding of conversion, with each discipline addressing a different piece of the puzzle.

In closing, I hope that this exploration of religious conversion definitions will spark interest and discussion among those involved in the study of conversion. In order to maximize progress in this field, we need a definition that clarifies and focuses the subject of study without unnecessarily constraining it, which is what I have attempted to provide.

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Punk Rock is My Religion

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Abstract: Social theorists of religion such as Durkheim, Evans-Pritchard, Lynch and Taylor have all demonstrated that awareness of, and engagement with, concepts of the divine, the spiritual and the community are not understood or accessed in a universal way. Nor are they expressed in universal ways, especially amongst those individuals partaking in the current trend of nomadic or syncretic religious beliefs and practices. Thus if we as researchers and theorists are to fully understand the religious beliefs and practices of such individuals and indeed the theological landscape of modern western societies, we must be prepared to explore new and expanding methodologies and means of expression of religious and spiritual identity. My PhD is focused on the spiritual identity and practices of Straight Edge punks, a subset of hardcore punk. During field work in both the US and the UK I utilised visual methodology, primarily though not exclusively, based on the proclivity of adherents to wearing tattoos, to enable interviewees and informants to explore and express their spiritual identity and practises. This paper will use the visual results - photographs, tattoos, flash, and video - garnered to explicit the spiritual identity and practises of Straight Edge adherents, linked strongly to the work of Gordon Lynch and Charles Taylor. From that point the work will argue that instead of focusing on a binary of religious / secular we should instead look to one composed of authenticity / profane / sacred to provide a more accurate understanding of interaction and relationship between religion and modern Western society.

Keywords: Straight Edge, Hardcore Punk, Syncretic Approaches to Religion, Religious / Secular Divide, Spiritual Identity

> *The deep embedding of secularism within contemporary social science approaches has imposed rigid borders on knowledge and understanding of the experience of people who hold faith identities.*[1]

I**F RIGID BORDERS** have been imposed upon those who hold or practise identifiable traditional religions we are then left with the question of where do those whose faith is distinctly untraditional find themselves placed? Are they destined to remain the forever outsiders, relegated to the role of peering in? Or is there a possibility that through discarding said borders and entering into a discourse with less traditional practitioners could we potentially discover new or emerging models of religion and thereby completely re-examine the question of what religion actually is?

Reliance on an assumed inherited understanding carries an inherent risk, as the quote above highlights. It risks precluding, not only a full understanding, but a wider meaningful engagement with individuals and small collectives who do not operate within the given sphere of understanding surrounding the notion of the universal experience of 'religion'. Some of these collectives and individuals have successfully merged lived engagements with both the religious and the secular into a meaningful whole. These were some of the questions

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[1] Basia Spalek & Alia Imtoual. Religion, Spirituality and the Social Sciences. (Bristol: Polity Press, 2008) p.1.

that I have brought to bear on my research through the wider question of examining Straight Edge punk as a surrogate for religion.

This paper will present some of the findings of the research undertaken amongst Straight Edge adherents in the UK and in the Bay Area of San Francisco in 2009 and 2010. The United States based interviews and observations took place prior to the UK ones, although both followed the same pattern. These were lengthy face to face individual interviews, a small number of group interviews and guided conversations at hardcore punk shows. In addition a small number of email interviews took place with individuals who were unable to meet in person during to touring commitments, for example. Interviewees were asked to select how they wanted to be referred, choosing between their first name, their initials or a pseudonym which is indicated through quotation marks. Interviewees were encouraged to utilise visual images – graffiti, tattoos, clothing etc – to further illustrate or explicate their ideas. Demographically interviewees were between the ages of 25 and 55, involved with their local scenes and – comparative with all aspects of punk – predominantly white, working class male. Furthermore they made their living within their individual Straight Edge scenes, typically involved with music, promotion or tattooing.

As will be evident in this paper, this was mirrored in the approach I took to attendance at live performances where I actively engaged in an observer participator stance. This is in contrast to the typical adherent participator stance I typically undertake as a Straight Edger, this was deliberately undertaken to ensure as minimum an impact as possible on the interviewees and situations. However due to my own tattoos, clothing and argot all interviewees were aware that I was an adherent, with many commenting upon it during their interviews – often it was the reason for agreement to interview participation. Consequently this paper, and indeed all the research undertaken for it, is very much of an emic perspective.[2]

Theoretically this paper is concerned with the notion of authenticity. In particular how authenticity is understood and practised by Straight Edge adherents both as individuals and as a community. It will demonstrate the importance of authenticity in both connecting with religion and understanding the religious/spiritual dimension(s) of Straight Edge. It is in essence a case study that relies upon and demonstrates the theories of new and emerging religions found in the work of Gordon Lynch, Christopher Partridge, Paul Heelas and Linda Woodhead. In particular the whole research, including this paper, links with work being done in the area of popular culture and religion/spirituality in the West. However this paper does not specifically engage in conversation with the work of those theorists, as the focus is on authenticity, but they should be borne in mind throughout.

Overview of Straight Edge

Straight Edge began in 1981 as a song written by Ian McKaye, then teenage singer of DC hardcore punk band Minor Threat. The 50 second song was about McKaye's personal life stance with regards to the imbibing of alcohol and drugs; it was also a scathing attack on the popular stereotype of the 'drunk punk' that was prevalent at the time. Despite his intentions of the song remaining a personal statement rather than a call to arms, it quickly gained in appeal and a number of young hardcore punks recognised their own lifestyles within the lyrics and so began self identifying as Straight Edge. The dialogical rather than poetical

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[2] Headland Thomas; Pike Kenneth & Harris Marvin. Emics and Etics: the insider/outsider debate. (London: Sage, 1990).

nature of punk lyrics enabled bands to enter into this nascent idea and solidify it.[3] Bands began to describe themselves as Straight Edge and shows that were exclusive of these bands began to be performed leading to the formation of a strong Straight Edge community within DC.

The incessant DIY touring ethic of hardcore punk bands ensured that Straight Edge quickly spread throughout the US and then the UK. Today it is a world-wide movement with adherents in the estimated tens of thousands. Those who claim edge follow three rules:

- No alcohol
- No drugs including tobacco
- No casual sex

These rules are self regulated as Straight Edge has no leader of any kind. Claiming edge can only be done once in an individual's lifetime, analogous with a wedding vow adherents claim to be true till death. Breaking edge is irreparable. Should an individual decide to live a sober life again they cannot reclaim edge. However ostracism from the community is rare and typically only occurs when the ex-Straight Edge persistently or violently attacks those who remain edge.

Those who adhere to the Straight Edge lifestyle remain with the hardcore punk community as well as the Straight Edge community. They are often only identifiable from other hardcore punks by the presence of tattooed or penned X's usually on their hands or somewhere visible. The X as an emblem of Straight Edge is a result of using the law against the lawmakers – younger punks would have to wear it to gain entry into shows as the large X on their hand prevented them being served alcohol at the bar. Older adherents would wear it as a symbol of solidarity that punk is for all regardless of age and to clearly state that although they are old enough to drink they choose not to.

Straight Edge and Religion

In terms of traditional, and in particular institutional, religion Straight Edge has never moved or disassociated itself from punk's view of religion as a pernicious influence on society at worst and at best an irrelevancy.

> While a few sXers will connect their sXe identities with a Christian faith, the group advocates no form of religion and remains deeply suspicious or critical of organised religions, a remnant of their punk roots.[4]

Haenfler's argument could lead to an assumption that therefore religion is all but nonexistent within the subculture when in fact field work demonstrated that to be somewhat specious. The subculture has a strong specific, and somewhat unusual for punk, moral code at the heart

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[3] Punk lyrics are intended as a conversation between the writer and listener, rather than a grand or universal truth or experience being illuminated by an 'artist'. Partially this is indicative of punk's stance as the uncompromising voice of the common, everyday person.

[4] Ross Haenfler. Straight Edge. (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2006), p.45. sXe is a common abbreviation for Straight Edge amongst adherents and sXers is used to describe the individuals themselves.

of it, but in addition to this there are strong communal values that underpin the movement. These are:

- Positive, clean living – abstinence from imbibing alcohol, drugs and maintaining a positive mental outlook and approach to life.
- Lifetime commitment – to both Straight Edge as a lifestyle choice and to the hardcore community.
- Support – for one another within the subculture.
- Integrity.
- Direct political and social action to better the local or global community in connection with self responsibility.
- Self actualisation.

Combined with the moral code of Straight Edge these values can be summarised under the concept of authenticity. The reminder of this paper will be focused on the understanding of authenticity as it appears within Straight Edge before moving onto specific spiritual identity and practices as they are informed and shaped by this notion.

Authenticity

Authenticity is a term that has been appropriated by and bleeds through Straight Edge but it is not fully worked out in a historical or philosophical sense. For many of these adherents authenticity is intrinsically linked to questions of morality and behaviour, as well as one's motivations. This is an authenticity that is framed with words and phrases such as 'true' and 'integrity' and is found within both lyrics and the discourse that permeates the subculture.

It is an authenticity that is very much focused on the inner self, very different from the interior search advocated by Socrates, Plato and Augustine. Theirs was an inwardness that relied upon a hierarchal[5] ordering of the universe and a success and contentment borne from knowing one's place and purpose within that order, in societies based on the notion of honour.

Modern societies are characterised by the replacement of honour with dignity, to borrow Guignon's phrase.[6] The concern is no longer solely with the outward, how one fits within a wider cosmic order but instead in finding dignity in being autonomous and self directed. In other words, looking inward to discover your 'true self' and then allowing yourself the freedom to be that individual irregardless of the thoughts and responses of others. In essence, people became more concerned with the physical, tangible world in which they lived and had a place rather than a vast cosmos that could only truly be grasped within the imagination. Finally, the institutions of the divine were starting to be viewed as divisive, especially after the Protestant Reformation, and increasingly a symbol of the prior age when people were superstitious and thus relied on religion in a way they no longer needed to.

An important linguistic and conceptual consequence of this inward turn was that individuals began to articulate a notion of searching for an authentic self. This search leads individuals away from Augustine's interior notion that looking within inevitably leads one to looking above.[7] Eventually the sense of looking inward remained grounded, so to speak, that is it

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[5] Cosmological in the writings of Socrates and Plato and theological in the work of Augustine.
[6] Charles Guignon. On Being Authentic. (London: Routledge, 2002) p.150.
[7] Charles Taylor, Sources of the Self, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p.134.

did not lead to looking above for the divine or the transcendent. Instead a basic assumption arose which Guignon expresses as:

> Lying within each individual, there is a deep, 'true self' – the 'real me' – in distinction from all that is not really me.[8]

Taylor suggests that with this inward turn makes the self the centre surrounded by a world of objects that this self can then manipulate and use to improve or promote its life. Taylor reminds us:

> The search for identity can be seen as the search for what I essentially am. But this can no longer be sufficiently defined in terms of some universal description of human agency as such, as soul, reason or will. There still remains a question about me, and that is why I think of myself as a self. This word now circumscribes an area of questioning. It designates the kind of being of which this question of identity can be asked.[9]

The self as a 'definable' being separate from every other self grew exponentially from the 18th century and was a significant factor in the founding of the discipline of psychology and the practise of psychiatry as individuals such as Freud and Jung began to articulate means of understanding and living with the self as a whole rather than a fractured or unstable person. Taylor argues that these attempts to understand the self and the insistence of a true or authentic self lying within are the beginnings of the recognisable modern self within today's Western societies.[10]

This understanding of authenticity and the authentic self relies strongly on a sense of the narrative with which we express our life story and our moral stance to others. The narrativist tradition does assume a deep truth exists that cannot be contested because it is within the self and therefore privileged access is limited to the individual. It can be shared linguistically with others in a public space but it remains within. This has the advantage of removing pregiven criteria or socially constructed barriers for self creation and expression, something Nietzsche greatly desired and promoted.

Straight Edge and Authenticity

What is distinctive for Straight Edge adherents is that subjective knowing is valued above propositional truth. The quest for higher forms of knowing is not abandoned entirely, but such truths are better embodied in stories and myths than in dogma and doctrine.[11] For many Straight Edgers, dogma and doctrine represent authority, in particular traditional forms of authority and institutional authority. For this cohort, authority of this ilk is treated with suspicion because it is believed to contain a predetermined set of ideas and attitudes based on a specific agenda, which is not always for the betterment of others or society. Thus they are more concerned with that which feels authentically real or true as determined through their

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[8] Guignon. On Being Authentic. p.6.
[9] Taylor. Sources of the Self. p.184.
[10] Taylor Charles. Sources of the Self. p.185.
[11] Richard Flory & Donald Miller, Generation X Religion, (London: Routledge, 2000), p.9.

lived experiences and how they relay them in a narrative to others as opposed to deference to an external authority.

While acknowledging that the narrative dimension and the creation of a moral framework using narrative means is a significant factor in understanding authenticity as it is found within Straight Edge, we must also address a flaw within this tradition that prevents it being the sole means of understanding the importance of authenticity in relation to their spiritual identity. To put it succinctly, the narrativist framework necessarily promotes the individual over the collective. It can also lead to the charge that those seeking authenticity are simply self centred or even narcissistic. The collective or the community is of paramount importance to Straight Edge adherents. This is clearly in evidence in these interview extracts.

> Being Straight Edge is to be something different. Being Straight Edge is being part of a group, physically or mentally.[12]

> Yep, like, well I think it's important, the community ya know, it's like you kinda influence each other. The community's the drive isn't it, cause if ya, you're by yourself, it's more of a united thing.[13]

> When I moved to (*name removed for the purposes of anonymonity*), I met a bunch of other kids with Straight Edge, and joined this whole community. It felt really good to be surrounded by other people … and I would say that the prominence of the Straight Edge community there made Straight Edge seem more a primary part of my identity.[14]

To be clear, stating that Taylor's narrativist framework is centring on the self is not to deny that there is a social element within it. "It is only through our social interactions that we become selves whose inner episodes are given enough steadiness and cohesiveness so that our relations to others can be built on co-operation and trust."[15] However the distinction between the concepts of social and communal must be made. Social phenomena involve interaction, telling your narrative to one another, and living out what you narrate within social practices. Communal phenomena involve those social elements but in addition claim shared beliefs and values common to all who remain within the collective.

> To be fully authentic is to recognize the need to be constantly vigilant in one's society, to be engaged in political action aimed at preserving and reinforcing a way of life that allows for such worthy personal life projects as that of authenticity. If this is the case, however, then the authentic individual cannot be thought of as someone who is simply reflective and candid in acting in the world. Such a person must also be attentive to what is going on in the political arena and politically active at all levels of society. It is through this sort of attentiveness and activism that the authentic person takes a stand not just on his or her own life, but on the community's project of achieving a good society.[16]

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[12] Nate, email interview with researcher 05.04.10
[13] Karl, interview with researcher in Durham, UK on the 07.05.10
[14] S.G. email interview with researcher 30.04.10
[15] Guignon. On Being Authentic. p.155.
[16] Guignon. On Being Authentic. p.162

For those who claim Straight Edge as a way of life, or a moral framework if you will, to be politically active and able to make a stand cannot be done effectively unless one is living a clean or sober life otherwise the transient nature of chemicals can affect one's mind strongly enough to change the stance and actions one takes. In terms then of spiritual identity and practices authenticity expresses itself in a variety of ways. Religion often did not fare well within punk lyrics or discourses as these Crass lyrics attest, and they were not the only ones.

> They tried it with religion and with Christ. Said I'd get to heaven if I acted real nice, but they were just preparing a crucifix for me. A life of guilt, of sin, of pain, of holy misery…The Bible's just a blueprint for their morality scene …They stand there in the pulpit, doling out their lies. Offering forgiveness, then they talk of eyes for eyes.[17]

However it is worth noting two things about this antagonism towards religion – first, that it is the institutions, rituals, authority figureheads and leaders as well as the notion of claiming absolute answers and the perceived hypocrisy that are being attacked and ridiculed, not the notion of a personal faith or spirituality. Second, religious imagery and ideas remain rife within the subculture in album covers, song titles, lyrical content, arguments, discourse, graffiti and tattoos.

Figure 1: Integrity Album Cover for 'Psalm Sunday' and Tattoos which Merge Religious Imagery with Straight Edge Symbolism

Interviewees repeatedly made a sharp distinction between organised religious traditions and spirituality or a personal faith. As can be seen in these interview extracts, the implied reasoning underpinning them is that spirituality is more authentic than organised religions.

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[17] 'I ain't thick, it's a trick', Crass, Stations of the Cross, Crass Records, 1979.

> It's like I get the faith side, the spiritual or whatever but I can have it without needing the religion side, the side that does all the manipulation and controlling.[18]

> I think they, organised religions, they are just corrupt and shit, cause ya know, there seems to be more shit going on with proper religions like Christianity and all that shit than like anything we ever managed to do. If anything I find it (Straight Edge) kinda is a religion[19]

It quickly became clear that this was based on a perception that authenticity within spirituality under the framework I have laid out in this paper necessarily has to remove borders or boundaries. Therefore there cannot be one true religion or spiritual path to the exclusion of all others, nor can there be a distinction made between the sacred and the profane or the religious and the secular. Instead what exists is a rich bricolage based on wilful syncretism.

> I decided that just as I liked different types of punk music I could have different parts of religions without having to actually be just one and buy into the whole I'm right and everyone else is wrong. Works for me for the most part.[20]

Specific Examples – Taqwacore, Krishnacore and Gilman Street

We find, for example, within Taqwacore - a mixture of punk, Straight Edge, Islam, mysticism and secularism - that prayers take place before the show begins. However it is men and women praying together without the posturing or facing Mecca. In addition many will be dressed as punks, the only discernible difference being that their tattoos are in Arabic script, while others will adhere to a something of a more traditional dress code – all be it with a punk twist! As with many within hardcore and Straight Edge the religion that is practised or found amongst individuals within Taqwacore is not that proscribed by or expected within Islamic dogma. They also play Western music and encourage women to play such music in public. Those individuals who do not adhere to a Straight Edge lifestyle will drink and smoke. Finally many adorn their bodies with permanent markings in the form of tattoos, all of which are considered haram. Yet they still consider themselves Muslim's with some describing themselves as religious Muslims.

> It's infinitely more pious to be true to your heart, because that is where religion really lies … its ok to approach Islam on your own terms…Taqwacore is more about earnestness in music and earnestness in religion. Different people are in different places in terms of those things.[21]

A further example can be found within Krishnacore. Krishnacore is a somewhat loose term that is used to describe bands whose members personally subscribe to a Krishna lifestyle of one form or another and who use their band's music and lyrics to promote, explain and explore their beliefs and practices. Being so firmly rooted within Straight Edge many band members

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[18] K.B. in interview with researcher in Berkeley, ca on 28.10.09

[19] Karl, in interview with researcher in Durham, UK on 07.05.10

[20] Marc, in interview with researcher in San Francisco on 07.11.09

[21] Kamel, quoted in www.suntimes.com/entertainment/music/1778313,mulim-islam-punk-rock-kominas-092009. article last accessed July 2010.

were interested in pursuing a sense of a full life in a sober and knowledgeable way. A significant number began to talk about how, for them, pursuing spirituality was a natural extension or the next step in being Straight Edge. They did not give up, ridicule or deny the Straight Edge lifestyle and philosophy; rather they were looking to carry it into a new direction.

> I became Straight Edge in 1987 … and the whole thing seemed to fit me perfectly at the time, which it did…My interest in Krishna Consciousness built at a steady and gradual pace … But Krishna Consciousness is obviously a huge step beyond Straight Edge, in both positive and negative ways, as both a governing religion and a liberating philosophy.[22]

Punks were not individuals looking for someone to tell them what to think or how to think. They were individuals that were aware of hypocrisy, of recruitment and were by nature suspicious. Thus a number of them who did start to consider Krishna consciousness as a potential way of life did so in a considered and slow manner. They began reading, going to temples and observing, they questioned the monks incessantly, and challenged the monks on areas of teaching or practise that they could not align with their own worldview or experience. They also talked to those in bands who were promoting or practising Krishnacore and they talked and argued with their friends. Not everyone appreciated this, and there was growing concern that hardcore and Straight Edge was being used as an insidious means of recruitment for the Hare Krishna movement and ISKCON in particular.

> These groups were using a music scene to indoctrinate people with their brand of mass opiate and it ran against everything I was interested in about hardcore such as thinking for yourself as an individual and deviation from a flock or herd mentality … We had some pretty 'lively' debates both at shows and in fanzines and even in our lyrical content.[23]

These debates, largely at shows, where a number of bands would play, and in lyrical content, forced many hardcore and particularly Straight Edge people – both those in bands and those as fans – to form an opinion on spirituality. Critical reasoning now entered and intellectual challenges were made towards expressed opinions. In a very real way the Krishnacore scene was the first time that hardcore and Straight Edge punks had to deal with religion on an intellectual and personal level that took them beyond the standard fare of a nihilistic approach to anything resembling authority, an institution or a system.[24]

During fieldwork in San Francisco and the Bay Area I spent a lot of time at a club known as the 924 Gilman Street Project, which is in Berkeley. It hosts hardcore, punk and Straight Edge shows, art displays, free movie nights and special events. It is owned and maintained by the local hardcore scene and run on Straight Edge principles. Interestingly it is physically situated between a brewery/pub and a church. Inside the space all the walls are painted black

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[22] Vic Dicara, guitarist for the band 108, quoted in Brian Peterson, Burning Fight, (Huntington Beach: Revelation Records Publishing, 2009), p.147.

[23] Nick Forte from the band Rorschach, quoted in Peterson Brian, Burning Fight (Huntington Beach: Revelation Records Publishing, 2009), p.121.

[24] In addition to Taqwacore and Krishnacore, I could have also utilised the examples of Dharma Punx and Christian punk to further illustrate the same points. However for the sake of brevity I choose not to include them in this particular paper.

and those who frequent it can graffiti it in any manner they choose, so long as it is not racist, sexist or homophobic. Periodically it is repainted by volunteers and then patrons begin again. While I was there, adorning the right hand wall was this mural, which again demonstrates the refusal to accept or recognise boundaries.

Figure 2: The Right Hand Interior Wall of 924 Gilman Street, Berkeley ca with a Large Graffiti Piece that Blurs the Boundaries between Religion and Secular

Here we can observe a devil sitting in a traditional meditation pose more commonly associated with Buddhism. Both the devil and the myriad of figures carry typical punk signifiers such as the spiked bracelets, the back patches, the skulls (a typical tattoo image) and so on. The devil is clearly meant to represent punk as a concept, while around it human figures which represent individual punks pull pigs wearing political insignia and humans wearing religious markers towards the devil who devours them. On the left hand side, some punks are dancing in celebration. Surrounding this image is the slogan 'punks support the separation of church and hate'.

On the ceiling of the same club was this anonymous piece of graffiti.

Figure 3: The Ceiling of 924 Gilman Street, Berkeley, ca

Someone has sprayed 'Jesus Crisis? Devo saves', possibly demonstrating awareness that within modern western society today there exists a crisis surrounding religion, both in social and in individual terms.[25] Their solution is arguably rooted within the secular subculture to which they belong.

Most common amongst interviewees was a reference to punk, specifically Straight Edge as their faith usually under the phrase which forms the title of this paper – 'punk rock is my religion. It is also a line from a Rancid song which was released during the time my field work in the US was taking place. The lyric is "some live a life of indecision, strung out over petty schisms, I heard GBH, I made a decision, punk rock is my religion."[26] These interview extracts demonstrate the depth of feeling regarding their notion of punk as a faith.

> Church of punk! Yeah, like with the songs and the dancing and the ideas of support and shit …only of course the church of punk actually worked, made statements of belief, statements of intent, tried to make a difference not a profit … it's about fixing yourself to help fix the world you know.[27]

> I dunno like, like a punk spirituality you know … it's just going to shows, exactly what it is like a kinda Mecca … I think the bands are sorta a by-product of it, just like the chanting with a big sweaty massive prayer.[28]

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[25] Devo is the name of a band from Los Angeles.

[26] 'You want it, you got it.' Rancid, Let the Dominos Fall, 2009, Epitaph Records. G.B.H. is an English punk band.

[27] Ann, in interview with researcher in San Francisco on 07.11.09

[28] Kevin, in interview with researcher in Glasgow, UK on 31.03.10

I guess punk is like a new religion, well I wouldn't say religion but it is something that people put their trust in, have hope in, I do. So definitely I think punk rock is a faith, like I said everything I have done in life has been influenced by punk.[29]

Once again this notion of Straight Edge as their faith refers back to their conception of authenticity. For these adherents everything that should be contained within a faith is accessible through Straight Edge, if not contained directly within it. There is the community, the strong moral code, the communal values, a variety of ways to improve the self and an opportunity to move beyond your past. Furthermore there are opportunities to experience what Durkheim referred to as 'the collective effervescence' through the music and the live shows, which can lead to an experience of rapture similar to that experienced in eastern faiths and mysticism.

To summarise then, the purpose of this paper has been to introduce the subculture that I have been examining within my thesis and to demonstrate how a subculture formed a deep desire and connection with spirituality despite their inherent distrust and abhorrence of organised religions. Through an exploration of the notion of authenticity, both in modern Western society and its peculiarities within Straight Edge, it became evident that these punks found and created a subculture that enabled and encouraged them to be authentically themselves, through embracing and fully engaging with the hardcore and Straight Edge community. It is the goal of attaining the authentic self that led to the exploration of spirituality, but this is a concept of spirituality that knows no boundaries, no borders and thereby in their refusal to adhere to the imposition of others they have demonstrated an example of how religion can be re-modelled and reconsidered.

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[29] Ewan, in interview with researcher in Glasgow, UK on 26.02.10

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About the Author

Francis Stewart
I am a final year PhD student working on the spiritual identity and practices of Straight Edge punks, a subculture I have been an adherent of for over a decade. I am particularly focused on their nomadic approach to religion and religious ideas, their willful syncretic approach to spiritual practices and how that relates to, informs and on occasion diverges from the current discussion on the relationship between religion and the secular and religion and society.

The Relationship Between Measures of Spiritual Well-Being and Communication Apprehension: A Pilot Study

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Abstract: Communication anxiety is both common and potentially debilitating; a negative relationship between the level of communication apprehension and communication skills has been consistently described in both communication and psychology research. After decades of studies on communication apprehension, researchers are favoring a communiobiological approach. This raises a challenging question for educators: if our speech anxiety is inherited, how are classroom techniques or therapy treatments, other than drugs, possible? Most researchers recommend the use of multiple coping strategies, none of which explore or address spirituality. The proposed pilot study explores the relationship between measures of communication apprehension and spiritual well-being. Subjects are 20 students enrolled in an interviewing communication course at a public institution in the Southeastern United States during the summer of 2010. The pilot study utilizes two measurements: the Communication Anxiety Inventory Form Trait (Booth-Butterfield and Gould, 1986) and the Spiritual Well-Being Scale (Paloutzian and Ellison, 1982). If there is a correlation between communication anxiety and spiritual well-being, further exploration may provide more possibilities for educators and students in developing individual coping strategies.

Keywords: Spiritual Well-Being, Communication Apprehension, Communication Anxiety, Education, Communication

COMMUNICATION APPREHENSION (CA) is "probably the most thoroughly researched topic in the history of the communication discipline" (Infante, Rancer, & Avtgis, 2010, p. 117); and yet, researchers acknowledge that an explanation for why some develop a predisposition to communication apprehension remains a mystery (Beatty, McCroskey, & Heisel, 1998), and that effective treatments are elusive (Bodie, 2010).

Within the communication field, James McCroskey and his colleagues are acknowledged as having "the best-known work" on communication apprehension (Littlejohn & Foss, 2008). Decades after McCroskey's initial study of CA, Beatty, McCroskey, and Heisel (1998), citing the accumulating evidence of biological origins of social traits, offer a biological explanation. However, one of the concerns of a biological explanation is the effectiveness of various therapies to reduce communication apprehension. Citing strengths and weaknesses of this communiobiological perspective, Infante, Rancer, and Avtgis (2010) believe we need to address what this perspective means for the future of communication education. In other words, if speech anxiety is inherited, how are classroom techniques or therapy treatments, other than drugs, possible?

A topic which has not received as much attention is religion or spirituality and communication (Baesler, 1994; Stewart, 1994; Stewart & Roach, 1993; Wrench, Corrigan, McCroskey, Punyanunt-Carter, 2006). Addressing the "God-Problem" in Communication Studies, Schultze (2005) states, "I recently reread many basic public speaking textbooks in preparation for teaching a 100-level oral rhetoric course after a multi-year hiatus . . . . Most of these books . . . ignore the possibility of a spiritual dimension to human communication" (p. 6).

Given the criticality of reducing students' communication apprehension through traditional interventions, coupled with the need to find other methods besides drugs, a consideration of the spiritual dimension of communication may be beneficial for the educator. Exploring the link between spirituality and CA may provide clues for developing new anxiety-reducing interventions.

The current pilot study examines the relationship between measures of communication apprehension and spiritual well-being in an attempt to identify ways to effectively reduce communication apprehension in the classroom. The relationship between spiritual, religious, and existential well-being and CA is examined in an effort to encourage the development of newer strategies that may account for these universal aspects of identity. If there is a correlation between communication anxiety and spiritual well-being, further exploration may provide more possibilities for educators and students in developing individual coping strategies.

It is hoped that this pilot study will not only help spur further research in communication apprehension and spirituality, but also guide communication educators regarding their departments' CA reduction strategies and practices. In the following sections we briefly summarize the research which has informed the current pilot study.

Communication Apprehension

A course in public speaking is typically required for undergraduate students at the university level, and is often accompanied by apprehension and fear for some. The anxiety associated with public speaking has consistently been described as detrimental to the quality of speech delivery (McCroskey, 1982). A meta-analysis of the literature on speech anxiety shows a negative relationship between the level of communication apprehension and communication skills (Allen & Bourhis, 1996); as one's fear of public speaking increases, the quality and quantity of the speech diminishes.

Occasional stage fright or communication apprehension (CA) is normal, but "an enduring tendency to be apprehensive about communication in a variety of settings" (Littlejohn & Foss, 2008, p. 67), or Trait CA, can be debilitating. State CA, or the tendency to experience anxiety in specific communication settings for a definite period of time, has been a reliable predictor of Trait CA (Bodie, 2010).

Psychologists have explained traits in terms of genetic predispositions for years, and the communication field is also open to this explanation. Citing the evidence of biological origins to explain social traits, Beatty et al. (1998) offer a communiobiological perspective or an inborn, biological explanation. However, if one accepts a genetic explanation for Trait CA, communication educators are left to question the effectiveness of various means to offer help or "treat" those in need to reduce their apprehension (Infante et al., 2010).

Although trait behavior cannot be changed much, Infante et al. suggest "specific skills are very amenable to improvements" (2010, p. 96). In a meta-analysis of methods used to

reduce public speaking anxiety, Allen, Hunter, and Donohue, conclude "all forms of treatment (cognitive modification, systematic desensitization, and skills training) were effective" (1989, p. 62). However, skills training alone was the least effective, and a combination of all three treatments was the most effective.

According to Beatty, McCroskey, and Heisel (1998, p. 214), "The greater efficacy of multiple strategies makes sense given our conceptualization of communication apprehension as neurotic introversion. That is, techniques, such as systematic desensitization, are designed to reduce anxiety, a neurotic feature of communication apprehension, whereas such strategies as skills training and cognitive restructuring basically develop skills and attitudes about communication that model those of extroverts. Our conceptualization, therefore, provides a theoretical framework for explaining the effects that might be observed in scientific studies of single and multiple treatment strategies."

However, not all researchers agree that standard treatments are completely effective, even when used in combination with each other. A study by Duff, Levine, Beatty, Woolbright, and Park (2007) concluded a credible placebo was just as effective as systematic desensitization and other combined treatments at reducing CA for public speaking students. Furthermore, Bodie (2010), in a comprehensive review of public speaking anxiety and its treatments, warns that "care should be taken …since the exact mechanisms underlying the effectiveness (or lack thereof) of different treatment options are still unknown and since the unintended consequences of treatment are largely unexplored" (p. 92).

Besides the difficulty of consistently reducing students' Trait and State CA through traditional interventions, one must also consider the connection between how a student thinks about him/herself and communication apprehension. In a survey and analysis of the communication apprehension literature, Patterson and Ritts (1997) found social and communicative anxiety has three aspects: physiological (sweating, heart rate, and blushing), behavioral (avoidance and self-protection), and cognitive (self-focus and negative thoughts). "Cognitive factors were found to be the strongest of the three, which may mean that social and communicative anxiety has most to do with how we think about ourselves in regard to communication situations" (Littlejohn & Foss, 2008, p. 67).

McCullough, Russell, Behnke, Sawyer, and Witt (2006), examining public speaking state anxiety, support this notion of "thoughts of self." They found anxious speakers lack the ability to control their state of mind; whereas, "speakers who have a positive state of mind are able to control their affective states, thereby lessening the severity of their own body sensations" (p. 107).

Witt et al. (2006), investigating the relationship between public speaking anxiety and physiological stress indicators, suggest "positive thinking exercises before delivering a speech could decrease the occurrence or intensity of gastrointestinal sensations in trait-anxious speakers and, thereby, lead to a more favorable speaking experience. Prespeaking exercises, therefore, actually may offer the greatest promise for reducing anxiety symptoms during the speech performance itself" (p. 98).

Seeking further understanding of the self-monitoring aspects of public speaking anxiety Dimberg and Thunberg (2007) explored the extent to which facial reactions of audience members affected the anxiety of the speaker. Participants who rated highest in communication anxiety described the most anxiety when audience members displayed negative facial reactions and rated angry facial expressions in the audience as most disconcerting and indicative of

disgust. These results suggest that people with high speech anxiety show an exaggerated sensitivity to audience reaction and are more likely to perceive poor evaluation.

Given the difficulty of consistently reducing students' Trait and State CA through traditional interventions, and the importance of how we think about ourselves, a consideration of the spiritual dimension of communication may be beneficial for the educator. Exploring the link between spirituality and CA may provide clues for developing new anxiety-reducing interventions.

Religious and Spiritual Well-being and Anxiety

There are an increasing number of studies relating mental health, religion and spirituality in the past two decades (Dein & Lowenthal, 1998; Batson, Schoenrade, & Ventis, 1993; Larson & Larson, 2003; Koenig, Larson & McCullough, 2001). Much of the research is focused on self-reported levels of anxiety and depression, various belief systems, and attitudes and behavioral factors with varying outcomes. While some studies show a positive relationship between mental health and religion, (Ellison, Boardman, Williams & Jackson, 2001; Jansen, Motley & Hovey, 2010; Francis, Robbins, Lewis, Quigley, & Wheeler, 2004; Gartner, Larson & Allen, 1991), others find no relationship or a negative one (Spellman, Baskett, & Byrne, 1971; Wilson & Miller, 1968; Heintzelman & Fehr, 1976).

Davis, Kerr and Kurpius (2003) found a negative correlation between spiritual well-being, existential well-being, religious well-being, intrinsic religious orientation, and anxiety among at-risk adolescents. Forty-five students were measured with the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI; Spielberger, 1983), the Spiritual Well-Being Scale (SWBS; Ellison, & Smith, 1991), the Social Provisions Scale (SPS; Cutrona & Russell, 1987), and the Allport/Ross Religious Orientation Scale (ROS; Allport & Ross, 1967). When analyzing the two aspects of spiritual well-being measured by the SWBS (religious well-being and existential well-being) for predictions of trait anxiety, the authors found that existential well-being was the major predictor of anxiety. The authors believe this "makes sense when considering that religious beliefs, in and of themselves, do not hold psychogenic value unless they provide a sense of existential well-being" (p. 363).

Some researchers have noted decreased anxiety and higher well-being for those who engage in behavior associated with a high level of religiosity (Ellison et al. 2001). Jansen et al. (2010) measured 430 college students with the Beck Anxiety Inventory (Beck, 1990), the Beck Depression Inventory (Beck, 1987), and a questionnaire measuring religiosity (religious influence and church attendance), and religious beliefs. They found a significant decrease in depression and anxiety among students who identified themselves as highly religious. Among factors including religiosity, the frequency of church attendance was the greatest predictor of lower anxiety.

The significance of church attendance in predicting anxiety was also observed by Petersen and Roy (1985) in a study that examined five variables of religiosity: religious salience, church attendance, orthodoxy, other-worldly orientation, and religious comfort beliefs. The researchers interviewed, via telephone, 318 people in a large southern city and concluded that "religiosity facilitates psychological well-being" (p. 50) and church attendance has a significant negative correlation with anxiety.

However, some researchers have downplayed a causal connection between religious behavioral patterns and anxiety in favor of a social-cognitive approach that emphasizes deeper

personality traits and attitudes (Pfeifer & Waelty, 1999; Dezutter, Soenens, & Hutsebaut, 2006; Francis et al., 2004). After sampling the religiosity and psychological well-being of 363 Greek Orthodox Christians, Leondari and Gialamas (2009) found that personal orientation and attitude may have more to do with well-being than religiosity:

> . . . . religious attitudes and orientations represent deeper-rooted predispositions that are less contaminated with contextual factors, and which are more indicative of a person's general functioning than the relatively surface aspects of religious involvement . . . the effects of religiousness on well-being might well be indirect (p. 247).

Dezutter et al.'s (2006) research supports these findings when they examined which religious factors predict psychological well-being by surveying 472 Dutch-speaking Belgians. The study measured for relationships between both psychological distress and psychological well-being and religious orientations and religious attitudes. The researchers defined Religious Orientations according to the Allport and Ross Religious Orientation Scale (ROS; Allport and Ross, 1967) by identifying two religious orientations: extrinsic orientation and intrinsic orientation. Extrinsic orientation refers to the non-religious use of religion (i.e. for social and emotional support); whereas, intrinsic orientation refers to religion as being a fundamental aspect of one's life. Intrinsic has been positively correlated with psychological well-being; whereas, extrinsic has been negatively correlated (Batson, Schoenrade, & Ventis, 1993; Maltby & Day, 2000, 2003). Dezutter et al. determined religious attitudes by use of the Post-Critical Belief Scale (PCBS; Duriez, Fontaine, & Hutsebaut, 2000). The four attitudes included in the PCBS are Orthodoxy (Literal Affirmation), External Critique (Literal Disaffirmation), Second Naivete (Symbolic Affirmation), and Relativism (Symbol Disaffirmation).

The authors acknowledge Francis et al. (2004) by asserting that personal well-being has little to do with religious involvement:

> Results confirmed that differences in religious attitudes and orientations are more important than differences in religious involvement [when predicting psychological well-being]. Religious attitudes and orientations had a significant effect on Psychological Distress and/or Psychological Well-Being whereas Church Attendance and Belief Salience showed no such effect (p. 816).

These findings emphasize the importance of examining more fundamental aspects than religious behavior when examining how religion or spirituality contributes to well-being. In a review of the clinical aspects of religion, spirituality, and anxiety in administering psychiatric care, Glas (2007) emphasizes the importance of recognizing the existential dimension.

> One way to look at religion and spirituality is to consider them as offering a way to deal with the existential concerns that are inherent in life. Religions and different forms of spirituality offer a framework – cognitively, affectively, and socially – which provides meaning with respect to the "big" questions (p. 624).

Although a review of the literature yields broad and, sometimes, inconsistent findings, a theme emerges: existential well-being is a significant indicator of mental health. Measuring and confronting one's existential well-being and how it contributes to a sense of safety and satisfaction within a religious or spiritual framework may be more useful than measuring

behavioral aspects, especially for researchers and educators who are attempting to reduce anxiety of their students, employees, or congregations.

In summary, given the difficulty of consistently reducing students' communication apprehension through traditional interventions and the connection between how a student thinks about him/herself and communication apprehension, exploring the link between spirituality and CA may provide clues for developing new anxiety-reducing interventions.

It is not the purpose of this pilot study to develop a comprehensive theoretical model of predictors of communication apprehension and spirituality. This pilot study aims instead to shed light on what communication departments can do to actively educate and reduce communication apprehension and, how spirituality can be utilized to do so. Given the importance of reducing communication apprehension, our research question is: Is there a relationship between measures of Spiritual Well-Being and Communication Apprehension?

Method

This pilot study's sample consisted of 20 undergraduates enrolled in two sections of interviewing classes at a mid-sized regional university in the southeastern United States in the summer semester of 2010. Students were recruited in the classroom and were asked to volunteer for the pilot study. The pilot study was a continuation of an ongoing IRB exempt research project on communication apprehension reduction techniques.

The majority of students in the interviewing classes were communication majors. The interviewing class is required for communication majors but is open to all students and does not require a prerequisite. Students completed both measurements (listed below) during regularly scheduled class time near the beginning of the semester.

Trait Communication Anxiety was measured using the Communication Anxiety Inventory – Trait (Booth-Butterfield & Gould, 1986), which measures three contexts of communication: public, interpersonal, and group. This 21-statement inventory focuses on the frequency and intensity of CA the respondent generally feels. Sample statements include: "I feel disappointed in myself after speaking in public," and "My body feels stiff and tense when I speak in public." Response options include: Almost Never, Sometimes, Often, and Almost Always.

Spiritual Well-Being (SWB) was measured using the Spiritual Well-Being Scale (Paloutzian & Ellison, 1982), which measures two aspects of spiritual well-being: religious well-being (RWB) and existential well-being (EWB). The Spiritual Well-Being Scale "shows evidence of good reliability and appears to be a valid indicator of general well-being" (Bufford, Paloutzian, & Ellison, 1991, p. 66).

This nonsectarian scale consists of 20 statements: ten assess RWB and ten assess EWB. The RWB questions contained the word "God," whereas the EWB questions did not. Sample statements include: "I believe that God loves me and cares about me," and "I feel that life is a positive experience." Response options include: Strongly Agree, Moderately Agree, Agree, Disagree, Moderately Disagree, and Strongly Disagree.

Results

Summary statistics are presented in Table 1. Religious and existential well-being were positively associated ($r = .521$, $p < .05$). Religious well-being was negatively associated with all three measurements of trait CA, public speaking anxiety ($r = -.420$, $p < .066$), interper-

sonal communication anxiety ($r = -.541$, $p < .05$), and group anxiety ($r = -.287$, $p < .221$) but only interpersonal communication anxiety rendered a statistically significant negative association. Existential well-being was negatively associated, at a significant level, with all three measurements of trait CA, public speaking anxiety ($r = -.451$, $p < .05$), interpersonal communication anxiety ($r = -.574$, $p < .01$), and group anxiety ($r = -.566$, $p < .01$).

Discussion

This pilot study revealed some noteworthy findings for communication educators. The central finding is that there is a significant relationship between measures of Spiritual Well-Being and Communication Apprehension. The data shows that both religious well-being and existential well-being were negatively associated with communication apprehension, i.e., when the rating of one goes up, the other goes down. The strongest negative association was the existential well-being scale and communication apprehension.

Although this pilot study contributes to the research on CA, religion and spirituality, there are limitations that require caution in interpreting the results and warrant further investigation.

Limitations

The observations and interpretations of this pilot study are, as with all studies, limited by the choices made in data collection and analysis. Limitations include small sample size, lack of generalizability, and a lack of demographic data. First, and most importantly, the small sample size used in this pilot study limits the extent to which the findings can be generalized to a wider population. Given the results identified in this pilot study were based on the reports of only 20 undergraduate students from a mid-sized regional, publicly-funded university in the southeastern United States, it is also plausible that different results might emerge from larger, random samples, and those including privately-funded universities. Students from a privately-funded university might have relational experiences different from those of public institutions.

Likewise, the culture of academic institutions is very different from the culture of a business or government agency. Therefore, such results from a student population might be much different from a population of multiple institutions (i.e., government agencies, private sector businesses, nonprofits, etc.). Many of the experiences faced by these 20 subjects could be related to the expectations and organizational culture of academia. Thus, we are not able to make claims regarding the potential effects of organizational, occupations, or demographic characteristics.

This pilot study does not speak to the possible influence culture and ethnicity would have on one's experiences and expressions of religion and spirituality. Undoubtedly, a person's ethnic and cultural background would influence how he or she relates to and communicates with others. As such, future research should account for cultural and ethnic differences by including the perspectives of more diverse research participants.

A second limitation to this pilot study is the measurement used to assess religion and spirituality. For example, having only two measurements to assess spirituality (religious well-being with ten questions and existential well-being with ten questions) considerably limits our ability to draw conclusions about the data. Clearly, to understand the relationship between religion and spirituality and communication apprehension, research will need to do

more than just articulate the various forms of communication apprehension students enact (public, interpersonal, and group). Indeed, studies will need to explore the effectiveness of spirituality for meeting students' needs. Future research could explore how frequently students typically express their religion and spirituality, and how different expression frequencies relate to well-being. Some behaviors may even have a curvilinear relationship and be subject to diminished returns.

Additionally, future studies could incorporate mixed-method strategies in addition to the instruments used in the present pilot study. A content analysis of probing interviews with participants that seeks to determine how and the degree to which their own CA may be mediated by their belief systems may contribute to a deeper understanding of the connections between CA and SWB.

Furthermore, since research has demonstrated that CA negatively affects communication performance (McCroskey, 1970, 1982), future studies could collect more objective measurements of communication performance such as classmates and/or instructors to determine if quality of performance is linked to SWB and CA. Also, seeing as there is a correlation between low trait CA and EWB, future studies could also address the questions: Could there be a common biological cause? And, could both low trait CA and EWB be aspects of mental health?

Third, demographic data was not collected from the participants of this pilot study. Since differences between trait and state anxiety among subjects have been noted when factors like gender and age are considered (Davis, et al., 2003), the lack of this data hampers further analysis. Future studies should include demographic data to include gender, age, and religious orientation.

Future Applications

Since religious, spiritual, and existential well-being are continually shown to be positively correlated with mental health and well-being, and more specifically related to a reduction in anxiety, the communication educator is encouraged to address these aspects with his/her students when seeking to reduce CA among students.

Since this pilot study reveals a strong link between spiritual well-being and lower trait CA, a fundamental question for this research, from an applied perspective, is how do educators effectively integrate these findings into existing or new CA reduction techniques? Furthermore, how do textbook authors, and curriculum and course coordinators use these connections? The results of this pilot study suggest that the answers to these questions are fairly straightforward: use messages that are affectively neutral. It is unlikely that the publicly-funded educator could responsibly and legally encourage high anxiety students to pray in an effort to reduce CA, and it is unknown whether such a practice would even be effective.

However, three aspects of these findings may relieve some of the concerns educators may have. One, the EWB is a secular, non-sectarian state of being that requires no mention of specific religious or spiritual ideology; two, the EWB operates independently of RWB; and three, religious well-being and existential well-being were negatively associated with communication apprehension, but the strongest negative association was the existential well-being scale and communication apprehension.

It is our hope that professionals such as clergy, medical personnel, or mental health counselors working with students will find the experiences of our participants insightful and

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will use their experiences to help other students. Likewise, educators could encourage students to find individuals in whom they can confide about their communication apprehension. Although talking with their students about their anxiety can be supportive, doing so is sometimes not enough for the student experiencing the apprehension. Thus, we urge educators to encourage students to find sources of support in addition to their instructor. Support groups, counselors, clergy, and trusted friends can serve as another source of support.

To reach students who are unable to find resources such as support groups or professional help, written materials might help these students to understand and better cope with their apprehension. Counselors and spiritual guides are well positioned to provide this resource material to students.

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Table 1: Correlations

		RWB Scale	EWB Scale	Public Anxiety	Dyad Anxiety	Group Anxiety
RWB Scale	Pearson	-				
	Correlation Sig (2-tailed)	-				
	N	20				
EWB Scale	Pearson	.521*				
	Correlation Sig (2-tailed)	.019				
	N	20				
Public Anxiety	Pearson	-.420	-.451*			
	Correlation Sig (2-tailed)	.066	.046			
	N	20	20			
Dyad Anxiety	Pearson	-.541*	-.574**	.721**		
	Correlation Sig (2-tailed)	.014	.008	000		
	N	20	20	22	22	
Group Anxiety	Pearson	-.287	-.566**	.744**	.638**	
	Correlation Sig (2-tailed)	.221	.009	.000	.001	
	N	20	20	22	22	

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)
** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

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Exploring the Role of Mela Chiraghan in Educational Context

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Abstract: The study was investigated; (a) to observe the importance of Mela Chiraghan that how culture transmits through education; and (b) the effects of festivals of Mela Chiraghan in educational context. The study was descriptive in nature and survey in type. The questionnaire was designed; for the trainers teachers and interview were designed for teachers and informal interview was designed for the employees of Mela Chiraghan of the tomb of Shah Hussain. The population of study was all the teachers of Govt. Schools and training colleges of Lahore District. Results of the study showed that teachers agreed to attend the cultural festivals because the festivals help to our young generation to understand the cultural aspects. The majority of teachers' opinions about festivals activities are great value to modifying our behavior in learning.

Keywords: Religious Festival, Religion and Culture

Introduction

PAKISTAN'S LAHORE CITY has been known as the city of culture, arts and learning conquerors, saints, poets and scholars through the generations. Lahore has the thriving and the vibrant cultural life with a series of festivals, carnivals and events throughout the year. The most prominent is the Mela Chiraghan or festivals of lamps. Mela Chiraghan is the most important festivals of the city and is held on the last Friday of March. Mela Chiraghan is organized at shrine of Madhu Lal Hussain's near the Shalimar Garden in honor of the poet-mystic Madhu Lal Hussain. Mela Chiraghan is closely associated with peasants, and the Mughals, the Sikhs and the British administrations used to observe their festivals officially. During the Sikh period, Maharaja Ranjeet Singh used to lead the procession from the Lahore fort to the Mazar.

After independence the festival continues as it was designed during the Raj. It used to be the biggest festival of Punjab on which doors of the Shalimar were flung open to the public. But the center of the festivals, Shah Hussain, was lost as a poet. There was a time when Shah Hussain's poetry was used to trained young classical singers.

This tradition was also lost till much later when it was revived by singers like Hamid Ali. He made Hussain's verses popular under the banner of the Majlis Shah Hussain formed in

1964. Hussain, their after has been remembered as a poet. Shah Hussain was the pioneer of the Kafi. His poetry has influence the great Sindhi poet Shah Abdul Latif Bhattai, on whose urs the Sindh government declares a holiday. The original manuscript of Bhattai work also included Kafis of Shah Hussain. It was this genre which was further developed by Bulleh Shah and Khawaja Farid. Shah Hussain's language, images and symbols were frequently used by later Kafi writers. The unfortunate aspect of this affair is that the government has not so far considered it proper to arrange visits of foreign cultural delegates to the Mazar of this 16th century.

It is very important for students that the teachers try to teach the students about our culture, tradition, festivals and history of poets and saints that the students will enable to understand the history and culture of our society because the culture and traditions reflect our values and beliefs which are the identity of any person.

Statement of the Problem

The study is designed to investigate the role of Mela Chiraghan in educational context

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study were to;

- Explore the role of festivals in educational context
- Investigate the role of Mela Chiraghan in educational context.

Research Question

- What is the role of Mela Chiraghan in context to education of elementary grader children?

Significance of the Study

Mela Chiraghan plays a very important role in our educational context. First of all the teachers can observe the affect of our festivals history, culture and tradition on students learning. The main purpose of this study was that the teachers learn the students about our culture and mystical poetry of saints. And give them information about our tradition. Teacher tries to give the information about our history in different ways like educational, excursion and group discussions. Because to aware the children about the history of Sufi Madhu Lal and the importance of Mela Chiraghan in educational context. It is helpful and supports our culture and traditions. That how to culture and traditions transmit in our education. The researcher selected this topic because she wants to encourage the students to develop interest in the history of our tradition.

Delimitation

Keeping in view the financial problem and the time factor the study was delimited to the Govt. schools and Govt. colleges of Lahore district.

Review of Related Literature

Culture has a strong fundamental influence on the way people think, act, behave and develop themselves and their environment. The social significance and contemporary relevance of culture cannot be overstated. Franze Fanon, a renowned revolutionary intellectual from Martinique, posits that though culture is dependent on and reflects a material base and social reality, it can also affect a people's consciousness. (A. Atafori, Jan 2006)

Festivals in Pakistan

The festive celebration of Pakistan is woven with the fibers of a galore of traditions, culture, heritage and rituals storing each region's fragrance in it. The fairs and festivals of Pakistan are nothing but the outburst of this multi-fragrant basket in different times at different corners of the country. Diverse religious faiths and geographical variance have lead to the celebration of a number of festivals round the year with equal enthusiasm.

Some festivals are of religious nature while others are celebrated to mark the change of season or harvesting. People come alive with much ardor and élan in the festive time which is reflected from the colorful vibrancy of the fairs and festivals. Dance, music, dazzling attires are the integral part of these festive seasons, as we cannot think of Lok Virsa Fair without the folk dance performance or Basnat festival without the colorful traditional kite flying in outfits. Festivals such as, Pakistan Day, Eid Meladun Nabi, Mela Chiraghan (Festival of Lamps), Lahore. Basant (Kite flaying) Lahore, Eid, etc. are celebrated in all parts of the country with same energy and exuberance. (D. McMillan and E. Tunick, 2005-2006)

Definition of Mela

"Mela means many different things to different people. To some its meaning is ancient and mystical, which play a very important role to entertain the people".

A Mela is simply a festival. But the tradition and meaning of Mela is ancient. Indian civilization can be dated back to 10,000BC, using dates for astronomical events (Pleiades at winter solstice) described in the earliest Vedas or sacred scriptures. These also mark the origin of the pilgrimage festival, or Mela. The oldest Mela, the Khumba Mela, is held once every 12 years at the junction of the three sacred rivers (Ganges, Yamuna, and Saraswati) and attended by more than 40 million people. Mela today is a multi-cultural and multi-ethnic festival still rooted in events.

Mela Chiraghan

The Festival of Lamps or Mela Chiraghan is a very important and popular event in Lahore. This is celebrated at the same time as Basant, every spring on the last Friday of March outside the Shalimar Gardens. During the festival, people from all walks of life gather to actively participate in the festival. The National Horse and Cattle Show is one of the most famous annual festivals, it is held in spring in the Fortress Stadium. During the week long activities, there is a display of the finest livestock, horse and camel dances, tent pegging, colorful folk dances from all regions of Pakistan, mass-band displays and tattoo shows in the evenings.

On August 14, the people of Pakistan celebrate the day Pakistan gained its independence from the British Raj. There are lots of celebrations in Lahore, the streets are full of joyful people singing and dancing. Parades of the Pakistan Army and Pakistan Air force are held early in the show have been described as an eloquent expression of Pakistan's heritage and an authentic account of its agricultural and industrial achievement's.

It is held in Lahore Fortress stadium at the end of February or at First week of March. The fortress stadium, the venue of the show is thronged by active participants, foreign visitors and peoples who watch the festival with great enthusiasm, verve and aplomb. A large number of them are interested in watching and appreciating the best breeds of livestock. Many derive pleasure by watching other activities such as display parade of animals, dances by horses and camels, polo matches, tent pegging, dog shows and their races, vaudeville acts of stuntmen, mass display of military band, rhythmically physical exercise by the children. Tastefully decorated industrial floats and torch light tattoo shows. Additional attractions include a subtle interplay of lights to weave enticing patterns at night and breathe taking acts by foreign groups. The show began as a modest exhibition organized by the army to project the cattle wealth of the country in the early fifties. Today it is an international event to which come dignitaries from abroad and visitors and foreign tourists.

The organizing committee comprises representatives of a number of agencies including army, rangers, LMC schools, the police, industrialists and the art councils he morning. Concerts are held with many pop and classical singers.

During the festival, devotees light thousands of earthen lamps to honor the saint at his shrine, which is situated near the Shalimar Gardens.

Traditionally, Shah Hussain's Urs was held in Shalimar Bagh and marked the start of a four-day festival. On the second day, Batsakis was held to celebrate the star of wheat crop harvest. The third and final day was reserved for women. Horse raisers used to bring their horses for sale to the festival. (W. Aslam Feb, 2004)

Mela in National and International Perspective

Now in its fifth year, the London Mela is a major free festival, supported by Mayor of London and produced by Ealing Council, celebrating Asian arts, culture and creativity. The London Mela features a great line of top acts including: Pandit Dinesh & Kishon Khan, Punjabi music star Sukshinder Shinda, 80's Bhangra legends Heera, Radio 1's Bobby and Nihal plus Esh…UK's newest r'n'b sensation. The London Mela has grown to be regarded, nationally and internationally, as the most significant event of its kind. It's a truly family-friendly event, and one for all of London to enjoy. (Gunnersbury August, 2007)

Lok Virsa

The largest cultural activity in Pakistan is the annual National Folk Festival (Lok Mela), held in October each year. Over the past two decades, this festival has taken on an international flavor and more than 20 different countries have sent their artisans and performers to participate in the festival. Nationally, the festival has become a thing of pride for artisans and performers, who come on their own to participate. Most important of all, the Provinces of Pakistan and Azad Jammu & Kashmir put up beautifully decorated pavilions and visitors

have the unique opportunity to see an assortment of Pakistan's traditionally rich culture in the federal capital of Islamabad for an exciting ten days.

An exhibition of artisans at work under the banner of the Heritage Museum forms the core of this festival. The Research & Media Centre of Lok Virsa arranges groups of dancers that perform all over the festival grounds, inviting visitors to join in, and in the evening, arranges music concerts from all parts of Pakistan. Documentation of the festival is carried out by Lok Virsa's researchers, who interview all the artisans and artists. (W. Aslam Feb, 2004)

History of Shah Hussain

Shah Hussain, who lived in the times of Emperor Akbar (approximately 1538-1599), is perhaps the finest Punjabi poet of the Subcontinent. Both a revolutionary and a Sufi, Shah Hussain has been held in the highest regard for centuries by the common people of the Punjab. Up until the times of Zia ul Haq, the festival held in his honors was the biggest in the whole of the Subcontinent, attracting hundreds of thousands of people from across the region. This same event has been happening every year since his death some 400 years ago. It goes on for three days along the edge of the Shalimar Gardens in Lahore, by the tomb of Shah Hussain and is known as 'Mela Chiraghan' or 'the festival of lights'.

It has always been a truly inclusive event, with Hindus rubbing shoulders with Muslims, Buddhists and Sikhs. Shah Hussain himself had a devoted follower and friend in the form of Madhu Lal, a Hindu and son of a Brahmin. They were so closely associated that, following his death, Shah Hussain became known as Madhu Lal Hussain the fusion of names an embodiment of cultural unity.

Shah Hussain was the only son of a wealthy cloth worker and was educated at the Wazir Khan Mosque in Lahore, then the biggest educational institution in the area and breeding ground for the beauracrats of the day. His father wished him to belong to these circles. However, he came into contact with Abdullah Bhaddi, a political activist who was against the foreign rule of the Mughals and wanted the empowerment of the local people. It is these ordinary people that form the subject of Shah Hussain's poetry.

In Akbar's time the elite spoke Persian, alienating and depoliticizing the masses. Punjabi was (as it still is) looked down upon as a lesser language. Shah Hussain was an articulate voice in this 20,000 year-old language, which composed Kafis – a traditional type of Punjabi poem usually four to ten lines long. His poems are beautifully musical and have often been sung, sometimes by hundreds of people in unison.

As made my way to the festival, I had no idea quite what to expect. I have seen many different faces of Islam since I left London, from the formal weddings, to the warm hospitality, to the mystical and the more scholarly. But that night my eyes and heart were opened to a wonderful new element, like nothing I had seen before.

The roads were packed with people as we made our way towards the festival. There was the photographer. The occasional group of dancers and drummers in the middle of the road, little pockets of life orbiting the heart of the event. There were people selling candles, garlands of flowers, traditional wooden toys, and other little bits and pieces.

Then came to a turning off the roads into an enclosure, inside which was a giant carnival, with Sufi groups from across the country, and lots of young people (more accurately young men, since Zia got his claws on the event, men and women are supposed to come on different

days to the Mela). There was the occasional chain of young men, with arms linked, who would surge their way through the crowd. It was all a thousand miles from the type of festivals you get in England, which are far more restrained; far more pedestrian; far more inhibited.

Then came upon a giant fire illuminating the tomb of Shah Hussain. A mass of flames into which people would hurl big clumps of candles – all still in their plastic packaging.

Sufis sitting around a fire, they made an incredible sight, some with flowing red robes, others half naked with shaved heads, white markings and big heavy chains round their necks. We made our way to the edge of their group sitting in front of their fire.

People, like animals, can sense how at ease others are. If one is comfortable with oneself and surroundings, it shines through and is reflected in how others treat you. Now that was beaming and acknowledging people passed, everyone was friendly.

A man with frenzied eyes in the centre of the group tried to teach me how to do dance the bhangra. The crowds seemed to love (not to mention be decidedly amused by) my attempts. We started to make our way to the more formal event that had been arranged in tandem with the Mela by the South Asia Partnership, where there was music on stage. As we made our way we passed a policeman smoking a joint and a man looking slightly lost in front of his cart containing a most improbable mixture of toys, electronic gadgets and hairpins. We also passed a pair of people dancing on a makeshift stage on a street corner. They were dancing to Indian pop music in the most outrageously effeminate way, synchronized like a boy band. Anjum leaned over "Eunuchs," he said. A crowd watched avidly, cheering. I was transfixed by it all. Then we stopped at a food stall. We bought jalebis and katlama. I had never tried katlama before, but fresh out of the oil, still piping hot, it was quite delicious.

We arrived at the stage where there were hundreds of people sitting, watching and a few dancing. Behind the stage there was a small 500 year-old building with 12 doors taking up almost all of the wall space? Inside it was packed with Sufis sitting. And looked down at the musicians and the dancers.

The truth in Shah Hussain's poetry was found in Shakespeare. He said the essence was captured in the simple line "The world's a stage and we are all players on it". For that night the world felt like a stage, a fabulous dance. There contemplating what I had been told and with the music pulsating through the little room, I submerged into its rhythms.

History of Madhu Lal Hussain (1539-1593)

Shah Hussain was born in the house of a weaver, Sheikh Usman. He received his early education in a mosque and memorized the holy Quran by heart. As a young man he was attracted by the Sufi tradition. Shah Hussain became an ascetic and used to wear red cloak. It is also stated that Shah Hussain loved a Hindu boy, Madhu Lal that is why he is called Madhu Lal Hussain.

Madhu Lal Hussain, according to his Persian biography, "*Haqeeqtul Fuqra*", written by one Sheikh Mohammad Pir in 1071 A.H. just 63 years after his death, was a rebel of Mughal King Akbar and was linked with another rebel of Akbar, *Dullah Bhatti*. Sheikh Pir Muhammad records that when Akbar and his Sheikh-ul- Islam Abdullah Sultanpuri, got information about this Sufi, the King ordered his Kotwal Malik Ali to arrest and present Shah Hussain before him. But the Kotwal failed to arrest him.

Shah Hussain was the most popular saint of his age. The poetry of Shah Hussain is so deep-rooted that it moves the hearts of readers. Shah Hussain transformed the entire spirit

of Sufi poetry in the Punjabi literature. He broadened its sphere from philosophical Sophism to encompass the whole gamut of human feelings. He excels over all other Sufi poets in his met aphorism and sentimentalism.

Population of the Study

The population of study was all the teachers of Govt Schools and training colleges of Lahore District.

Sample of the Study

The sample was comprised of 150 teachers of Government boys and girls higher secondary schools of Lahore district, and teachers' educators of Govt. colleges for elementary teachers Kot Lakhpat Lahore.

Data Collection Instruments

After reading the relevant literature (a questionnaire at 5-point rating scale) was used as a research instrument for the trainer teachers and two interviews were designed; one for teachers and second was for the employees of tomb of Shah Hussain. An informal interview of the employees of Mela Chiraghan was also conducted to develop possible question for actual research instruments.

Instrumentation

Prior to developing instruments, the researcher conducted informal interviews of employees of the tomb of Shah Hussain. Two instruments were developed to collect data –a questionnaire for teachers of Government boys and girls secondary schools of district Lahore and teacher educators of Government colleges for elementary teachers, Kot Lakhpat Lahore.

Data Analysis Procedure

Data regarding various research questions was collected through instruments constructed by the researcher. To get answer of the research questions, the researcher constructed three research instruments i.e., a questionnaire for teachers an interview for teachers and an informal interview for employees of the tomb of Shah Hussain. These instruments were administered for data collection. Data was analyzed by using descriptive statistic of frequencies and per-centages.

Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations

Findings

Findings of the study drawn on the basis of data analysis were as under:

- 47% teachers are agreed that culture helps you in your living style.
- 40 % teachers are agreed that they like to participate in the Mela Chiraghan.

- 43% teachers are agreed that they like to attend the cultural festival.
- 42 % teachers are agreed that Mela Chiraghan is a source of cultural learning.
- 44 % teachers are agreed that Mela Chiraghan contributes in social interaction.
- 33.9 % teachers are agreed that that Mela is a good mean of excursion.
- 32.3 % teachers are agreed that Mela Chiraghan represents a good excursion for young generation.
- 37 % teachers are agreed that Mela helps young generation to understand the culture aspects.
- 31.5 % teachers are agreed that Mela Chiraghan helps to understand the historical perspectives.
- 37 % teachers are agreed that Mela Chiraghan is a source of social gathering.
- 43 % teachers are agreed that Mela Chiraghan represents our sophism culture
- 33 % teachers are agreed that Mela Chiraghan is a source of income of lower class.
- 45.3 % teachers are agreed that Mela Chiraghan helps students and teachers to learn many things.
- 39.3 % teachers are agreed that that they can interact with people of different local languages in Mela Chiraghan.
- 38 % teachers are agreed that Mela Chiraghan enables you to aware of different dresses of different regions.
- 42 % teachers are agreed that it promotes literacy through informal ways like quail musical instruments etc.
- 36 % teachers are agreed that our culture should be preserved with care.
- 46 % teachers are agreed that Mela Chiraghan gives us opportunity to here mystical poetry of famous Sufis.
- 31.3% teachers are agreed that different learning activities of Mela Chiraghan are of great values to modify our behavior.

Conclusion

After analysis the data, the conclusion of the results are:

Culture helps us in our living style. Teachers like to participate in Mela Chiraghan. They like to attend the cultural festivals. Mela Chiraghan is a source of cultural learning. It contributes in social interaction. It is a good means of excursion. It represents a good excursion for young generation. It helps young generation to understand the cultural aspects and helps to understand the historical perspectives. It is a source of social gathering and represents our sophism culture. It is also a source of income of lower class. It helps students and teachers to learn many things. Teachers can interact with people of different local languages in Mela Chiraghan. Mela Chiraghan enables us to aware of different dresses of different regions. It promotes literacy through informal ways like qawali, musical instruments etc. Teachers think that our culture should be preserved with care. Mela Chiraghan gives us opportunity to hear mystical poetry of famous Sufis. Different learning activities of Mela Chiraghan are of great value to modify our behavior.

Recommendation

It is recommended that:

- Mela Chiraghan is helpful for the representation of our culture and tradition so teachers should create proper awareness in the children about that event.
- Teachers should arrange the excursion trips to different melas like Mela Chiraghan to enhance their learning

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Spiritual Agency as Praxis for Community Healing: Hurricane Katrina to the BP Oil Disaster and Beyond

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Abstract: Technologically and politically 'manufactured risks' (Giddens, 1999) threaten people and nature depending on social and geographic location (Alario and Freudenburg, 2010; Marris, 1996). Paradoxical reactions from fear and trauma to hope and healing arise in response to disasters. Spiritual agency is a praxis based in spiritual reflection and action to transform social crises into opportunities; this dynamic process provides hope and mobilizes individuals and groups. While global crises are on the rise, a holistic paradigm shift—toward 'co-creating' more environmentally sustainable, peaceful societies based in social justice—is simultaneously underway. This paper explores the evolution of the concept of spiritual agency and how it can serve as a healing strategy for communities impacted by disasters. The Common Ground Relief collective in New Orleans is viewed as embodying this praxis in the wake of Hurricane Katrina and the BP oil spill.

Keywords: Spirituality, Eco-feminism, Sociology of Disasters, Environmental Justice, Multiculturalism, New Orleans, Gulf Coast

> … The two aspects of risk—its negative and positive sides—appear from the early days of modern industrial society. Risk is the mobilising dynamic of a society bent on change, that wants to determine its own future rather than leaving it to religion, tradition, or the vagaries of nature… Risk was supposed to be a way of …bringing it under our dominion. [Yet] Our very attempts to control the future tend to rebound upon us, forcing us to look for different ways of relating to uncertainty…the rise of manufactured risk... penetrates into [many] areas of life. (Reith Lectures, "*Runaway World*" Giddens, 1999)

I**N TIMES OF** great uncertainty, especially in the wake of disasters, survivors often feel traumatized with little sense of control. "Common wisdom" says that crises bring people together with renewed compassion, empathy and connection to community, however disasters can also have the opposite effect of severing community ties. A key factor is whether people are supported and encouraged to help themselves and each other in recovery (Erickson, 1972, Marris, 1996). After Hurricane Katrina and the devastating flooding of New Orleans from the breeched levees in 2005, many grassroots groups formed to help rebuild neighborhoods, re-forging deep ties to community in the process. Common Ground Relief is one such organization. The founders of the group understood the need to empower local people as they all struggled to heal and begin again. Starting as a small, multicultural collective, Common Ground organized quickly and effectively (Hilderbrand, Crow and Fithian, 2007). This grassroots mobilization can be contrasted with what was largely viewed as severe

negligence and even discrimination by the Army Corps of Engineers and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (Dyson, 2006; VanHeerden and Bryan, 2006).

Common Ground embraces a social movement strategy that combines community-building among members with tactics for achieving broader social change. The group serves to illustrate the emerging concept of "spiritual agency" as a new form of praxis. Agency is simply the ability to act independently, as a free agent, in spite of structural or cultural constraints, such as inequalities due to social class, race or gender. Sociologists see praxis as a reflexive process whereby theory is put into action (Giddens, 1984). The praxis of spiritual agency empowers people through faith and spiritual reflection to overcome trauma by transforming crises into opportunities for co-creating conscious community (Denning, 1993). Common Ground's principles and practices are shown to embody spiritual agency as members seek to prefigure alternative, multicultural forms of shared leadership (Hilderbrand, et. al, 2007).

Reflexive Statement

As a northern, white, eco-feminist sociologist, I did not know much about New Orleans until the Fall of 2005, after Hurricane Katrina, when the negligence of the Army Corps and FEMA were first exposed. Traveling to the city for conferences and for the International Tribunals of 2007 hosted by the People's Hurricane Relief Fund, I learned to appreciate—as well as any outsider can—the unique living history that makes it clear why people love New Orleans enough to stay and return to rebuild even as living there continues to be perilous. Dr. Beverly Wright, Director of The Deep South Center on Environmental Justice, once remarked that eight generations of her family had lived in the city (2006). Many families in New Orleans, have much older ties to place than in most of the United States (Flaherty, 2010); the depth of loss for these communities may be hard to understand for those coming from a highly mobile, modern American cultural context.

I was moved to learn more about New Orleans. The beauty and cultural mystique side-by-side with rampant poverty and racism ignited a spark which led to an abiding interest in the region. Many people in New Orleans are not rich in a material sense. Pre-Katrina, African Americans comprised 67% of the city, 28% of NOLA residents lived below the poverty line, 84% of whom were black, 100,000 people had no car, and therefore had no ability to flee the city when the storm hit (Strolovitch, Warren, Frymer, 2006). Southern Louisiana communities have a "rich," rural Cajun and urbane Creole mix of French, African and Native American roots leading to unique spiritual, musical and culinary traditions, deep faith and family connections (Baum, 2010). Hurricane Katrina spurred me to revisit earlier research on disasters and healing. Then on Earth Day 2010 when the Deep Horizon rig exploded and the oil gusher (so much bigger than a "spill") devastated the Gulf of Mexico my research seemed even more timely. Widespread institutional race and class discrimination in New Orleans have been highlighted (Bullard and Wright, 2007; Dyson, 2006). Yet, I felt that sociological studies missed the spiritual dimension.

For the past twenty years, Earth-based spirituality has guided my journey and scholarly work (Fox, 1999; Merchant, 1980). A transcendent connection to the Divine is felt most when I am outside in nature. An experiential, feminist methodology (Hill-Collins, 1990; Reinharz, 1992) and multicultural perspective shaped my research as myriad interdisciplinary ideas converged, coalescing into the concept of spiritual agency. I seek here to open a conversation about mysteries beyond social science to make sense of the volatile times in which

we live. Very different interpretations about how to proceed in this post-modern era of global risks may lead to fruitful dialogue bridging science and spirituality.

> An era such as ours will inevitably breed… diverse New Age philosophies, which turn against a scientific outlook. … our relationship to science… won't and can't be the same as in previous times (Giddens, 1999).

My path of ecofeminist sociological inquiry embraced diverse religious and cultural perspectives, philosophies of non-violence and alternative pedagogies. This multifaceted and multidisciplinary journey came together in Peace and Justice studies (Harris, 2010). Each step along the way provided insights in developing the praxis of spiritual agency. Following from Gandhi's "Satyagraha" and King's "Soul-Force," this praxis seeks to continue turning social crises into opportunities.

> … Darkness cannot drive out darkness: only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate: only love can do that. (King, 1967:62)

Imagining a peaceful future founded on equality and ecological wisdom, I came to see how spiritual agency can help people remain hopeful while facing the darkness of fear and despair. Damage clearly comes from acute disasters. Chronic trauma also debilitates people and communities as the "triplets of materialism, militarism and racism" (King, 1968:167) oppress so many. Martin Luther King's vision for the "beloved community" grounds my understanding of spiritual agency as a potential way to transform relationships and structural inequalities.

In the process of examining ongoing impacts of Katrina and the oil spill on Gulf Coast communities of color and on fragile wetlands ecosystems, my analysis evolved beyond sociological inquiry to include insights ranging from restorative and environmental justice to geography. While grounded in sociology of disasters and social movement theory, spiritual agency can be applied to more fully explain the power of grassroots organizing for healing communities from trauma and as a tool for personal awareness.

Natural Disasters vs. Manufactured Risks

Modern "risk society" (Beck, 1992) is increasingly characterized by disasters that appear to have environmental causes, but are, in fact severely exacerbated by human interventions. People need supportive communities as they struggle to achieve environmental justice (Bullard, 2005; Bullard and Wright, 2007; LaDuke, 1999). Unnatural, acute disasters, such as the BP explosion and oil spill, are made worse by ongoing, chronic practices shaped by relations of dominance, both of human over human, and humans over nature. Framing disasters as "natural" obscures their political, economic and social causes and effects. Those with the least power—including the poor, people of color, other species and the environment itself—bear the heaviest burden (Bullard and Wright, 2007; Freudenburg and Gramling, 2010). Those least able to manipulate or control contingencies continue to be most at risk (Alario and Freudenburg, 2010; Marris,1996).

Trauma from disasters heavily impacts individuals and communities, no matter whether the cause is natural, technological or political (Erickson, 1994). Healing is inhibited when communities are dis-empowered (Freudenburg, Gramling, Laska and Erickson, 2009).

Strategies for healing that include both psychological and collective levels are reinforced and strengthened by mobilizing survivors to work together for recovery (Erickson, 1972, 1994; Marris, 1996). Encouraging hope, while acknowledging fear is an example of the paradoxical nature of spiritual agency.

Multiple impacts and causes of the disaster following Hurricane Katrina slowly emerged as the flooding came to be understood as a product of manufactured risk; the disaster was not primarily from hurricane winds, but rather from the massive storm surge which, according to expert, Ivor Van Heerden, could have been prevented to a large degree. The fragile wetlands of Southern Louisiana were decimated for decades prior to Katrina and the BP oil disaster through development, oil exploration, drilling and commerce. While these forces of modernization may be necessary for one of the country's most important ports they also led to the destruction of vast swaths of cypress swamps that served for centuries as a natural barrier absorbing hurricane surges until very recent times (VanHeerden and Bryan, 2006).

Environmental destruction and lack of government accountability after Katrina have been thoroughly documented—from institutional and environmental racism and class inequality to the geography of the wetlands and more (Brinkley, 2006; Bullard and Wright, 2007; Dunne, 2005; Freudenburg and Gramling, 2010). Few "voices" speak for the natural treasure of the wetlands marshes and swamps beyond local community and environmental groups.

As of this writing, the bulging floodwaters of the Mississippi River finally reached the Gulf of Mexico—the latest in a year of epic environmentally-related disasters from the BP blowout to massive tornadoes in Midwest and Southern states. The crises in the Gulf led to mobilization of the environmental movement and other grassroots community organizing. Simultaneously, social movements for democratic change have swept the globe, from revolutionary upheavals in the Middle East to the rise of a democracy movement in the Midwest of the U.S. It is faith in the power of spiritual agency that gives me optimism that these movements will prevail as more people become conscious of widespread injustice in an unsustainable American political/economic system.

The rise of collective action signals a paradigm shift away from a culture of dominance to one of partnership in interdependent caring communities. Partnership with the Earth is also part of an emerging eco-consciousness (Hawken, 2005; Merchant, 2005). Waves of awareness, like ripples in a pond, spread outward to awaken more people, to wash aside the fascination with the "Blade," symbolic of power-over others and the Earth, finally shifting priorities to honor the nurturing "Chalice" (Eisler, 1988). The potential of spiritual agency is to forge a balance between the two forces—the incisive, analytical aspects of the blade and the expressive, cooperative yearnings of the chalice. Rebirth of a new, harmonious paradigm must follow death as part of the grand cycle of change and growth.

Roots of Spiritual Agency

Spiritual agency as praxis seeks to find balance between paradoxical potentials. Drawn in part from the wider "New Age" movement, the reflexive process begins with imagining an outcome; expectations for how results will manifest are released to open the door for potentials to emerge. Spiritual agency is a useful tool for both personal and social change as one becomes aware of the balancing act inherent in manifesting an outcome through focused intent, while simultaneously surrendering control. Embracing the dialectical, cyclical nature of change teaches patience, perhaps even more relevant in the midst of dramatic crises.

A holistic view of the world is central. Love and fear, trust and risk, joy and grief are central paradoxes defining human experience. Reflecting an Eastern understanding of the "Tao," or "Way," spiritual agency is a dance between universal forces of yin/yang energies (Capra, 1984). Two sides are understood as parts of a whole, seen as complementary, in contrast to the dualistic lens of the dominant worldview which frames everything in either/or terms. Ecofeminism offers a holistic critique of the dualistic, patriarchal, hierarchical worldview: masculinity over femininity, rationality over intuition, competition over cooperation, humanity over nature. An emerging paradigm posits that healing human relationships must include reawakening our responsibility to serve, not only as stewards of nature, but as equal partners (Diamond, 1990; Merchant, 1980, 2005; Plant, 1989; Radford-Reuther, 1975). Acting on these ideas is praxis.

The concept of praxis has very old roots. Myriad philosophical, religious and cultural traditions incorporate the dynamic process between theory and action as a central tenet: from Chinese Taoism to classical Greek thought, from Hegelian and Marxist dialectics to modern sociological theory. Giddens' conception (1984) of the "double hermeneutic" posits two intertwining spirals representing interconnected forces—psychological and social, micro/macro levels—each shaping the other. This spiral model strongly influenced my thinking about how to see spiritual agency in daily life and how it could be applied to social change movements.

History repeats itself. My contention is that praxis of spiritual agency can minimize the tendency of grassroots groups to become "isomorphic representations" of the very structures they seek to revision and replace (Zald and McCarthy, 1990). For example, in social movement organizations charismatic leaders—though tremendously important figures—can sometimes have too much power as members look to leaders to manifest goals, rather than collectively envision and shape future outcomes. Spiritual agency can serve by helping groups prefigure alternative forms of leadership as shared partnership, rather than replicate top-down structures. Decision-making processes, such as indigenous-circle processes (Pranis, 2004), rather than Western hierarchical practices, can teach people to "let go of control." Paradoxically, a fuller vision may be realized by encouraging democratic participation.

Paulo Freire's classic model of teaching as praxis, advanced in *A Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970), embodies this point about sharing power. A dialogic approach sees reflection and action in service of transforming social relations from domination and fear to justice and love. As students teach and teachers become students—through practicing "true dialogue"—each learns from the other through shared experiences rather than traditional pedagogies of "passing on knowledge."

Key to the praxis is encouraging appreciation for diversity, striving to see the world from the position of disenfranchised groups—whether the poor, people of color, women or others that experience systemic oppression (Hill-Collins, 1994; Mills, 1959; Reinharz, 1989). As an active force mobilizing people in opposition to relations of dominance, spiritual agency reminds us to treat nature itself with respect and reverence.

Spiritual Agency as Praxis: Common Ground

Common Ground Relief embodies spiritual agency as it puts faith into action, working for environmental justice. Co-founded in the first days of September 2005—Malik Rahim, Scott Crow, and friends organized to help in clean-up, recovery and rebuilding efforts following

the hurricane and flooding (Hilderbrand, et. al, 2007). Volunteers set up a health clinic and operated a "store" for basic goods, such as food, water, diapers and medicines—the only one in the devastated neighborhood of the Lower Ninth Ward for months (Mizell, 2005). They trained thousands of volunteers and projects grew to cover a wide range of needs. According to the website (commongroundrelief.org), in addition to hurricane preparedness and rebuilding, projects include:

- Environmental justice: soil bioremediation, community gardens, wetlands restoration
- Legal advocacy
- Anti-Racism working group

Guided by spiritual values in daily operations, Common Ground has empowered some of the most vulnerable in NOLA. Beyond implementing specific community programs, Common Ground developed what they call "a holistic practice and process." Members are urged to listen to and speak with respect, follow consensus decision-making and nurture their own leadership skills rather than rely on top-down directives. Interracial membership and leadership is encouraged, acknowledging white privilege. Admittedly sometimes foundering, as members write about their internal struggles to live by the group's democratic principles, they try to hold each other accountable (Hilderbrand, et.al, 2007). Healing is a primary goal, both for those serving and receiving assistance.

I am not suggesting that spiritual agency can overcome all obstacles. Such an assumption could lead to the serious error of "blaming the victim" (Ryan, 1976) a common trap of the dominant ideology and the "myth of meritocracy" (McIntosh, 1988). The American Dream is in many ways founded on a meritocracy model claiming that people receive social rewards based solely on personal effort (Davis and Moore, 1945). A *critical* sociological perspective as articulated by Peggy McIntosh in her classic analysis of white and male privilege helps bridge the gap between race, gender and class inequality (1988) She posits that it is essential to recognize that much suffering derives from structural constraints of poverty, racism and sexism in a society built on capitalism, white supremacy and patriarchy. For instance, institutional racism within the New Orleans Police Department has finally come to light (Lee, 2010). Police brutality, cover-ups and white vigilantism were common following Katrina, but it took nearly five years for it to merit special media coverage by Frontline (2010)**.** Rahim notes on the website that it was partly to protect the black community that he and his friends initially formed Common Ground.

To become an empowered actor, rather than passive victim, a "combative spirit" is necessary, according to Cornel West (2000). He writes that grassroots leaders in predominantly African American communities have powerful inner reservoirs of strength to arm themselves against ongoing adversity and racism. Historically, the African American experience of spirituality provided courage. In contemporary times, faith still often leads to the formation of "communities of hope" as West calls them, in opposition to the nihilism and violence stereotypically associated with the impoverished Black community. Only by recognizing social/economic/political constraints can we fully appreciate the power of spiritual agency as praxis—the paradox is that while all people have free will to act to overcome obstacles, many are simultaneously limited from achieving "success."

In this spirit, Common Ground created an anti-racism program and built diversity awareness into all volunteer trainings. While the extreme racism and structural violence in the aftermath

of Katrina brought forth community resistance, it also encouraged hopeful visions for healing through rebuilding the city. For example, The "Make it Right" housing development in the Holy Cross neighborhood of the Lower 9th Ward—funded and founded by Brad Pitt—has become a model of green urban planning primarily supporting African-American homeowners. Other neighborhoods, like the New Orleans East Vietnamese community, have fought being turned into green space or used as dumping grounds for contaminated waste (Flaherty, 2007).

NOLA is a metaphorical gumbo of tastes and textures serving as the roux binding people from the city together (Riggs, 2000). To appreciate the extent to which the Common Ground collective has made positive impacts, the unique cultural context and chronic nature of social problems plaguing New Orleans must be kept in mind. Discrimination has a long and violent history in the Mississippi Delta. Katrina raged only briefly, yet the flooding is omnipresent like a ghost lingering, not only in expanses of vacant lots or severely blighted housing stock, but in poor communities where people of color find themselves even more disproportionately unemployed, under-employed or discriminated against, their children attending even more under-served schools and even more limited health care facilities in poor neighborhoods than before Katrina (Flaherty, 2010; Quigley, 2010).

BP and the Future of the Gulf Coast: Common Ground and Beyond

The work of Common Ground post-Katrina illustrates how spiritual agency can help in healing human relationships to each other and nature. The BP disaster raises somewhat different, related issues. Mitigating destructive corporate practices and holding the oil industry accountable is a daunting prospect; keeping attention on the Gulf is necessary, especially with oil spills in the Yellowstone River and Alaska tundra. When the Deep Horizon well was finally capped it was estimated that 60,000 barrels (2.5 million gallons) of oil per day flowed into the Gulf of Mexico totaling between 94-184 million gallons of oil (Freudenburg and Gramling, 2010). No one knows the long-term toxic effects of the massive releases of the chemical dispersant, Corexit. Countless bird, turtle, dolphin and fish populations were decimated; beaches and islands were spoiled. Consequences of these losses weigh especially heavily on the minds and hearts of those deeply tied to the region. For how many decades will oil and the dispersant wreak havoc on the Gulf ecosystems and on people's health and livelihoods?

Wetlands restoration and tree planting have also been taken on by Common Ground, helping efforts of the Gulf Restoration Network and other environmental groups. Cultural loss and economic suffering of local peoples adds to the extent of the devastation. What is clear is that "fisherfolk," from the New Orleans Vietnamese community to rural Cajuns and Indigenous peoples, like the Houma Indians, living deep in the bayous, who rely on fishing for subsistence livelihoods and family food supply are still feeling dramatic negative impacts (Serpas, 2011). While the scope of the BP disaster was enormous, there is still hope that it will serve as another call to action—not only to clean up the oil and perhaps redirect the economic foundation of the Gulf, but to begin to remedy the long history of injustice and inequality that has for so long constrained and characterized the region.

One response to the BP spill was Malik Rahim's decision to ride his bicycle from New Orleans to Washington DC in the summer of 2010 while the oil was still spewing into the Gulf unabated. Infused with spiritual agency, Rahim rode to raise awareness of the destruction

of the wetlands and to lobby congress on behalf of the people of New Orleans and the Delta. His message was to demand that Gulf Coast restoration remain a political and economic priority. In an interview with Brentin Mock, contributor to *The Root*, Rahim explains:

> Wetland restoration. It's all about the global crisis that we are in…. I truly believe that (as) goes the Gulf Coast, then so goes America… We have to make sure that our children and grandchildren are able to enjoy life on this planet in the same way that we are enjoying it. That's why I'm biking…. I believe I am riding with the Holy Spirit with Christ as my guide. I have the prayers of the members of my church. This planet is the most precious gift, and we have destroyed it. As an African American raised under Jim Crow, who lived under segregation, who suffered the indignities of living under poverty, life has always been an arduous task for me. But I'm a firm believer that nothing comes without sacrifice, and this is a small sacrifice... it is an arduous task, but if we come together we can make it an easy task… (2010: 2)

A committed and soulful act motivated by faith and focused on creating a better future, the ride sought to keep attention on the Gulf. The call for a social movement may eventually lead to fundamental changes in policy. Charismatic individuals are few and far between, yet a movement must also be sustained for sweeping social changes to take root.

Citizens, activists and scholars working together must remind the general public of corporate irresponsibility and lack of political will that may have irreparably harmed the Gulf Coast. It is unclear what local people will do if the oil kills the marsh grasses and the soil literally washes away, leaving only open water. The water level is rising more quickly in the New Orleans basin due to a combination of manufactured risks: canal dredging, including the infamous Mississippi River Gulf Outlet ("MRGO"), as well as oil pipelines, commercial development and logging have all allowed brackish water to infiltrate the swamps, killing the Cypress trees. Subsidence of the land itself from pumping out all rain water, while necessary to prevent flooding, exacerbates the problem of sea-level rise.

According to Aaron Viles (conversation, February, 2011) of the Gulf Restoration Network, the loss of the wetlands is staggering and likely to speed up even more with oil infiltrating the marshes—a football field size area of land is lost every 45 minutes. Awareness of the magnitude of this ongoing tragedy may finally lead to spiritual agency spreading beyond the Gulf to initiate action to save these vital natural resources and the people who live interdependently in this special place.

Conclusions

The breech of the levees in New Orleans and the BP oil spill are but two recent examples of environmentally-related, manufactured disasters. Formed in the immediate aftermath of Katrina, Common Ground grew into a highly productive network in and around NOLA. Five years later, following the BP Horizon blowout, the grassroots group expanded to address ongoing impacts of the oil spill. The programs shifted from recovery to restoration of Gulf Coast wetlands; today, Common Ground continues to empower their members and thousands of volunteers to become engaged leaders, responding with faith, resilience, appreciation for diversity and love in the face of adversity.

Risk and vulnerability to disasters depends on social status, economic and racial privilege as well as geography. Paradox is pervasive, whether facing acute or chronic disasters or simply making daily decisions in the post modern world. Spiritual agency helps guide individual and collective choices by tapping into one's higher consciousness, transcending limiting fears by envisioning creative solutions to crises and current social problems.

Hope can be mobilized through applying spiritual agency as praxis for healing and navigating through the complex web of personal and societal challenges. A vision for sustainable, peaceful societies based in social justice has long been a shared dream by many across the world. Compassionate messages of love provide strength, reminding us to, "be the change we want to see in the world," as Gandhi said. Or as legendary activist Grace Lee Boggs reflected on prospects for achieving King's dream,

> (He) developed a strategy for transforming a struggle for rights into a struggle that advances the humanity of everyone in the society and thereby brings the beloved community closer to realization. … redefining our relationships with one another, to the Earth and to the world; about creating a new society in the places and spaces left vacant by the disintegration of the old; about hope, not despair; about saying yes to life and no to war; about finding the courage to love and care for the peoples of the world as we love and care for our own families (2004:1).

Hope and faith can be found in listening to stories from the ground, fostering spiritual agency. Resilience and resistance of Louisiana communities dealing with continuing impacts of Katrina, the BP disaster, ongoing destruction of the wetlands—while still facing historic and contemporary structural violence and racism—can inspire people well beyond the Gulf region. This new theoretical and practical tool is one contribution offered as a means for sharing lessons from New Orleans. Spiritual agency can play a role from disasters to everyday injustices.

Empowerment in the face of crises comes from deep reflection and action in supportive community. Co-creating opportunities together is essential for healing. Social science provides critical analytic tools; voices bridging spirituality and sociology add different dimensions. Grassroots organizations like Common Ground help "light the way," teaching scholars and activists new approaches for sustaining alternate forms of leadership, based in partnership and motivated by spiritual agency to nurture meaningful connections within communities, manifesting dreams through focused intent and action. My hope is for seeds of this awakening to take root and grow, like the sunflower, cleansing the "soil" of American culture, as global social movements continue to build new multicultural societies based in love, equity and environmental justice.

Acknowledgments

as extreme police brutality and vigilante violence in New Orleans post Katrina. Safe Streets/Strong Communities, INCITE, The Gulf Restoration Network and many others have made major impacts in rebuilding communities, empowering people and reminding the nation of the responsibility to restore the fragile wetlands. Local institutes, such as the Deep South Center for Environmental Justice and the Southern Institute for Research and Education have provided leadership, education and support. I want to thank, especially, Dr. Beverly Wright for grant funding that paid for my first trip to NOLA in the Fall of 2006 for the conference on Race, Place and Environment after Katrina. Listening circles and a research network set up by Dr. Lance Hill through the Common Ground Project at Tulane have promoted healing as survivors shared stories and as scholars shared their work. There are many others to acknowledge, but in this short space, I will simply thank Ian Harris for valuable insights from Peace Studies and Charles W. Ogg for critical editing and humor. Lastly, I wish to honor my recently deceased father, Robert A. Denning, for teaching me to connect with the spiritual realm through dancing with trust and risk and listening with my heart. To all those who read these words, please help continue to direct healing energies to Gulf Coast communities, animals and vital wetlands ecosystems.

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About the Author

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C. Holly Denning has served as Academic Staff Instructor in Sociology and Ethnic Studies since 2004 at the University of Wisconsin at Whitewater. Doctoral research through Boston College in the program for Social Justice, extended through the 1990s and early 2000s; she is ABD. Multicultural and interdisciplinary research interests characterize her work. She has worked with Restorative and Community Justice models, traditionally used in criminal justice contexts, applying them to environmental disasters. Recent focus has been on the multiple impacts of Hurricane Katrina and the Gulf oil disaster. Water issues are one central focus-- she is part of a strategic initiative on campus, the Interdisciplinary Water Expertise Team. She has also created a minor in Peace and Justice Studies at UW-W. Holly serves on the Race and Ethnic Studies Committee, co-coordinates learning communities and teaches in the Green Business is Good Business LC for incoming students.

Teaching Comparative Religion: Problems of Subjectivity

James Earl, Richmond the American International University in London, UK

Abstract: No student doing a math course has their 'own' math; whereas the student of religion is likely to have their own religion, or a position in relation to religion, such as agnosticism or atheism. Designing and teaching the comparative religion course at Richmond, the American International University in London, has helped me reflect on the problem of subjectivity, and how it is intrinsic to the discipline of comparative religion. It demands a specific conceptual framework, ethical awareness and pedagogic practice which this paper seeks to outline. Using Richmond as a case study, I propose an existential ontological approach to the teaching situation, and make specific practice recommendations. Richmond is fortunate to have 110 nationalities in its student body and members of all the major faiths. It has been the perfect environment to explore these issues with students and faculty colleagues.

Keywords: Subjectivity, Comparative, Pedagogy, Teaching, Practice, Ethics, Existentialism, Ontology

T**EACHING COMPARATIVE RELIGION** poses some quite particular problems for the educator. The student who enrolls on a mathematics course is unlikely to say they 'have their own math,' whereas the student of comparative religion has almost certainly either a religious belief, or attitude toward religion such as agnosticism or atheism. This raises the question of how the students-and indeed the teacher-should speak, and write. Is it OK to present 'as a Christian' or 'as an atheist', for example?-or must the student and teacher avoid all reference to personal belief in order establish an objective spirit of enquiry?

One example of this quandary happens, without fail, every semester, when I am asked by one or more students, 'Professor, do *you* believe in God?'

If I answer directly with a yes or no, the fear is I may alienate the section of the audience that does not share my views. As importantly, I might also be seen to compromise my academic neutrality, or be promoting my own views.

On the other hand, if I refuse to answer the question, then I am to some degree 'in disguise'- which might be seen as a dubious starting-point for a productive teacher-student relationship. Furthermore, it is a disguise that I assume a reasonable intelligent student may well see through-in other words, is it not best to be honest rather than have the students guess? (and guess, of course, they do.)

Then again, is disguise perhaps a *good* thing?-in much the same way as traditionally, a counsellor or psychotherapist would present a rather neutral, anonymous face to the client, and avoid giving too much-or sometimes any-personal information to them.

Avoiding the question is well-nigh impossible-it always comes up, and student are particularly expert in spotting a lecturer who is trying to dodge a question.

Whatever the right response to this question is-and I am sure there is more than one right answer-it must surely be a product of the overall model one has of the teaching relationship, and the particular the demands that the subject of comparative religion makes of it.

I am therefore looking for a model to give me best handle on what I term 'the problem of subjectivity' in comparative religion-the problem of how our own preexisting beliefs might 'sit' with the study of belief itself.

When I started teaching, I didn't really have a theoretical model of what the classroom situation is about. The model I am proposing here hasn't directed my practice until quite recently-it is more a set of ideas that emerged in practice.

Richmond is an American International University situated in London and follows the liberal arts tradition. There are currently 110 nationalities within its 1,200 student body, and therefore most of the world's major faiths are represented here. Many others of Richmond's students would self-identify as agnostic or atheist. It provides an interesting case study for these questions.

Using Carr's (Carr, 2007) distinction between confessional and non-confessional religious teaching, the comparative religion course I designed, like most others at University level, is clearly non-confessional: that is, it does not seek to privilege one or other particular religious view. My role as the teacher is merely to survey the landscape of world faiths.

Comparative World Religion at Richmond is a course for juniors and seniors that takes a set of philosophical puzzles, such as free will and suffering, and outlines how different faith traditions have discussed them. It does not spend a week on Islam and a week on Buddhism, which I believe would not be truly comparative, but patterns the major faiths into families and compares and contrasts what each family says about a certain philosophical problem. (The two big families are we discuss are the Abrahamic family, and the *karma*-based family of Hinduism and Buddhism and Jainism. I spend a fair amount of time explaining the notion of 'families' of faiths and justifying it in terms of both historical and philosophical linkages.)

This philosophical, rather than anthropological orientation, has had a direct bearing on the way in which my thinking about subjectivity has developed. For whatever faith background a student is from, most have pondered before taking this class on at least some of the philosophical puzzles we examine. There is therefore already a suggestion of common ground despite our differences.

This is an interesting starting point, and engages with the idea enshrined in Richmond's motto, which is 'Unity in Diversity.' This disarmingly simple phrase contains a real problem with the word *unity*. Is unity to be understood descriptively or normatively? In other words, is this making a claim that we are united, or merely that we should aspire to unity?

It is difficult to disagree with the normative sense, that we should aspire to unity, and in fact Richmond's approach is based on the idea that we have an overriding common purpose in learning, enriched by the manifest diversity of our cultures. We therefore stress the liberal values of tolerance and respect.

Reading the word 'unity' in the descriptive sense is much more contentious. To what extent are we a unity beyond our cultures-and religions?

This takes us into the familiar debate between *cultural relativists* on the one hand, who claim that all values emerge from cultures, and that since there is no universal culture there can be no universal values; and on the other hand *universalists*, who claim despite cultural differences we share a core identity which gives us universal values.

Understanding the word unity in the universalists' sense, we have some empirical evidence of a core identity. Many would argue, for example, that much of the world's great literature can be understood across culture and down through history because we share enough to recognize ourselves across these divides.

However, philosophizing *why and how* we recognize ourselves is a problematic. One route that both left and right, politically, have taken at different times and to different effect is the idea of a core human nature. For Marx, for example, this core is our *species being.* He required this idea in his early work to demonstrate how the market alienates ourselves from our true humanity.

Social conservatives have used the idea to very different effect. Our core human nature, for them, serves to entrench certain qualities (such as our gender, sexual orientation and so on) and show them to be both natural and beyond the possibility of change.

Marx in fact gives up the idea of species being in later work precisely because of the way in which this idea can be used equally by his political opponents. He graduates to the materialist position where our views of the world, or ideology, are expressions of (or reification of, to use the useful Marxist term) our real-world practice.

Marx, then, does away with a unifying human nature. The long tail of this philosophical trend is found in contemporary debate about essences. Is there, for example, an essence which men share, distinct from that which women share? Are ethnicities, or so-called racial groups, any kind of essences?

I am very much convinced by the anti-essentialist position, probably best personified by Judith Butler in the field of gender (Butler, 1999). She argues for a radical deconstruction of gender terms (and terms of sexual orientation), and consequently terms such as 'feminism'.

Her famous position that 'gender is performative' is indicative of her view that gender lacks any kind of essence. This is a radical move beyond the tired nature/nurture debate.

If we are to follow Butler, it would seem virtually impossible to accept the idea of a 'unity' in anything other than normative terms. However, this is only the case if we locate the unity in human nature or a claim to a universal essence.

The alternative is to locate our unity, not in *who we are,* but in *where we find ourselves*.

I have termed this approach to unity *existentialist,* because it refers to that broad body of mostly 20th Century philosophy that begins with our ontological condition. Ontology can be defined as the study of the human circumstance. *Existential* philosophy generally starts, not with epistemology or problems of perception, for example, but with this study.

Defining existentialism is a little tricky because many philosophers who are rightly identified as existentialist have rejected the term. However, I think we can discern a few common themes. Firstly, there is the statement that we find ourselves here, or even that we are 'thrown' here: in other words, we do not arrive with any apparent preexisting essence, intention or plan. Secondly, we possess freedom. Thirdly, there is no authority-even divine-that can assist us in our use of that freedom and in making our choices. And lastly, this leads to a search for a personal authenticity: another way of putting this, is to say *everything,* for each of us, becomes ethical.

This is our common situation. One might object that this describes a particularly 20th Century view of the human condition-perhaps because existentialism has become associated with atheism. But of course not all existentialists have been atheist-Kierkegaard for example would say this ontology was not only compatible with belief on God, but is the very reason we need his 'leap of faith'.

In encouraging an existentialist view of the comparative religion classroom, I am seeking to find unity, then, not in an underlying human nature, but in our ontological state. We are all-atheist, agnostic, Christian, Muslim, Hindu and Buddhist-searching for ways to comprehend our situation, assert meaning, and operate ethically with our freedom.

It is this idea which I attempt to promote to students as a basis of our unity in diversity. It suggests that unity in diversity is far more than a liberal ideal: it is actually our shared existential state. The classroom, then, becomes a kind of model of our real, human situation.

The answer to the questions I asked at the beginning of this paper then take on a new significance. I asked how the students, and indeed the teacher, should speak, and write. Is it OK to present 'as a Christian' or 'as an atheist', for example?

It might be supposed that the expression of each person's subjective views would be to emphasize the *diversity* side of 'unity in diversity'. However it turns out that to suppress the subjective point of view, is actually, and paradoxically, to deny the common bonds between us, our *unity*.

It is our ontological condition, our finding ourselves here and being obliged to exercise our freedom and find meaning, which unites us. Allowing ourselves to speak from our subjectivity emphasizes our unity rather than divides us. I would say this is born out in practice-rather than leading to conflict it seems to automatically lead to a respectful, tolerant curiosity which is almost perfect for learning.

Of course no-one can, or should, oblige anyone else to self-disclose. I am critical of that strain of thought in education that welcomes the multi-cultural classroom because of the opportunity to share and learn from everyone's different background! This is frankly unethical unless it is with full consent. Clearly students from different cultures-or with just different personalities-have different expectations of the appropriateness of self-disclosure. Teaching should embrace it when it is freely offered but never demand it.

Some students, of course, can't wait to share-but using this model, the student who wishes to maintain a 'cool' and objective tone of voice can still see themselves as engaged.

It is common nowadays to assert that no-one should be treated as a representative of their ethnicity, skin color, or religion, a position I agree with. So I am clearly talking here about our acts of *self*-identification.

Turning to what this means in practice; I spend some time in the first sessions clarifying expectations in the classroom. The very first thing I do is to address the issue of if it's OK to speak subjectively or not-because, almost always, that is the question students arrive with.

I suggest that we all can speak from (using my own slightly cutesy terminology, for which I apologize)-from *inside* or *outside* 'the box'. Your box is what you know-it might be what you were born into, or are familiar with, or personally believe; it may be a position of uncertainty or great conviction, loose adherence or devotion.. So for myself, I would begin to describe my box is loosely Church of England-I went to a church school - but my parents were not religious. Growing up I was only really familiar with the Abrahamic faiths.

Each person's box is different and some may be quite complicated to express (assuming the person wishes to self-disclose). But the freedom in being allowed to write from inside or outside one's box is clearly a welcome and creative thing for most students.

I underline this policy by encouraging the student to choose between first and third person in essay writing, and allowing either.

Once 'the box' has been mentioned, it also becomes less of an elephant in the corner. When students ask about my beliefs they quickly understand, to quote the contemporary phrase, 'its complicated.'

Having first established this idea of modes of speaking, I then talk about the problem of defining what a religion is-in my view, a catalog of many failed attempts! I ask them why this might be, and this leads to my introduction of the existential model for the class. I point out that while religion (whatever it is, and whatever its boundaries) may or may not be expressing the same ultimate truths, the way in which it is used to *assert meaning* is common. I then suggest our classroom exploration of the worlds faiths parallel our own, individual, ontological exploration. This is arguably a better glue than merely an attitude of liberal tolerance (which I am, of course, by no means decrying).

An alternative approach to this ontological approach might be to root the search for unity in our shared assumption of rationality. This is exemplified by Alasdair MacIntyre, and John Rawls. In both cases, we can acknowledge the rationality of someone else's different beliefs without sharing them. In later Rawls, for example, this takes the form of our contract to respect a standard of *public reason.* In many ways this can function similarly to an ontological approach. However, I think it falls down inasmuch it prohibits or privatizes those beliefs it deems (perhaps through a concept like public reason) to be unreasonable. The ontological approach is much more open - in fact, it frames the search for meaning as being universal, even where those of the other are *not* reasonable to me or my idea of society. And wheres models based on rationality arguably require all participants to accept the model (by agreeing minimum standards) the existential model has no such requirement.

There is a third and final component which I don't discuss explicitly unless it comes up, but which I believe to be fundamental to the teacher's role in a sensitive subject. It is a concept borrowed from the world of counseling and psychotherapy (my 'other job.')

I found John Bowlby's (Bowlby, 1988) *Five Therapeutic Tasks* very useful in thinking through my role in the classroom, despite the differences in the teaching and counseling situation. It may seem unorthodox to borrow concepts like this from such a different world, but I feel it is justified given the sensitive nature of the subject area. It has potentially a very personal character: students aren't just studying religion, they are studying their own and others' f*inding-ourselves-here*.

It is the first of Bowlby's task which is most important, in my view, for the teacher of comparative religion (though it is instructive to look at all five). This is the counsellor's task to create a 'secure base' for their client. Equally, the teacher should think about creating a 'secure base' for their students. It is worth quoting Bowlby (p 138):

> *The first [task] is to provide the patient with a secure base from which he can explore the various unhappy and painful aspects of his life, past and present, many of which he finds it difficult or perhaps impossible to think about and reconsider without a trusted companion to provide support, encouragement, sympathy, and, on occasion, guidance.*

While we do not address issues of a student's painful past, in allowing a subjective voice, we may be looking at how a student's background patterns their sense of the present, and the personal - and even occasionally painful-search for meaning which we are all engaged in. In this respect, we should act like a 'trusted companion.'

Bowlby was a pioneer of 'attachment theory.' This proposes children have different styles in their attachment to their parents. Avoidant or anxious attachment styles are carried through into adult life, as is the preferable 'secure' style, where parents create a secure base for their children (allowing the child to accept, for example, appropriate parental absence without producing anxious or avoidant behavior). For this to succeed the parents must not demonstrate an anxious or avoidant style themselves.

Using this idea, it is important that the teacher is does not adopt an anxious or avoidant 'parenting' style if they wish to create a safe place in which the student can discuss difficult, challenging, and occasionally personal material. The existential teaching model I propose has, I believe, the virtue of being non-avoidant: in that it allows for subjectivity, and this should lead to an increased feeling of safety in the classroom.

(There are many closely related ideas in the world of counseling and psychotherapy: for example, Bion's idea of that the counsellor-or teacher-must act as if she was a container of the client-or student's-potential anxieties. Bordin's 'therapeutic alliance' might also be usefully imported as a model for the teaching relationship.)

It has been generally recognized that post-9/11 there is an increasing demand from students to study comparative religion. The sensitive nature of the subject is all too obvious to most students: perhaps particularly at a university like Richmond where regularly we have not only a wide mix of religions in each class, but also a heady mix of nationalities, where religion meets politics. This reaffirms how important it is for the teacher of comparative religion to acknowledge their role in creating a 'secure base' for their students. The existential model I have proposed here is hopefully one way of working toward this. It will not be one to everyones taste, but I hope it is a possible-and ethical-approach.

The problem of subjectivity, which the model seeks to address, is what makes Comparative Religion as a discipline so immensely rewarding. It is a privilege to teach it.

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I designed and teach the Comparative Religion course at Richmond. My other subjects are philosophy, specializing in ethics. I have an unorthodox academic background in that I became a teacher late in life, having a Masters Degree in social work. I have used my group work experience to advantage in my teaching practice. I am also training as a Counsellor with Relate, who specialize in Relationship Therapy. I combine an interest in religion and philosophy with a knowledge of group dynamics and a focus on pedagogic practice.

Jewish Religious Parties Facing Jesus' Teachings

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Abstract: This paper aims to present some aspects of the attitude adopted by the Jewish religious parties towards Jesus' teachings, emphasizing both the religious and the socio-political dimension of the way that the representatives of Jewish parties understood Jesus. His teachings represented a challenge for these parties, forcing them to adopt an attitude and to try to formulate replies to the particular problems raised by the teachings. The representatives of the Jewish religious parties tried to find out more about Jesus' religious and political views, either by infiltrating the crowds that were listening to Jesus, or by addressing Him directly. They were particularly interested in aspects like the new interpretation of the Law, the social "program", the attitude towards the Roman occupation. The vast majority of the members of the Jewish parties rejected all the teachings of Jesus (including, of course, His divinity). However, despite this general attitude, some of them manifested a more favourable attitude (such is the case of Nicodemus), accepting that Jesus might be right.

Keywords: Judaism, Education, Religious Parties, Jesus

T**HE LIFE AND** sermon of Jesus took place in a Jewish social context dominated by two major religious and political parties: the Pharisees and the Sadducees.[1] The only sources we have at our disposal today, which allow us to understand, in part, the structure and thought of the two parties are the New Testament writings, the works of Flavius Josephus and some scattered references in the rabbinic literature. What can be said of the Pharisees, beyond the different attitudes of the authors of the three main sources, is that they were a lay party, a group of people who knew Jewish Law very well, with a special interest in strictly conserving the traditions concerning ritual purity and the other prescriptions of the Law. They had also enriched the written traditions with oral ones, an intervention that was not tolerated by the rival side of the Sadducees. In point of politics, the Pharisees occupied a middle position between the masses and the aristocracy, but were more attached to the popular attitude towards the Roman occupation.[2] On the other side of Jewish society, the Sadducees had a totally different understanding of the Law, particularly in point of ritual purity and eschatological doctrine. They were linked to the priestly and civil aristocracy, lacking the popular support that the Pharisees enjoyed. Josephus says, though, that the differences between the Pharisees and the Sadducees were not considered as important as one could conclude after reading the New Testament, and switching between the two parties was not an uncommon practice among the Jews.[3] Other religious and political groups, like the Zealots or the Essenes, are not mentioned in the New Testament, neither in

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[2] Allen C. Myers, *The Eerdmans Bible Dictionary* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1987), p. 1043.
[3] Flavius Josephus, *Antiquities* 13.293-299, in William Whiston, *The Works of Josephus: Complete and Unabridged* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1996).

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the Gospels, nor in the other canonical writings. Our short study will be focused on analyzing one relevant episode for the attitude of each of the two major Jewish parties towards the person and teachings of Jesus. We will also provide a short analysis of the visit that Nicodemus paid to Jesus, to show that even in the interior of the Jewish religious parties there were divergent opinions on the attitude that should be adopted as far as Jesus was concerned.

The Pharisees and Jesus

A huge body of literature was written on the Pharisees. It is easy to understand the interest of the Jewish and Christian researchers in this religious and political party, given, on the one hand, the important role that the Pharisees played in the history of Judaism, and on the other hand, their presence in the New Testament, as opponents of Christ's teachings. As to their contacts with Jesus, the scholars emphasized a lot of aspects. First of all, they carefully examined why the Pharisees questioned Jesus so often, one of the hypotheses being that Jesus himself should be considered a liberal Pharisee. The exegetes also looked for clues that would allow them to understand why the Pharisees' attitude towards Jesus became more and more aggressive. This increasing hate led them to collaborate with their political rivals in order to bring Jesus in front of the civil and religious courts and to have him judged and condemned. In the beginning of Christ's public activity, we may assume that the Pharisees had a favorable attitude towards Him, perhaps admiring Jesus' prophetic zeal and his wish to teach the Jews how to live their lives according to God's will. Initially, the Pharisees questioned Jesus on a number of matters and asked Him to interpret some passages and prescriptions of the Law in order to be sure that His thought was identical or at least very similar to theirs. By obtaining positive answers to their questions, the Pharisees would have gained for their party a very learned person, with exceptional pedagogical and oratorical skills.

An important episode in the series of contacts between Jesus and the Pharisees is represented, without any doubt, by the question they asked Him concerning the financial contribution that the Jews had to pay to the Roman imperial administration. This dialogue is mentioned in all the three synoptic Gospels (Mark 12:13-17; Matthew 22:15-22; Luke 20:20-26), being placed by all the authors in Jerusalem. Except for this indirect information, the passage does not specify the time or the exact place of the dialogue, but the only indication of the purpose of the Pharisees and the Herodians in asking the question is that they were sent to Christ in order "to trap him in his talk" (Mark 12:13). That is why the majority of the exegetes and commentators of the Gospels were forced to try to recreate the setting.

Some scholars maintained that the Gospel tradition adapted Jews' problem of paying taxes to the Roman power to the situation of those previously pagan Christians, whose problem was represented by the cult of the emperor, and not by the paying of the taxes itself. This way, these researchers tended to consider that the passage we discuss is not authentic. Nevertheless, it is quite probable that Jesus was indeed asked, maybe several times, about the attitude that Jews were to adopt towards the Roman authorities, because this problem was of great significance in the Jewish world of the first century.[4]

Some enemies considered Jesus a new Judas the Galilean, a teacher with false messianic pretenses, so they felt it was legitimate to ask Him a question with a social and political

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[4] Fabian E. Udoh, *To Caesar's what is Caesar's. Tribute, Taxes and Imperial Administration in Early Roman Palestine (63 B.C.E.–70 C.E.)* (Rhode Island: Brown University Press, 2005), p. 255.

character, which concerned the whole Judaic society. In Jerusalem, the problem was even more acute and the fact that Jesus is asked this question in a period close to the Jewish *Pascha* proves that, in the tense atmosphere of this great feast, the discussions about the relation between the Jews and the Romans were an important concern for the religious and political parties. It is interesting that Jesus is questioned by a mixed group of Pharisees, who contested the legitimacy of the Roman demand for taxes from the Jews, and Herodians, who, being close to the Jewish authorities and subsequently to the Roman interests, accepted with no reserves the paying of the taxes.[5] We may assume that, before questioning Jesus, the Pharisees and the Herodians already had a dispute on this topic. The conjectural alliance between the representatives of the two antagonistic parties was aimed, as the Gospels tell us, at discrediting Jesus as a teacher. This alliance was made possible by the duplicitous attitude of the Pharisees who despite their claim that the Jewish people, as the chosen people of God, had no obligation to pay any sort of civil tax, were carefully paying their financial contributions to the Roman power.

Jesus will speculate about this very attitude of the Pharisees, in the answer He provides to the tricky question: "Is it right to pay the imperial tax to Caesar or not?" (Mark 12:14). Assuming that the hidden motivation of the question was represented by the excessive interest of His contemporaries in political, non-spiritual matters, Jesus answered in a way that emphasizes, above everything, the need of man to restore the correct order of his priorities in life. The essential problem, in Jesus' thought, was not the tax itself, but the fact that the Jews were placing the polemic on this matter above their fundamental religious obligations. The paying of the taxes was not such a bad thing for the Jews; we could say that the stability offered by the financial and economical system of the Empire was of great benefit for them, as this system was far better organized than a potential mainly autochthonous administration. For Jesus, the danger of the question was twofold, so the Pharisees and the Herodians were probably convinced that He would not manage to escape this difficult situation. If he had encouraged the Jews to pay their taxes, the Pharisees could have accused Him of a pro-Roman attitude. This would have discredited Him in the eyes of the crowds, which considered Jesus not only a teacher, but also a political Messiah. Such an answer would have drawn Him close to the Herodians, but this wouldn't have been of any help. The Herodians just wanted the Jews to pay their taxes, regardless of their inner thoughts on the matter. On the other hand, if Jesus had offered a negative answer, the Herodians would have exploited the moment, denouncing Him as an enemy of the Empire. Given Christ's public exposure, a public declaration of civil disobedience, so close to the *Pascha*, would have been regarded as a serious crime by the Roman authorities who would have arrested and condemned Jesus instantly.

The Lord's well-known answer, "Give back to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's" (Mark 12:17), was extensively commented on in the theological, sociological and political literature. Some exegetes saw in Jesus' declaration a recognition of the irreconcilable opposition between the civil authorities and God.[6] Nevertheless, this conclusion is hard to accept, as Jesus rather recognized Caesar's right to ask for taxes because the money used for paying these taxes was produced by himself (i.e. by the Roman administration). But in Christ's answer, the emphasis is on the fact that, beyond these civil duties, there is man's

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[5] Ethelbert Stauffer, *Christ and the Caesar* (Philadelphia: Westminsters Press, 1995), p. 115.
[6] Ched Myers, *Binding the Strong Man: A political Reading of Mark's Story of Jesus* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2008), p. 312.

relation with God.[7] On the other hand, though, we have to admit that the amazement of the Pharisees, Herodians and the other listeners was generated by Jesus' ability to provide a neutral answer, which was impossible to use against Him. Considering the manner in which the authors of the three synoptic Gospels end their account, we may conclude that the group of Pharisees and Herodians sent to entrap Jesus became a group of admirers of His teaching abilities.[8]

Nicodemus – an Exception among the Pharisees

A special case in the general context of Jesus' contacts with the representatives of the Jewish religious parties is represented by His dialogue with Nicodemus the Pharisee (John 3:1-21). Similarly to the other Jewish leaders, Nicodemus was interested in Jesus' thought, but chose a different way to get answers to the questions he had in his mind. Instead of getting himself involved in the discussions and plans of the other Pharisees, who were setting up various situations, in order to ask Jesus their questions, Nicodemus chose the straight path.

His first words to Jesus are "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him" (John 3:2), a statement that comes following the *signs* Jesus had previously offered the Jews. The fact that he uses the pronoun *we* proves that he came to Jesus not only in his own name, but as the representative of a group, perhaps of sanhedrinists. Of course, Nicodemus had several key-questions prepared for Jesus, but considered that it is appropriate to begin the dialogue by a peaceful declaration. That was really necessary, if you take into account the violent episode of the *Cleansing of the Temple*, narrated by John earlier (John 2:13-22). We must emphasize that Nicodemus, a personality among the rabbis, addresses Jesus with the appellative "rabbi", a very uncommon way of addressing such a young Israelite, with no rabbinic training.[9] Furthermore, Nicodemus stresses that "we know", indicating that at least the small circle of Pharisees that he represented had already formed an opinion on Jesus as a rabbi.[10]

Nicodemus' attitude is a very courageous one, as it will be seen later, in John 7:50, when he completely defies the other members of the Sanhedrin. We see him opposing the condemnation of Jesus, his position making it impossible for the Sanhedrin to make a decision, because a unanimous vote was necessary to condemn a person to death. Considering the increasing tension concerning Jesus, among the Jewish leaders, Nicodemus' gesture to block the procedure of the highest Jewish collegial authority must be interpreted as an important proof of his courage. In these circumstances, to consider the fact that his visit to Jesus took place during the night as a sign of cowardice is an erroneous opinion.[11] The reason for Nicodemus to choose this particular moment of the day was, probably, the difficulty in engaging in a conversation with Jesus during the day, because of the multitude of daily obligations of a prestigious rabbi like Nicodemus and because of the permanent agitation around

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[7] R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, Mich.; Carlisle: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 2002), pp. 468-469.

[8] Adela Yarbro Collins and Harold W. Attridge, *Mark: A Commentary on the Gospel of Mark*, Hermeneia-a critical and historical commentary on the Bible (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007, p. 557.

[9] Andreas J. Köstenberger, *John*, Baker exegetical commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2004), p. 120.

[10] Bruce Milne, *The Message of John: Here Is Your King!: with Study Guide*, The Bible speaks today (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, Ill.: Inter-Varsity Press, 1993), p. 74.

[11] M.S. Mills, *The Life of Christ: A Study Guide to the Gospel Record* (Dallas, TX: 3E Ministries, 1999), Jn 3:1.

Jesus. It was not very uncommon for the rabbis to study and debate theological and socio-political problems until late in the night and the dialogue of Jesus and Nicodemus can be considered, without any doubt, as one of these debates.[12]

Nicodemus' question "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" (John 3:4), that follows the initial answer of Christ, may be interpreted in two ways: either as a proof of his incapacity to understand the re-birth of man, or as an irony directed towards Jesus. The first interpretation is easy to maintain, because the birth from above as a re-birth of the human being was a totally new idea in Judaism. In these conditions, Nicodemus' question was caused by pure curiosity, following his misunderstanding of the concept used by Jesus.[13] Nevertheless, it is possible to find a nuance of irony, determined by the very fact that Jesus' idea was very uncommon for the Jewish tradition. Nicodemus, as one of the most learned rabbis, had a very good knowledge of the Judaic teachings, so he was skeptical that Jesus could maintain His affirmation.

Anyway, we can conclude, from the episode narrated by John, that among the Jewish scholars and leaders there were receptive persons, disposed to accept Jesus' teachings or at least to listen to His arguments. The fact that Nicodemus represented a group of disciples, or even sanhedrinists, allows us to assume that the Jewish religious parties were the scene of some inner disputes on the attitude they should adopt towards Jesus and His teachings

The Sadducees and Jesus

Although the accounts of Jesus' meetings with the Sadducees are fewer in the New Testament than those describing His contacts with the Pharisees, one of these accounts is relevant for our topic: the so-called episode of the *Question about Resurrection* (Mark 12:18-27; Matthew 22:23-33; Luke 20:27-40). This episode has in its center the dialog between Jesus and a group of Sadducees, on a specialized theological topic.

As the three synoptic Gospels tell us, the Sadducees' question concerned the idea of after-life, an idea that they did not accept, at least not in the same form that the Pharisees did. The passage has been at the center of a prolonged debate and analysis, in the Christian tradition, in point of theological content and meaning, so that we will not insist on this kind of explanations. Instead, we will focus on uncovering the inner motivation of the Sadducees in asking the question and their purpose in doing so. Life after death and the resurrection were not some of the clearest doctrinal points of Judaism, the traditional perspective on the matter being that, after death, there cannot be any discussion about a real human existence, "except in the minimal sense of a shadowy existence in Sheol, the land of dead (...) In Sheol there is no sense of community, no memory, no activity, and hence no praise of God (Ps. 115:17)-all that invests life with a meaning".[14] Except for the passages from Isaiah 26:19 and Daniel 12:2, as well as for some references in the poetic writings, the Old Testament does not offer us many details about the resurrection of the bodies or about reward or punishment in the

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[12] Beauford H. Bryant and Mark S. Krause, *John*, The College Press NIV commentary (Joplin, Mo.: College Press Pub. Co., 1998), Jn 3:2.

[13] Gerald L. Borchert, *John 1-11*, electronic ed., Logos Library System; The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2001), p. 173.

[14] Bernhard W. Anderson with the assistance of Steven Bishop, *Contours of Old Testament Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999), p. 312.

afterlife. Considering this, we could say that the Sadducees were faithful to the teachings of the old Judaism. Actually, the doctrine about angels, demons and life after death was an innovation of late Judaism. Relevant for the matter is the passage from 2 Maccabees 12:42-46 (LXX). The Pharisees, though, were more interested in these new teachings and they accepted them as religious truths.

Given the context, one may suppose that the tricky question asked by the group of Sadducees was focused on two purposes: firstly, they wanted to discredit Jesus, by attracting Him into an absurd argument, and secondly, by proving the absurdity of the belief in afterlife and resurrection, they were looking to discredit the rival side of the Pharisees. The way they formulate their question to Jesus should not lead us to the conclusion that they really believed that in the afterlife earthly marriages will have any importance. They set up this situation with the sole purpose of illustrating the absurdity of the belief in resurrection, which Jesus and the Pharisees shared.[15] Forced either to publicly admit His mistake, or to bear the shame of the proving of the absurdity of His belief and teaching, Jesus would have lost much of the support of the crowds, which considered Him as a veritable Rabbi. The question of the Sadducees was well planned in point of strategy and tactics, because the impact of such a public defeat of Christ would surely have had a very powerful effect on His disciples and would have reduced Him, in the collective mentality, to the level of a simple agitator, looking for public exposure.

Their presupposition that Jesus does totally agree with the Pharisaic position proved to be wrong, as His answer, although it preserves the central idea of resurrection and eternal life, tears apart the naive theory of the Pharisees, which maintained that the afterlife follows the same coordinates as the earthly one. Jesus manages to escape the difficult situation and, furthermore, counterattacks decisively. In the first instance, Christ's answer, "You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God" (Matthew 22:29), seems to be a precipitated retreat, because it doesn't tackle directly the topic of the question, but it is directed personally towards the questioners. Of course, at this moment, the Sadducees were convinced that their effort would reach its primary purpose, that of discrediting Jesus as a teacher, because His use of a sophistic argument could have been immediately exploited as a proof of His imposture. But what follows after this first phase of the answer leaves both the Sadducees and the crowds astonished. Christ reinterprets, in a very subtle manner, a passage from the Pentateuch, a collection considered normative by the Sadducees, and He shows them that they had serious problems in knowing their own Scriptures. Although the passage was very familiar to all, the new interpretation offered by Jesus Christ is a very uncommon one, one which they would not have thought of.[16]

Despite the fact that, apparently, Christ's answer does not evidently imply the truth of the belief in afterlife and resurrection, the Gospels mention that the listeners were shocked and amazed by the explanation provided by Jesus. According to Matthew, the Sadducees were so ashamed, that they left the scene without any further reaction (Matthew 22, 34). Mark and Luke note the amazement of the crowds, too. The defeat and the retreat of the Sadducees are quickly speculated on by the Pharisees (according to Matthew) and the teachers of the

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[15] R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, Mich.; Carlisle: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 2002), pp. 471-472.

[16] R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publication Co., 2007), p. 837.

Law (according to Mark and Luke). Evidently, the adherents to the belief in resurrection felt, suddenly, that they were very close to Jesus in their theological views. This could be the explanation for the fact that they took the initiative and addressed to the Lord other questions, trying to find out more about His thought and teaching.

As far as the Sadducees are concerned, it is hard to believe that, despite Christ's argument, they really changed their minds as to the afterlife and the resurrection. They probably took the decision to leave the scene because they felt they were losing the initiative and they could become themselves targets of Jesus' potential attacks. On the other hand, though, it is possible that the retreat of the Sadducees was determined by their belief that they had reached their purpose. The doctrine of the Sadducees on the afterlife represented, in fact, the old Judaic Orthodoxy, so its rejection by Jesus equated to a rejection of the whole official theology of the Temple.[17] By drawing Christ into this polemic, the Sadducees offered Him a suitable context for the public abnegation of a traditional doctrine of Israel's religion. This abnegation added a new count to the list of accusations that they were charging Jesus with.

Besides this episode narrated by all the three synoptic Gospels, the direct references to Sadducees are very few. They also appear in another place, in Matthew, together with the Pharisees, asking Jesus to show them a sign from the sky (Matthew 16:1-4), an event that took place before the *Question about Resurrection*. Of course, there could have been some other encounters between Jesus and the Sadducees that are not mentioned in the Bible. It is certain, though, that all these events made the Sadducees consider Jesus as an enemy of the traditional Judaic religion. Moreover, being the representatives of the Jewish higher social classes, the Sadducees, headed by the High Priest Caiaphas, saw Christ as a person who could disrupt the very fragile equilibrium between the Roman power and the Jewish aristocracy. In these circumstances, beyond any religious controversy, they assumed a main role in the charging, judgment and execution of Jesus Christ.

Conclusions

Concluding our considerations on the three episodes we analyzed-the dialogue on the taxes, the visit of Nicodemus, the question about the resurrection-we may assert that, at first, the representatives of the Jewish religious parties were interested in the ideas and teachings of Christ but, except for Nicodemus, they didn't want to have an open and sincere conversation with Him. Instead, they used various key moments and they even set up some situations in order to learn Jesus' position concerning the most important aspects of their religious and social life. The Pharisees used the context created by the tension between the Jews and the Romans in the period of the *Pascha* to question Jesus on the way they were supposed to act in their relations with the imperial administration.

We see the Sadducees, in turn, presenting Jesus a hypothetical situation and trying to draw Him into an absurd argument. In fact, the representatives of both parties prepared their questions in such a manner that they were sure that Jesus would not be able to avoid a straight answer. Furthermore, no matter His answer, He would have been discredited in the eyes of His disciples and of the crowds. These efforts of discrediting Christ were determined by the Pharisees' fear that they would lose the support of the crowds, which were amazed by Jesus'

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[17] *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 7th vol., ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley and Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964-), p. 52.

teachings. The Sadducees feared, on the one hand, that the popular support that Jesus enjoyed could be speculated by the Pharisees and, on the other hand, that Jesus Himself could attract such a great support that He could be able to generate a powerful social movement. To all these we should add the concern of the Jewish leaders that Jesus could be a member of the Zealot party, an aggressive political group whose main purpose was the social and political liberation of the Jews.[18]

In order to understand the complexity of Jesus' message and the impact of His teachings on the Jewish society, we must look at Christ through the eyes of His contemporaries. We showed in this short study an example of how to do this by analyzing the information provided by the Gospels. Of course, an extensive study of the attitude adopted by the Jewish parties towards Jesus' teachings should extract this information and compare it with the other sources we have on the Jewish parties (Josephus' writings and rabbinic literature), revealing the differences and similarities. This way, we would be able to arrive at a more complex picture of the matter, although, given the lack of details, there will always be room for speculation.

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[18] A very competent analysis of the links between Jesus and the Zealots can be found in S.G.F. Brandon, *Jesus and the Zealots. A study of the Political Factor in Primitive Christianity*, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1967).

Qur'an and Bible: Between Love and Law

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Abstract: Although the word "love" appears less frequently in the Qur'an than in the Bible, Love is a cornerstone of both Islam and Christianity. As the Bible and the Qur'an agree on many things, why then do Muslims and Christians perceive each other so differently and so often misunderstand each other? Such a question, of course, deserves an in-depth, multi-faceted answer; however, we will look at just one of those facets: a difference of emphasis and vocabulary. This paper tries to pick up some salient points about the nature and function of the love and law as given in the Bible and Qur'an itself. The Qur'an seems to be in accord with this viewpoint, giving priority to love although not neglecting the necessity and reality of law. The verses of Qur'an open with the conception of a beneficent and merciful God Who is the Lord and Sustainer of all the worlds that He creates. This perpetual providence or sustenance implies love for what is sustained. But having emphasised these attributes, another attribute of God follows that He is the Lord of the Day of Judgment. He is the Supreme Judge Who first made the laws and then watches life to see whether it is following those laws. Love apart from law and reason is an abstraction, and 'law,' devoid of the foundation of love, would become a tyranny and a burden, hampering life instead of advancing it. This essay also indicates the attitude of Jesus and Christianity towards Law. Jesus said that he had not come to destroy the law of Moses but to fulfill it. His main function and mission was to turn humanity towards the spirit more than the letter of the law. Soon after him Christianity unburdened itself of the cumbersome corpus of almost the entire Jewish law. But when [the] Christian Church became powerful and Christianity became a State religion, laws were required both for religious and for secular life. The State legislated for its own necessities and the Church developed Canon Law.

Keywords: Qur'an, Bible, Christianity, Islam, Love, Law, Relationship, Misunderstanding

Low and Love in Christianity

JESUS WAS NO violent revolutionary and [he] made no frontal attack on the entire system of Jewish law. He wanted to spiritualize it and internalize it by [promoting] new attitudes. Only in the matter of divorce he seems to have said something that went against the accepted Jewish law. Otherwise we find him saying, "*it was said unto you but I say....*" Whatever he adds does not contradict the previous law but adds a necessary inner attitude towards it. When he was found not observing a ritual or following a law that the rigid priesthood demanded, and [was] asked whether he had come to destroy the law, he said that he had not come to destroy but to fulfill it.

Jesus protested against the burdening of the soul with excessive legalism, but the protest was not emphatic enough to shatter this overgrown and complicated structure. A large part of it actually needed to be razed to the ground so that the liberated human soul could breathe freely. The mission of great prophethood is the liberation of the human soul from [the] chains [that were] welded by rigid traditionalism and shackles forged by man himself. Jesus said

he had come not to destroy the Law but to fulfill it and whoever violates a jot or tittle of the Law shall go to Hell. But this fulfillment, in order to be effective, needed considerable destruction [and] as Rumi said, "you cannot build a new house [with] a new plan unless you destroy the old structure."

St Paul and others after Jesus did not hesitate to draw the logical conclusion from the outlook of Jesus with respect to 'Law as Life. They began to say in open words, without mincing matters, that the Law was a curse and that the advent of Jesus had superseded it by Love.

But Love by itself may be a sufficiently regulative principle among a community of saints, though it is doubtful that even there it could suffice if the saints, ascetics or monks want to live well-regulated lives in a monastery. As we have already stated, during the first three centuries of the Christian era the Christian community without a State required no civil or criminal law. During this period all the laws that they required were those necessary for the organization of the Church. During these centuries Christianity was a non-legal religion but with the sudden acquisition of political power by conversion to Christianity of the Emperor Constantine, it was impossible to continue this indifference to [the] Law. Jesus had given them no laws and had exhorted them to follow the Jewish law adding only inner spiritual attitude to external observances.

We pass on now to Islam which was a continuation of Judaism and Christianity.

Law in Islam

A critic of the Qur'an, who was fond of mystical and metaphysical aspects of religion, complained that the Qur'an, like some portions of the Old Testament, is full of fight. It must be acknowledged that it is so because Islam envisaged human life as a battleground of good and evil and the purpose of life is to combat evil in thought, word and deed. The Prophet of Islam was engaged in this struggle all his life and fought the evil that he found around him by wisdom, by love, and when there was no other alternative, he did not hesitate to curb violent evil by violence. He is reported to have said : "**When you see any evil, remove it with your hands by doing something actively about its eradication. If you cannot do that, then cry aloud against it in protest. But if you feel so helpless that you cannot even shout against it, then detest it in your heart-this last alternative is the weakest side of faith**."

Let us take theQur'an first which is the fountainhead of the Islamic faith. The Qur'an does not present any elaborate and systematic code of laws; it does not call itself a book of laws. It characterises itself as the book of wisdom-it is *Kitab-ul-Hakim* and not *Kitab-ul-Ahkam*. The laws and regulations found in the Qur'an are few and far between. Nor is it a book of any detailed rituals-necessary rituals about Pilgrimage and a few other essential practices are found in the Qur'an, but the general attitude of the Qur'an is that it has clearly pronounced ritual to be of a very secondary importance not to be identified with righteousness itself.

"*It is not righteousness that while offering prayers you turn your face towards the East or the West.*" (Qur'an 2:177)

Let us try to pick up some salient points about the nature and function of the law as given in the Qur'an itself.

(1) The Qnr'amc revelation styles itself as law of liberty, an act of mercy vouchsafed by God to mankind in order to soften the rigidities of previous systems of law. It suppresses

the austerities and the numerous interdictions imposed on the Jews by the Mosaic law or the accretions and interpolations of the scribes who attributed them to Jehovah and Moses.

(2) The Qur'an has a positive attitude towards life, disapproving [of] the exaggeration of austerity, which weakens the body and suppresses the natural instincts of man. It exhorts the believer to enjoy the good things of life provided he observes the due measure. The Professor of Islamic Laws and Institutions in the University of Rome, who has contributed an admirable article on the subject in the Legacy of Islam, has also come to the conclusion that the spirit of Islamic law is allowing as large a latitude in human conduct-as is possible within the limits of reason and morality.

He says, "We may agree with the Muslim jurists, when they teach that the fundamental rule of law is liberty. . . . God has set a bound[ary] to human activity in order to make legitimate liberty possible for all; without the 'bounds of God' liberty would degenerate into license, destroying the perpetrator himself along with the social fabric. This 'bound[ary]' is precisely what is called law which restrains human action within certain limits, forbidding some acts and enjoining others, and thus restraining the primitive liberty of man, so as to make it as beneficial as possible either to the individual or to society." To quote Professor Santillana further: "Whatever their form, these rules tend to the same end and have the same purpose, that is, the public weal (*maslahah*). Accordingly, law, divine in its origin, human in its subject-matter, has no other end but the welfare of man-even if this end may not at first sight be apparent, for God can do nothing which does not express the wisdom and mercy of which He is the supreme source."

(3) According to the Qur'an, law has a utilitarian basis. Its main purpose is to promote human values the realisation of which creates inner and outer peace leading to God Who is also called Peace (*Salam*) in the Qur'an. In the few rules of laws given in the Qur'an, the fundamentals of jurisprudence are not repeated in every instance. But when once a general basis is formulated and definitely given, it should be applied even in those instances in which the bare law is given without its rationale.

For instance, prohibiting alcoholic drinks and gambling, it says that in some cases they might benefit some individuals but they must be shunned in the interest of common weal, their injuries far outweighing their benefits. Law should not take account of individuals. It is the nature of law to have a universal character.

In amplifying the law given in the Qur'an or based on the *Sunnah,* to meet the demands of a growing and complex civilisation, the Muslim jurists kept this principle in view. Imam Abu Hanifah, in his doctrine of *Istihsan* and Imam Malik, in his doctrine of *Masalih Mursalah* accepted it as a basis of fresh laws and rulings.

I propose to restrict this discussion to the question of the relation of law and love. All existence is governed by law and the law about every aspect of existence is as abiding as the phase of reality to which it applies. The unalterable laws of life and nature are designated in the Qur'an as *Sunnat-Allah* or [the] behaviour of God and it is repeatedly said that you shall not find any change or alteration in this.

Understanding the abiding nature of eternal laws and moulding one's life according to them is defined as true religion. The second assertion in the Qur'an is also a univeral proposition and that is that God essentially is Love-*Rahman* as Creative Love-and *Rahim* as Love exercised in Mercy. Certain attributes of God as given in the Qur'an are absolute and others are relative. It is only the quality of mercy that God has enjoined on Himself which means that it is eternally an essential part of His nature. But God's Love is not blind. It cannot be

symbolised as a blind Cupid, throwing his darts at random. It is enlightened Love. In God, love and reason are identified. But reason is a law apprehending, law-making and law-abiding faculty. Therefore, life originating in love must find its manifestation in law. Human love, at a lower level of existence, tends to become lawless and human laws tend to become loveless. Love like war is supposed to justify breaking of all laws of morality or decency. This is because in the limitations of human life neither love nor reason is perfect. In their imperfection they lose their identification with each other.

The essential reality is life and, therefore, law as well as love are to be judged by the criterion of life. The purpose of life is more life, higher life, better life, augmenting itself intensively as well as extensively. Life in its preservation and evolution, creates new laws out of its vital urge. Bergson, the protagonist of life against logic, makes the cosmic vital urge creative and evolutionary and in his book on two sources of morality and religion identifies it with love-which is the intuitive life of prophets and saints. For him the evolutionary urge is creative. It does not, however, create according to any previous laws and plans but laws and patterns emerge[d] out of it as secondary products.

A plant does not grow according to the laws of botany, but a science of botany becomes possible when life has created a plant. It is the same with language which does not develop out of a preconceived grammar, but grammatical patterns can be discovered in even the most primitive dialects. The Qur'an seems to be in accord with this viewpoint, giving priority to love although not neglecting the necessity and reality of law.

Note the sequence of God's attributes in the opening verses of the Qur'an about which we have already said something. The verses open with the conception of a beneficent and merciful God Who is the Lord and Sustainer of all the worlds that He creates. This perpetual providence or sustenance implies love for what is sustained, because one nourishes only that which one loves. Forgiveness is also implied in love because only love can be forgiving. But having emphasised these attributes, another attribute of God follows that He is the Lord of the Day of Judgment. He is the Supreme Judge Who first made the laws and then watches life to see whether it is following those laws.

Natural laws cannot be violated because material existence is not endowed with free will. The sun and the moon and the stars follow their prescribed courses as determined by the law inherent in their nature, planted by the power that created them. Free-will emerges as a novel phenomenon during the course of an emergent evolution. Human life is lived at two levels in quite different dimensions. Free-will makes man a denizen of two worlds-the world of necessity and the world of freedom. Of the God's creation only man is to be judged. In the symbolic description in the Qur'an the rest of creation, when offered this risky gift, shuddered at the idea of its acceptance and were contented to exist in their eternal modes wherein no violation of law is possible.

The Qur'an also depicts spiritual beings as angels who are inherently incapable of defying the will of God. They perform their functions in absolute obedience. Rationality and free-will are two distinguishing characteristics of man, but his rationality can be blurred and his freedom misused, making him tyrannical and ignorant because of the improper use of these gifts.

In the QURANIC conception of man, he may rise above the angels or sink below the animals. To the 'ideal man' as depicted in the Qur'an, the angels have to submit if he realises his ideal humanity and infinite possibilities, and entire 'nature' is a field for conquest through knowledge. But when he sinks, he sinks to a level [which is the] lowest of the low. His min-

utest thoughts, feelings and actions are weighed with precision in the sensitive balance [which has been] planted in his own nature in which, according to the words of the Qur'an, even atoms of deeds are weighed and his life is determined by the balance of good and evil.

God, Who creates out of Love and sustains out of Love, is also a judge of good and evil. Human life in its own interests has to be judged. Constantly sentences are pronounced-some are rewarding and the others are punishing. Not on account of vindictiveness, but because of the demands of life itself. Moral laws are real and God is the Legislator as well as the Judge. Love apart from law and reason is an abstraction, and 'law,' devoid of the foundation of love, would become a tyranny and a burden, hampering life instead of advancing it.

Reverting again to the opening prayer in the Qur'an, having asked man to recognise God as the Lord and Sustainer of all the worlds, of entire existence in all its variety and gradation, acknowledging Him primarily as Beneficence, Love and Mercy, creating life not as a haphazard phenomenon but regulated by law, in this aspect, God manifests Himself as Legislator and Judge in the natural as well as the moral realm. It proceeds further to draw a corollary that only such a Being is exclusively worthy of worship and service, and assistance is to be sought ultimately from this Source. It directs man to pray, not for any particular goods or privileges, but to be guided in this Straight Path which combines love and law, following which the blessed ones have attained to Beatitude. Deviation from which has led others to stray and draw upon them[selves] the wrath which is the natural result of wrong thinking and wrongdoing.

We have already indicated the attitude of Jesus and Christianity towards Law. Jesus said that he had not come to destroy the law of Moses but to fulfil it. Jesus was not a legislating prophet. His main function and mission was to turn humanity towards the spirit more than the letter of the law. That is probably what he meant by fulfilling the law. Soon after him Christianity unburdened itself of the cumbersome corpus of almost the entire Jewish law. But when [the] Christian Church became powerful and Christianity became a State religion, laws were required both for religious and for secular life. The State legislated for its own necessities and the Church developed Canon Law. There was clash of jurisdictions which has not disappeared after the conflict of centuries even in predominantly secular Christian States.

Islam did not believe in this dichotomy of jurisdictions. Life had to be regulated as an indivisible organic whole. Therefore it never developed a Church with a hierarchy of priests. Its system was neither theocratic nor secular in the Western Christian sense. In the Islamic system, law originates in religion and every law is given either as a part of religion or has to justify itself on the basis of the fundamentals of Islam.

Love

Just as faith without works is dead (James 2:17), so, too, is it dead without love.
Love of one's neighbor
Muhammad affirmed: "You will not believe as long as you do not love one another" (Muslim 1: 96) and "No man is a true believer unless he wants for his brother that which he wants for himself" (Bukhari 1:12). Concurring, Jesus said that to love your neighbor as yourself was like loving God (Matthew 23:37-39).

Although the word "love" appears less frequently in the Qur'an than in the Bible, the notion of love permeates it. True love consists of right action towards one's neighbor, of taking

care of others, of and helping those in need. In verse after verse, the Qur'an enjoins believers to be charitable to orphans, widows, travelers, and the poor. According to one hadith: "The best Islam is that you feed the hungry and spread peace among people you know and those you do not know." Similarly, Jesus tied Peter's loving him to taking care of his disciples (John 21:15-17), and John asserts that those who do not help a brother in need when they are able to do so do not have the love of God in them (1 John 3:17).

Love of God

Love of neighbors is a cornerstone of both Islam and Christianity, but love of God is the foundation. Such love is expressed in many ways, but let's look at four: prayer, repentance, contentment, and surrender to God.

People desire to be with and talk with those they love. Thus, Christians and Muslims who love God "pray continually" (1 Thessalonians 5:17) and "remember Allah much" (Qur'an 33:21). Prayer is a cleansing activity, partially because engaging in it allows people to see God's greatness and their own unworthiness. Such understanding brings repentance, which is essential to receiving God's approval and forgiveness (Qur'an 20:82; Muslim 2:1142; Matthew 4:17; Mark 1:15; Luke 5:32; 15:7).

Through cycles of prayer, repentance, and forgiveness, the believers' love of God grows. This gradually results in a weakening of the desires for worldly things, the cause of discontent. Becoming content with what God has allotted them, they "give thanks in all circumstances" (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18), whether good or bad. Such believers are loved by people and by God, as one hadith says: "Desire not the world, and God will love you; and desire not what men have, and they will love you."

To be fully content means to be surrendered to Allah, a key concept in Islam. Indeed, the word "Islam" is understood to mean surrender, as it says in the Qur'an (3:19): "The religion before Allah is Islam." Christianity believes the same, for as Jesus said, the greatest commandment is to "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind" (Matthew 22:37). In other words, give your entire being to God.

Those who completely devote themselves to God are, naturally, are the closest to Him. Yet God is near all believers. Christians believe that God, in the form of the Holy Spirit, lives within them (1 Corinthians 6:19). For Islam, the indwelling concept is not prevalent, but God is nearer to the believer than his jugular veins (Qur'an 50:16) and says: "When my servants ask you about me, tell them I am near, I hear the prayer of the one who calls upon Me" (Qur'an 2:186).

Misunderstanding

As the Bible and the Qur'an agree on many things, why then do Muslims and Christians perceive each other so differently and so often misunderstand each other? Such a question, of course, deserves an in-depth, multi-faceted answer; however, we will look at just one of those facets: a difference of emphasis and vocabulary.

Muslims tend to emphasize right action, while Christians tend to focus on right belief. Consequently, when Christians hear Muslims say that they are earning merit through their good deeds, they jump to the conclusion that Islam is a religion of works, not faith, and that Muslims are trying to earn their salvation, which no one can do. Also, Christians, disturbed

by Muslims' emphasis on imitating the Prophet Muhammad, perceive Muslims as legalistic and fixed on externals rather than on such transforming internals like as love. They not realize that for Muslims, good deeds earn merit only if one has faith, and that it is love of the Prophet that leads them to follow his example.

In turn, when Muslims hear Christians talking about freedom and love, they believe that Christians can sin as much as they want and still enter Paradise, a perception bolstered by the immorality of not only ordinary people but also of the highly visible religious and political leaders in the West. Muslims fail to understand that the love of God prevents pious Christians from sinning. And there are other similar vocabulary problems resulting in misunderstanding and misperception that are exacerbated by the natural belief that theirs is the true and final religion. This misguided attitude causes both Muslims and Christians to exaggerate any potential difference to its worst extreme, and to forget that their own religions have the same concepts, albeit sometimes de-emphasized or expressed differently.

Conclusion

Although the disagreement on the nature of God and on the atonement of Jesus seems unresolvable, most differences are more a matter of emphasis rather than of disagreement.

Christianity stresses right belief and faith, but no Christian would deny that they should do good deeds and have good behavior. On the contrary, they "work" hard to please God because of their faith. Muslims, on the other hand, assuming that faith is necessary, prefer to emphasize the practical side of perfecting their faith via good works. Christians and Muslims agree that faith is necessary and that good works are important.

In reality, if one were simply to watch the outward behavior of pious Muslims and Christians in their daily lives, it would be quite difficult to know who was a Muslim and who was a Christian-for the pious of both religions who love their God and who have surrendered their lives to Him pray much, help the needy, and are kind towards their neighbors and their families. Due to its shortness, this article will necessarily make broad generalizations that have many exceptions.

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Paganism in William James and George Santayana

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Abstract: In Interpretations of Poetry and Religion, George Santayana develops a view in which religions are understood to be a product of imagination, differing from poetry by their practical effects. Religions represent idealizations that are related to experience, but not derived from it. While they cannot be justified by experience, they do develop into traditions that influence how individuals select and justify some experiences over others. Religious traditions emerge in an effulgence of imaginative activity that ultimately wanes. This happened to classical paganism, causing its later adherents to engage in a process of reconstruction that creates a natural theology that is artificial (e.g., Stoicism), or one of reduction, as when the vibrant myths of antiquity became fables in later times. William James in Varieties of Religious Experience highlights the notion of progress in religious thinking. He limits his subject to experience, particularly that of the most extreme variety as indicative of the most typically religious, and also emphasizes the experiences of the most exemplary in their solitude. For him, the experiences of a St. Teresa are more important and revealing than those of an average Catholic. For Santayana, James's reconstruction impoverishes the pagan and Catholic imagination, one that he addresses again in The Last Puritan: a Memoir in the form of a Novel. For Santayana, imagination also means empathy, and this novel can be read as his own variety of religious experience. My paper argues that these two authors may be read most profitably together. Their views on religions represent, sometimes despite their intentions, a reaction against the views of the other. Yet, they remain close in spirit.

Keywords: George Santayana, William James, Protestantism, Paganism, Catholicism, Last Puritan, Interpretations of Poetry and Religion, Varieties of Religious Experience, Epicurean, The Will to Believe, Experience, Poetry, Walt Whitman

ALTHOUGH TWENTY-ONE YEARS his senior, William James did his major work on religions during the same period as George Santayana was beginning his work on it. James's earlier work in psychology had greatly influenced Santayana, particularly in its open-ended approach to dealing with philosophical issues (McCormick 87).[1] In *Interpretations of Poetry and Religion*, first published in book form in 1900 Santayana includes a chapter entitled "The Homeric Hymns," which prefigures the style of using extensively long quotations that later became a hallmark of James's approach in *Varieties of Religious Experience*, published two years later in 1902. Santayana rarely includes such a large amount of quoted material in his prose, and this anomaly should be viewed as emblematic of his intense passion for the Classical.

James's framework for examining religious ideas is narrower than the one proposed by Santayana. In an earlier work, James counts as a "*Hypothesis* . . . anything that may be pro-

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[1] James's philosophy as a whole had a great impact on Santayana's thinking. *The Principles of Psychology* was published in 1890, a time when our contemporary academic demarcations that would later separate psychology from philosophy were not yet in place. Hence, Gale finds all of James's philosophy already prefigured in this seminal work (347).

posed to our belief." Borrowing an analogy from how electricians describe wires, we could also "speak of any hypothesis as either *live* or *dead*. A live hypothesis is one which appeals as a real possibility to him to whom it is proposed" (Will 717). In *Varieties*, James implicitly follows this line of argument, describing the pagan religious experience as an irrelevant set of dead hypotheses no longer capable of eliciting any genuine response to real, human concerns.[2] Like James, Santayana also gives primacy to experience: "Whatever forces may govern human life, if they are to be recognized by man, must betray themselves in human experience" (Life 1:1). Santayana, however, strives to expand the domain of religious thinking by shifting the discussion to the consideration of practicable ideals rather than hypotheses as objects of belief.

Knowing each other well, both personally and professionally, Santayana and James each took the ideas of the other for granted in their respective religious frameworks, allowing both authors to allude to the work of the other in indirect and implicit ways. This common context shared by Santayana and James has become eclipsed throughout the twentieth century and has only recently begun to be recovered. Bruce Kuklick's reference, for example, to "the Golden Age of American philosophy" as "the thirty years that Royce and James spent together, from the 1880s to the First World War" (xx) is at odds with Bertrand Russell's report of his annoyance while visiting Cambridge as a lecturer in 1914, during which time he was told by each faculty member: "'Our philosophical faculty, Dr. Russell, as doubtless you are aware, has lately suffered three great losses. We have lost our esteemed colleague, Professor William James, through his lamented death; Professor Santayana, for reasons which doubtless appear to him to be sufficient, has taken up his residence in Europe; last, *but* not least, Professor Royce, who, I am happy to say, is still with us, has had a stroke.'" John McCormick reports that "This speech was delivered slowly, seriously, and pompously." Russell would unsuccessfully attempt to derail it by interrupting it with his own speeded-up version (213). As this anecdote suggests, The Golden Age of American philosophy remains unthinkable without its most important representatives: William James, Josiah Royce, and George Santayana.

Each of these three thinkers approaches the study of religions from a different perspective. In *Santayana, Pragmatism, and the Spiritual Life*, Henry Samuel Levinson traces some of the salient differences between each along with their posthumous influence. Royce pursues "an objectivist path that most American philosophers of religion eventually will take during this [twentieth] century" (89). His idealist philosophy represents an attempt to bolster the reality of the Absolute, which can only be ascertained through the study of philosophy, i.e., metaphysics and epistemology. This God-like entity serves to guarantee truth and correct purposefulness in human actions: "Royce claims that the key to true significance and well-being is the establishment of the objective relations that obtain between individuals and Absolute Spirit" (89). In however many ways it may vary, this objectivist path remains dominant in religious studies in America.

James's emphasis on experiences rather than ideas represents an attempt to establish a new science of religions in order to avoid the limitations of speculative, philosophical argumentation. Science generates living hypotheses for modern thinkers and making religious

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[2] These definitions were set forth in *Will to Believe* (717). In *Varieties*, he does not explicitly use this terminology, but the methodology he develops has the effect of reducing pagan ideas, not only in content, as he ignores much, but to dead hypothesis that deserve little attention.

experience the object of scientific investigation would serve to validate religions for nonbelievers, who would then be forced to contend with this realm of experience, even if skeptical about the existence of its putative referents, such as God or miracles. Hence, James examines different reports of religious conversions and their distinctive impact on people's lives, while leaving open the possibility that something more–something beyond a psychological (non-Freudian) unconscious, obviously at work in such cases–may indeed be at work in originating such experiences. This tradition continues to generate innovative scholarship.[3] Lynn Bridges, for example, provides an excellent introduction to James's analysis of religions. According to Ann Taves, however, Bridges also provides her own unique perspective on "James's typology by introducing the reader to research and writings that have taken his categories and demonstrated their power with empirical investigation" (Introduction viii).[4]

Santayana differs from both James and Royce in that for him "religion is good poetry if it is good for anything," a perspective that Santayana contends also benefits the goals as well as the standing of religions in the world (Levinson 87). Levinson finds this view to have been most influential in cultural anthropology. He notes that in 1947 Ruth Benedict mentioned several of Santayana's works as important for the field. He also points out that Clifford Geertz exhibits Santayana's influence in "his essays on common sense, ideology, religion, and art (and, I'd wager, eventually science) as 'cultural systems' reflect the influence of *The Life of Reason*" (297). Santayana also influenced the poet Wallace Stevens.[5]

Herman Saatkamp Jr. observes that although Santayana has not received the attention he merits, "his perspectives were far ahead of their time, and they deserve reconsideration and respect." In his list of intellectual achievements, he includes Santayana's early support of naturalism, his intelligent restatement of Platonic and Aristotelian ideas and of how "he appreciated multiple perfections before multiculturalism became an issue." Santayana's most distinctive accomplishment was creating "a striking and sensitive account of the spiritual life without being a religious believer" (xxxii).[6] Saatkamp's evaluation gains currency in light of Santayana's interpretation of the pagan religious experience, as contrasted to James's subordination of it to later Christian accounts of their experiences.

Conjointly, Santayana and James's work remains important because it represents an experience-based alternative to Royce's transcendental, idealist philosophy of religion. The young Santayana studied philosophy at Harvard and continued through the ranks to becoming a professor and influential author, who became a leading voice of the institution until his early departure in 1912 (Kuklick 352, 365). As regularly happens in intellectual history, however, theirs was an often strained relationship. In *William James: In the Maelstrom of American Modernism*, Robert D. Richardson provides an interesting perspective on how the

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[3] Proudfoot traces the origins and shortcomings of the idea of religious experience (Religious) and Taves reviews some of the controversies it has generated in *Religious Experience Reconsidered* (3-9), which leads her to propose some innovations to the use of the concept.

[4] The extent of James's influence in all fields that he worked in is difficult to overestimate. Richard Gale characterizes James as a "great appreciator." His "philosophical writings are very rich and suggestive, so much so that every major subsequent movement in philosophy can find its roots in them" (20). Brunner emphasizes that "his influence was more atmospheric than substantive, more ideological than theoretical" (73). He also credits this atmospheric influence with helping to launch the cognitive revolution and helping to initiate 'the "constructivist point of view" (74).

[5] For an account of tributes to Santayana from several poets see McCormick, 504-08.

[6] From Herman J. Saatkamp Jr.'s introduction to a recent reissue of Santayana's *The Birth of Reason and Other Essays*, a collection published posthumously initially by Santayana's assistant Daniel Cory.

differences between them functioned in their respective writings. They neither disliked nor misunderstood each other, as it is so often suggested, but rather "By being so different, they were perfect foils for each other. Underlying good will counted for something. Each made room for the other in his intellectual universe, both wrote better prose than anyone in the Harvard English department of the time, and Santayana wrote some of the best and most generous descriptions we have of William James" (285). Richardson underestimates the complexity and ambivalence of their relationship. From our contemporary historical perspective, however, it has become obvious that their similarities do far outweigh their differences.

Santayana's thought resists simple paraphrase or succinct summary and is best described through four basic interrelated themes: imagination, knowledge as symbolic in nature, ideals, and disillusion: these remain constant and central for Santayana throughout his long life and career as a philosopher, essayist, and poet. The imagination as the motive-force of all thinking generates ideas, some about the material world, in keeping with differing standards of appropriateness. As in Wittgenstein, for Santayana socially established norms serve to demarcate science from other intellectual endeavors such as poetry. Santayana also allows for the poetic imagination to develop meaningful assertions about the world of human actions, going beyond such norms, without, however, being allowed to compete with science, as representing legitimate beliefs about the world of material reality. Consequently, Santayana's view resembles Wittgenstein's, but also goes beyond it.[7]

Santayana's multifaceted concept of imagination also crucially involves what today would be more readily identifiable as empathy. In this aspect, Santayana's concept of imagination is similar to Martha Nussbaum's view in "The Narrative Imagination."[8] Santayana's account of imagination generally links with his conviction that all knowledge is symbolic, and never literal; ideas only allude to the real world of external objects and persons, but can never succeed in definitively characterizing them. Consequently, the notion that every religious tradition offers some insight into how human beings may relate to the natural world becomes attainable.

The claim that all knowledge is symbolic means that thinking takes place in accordance with some set of ideals that serve to organize reality in specific ways. These are not to be understood as real objects of existence, but as mental creations. Rooted in and relatable to experience, they serve to guide human endeavors. Hence, the statement "everything natural has an ideal completion, and everything ideal a natural ground" (84) can be allowed to stand as a brief, summary statement of Santayana's philosophy.[9] Disillusion should constrain the imagination's proclivity to generate illusions by urging the withdrawal of all metaphysical or religious claims to explaining how anything comes in or out of existence, a function only the sciences succeed in doing.

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[7] For a comparison of the views of Santayana and Wittgenstein on science and religion see Hodges and Lachs (70-86).

[8] Her description of imagination and empathy, if not her politics generally, resembles Santayana's, as her characterization of Aurelius suggests: "Marcus Aurelius insisted that to become world citizens we must not simply amass knowledge; we must also cultivate in ourselves a capacity for sympathetic imagination that will enable us to comprehend the motives and choices of people different from ourselves, seeing them not as forbiddingly alien and other, but as sharing many problems and possibilities with us" ("Narrative Imagination" 85).

[9] Hodges and Lachs contend that only Santayana's *The Life of Reason* could be characterized in this fashion. In a narrow, technical sense, this is true. That Santayana, however, would later replace the notion of the ideal by more technical analyses of essences does not significantly alter the validity of extending the statement's scope to include his philosophy as a whole.

In contradistinction to James, Santayana, in his "Introduction" to *Interpretations* argues that the core of religious thought will forever remain inaccessible to science, for it originates as a unique kind of interpretation that isolates it from other kinds of experience: "religion and poetry are identical in essence, and differ merely in the way in which they are attached to practical affairs. Poetry is called religion when it intervenes in life and religion, when it merely supervenes upon life, is seen to be nothing but poetry" (3). By eliminating spurious claims about the world, religions could avoid sectarian tensions as well as the conflict with science. The attempt to resolve the latter can only result in impoverishing the imaginative life associated with religious ideas: "Mythology cannot become science by being reduced in bulk, but it may cease, as a mythology, to be worth having" (4).

Santayana's understanding of paganism's decline from a once vibrant religion to a mere collection of quaint fables, which he attributes to a loss of its imaginative vitality, becomes an implicit critique of contemporary, liberal Protestantism. In the chapter "The Dissolution of Paganism," Santayana observes that: "In the Gospels . . . we sometimes find the kingdom of heaven illustrated by principles drawn from observation of this world rather than from an ideal conception of justice; as when we hear that to him that hath shall be given and from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath." He adds that these kinds of statements, by their allusion to the world of familiar events, "remind us that the God we are seeking is present and active, that he is the living God." Moments such as these become intermingled with the otherwise mysterious world of religion and myth and remain essential for sustaining the religious sensibility of a people, one that can be easily disrupted by attempts to convert them into rational formulas. An experiential connection "with the forces of Nature, or the passions or conscience of man, or (if it must come to that) with written laws or visible images" tethers "religious objects" to material reality in a way that ensures their relevance for people's lives (55).

Hence, the later, more enlightened Hellenistic philosophies of Stoicism and Epicureanism remained within the limited purview of elites and failed to ever appeal to the majority of people precisely because they explained away these seemingly irrational elements of paganism. Paradoxically, then, it was the more fantastic and least tenable aspects of early pagan ideas that made them most relevant to people's lives. Santayana retraces the steps of this historical process, beginning with illusion, moving to disillusion, and finally despair–the latter, however, can be avoided through a more thorough naturalistic interpretation. Assuming that the earlier beliefs were actually symbolic representations, essentially poetic in nature, a disillusioned religion could in principle retain its imaginative content by relinquishing its ontological claim to directly representing the world as it actually exists. Its moral force, in terms of privileging some options over others, Santayana believes, could also continue to be effective, however, as one need not accept the supernatural origin of the Ten Commandments in order to acknowledge their power as ideals for humanity to abide by.

Essential links between the creative imaginings of religious thinking with material and human reality can be established in a variety of ways, which serve to delimit the kinds of actions that the pagan gods were capable of performing. It is not arbitrary, for instance, that Zeus should exhibit irascibleness as part of his character, for he was associated with the power of thunder, which may occur at a moment's notice, and his moral character needed to reflect his natural element for the deity to remain believable. When these kinds of connections to the natural world are severed, they may be replaced by moral ones, as for example, in the famous story of Persephone. Swallowed up by the earth and taken down to Hades,

Persephone is missed by her mother, the goddess of agriculture Demeter, who as a result "conceals her divinity, refuses the fruits of the earth, and wanders about in the guise of an old woman, nursing her grief, until at last Zeus sends his messenger to Hades to effect a compromise." The dénouement that Persephone will be allowed to remain with her mother for two thirds of the year, as long as she returns to her husband for the remainder generates "a prototype of human affection" (37). Mothers, daughters, and new husbands now have an exemplar of imperfect, yet necessary compromise. Analyses of this kind that focus on the symbolic nature of religious ideas allow us to glimpse the religious pathos of paganism at work in its heyday.

Santayana's position is brilliant in exposition and relevant for contemporary discussions of religious issues. Decades before it became popular to do so, Santayana in *Interpretations* urges scholars to avoid presentist assumptions: "We study the past as a dead object, as a ruin, not as an authority and as an experiment" (170). And this hampers "any true apprehension of that element in the past which was vital and which remains eternal" (171). Consequently, Santayana is able to deploy his interpretation as a preemptive objection to the type of analysis that James will be producing in *Varieties*, for Santayana subtly suggests that the historical pattern exemplified by pagan religion is being repeated in Protestantism's attempt to privilege the scientific over the poetic in religious interpretations. In the first volume of *The Life of Reason*, he exclaims that "Progress, far from consisting in change, depends on retentiveness," shortly afterward adding his now famous apothegm, "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it" (1:284).

One lesson that Santayana thinks the history of pagan religion teaches is that submitting myths and religious beliefs to critical analysis cannot strengthen them, but can only diminish their utility. Consequently, James's project is flawed inasmuch as his goal is to preserve or extend the reach of the religious sensibility. In a study that lends support to this view, David A. Hollinger argues that *Varieties* represents a transitional work in which James is moving towards the view that "Protestantism [is] a historic vehicle within rather than outside the discursive constraints of modern science, once those constraints were properly understood" (10). This result comes at a costly price: "He worked from both ends simultaneously, making science more commodious and religion less confined by anything that might conflict with any specific finding of science" (28). Hence, Santayana would add, we end up with the compounded difficulty of a religion that still fails to fulfill its mission of organizing experience by speaking to the heart, and a science that ceases to be intellectually convincing by weakening its rigorous standards.

Arguably, it is Santayana's Catholicism that enables him to look to paganism with "an auspicious eye," and James's Protestantism that makes him look to it with "a dropping eye." For Santayana "Catholicism had more mythic power than Protestantism, especially in its Puritan ascetic form. Also, the Catholic deity is more forgivingly "human" than the Protestant one. Finally, Catholicism believes in the sacredness of nature and divine immanence whereas puritanism treats nature as a fallen, depraved world" (Russo 24). As Santayana sees it, Catholicism and paganism form one continuous narrative: "All religions and moralities seem to me forms of paganism; only that in ages of ripe experience or of decadence they become penitential and subjective" (Three American Philosophers 134). James orders the chapters of his presentation in keeping with "the evangelical Protestant conversion narrative" by "moving from 'healthy-mindedness' to the 'sick soul' to the 'divided self' to 'conversion' and then to 'saintliness'," a move in keeping with his desire to "present the core of religion

in general as having been most attractively manifest in exactly the cultural tradition to which James's listeners and readers were directly heir" (Hollinger 13, 14). James must have felt a great sense of triumph as: "The Gifford Lectures attracted larger audiences on each subsequent occasion and earned James worldwide acclaim. Their publication under the title *The Varieties of Religious Experience* attracted new readers to James's work" (Mcquade 9: xli). Yet, on this view, he was preaching to the converted.

Privileging the personal and individual, James analyzes specific reports of the putative religious experience of mystics, saints, poets, and philosophers, ranging from Marcus Aurelius to Saint Teresa, from Goethe to Emerson. A difficulty for this perspective: how do these reports represent empirical evidence on the par with that produced by other sciences? James addresses the problem by developing an innovative methodology to circumscribe his topic. For James, the most intense form experienced by those deemed the most religious becomes the standard-bearer, the criteria by which to judge all similar occurrences in common people. This focus on the extreme case he compares to a scalpel or microscope of the scientist (Varieties 31), which allows the researcher to isolate the significant part of a phenomenon. Surprisingly, this means that the morbid-minded is a superior type to the healthy-minded because the former experience most intensely the sense of evil in the world. This low threshold for tolerating evil causes them to prefer monism to pluralism, for the latter tends to isolate evil as just one aspect of the world. Having quarantined the evils of the world, the healthy-minded can lead happy, unperturbed lives. The morbid-minded, by contrast, endorse monism. Evil for them cannot be eluded for it is intrinsically linked to reality as a whole. They must confront it and engage the world in order to improve on it (Varieties 122-25).

Following this line of argument, Marcus Aurelius is deemed of less religious significance than the author of *Theologia Germanica*, because although both belong within the morbid type, the latter is the most intensely enthusiastic about his views.[10] Aurelius believes that we should welcome whatever comes our way, "because it leads to this, the health of the universe and to the prosperity and felicity of Zeus. For he would not have brought on any man what he has brought, if it were not useful for the whole." The author of *Germanica*, after having acknowledged the pains and tribulations of our earthly existence, explains the change in the man who has been touched by God: "he is made a partaker of all manner of joy, bliss, peace, rest and consolation, and so the man is henceforth in the kingdom of heaven." Citing these sources at greater length, James reacts to the telling difference in tone: "How much more active and positive the impulse of the Christian writer to accept his place in the universe is! Marcus Aurelius agrees *to* the scheme–the German theologian agrees *with* it" (48).

Given James's methodological assumptions, the Greeks come to represent weak versions of either the healthy-minded or the morbid:

> The early Greeks are continually held up to us in literary works as models of the healthy-minded joyousness among the Greeks–Homer's flow of enthusiasm for most things that the sun shines upon is steady. But even in Homer the reflective passages are cheerless, and the moment the Greeks grew systematically pensive and thought of ulti-mates, they became unmitigated pessimists. (131)

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[10] *Theologia Germanica* is an anonymous Christian text from the 14th cent.

This passage sums up James's view of paganism, one that he never revisited or altered in any way. The Epicureans and Stoics represent the "cold" and the "quite cold" respectively. They belong to the low-end of the twice-born spectrum, "the highest flight of what twice-born religion would call the purely natural man" (132). For James, these types remain in existence, but only as the tepid ones of the Christian religion. James ignores the whole Golden Age of Athens in his account, concentrating on the extremes of Homer and Aurelius, one must assume because they did not report any experience that James would deem an extreme case.

James does not cite Santayana in *Varieties* but clearly had him in mind in his paganism passages–never more so, however, than in his observations about Walt Whitman. Contrary to anything found in the Greeks, here we find the paragon of healthy-mindedness. Santayana had been unfairly critical of Whitman and Browning, in his chapter "The Poetry of Barbarism."[11] Santayana unsuccessfully attempted to present them as inferior to his pagan models in their comprehension of reality and portrayal of ideals, a position that came across as unfair and priggish, something that Santayana eventually came to admit as a flaw of his presentation. The stanzas in question come from "Song of Myself":

> I could turn and live with animals, they are so placid and self-contained,
> I stand and look at them long and long;
> They do not sweat and whine about their condition.
> They do not lie awake in the dark and weep for their sins.
> Not one is dissatisfied, not one is demented with the mania of owning things,
> Not one kneels to another, nor to his kind that lived thousands of years ago,
> Not one is respectable or unhappy over the whole earth. (85)

James had prefaced this section by the observation that "pagan" had come to mean either pertaining to the Greeks and Romans' religious sensibilities or to "the mere natural animal man without a sense of sin" (84). In an odd contrast that makes most sense when considered in the light of Santayana's book, James goes on to cite Homer's poignant description of Achilles' killing by decapitation of the young, Lycaon. James laments the lack of a sense of sin in these actions or the "ingenious" attempt of later generations to find some good at work in current evils. When Lycaon's brother decries these actions, he is merely told that such realities are simply a part of life (85-86).

James finds it appalling that the Greeks failed to ever achieve Whitman's level of optimism: they would have found "What is called good is perfect and what is called bad is just as perfect" repelling. Alluding most explicitly to Santayana, James denies that the Greeks "invent 'another and a better world' of the imagination, in which, along with the ills, the innocent goods of sense would also find no place." Instead, they remain trapped within the realm of simple instinctive reactions, which "gives a pathetic dignity to ancient pagan feeling," one totally lacking in Whitman, who in some ways achieves inclusion in "the genuine lineage of the prophets" (86). James seizes on Santayana's excess in his presentation of Whitman to defend his mostly pejorative use of the term pagan.[12]

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[11] See Porte for a detailed discussion of Santayana's treatment of Whitman and Browning.

[12] For a brief history of the controversies generated by the issue of Santayana's early and subsequent interpretations of Whitman, see Porte.

Decades after James's death, he published his bestselling novel, *The Last Puritan: a Memoir in the Form of a Novel*. As Daniel Moreno notes in *Santayana Filósofo: La Filosofía como Forma de Vida*, Santayana had no interest in melodramatic portrayals or in depicting the development of his characters, for these function primarily as symbols (161). Perhaps, this was the best genre for him to cast his religious explorations, since in Moreno's characterization, for Santayana "that which is considered real is in part invented and the invented is in part real" (160).[13] Here Santayana imaginatively explores the varieties of religious experience from within, seeing each imaginatively through the eyes of his characters, of whom he says "*they speak to me*, I don't have to prompt them" (Letters 5: 296).

Each character in his novel represents a different religious attitude, both toward the world and toward other religious perspectives. William Lyon Phelps writes to Santayana that the main character, Oliver seems to be very much like Santayana himself. The latter replies that his protagonist, while "ready for every sacrifice, had nothing to pin his allegiance to." Alluding to Mathew, Luke, and Mark, Santayana describes him as "the rich young man in the Gospel would have been ready to sell his goods and give to the poor, but then had found no cross to take up and no Jesus to follow."

In contrast to his character, Santayana does not need a supernatural, transcendent faith to avoid his tragedy, for he has "the Epicurean contentment, which was not far removed from asceticism." Furthermore, he boasts of "a spiritual allegiance . . . that hardly requires faith":

> only a humorous animal faith in nature and history, and no religious faith: and this common sense world suffices for *intellectual satisfaction*, partly in observing it, partly in dismissing it as, . . . a transitory and local accident. Oliver hadn't this intellectual satisfaction, and he hadn't that Epicurean contentment. (5: 297)

Under no illusion that pagan ideas could be restored to the status of James's living hypotheses, Santayana thought that they still retain their value as ideals by the manner in which they can still confer meaning and significance to our lives. Like James, he conceived their value to be discoverable only through experience. Classical ideals serve to complete human reality; it is not how they describe the actual material world that matters, or how such descriptions may contrasts with modern scientific ones. Rather, it is how they address human needs and aspirations in the process that remains of value to us.

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[13] The translation is mine: "lo considerado real es en parte inventado y lo inventado es en parte real.

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Faith, Politics, and Paradox: Jim Wallis as Social Justice Prophet

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Abstract: The United States has a history of reformers who stood at the intersection of religious belief and political action asking, "If you believe . . . how can you accept . . . ?" In a country manipulated to think of itself as divided into a red state/blue state binary, we must ask if there are still individuals who can present a vision of social justice based on spirituality that the majority will respond to and work toward. Drawing from Walter Brueggemann's The Prophetic Imagination and James Gee's work on Discourse theory and social literacy, this paper discusses the work of Jim Wallis and how it places him into the tradition of social justice prophet. Giving an overview of Wallis' core beliefs, it considers where he succeeds in crossing social boundaries that allow his message to be heard and enacted, and where and why that message is blocked. Wallis is trained and identifies himself as an Evangelical preacher, and his sermonic and writing style/rhetoric is clearly Evangelical in its presentation. At the same time, his message most strongly appeals to those who draw their inspiration from liturgical religious traditions and those who reject organized religion altogether. In negotiating the currents of American politics and religion, he excels at crossing the theological boundaries, but finds his message continually blocked by the political rhetoric attached to American faith identities. To be the social justice prophet he imagines himself to be, he must challenge that rhetoric, not become part of it, to create an alternative vision of society which motivates both the conservative and liberal factions to "locate a moral center that isn't left or right, but deeper."

Keywords: Social Justice, Politics and Religion, Faith, Jim Wallis, Social Justice Tradition, Prophetic Tradition, Discourse Analysis, Discourse Theory, Social Literacy Practices, Community Action, Social Reform

HOW DO YOU articulate a definition for an abstract term like "justice?" That is the type of question that is best worked out through the dialectical tradition. As members of a society form communities which debate and discuss what justice and other abstract principles mean, their opinions shape political ideologies which lend the group part of its identity. Contemporary American political conceptions of justice seem to be rooted in one of three positions; those who find freedom and justice in relationship to their right to own property, those who find it through a communitarian ethos—the sense that we are free because of a right to build relationship or our choice not to, and those who rally around the cause of being able to engage freely with various ideologies, religious or not, unfettered by government interference. All three of these positions have connective as well as conflicting junctures, but a specific point of connection to all is the suspension of an institutional authority. We are free, and we find justice in the moments that break from the political status quo. In order for that break to occur, the language of the community must shift as well. It must move from the dialectical to the rhetorical, from the language of discussion and debate, to the language of action. American rhetoric is and always has been about

change. Historically more often than not that change has been prompted by religious or spiritual values and the conversation between religion and politics.

Clarification of the phrase "all men are created equal" is often at the heart of the greatest of American social reforms. Each word takes on new meaning in the socio-political context of each movement. Before each redefinition of that phrase, be it in the cause of abolition, suffrage, civil rights, or economic justice, the prophetic witness appears and asks, "If you claim to believe …, how can you accept …?" The speech of the prophetic witness often has elements of the dialectic in it as he or she presents his or her case, but it is always rhetorical, always actively urging the community toward change for the common good. The root of American public discourse is found in the highly sermonic rhetoric of the Puritan colonists. It has always been partially based on a promised vision of a continually improving society.

Literary scholar Sacvon Bercovitch states in his study, *The American Jeremiad,* while drawn from European sermonic rhetoric, the vision for the new world has always been more corrective than destructive in nature. The afflictions of the righteous may be many, but in this version, they prove the Father's blessing, not curse. His punishment is based in love and the desire to produce a better, stronger community, not to destroy the one already created. Whereas the European version of the jeremiad generally was intended to invoke social change as a secular virtue, the New England version melded spiritual and secular virtues together. The "city on a hill" was literal and prophetic in nature. It was not a simple matter of civic duty to create a new society, but a deeply spiritual one as well.

This particular and particularly American jeremiad, or political sermon, served as a basis for much of the national rhetoric that would follow and is still echoed in movements for social justice and its attendant political reform. Evangelical preacher and social activist Jim Wallis stated in support of his book, *The Great Awakening: Reviving Faith & Politics in a Post-Religious Right America* (2008), "When politics fails to resolve or even address our greatest problems, what often happens is social movements rise up to change politics. And the best social movements always have spiritual foundations" (Light). The question we have to ask ourselves is, in a country that has been manipulated to think of itself as being divided into a red state/blue state binary–with all the moral and ethical subtexts of your particular political bent–are there still individuals who can present a vision of social justice that the majority will respond to and work toward? Does our culture still respond to those who present prophetic rhetoric which provides a spiritual basis for secular change?

Before looking at the model of a would-be modern social justice prophet, Jim Wallis, it is important to establish the definition of some key terms and ideas. The largest abstraction at hand is, "what is a social justice prophet?" Walter Brueggemann's text, *The Prophetic Imagination*, provides the framework for examining the actual rhetoric of what he identifies as a prophet. The prophet in this sense is not one who foretells the future, but one who is concerned with provoking "elemental changes in human society" based on his/her understanding of the "strange incongruence between public conviction and personal yearning" and "the distinctive power of language" (9). In short, (s)he provides a new word, or rhetoric, to replace what has been the language of power.

Brueggemann discusses the characteristic of the prophet as being one who can present an "alternative consciousness" by criticizing the dominant culture, which is a liberal tendency, while also energizing the community to move toward a promise of a better time and situation which is, referring back to Bercovitch, a conservative idea that is part of the fabric of American society. The conservative faction withstands criticism of the status quo without

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the real promise or hope of some sort of improvement over the current situation being offered by the new vision; the liberal faction resists talk of promises and hope in the new vision being offered without criticism of what is occurring in the status quo. The prophet's rhetoric captures the motives of both sides and provides a way for them to work together.

Using the Mosaic covenant tradition found in the book of Exodus as a model, Brueggemann also establishes criteria for prophetic rhetoric based on justice and compassion. The rhetoric is political and social, as well as spiritual in nature. This rhetorical tradition is one that must present an alternative to the "theology of God's enslavement"–the promotion of the belief that a community's current situation is the result of God's disfavor of the oppressed and a sign of favor for those in power, and a "sociology of human enslavement" (19). Moving beyond social theory and righteous indignation, prophetic rhetoric begins with discerning an alternative vision of Yahweh based in justice and compassion. It is the presentation of that alternative vision of "God's freedom" that energizes the community.

Brueggemann's emphasis on the relationship between the individual and the community provides an additional link to analyzing the power and effectiveness of the social justice prophet's rhetoric by examining his or her literacy acquisition. These are individuals who, in addition to their prophetic ability, have acquired multiple social languages which allow them to cross boundaries of multiple communities; many of whom are usually at odds with each other. There are many prophets who present alternate visions of "God's freedom" (or social justice), but only a handful are able to move beyond their historical moment and circumstance to have significant influence in the larger society.

The work of James Paul Gee provides the foundation for that additional step of analysis. In order to understand Gee, one must go beyond the boundary of the traditional definition of literacy; the ability to read and write texts. In addition to examining the acquisition of that specific language skill, a socio-cultural view of literacy also focuses on the cultural resources and models that mediate the individual's participation in social practice. Gee identifies literacy as Discourse. Each Discourse has a type of social as well as linguistic "identity kit" that includes multiple types of "d"iscourses. No specific or singular language or language skill makes one literate, but rather literacy is the ability to maneuver the multiple social languages within a Discourse. A social justice prophet must be able to negotiate the literacy of multiple Discourse communities, accentuating points of connectivity while also addressing those issues which threaten to cause dissention and withdrawal from the conversation.

Jim Wallis is considered to be a social justice prophet and is well known to those who work in justice causes. He is a co-founder of Sojourners, which began as a Christian, service-based intentional community in a poverty stricken area in Chicago in 1971 before moving to its current location in Washington D.C. in 1975. Members of the community live much like those in a Catholic Worker house, sharing their talents and skills for the good of the community, and placing all personal economic assets into a community account. The community has since evolved into Sojourners/Call to Renewal, and is recognized for its publications, particularly its magazine, which seeks to expand the definition of justice through its exploration of numerous social issues, as well as to provide practical guidance for those who work for justice in their own community. The group also has an impressive and growing online presence (sojo.net) and is consistently in step with reporting and commenting on current events.

Wallis is a prolific author and speaker, having written nine books and edited several other collections dedicated to the cause of revival and renewal of his faith tradition and American

culture. One of his great motivations is to remind Evangelicals in particular and all Christians in general that their faith tradition powered the great social causes of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, and that it is their responsibility to continue that tradition. The fact that he is an Evangelical by personal history and training comes as surprise to many, and is one important reason why he is such an interesting figure.

Historically there are four defining characteristics of Evangelicalism: a belief that the Bible is the ultimate religious authority, that the believer must experience a conversion or "new birth" moment where he or she makes a conscious decision to follow Christ, a call to activism on the part of the individual-faith with good works, good works done by and through faith-and a focus on Christ's redeeming work as was accomplished through the crucifixion and resurrection (Noll 104). Wallis' father was a pastor of a Plymouth Brethren church, a denomination that is part of the Evangelical tradition, and was trained at Trinity seminary in Deerfield, Illinois. Reflecting on these experiences, he concluded that there was too much emphasis on the redeeming work of Christ and the internal workings of the church in contemporary Protestant theology. He found in it a pattern of stressing the personal relationship with Jesus, which although important as the first part of the great commandment is to love the Lord God with all your heart, all your mind, and all your soul, while downplaying the second half, love your neighbor as yourself (Matthew 22:36-39 NKJV).

Wallis firmly believes that "faith is always personal, but never private" and that "we are called to respond in the particulars of our own personal, social, and political circumstances" (*Call to Conversion* 6). He states that the process of conversion "will be a scandal to accepted wisdom, status quo, and oppressive arrangements. . . It is more than a promise of all that might be; it is also a genuine threat to all that is" (7). Echoing Walter Bruggemann, who Wallis often references, he believes that in order to be a prophetic witness, the community of the church must present a genuine alternative to what is visible in the status quo, and that living by the alternative values which Jesus laid out in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5 is not just a personal decision, but a political act (*Great Awakening* 64). His call to action for believers is to ensure that the "shape of the church" is one that is both nurturing and prophetic. The church should not just speak of improving society, being peacemakers, or providing aid to the poor, but it should actively perform those works, and in doing so become the agency for the change it seeks (*Call to Conversion* 133-4).

Although Wallis has been labeled a "charter member of the religious left" by pundits like Chris Tucker, ("New Evangelical Leaders" NPR), he preaches that fulfilling the mission and a vision for the church should not depend on political party, because "God is not a Republican, or Democrat" (*God's Politics* 4). He states that he has been told throughout his life that "my faith and my politics don't jibe. I was either a rebel in evangelical circles because of my 'liberal politics' or I was an outsider in political circles because of the 'Jesus thing.' I felt like a believer without a country" (Falsani). He claims to speak for those who are not represented by the message created by the political rhetoric of the far right which, as Wallis often describes it, has "hi-jacked the evangel" to such a degree that our national conversation about religion and politics perceives Evangelicalism and Republican politics as being one and the same.

During the last election cycle, Wallis came to enjoy a bit of national prominence. He appeared on CNN multiple times to discuss American spirituality, and was the moderator of a debate/discussion concerning social and spiritual values among Democratic presidential candidates. In addition to those who lean to the left, he managed to get the attention and

cooperation of a few who are more aligned with the right. In *The Great Awakening*, he names several influential Evangelical leaders who he has been working with including Bill Hybels, leader of the Willow Creek association, and Baptist minister Rick Warren, bestselling author of *The Purpose Driven Life*. He takes great joy in proclaiming, "They used to say I was a 'progressive evangelical' and that was a misnomer. Or rather, it was a misnomer. Now, it's a movement" (Falsani).

There is nothing particularly new about the attempt to harness religious motivation in order to reform American socio-political positions. In his book, *Head and Heart: American Christianities*, historian and social commentator Gary Wills describes this type of dialogue as taking place between two powerful mediators, the head, Enlightenment Religion, and the heart, Evangelical Religion. These two positions form the "two poles of American religion in the dominant culture" (3).[1] These terms are meant to be broad descriptors; neither has an established doctrine, nor is one exclusive from the other, but rather they operate as "two force fields" that tug at our social discourse, directing the current according to historic circumstance (3-5).

What is interesting about Jim Wallis' approach is that it is clearly Evangelical in its presentation, relying heavily on scripture for authority and addressing the responsibility of the individual, while at the same time it appeals strongly to those who draw their inspiration from "head" religious traditions—liturgical mainline denomination Protestants and Catholics who find his teachings to be in line with the community based social traditions of Dorothy Day, as well as those who reject organized religion altogether.[2] In many regards Wallis fits the definition of a social justice prophet in that he criticizes the status quo and offers up visions of society that offer true alternatives to our current patterns. His ideas are firmly based on scriptures of compassion and justice. He is able to take his Protestant Evangelical literacy across the boundary of theological Discourse, but he has never quite mastered the ability to speak to the one group who should be most open to his style of speech and rhetoric, American Evangelicals.

This is very peculiar, but not completely unexpected given the continual media messages that keep faith identities tied to political labels. The simplified binary is presented repeatedly and is a significant barrier for anyone who truly seeks ecumenical justice reform. However, to just blame the media, the politicians, or pundits is equally simplistic. In an interview with Jon Stewart, Wallis called for a "religious litmus test for politics" in order to gauge not the specific religious beliefs of a candidate, but to determine where his or her "moral compass" points. He stated he believes in "the politics of the Common Good." Unfortunately this idea of being centered does not always bear the weight of close analysis. Wallis' rhetoric is visionary, but it also can be extremely divisive and holds an inherent paradox.

Wallis began preaching his claim that "the monologue of the religious right is over and now a new dialogue can begin" in earnest with the publication of his bestselling 2005 text,

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[1] By "dominant culture," Wills means that which is also non-Catholic. Although Catholicism does become more important to the conversation in the later portion of the text, his project is primarily focused on the history of Protestant religious conflicts and their effects on American history and ideology.

[2] That is no coincidence, in one of his earliest books, *Revive Us Again* (1983), he has a chapter dedicated to his two greatest teachers and sources of inspiration, Dorothy Day and St. Francis. He states in the chapter that is was Day who showed him how to be a Christian through her actions and writing. He further states that one of the highest compliments his community, Sojourners, ever received was when some Catholic Worker friends referred to it as "the Protestant Catholic Worker" (164).

God's Politics: Why the Right Gets It Wrong and the Left Doesn't Get It. The book was criticized, with good reason, for being just as polarizing as the rhetoric it claims to condemn. One of Wallis's repeated claims is that quite simply, "the Religious Right did it wrong," and that "the result was bad religion and bad politics" (*God's Politics* 8, *Great Awakening*, 12, and "*Face of Religion*"). This results in much applause from those on the left who agree with his political policies, but does little to actually encourage the dialogue he claims to be seeking.

Episcopalian priest and former moderate Republican Senator John Danforth takes Wallis to task for this in his book, *Faith and Politics*, stating:

> The problem is not that Christians are conservative or liberal, but that some are so confident that their position is God's position that they become dismissive and intolerant toward others and divisive forces in our national life. The tendency toward theocracy is not monopolized by the Christian Right, and it is no advance to supplant the self-confident religious agenda of the Right with a religious agenda to the Left (10).

Having been a firsthand witness to the growing intolerance for civil discourse between the political parties, Danforth calls for moderate believers to step forward and end their silent and therefore tacit approval of the tactics of those on the Right and the Left. In many ways this is exactly how Wallis is recalibrating his rhetoric with a call for a moral center; however, Danforth grounds his call for reconciliation in the humble recognition that "Faith in politics has more to do with the way faithful people approach politics than with the substance of our positions" (21).

Wallis is too much of a fighter, and is far too committed to his social positions to allow for such a compromise. It becomes clear fairly quickly when you read his work, that although he speaks of dialogue; it excludes those who are truly on the far right. He aims his rhetoric at those whose loyalty to the Republican party line is based on a perceived lack of alternatives, those who fall just right of center. Wallis' goal is not to change the mind of party loyalists, but to capture as many away from them as possible by presenting an alternate vision of their faith tradition. He presents Christian faith as one that reflects a concern for social issues like poverty, racism, and non-violence rather than one that obsesses on reproductive rights and homosexuality or insists that patriotism is only demonstrated through the unflagging support of U.S. war efforts.

In presenting an alternative that is connective to a core principle of Christianity–the great commandment to love your neighbor as yourself–Wallis is opening up a necessary ecumenical conversation. However, he has a tendency to nurture open dialogue on one hand while pushing it away with the other. One problematic theme that keeps Wallis' message from reaching the Evangels he wants and needs, if he is to achieve his social and spiritual reform, is that large churches are somehow automatically corrupt because size is an indicator of wealth. He writes in each book a variation of the idea that "the mere possession of wealth is proof of serving money" and a "wealthy church cannot testify to dependence on God" (*Call to Conversion* 73). There is no denying that many a scam artist has gotten rich in the name of the Lord, but you cannot tar everyone with the same brush. If a large church is hoarding its money and not sending it out again, there is something amiss, but wealth can be defined in many ways. Prosperity, which is more than financial success, can also be and

is interpreted by some as a sign of blessing, of an increase given because of faithful stewardship.

Wallis rejects this line of thought completely. In *Rediscovering Values On Main Street, Wall Street and Your Street* (2010), he states he "considers this lie [that the wealthy are so because they are more responsible and righteous] to be no less than a biblical heresy that has seeped into our culture and our country" (90). He reasons that both the wealthy and poor can be subject to both virtue and vice, referring to Ecclesiastes 9:1[3] as proof that there is a biblical acknowledgement that "might does not make right and a wealthy person is not necessarily a good person." This is true, but it also doesn't necessarily make them a "bad" person either, an extension Wallis refuses to make. These kinds of broad overstatements are part and parcel of his rhetorical style. Like the subtitle to *God's Politics*, they sound clever and are easy to remember, but because they are so over-reaching and often accusatory in tone, these statements that are meant to convict and thus motivate the audience to change become the source of offense, and the boundaries of community Discourse snap shut. Dialogue ceases, regardless of all other points of connection in message and purpose.

In addition to his constant attack on wealthy or successful church communities, Wallis insists that the church will always be more "faithful as a 'prophetic minority' than as the dominant religion" (*Great Awakening* 64). This is a rhetorical idea that right wing Evangelicals promote as their *raison d'être*; they are the minority under constant moral attack by a sinful society, regardless of how much political power they manage to gain. They should find this statement very appealing. Wallis is drawing off the trope, but he presents himself as not only being a prophetic minority in the culture, but in the Christian community. When he turns his prophetic criticism from the society at large to other Christians, resistance is an automatic response. It is not that his criticism does not have its valid points, but it doesn't help his case that when you expand his argument, it's not quite rhetorically sound. He believes the church must remain a "countercultural alternative living by different values than the surrounding society" (64), but yet he also asks his audience to imagine a society that runs by Christian values, which would thereby change the values of the surrounding society. Extending this line of reason, which he does not, if you succeed as a community and more people join you, not only will the wealth that is a byproduct of success automatically cause you to become corrupt, you eventually fail to be the prophetic voice of change as your position shifts from that of the minority to the majority.

As Sojourners has already developed from a small fringe community to an organization, Sojourners/Call to Renewal, with real presence in the national discussion, Wallis is going to have to address this paradox. It is particularly problematic because one of the main claims of his rhetoric is that "renewal isn't revival until it has changed something about society." He attempts to clarify how you can remain a minority and still influence the majority by claiming, "majorities don't change things; creative minorities do, and the majority just goes along in the end" (*Great Awakening* 65). Even if you allow that somehow the community will just "go along" with reform movements once they meet a tipping point, this is a flawed position. It is true that a creative minority can change the majority Discourse by infiltrating it with their own languages; however, the result of their success will be a totally reshaped social literacy because the minority position becomes that of the majority.

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[3] "The race is not to the swift, or the battle to the strong, nor does food come to the wise or wealth to the brilliant or favor to the learned; but time and chance happen to them all" (NIV).

For example, the determined minority led by Dr. King and others infiltrated the Discourse of American culture. Through their work and sacrifice, the large conglomerate of communities that make up American Discourse changed its cultural boundaries and the minority position became the majority. Their success resulted in the transformation of not only the policies of the majority, but the shape of the entire American conversation on race. King's beliefs about racial equality are no longer the minority position, but does that make him any less a prophet? Any less of a visionary for us today? One cannot affect change in a democratic society without affecting the majority, without shifting social literacy borders so that minority becomes the majority.

That is not to discount all the positive change that Wallis' vision represents. His concerns for the poor and his work as an advocate of social justice are based solidly in scripture as are his calls for personal spiritual revival and renewal. His vision is taking hold, even if he doesn't always get the credit for it. There is renewed interest in the Evangelical community in justice movements; they just drop the word "social" from the description. The July/August 2010 edition of *Books and Culture* has a feature article "The Church on a Justice Mission" which highlights the influence of Gary Haugen's books. Haugen is the founder of International Justice Mission and, like Wallis, writes about the Evangelical tradition in addressing injustice and the responsibility of the church to seek justice opportunities in their local communities. However, neither he nor the article mentions Wallis or his forty year crusade to do the same thing. This is heartbreaking. Imagine all the work that is delayed, all the suffering that continues because there is no dialogue between these Discourse communities.

Wallis, however, continues to speak out, using moments which disrupt the status quo and open dialogue to find and forge connections that can motivate all toward change. Although much of what is in *Rediscovering Values* is familiar to his long time supporters, and it has moments where the dialogue breaks down into easy, somewhat empty sound bites, it also provides guidance for reflection on the current economic crisis. Wallis challenges his audience to consider how economics and morality, both corporate and of the individual, are intertwined; a response missing in the media frenzy that constantly ping pongs blame between political parties. In response to the Tucson shootings, Wallis joined with conservative Evangelical Chuck Colson to write an article for *Christianity Today*. In it they state that although they do not agree politically, they do agree in their belief that "our treatment of the poor, weak and most vulnerable is how a society is best biblically measured" and that political differences are normal and expected because "God is neither a Democrat nor a Republican." In affirming a principled commitment to civil discourse in the nation's public life, they call for all people of faith to respect each other as fellow human beings created in the image of God, open to the idea of genuine dialogue that allows democracy to function. Unfortunately many of comments posted about this statement broke into the same two camps, which started throwing questionably defined, politically labeled stones at each other, while the spirit of connection and civility of the essay went unheard and unheeded.

In his attempt to create a necessary dialogue between factions in the Christian community, Jim Wallis is creating a new Discourse community; however, existence between communities places him in a very precarious position. To be the social justice prophet he imagines himself to be, he must challenge that rhetoric which divides, not become part of it. He continually refines his ability to "locate a moral center that isn't left or right, but deeper." It is unclear if that is even possible in our current cultural moment. There are only two parties, and Wallis, in living out his conviction to make faith political, has to pick one over the other.

This further alienates those who have been led to believe that God is indeed a Republican and have been taught through the media and other sources that to even consider listening to someone who holds an alternative political position somehow compromises the integrity of their core spiritual beliefs. (This is also true of those who believe God must be a Democrat. They are equally entrenched and refuse to think beyond their label.) As Wallis attempts to reach across the politicized faith divide, he is fighting against multiple discourses, some which he produces himself, which block the messages of *Agape* and the power of *Kairos* that are inherent features of all forms of Christian belief.

This problem is not his alone, nor is it a new dilemma that social justice prophets face. The powers who have a vested interest in maintaining the status quo have always actively, aggressively, and tirelessly worked to keep the new word from being heard and acted on. Jim Wallis is subject to the same social forces as everyone else, as all social justice prophets are in their time. Therefore, it is not surprising to find moments of digging in and exclusion in some of his rhetorical constructions even as they co-exist with his vision of an improved, more inclusive community. The reality for our current moment is that any ecumenical attempt to join disparate religious bodies is hampered by a deeply entrenched political divide that refuses to allow for any type of middle ground. This impulse to dig in and refuse to engage in cross community dialogue may appear self- preserving on the surface, but it is actually destroying our ability to act on any level.

Are the people he seeks to address and motivate willing to overlook their personal moments of offense and disconnection from the person, Jim Wallis? Can they silence the buzzing of the political spin of their particular community to glimpse that city on a hill one more time and listen to what the prophet, Jim Wallis, has to say to both the conservative and liberal factions in our society? At this point, it is difficult to determine what the final word on this particular prophet will be as he is still working, still refining the message and the vision. What is important to remember is that we need people like this who are willing to dedicate their lives to continually push toward the improving society. Whatever your personal feelings about Wallis are, he is performing a crucial role, reminding us that regardless of all the voices which seek to cause panic and foster a sense of division and isolation, there is an alternative. It is one that is based on a vision of community which acknowledges all its members as being crucial to the success of the whole, one in which all individuals are empowered to be the change that moves things forward.

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Mantra: Awareness of Reality

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Abstract: Mantras are the inevitable part of the rituals in Indic tradition. But more interesting and perhaps more worth facets of concept of Mantra i.e. the foreground of mantras, is explained in the non-dualistic Kashmir Shaiva philosophical tradition, particularly in the schools of Pratyabhijna and Spanda (the branches of the Kashmir Shaiva tradition). Both schools speculate more thoroughly on issues like the nature of Mantra, how is it put into use, source of its power and how can be imagined to function, rather than the other schools of the same philosophical system. Ontologically, it is estab-lished as the nature of supreme consciousness (the ultimate Supreme Reality). The supreme conscious-ness is defined as self-aware. Here the self-awareness, that is said vimarsha, opens the door for the principle of Mantra, which connotes the aspect of thinking own nature i.e. self-awareness. In such a manner, Consciousness is the nature of Mantra. Thus, a Mantra is not conglomeration of different syllables in this context. It is the deepest level of the principle of speech, the expressive of core of reality and near to the source of language as well as to that of our energies. In this way, nature and functioning aspect of Mantra at the ultimate level of reality in Kashmir Shaiva philosophy has been taken for evaluation in this research paper, since the philosophical nature of Mantra becomes the source of development of the religious aspect further.

Keywords: Mantra, Prakash-vimarsha, Vak, Pashyanti-madhyama-vaikhari, Parama Shiva, Vimarsha, Aham, Shakti, Shabda

MANTRA[1] is an important concept in the Indian philosophical tradition as well as in the ritualistic practices. The tantric tradition of India concentrates on both the aspects of *mantra* i.e. philosophical and ritualistic. Kashmir Shaiva school (belongs to God Shiva) of Tantric tradition accepts the hierarchical order of multilayered reality and an all-inclusive theory (*sarvasarvātmakavāda*) which accepts that all is present in all, that's why theory of *Mantra* does not occupy only the entire sadhana practices, but also is examined in the realm of metaphysical and the ontological principle. *Mantra* is related to the highest level as well as to the lowest level of reality. Its relation with the metaphysical and the ontological categories makes it settle as fundamental principle. The purpose of this paper is to enquire into the nature of *Mantra* that comes at the highest level of reality and becomes the awareness of Ultimate Reality because *Mantra* is nothing but the pondering over the real nature. This paper is related to the examining of the philosophical aspect of the concept of multi-dimensional *Mantra* in the context of metaphysical principle since *Mantra* is the inevitable part of the metaphysical element. Here, metaphysical element is the ultimate doer and knower. In this way, it is active in a constructive way so the very first characteristic

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[1] In this article wherever mantra with initial small letter 'm' has been written, refers to mantras which are related to the ritual practices and to the yoga, while Mantra with initial capital letter M connotes awareness.

of the ultimate consciousness, in the context of creation, is the nature of thinking. The whole world is its idea. Thus, the concept of *Mantra* exists since the beginning of the creation.

The concept of *Mantra* has been explored in two main parallel streams i.e. Āgama (Vedic) and Nigama (Tantric) of Indian knowledge system in accordance with their fundamentals. There is great diversity between the Vedic *mantras* and tantric *mantras* regarding their forms and usages. The problem of *mantra* of both the streams cannot be examined on common platform, that's why, *mantra*, in entire Indic tradition, opens the door for the further research from different perspectives. The quite popular areas, concerning to the *mantra*, are-*mantra* as linguistic formula, as magical formula and the science of sound system and so on. As follows, issues are also quite diversified, still, one characteristic is shared alike that *mantra* is muttered but must be inaudible to others by both the oral traditions which tend to inner consciousness always. Tantric scholar Padoux backs this claim in this manner-Certain notions concerning the nature and the powers of speech, especially those of the mantras, have been always present, even if only in the background. Forming the basis and directing the course of whole of Indian thought on that subject. In this context, it is worth noting that, from the outset, the sort of speech or word considered all-powerful was spoken not written. All speculations and practices always concerned, and still concern, the oral field only. Mantra is sound (śabda) or word (vāc), it is never, at least in its nature, written. To this, one should add that, since the Vedic period, in spite of the superiority of the spoken word, the highest and most efficacious form of that word was not loudest or the most intense but, on the contrary, the most silent and subtle-the inner utterance, the purely mental one[2].

In this way, *mantra* is undoubtedly related to the oral traditions of India. In spite of that, it has diversified forms in religious sects, so, for seeing the deviations in the structure of *mantra*, Gonda's pioneer study *The Indian Mantras* makes interesting and useful reading. The article presents a number of definitions and explanations of the term *mantra* at one place. But in terms of the study of *mantra*, one striking problem, which must be pointed out, is its use of English equivalent term as magical formula, which is used by the scholars. The term surfaces wrong and limited notion regarding the concept of *mantra* and restricts it within limited area. Andre Padoux strictly refuses using this translation since *mantra* is not related to such a limited area of magic, but the question is how? The answer is found in the statement of Padoux-

One might be tempted simply to consider mantras as examples of the magical use of language. But, the explanation by magic alone, though useful, seems inadequate. First, because the uses of mantras are not restricted to what may legitimately be called magic, which, even in Tantrism, is only a limited part of a vast amount of practice and speculation on the holy or sacred, of which magic is but a profane or profanatory handling. Second, and even more important, because, the distinction between magic and religion, always a difficult one, is practically impossible in the case of Tantrism, where one can seldom know where the domain of the holy ends or what exactly is profane[3].

Thus, magical formula is not the appropriate expression for the term *mantra*. *Mantra* is not the magic, rather than that it is related to the rituals, meditations and so on. It is the source of reawakening your energy, giving the mental strength to concentrate at your highest goal.

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[2] Padoux, Andre "*Mantras-What Are They?*" in Harvey, Alper P. (2002). p.n. 297.
[3] Ibid, p.n. 303.

Mantra is supposed to be come under these sections, either Tantric or Vedic-

1. Ritual usage
2. Yogic practices i.e. yoga, meditation.
3. Metaphysical and ontological elements.

But, it is to be sure that none of them can be understood separately. *Mantra* in Kashmir Shaiva, concerning these areas would be come in the range of these sections, by and large-

1. *Mantra pramātā*.
2. *Mantras* as formula.
3. *Parā Mantra or Aham*

Mantra pramātā is one of the categories of knower, while formulated mantras are the part of the yogic and ritual practices. On the level of these formulated *mantras*, linguistic study is possible. The distinguished problem 'Mantra: Awareness of Reality' which I have taken in this paper has to be considered by the examination of *parīmantra* or *aham*, which is the highest *mantra*.

To understand the meaning of *Mantra*, one needs to explore the concept of *prakāśa*, *vimarśa* and *parā vāk*. In Kashmir Shaiva, the Ultimate Reality (*Parama Śiva/īiva*) is the unity of *prakāśa* and *vimarśa*. *Prakāśa* connotes existence and *vimarśa* [4] connotes awareness of this very existence in the form of I that is said *aham* technically. *Aham vimarśa* is to think as the complete identity that is only I consciousness. Thus, at the level of perfection or completeness which belongs to the ultimate consciousness only, only one thing stays i.e. self-awareness into the form of *aham*. *Parā vāk* is the constructive power. Theoretically, *parā vāk* is here to establish the *Paramaīiva* as dynamic principle rather than passive one. *Parā vāk* and her dynamism has been marked out by intricate and often in excessive detail in the chapter third of the encyclopedic work *Tantrāloka* of Abhinavagupta. Fundamentally, *vimarśa* is the subtle form of *parā vāk*. *Vimarśa*, in the form of *parā vāk*, creates the world and becomes the source of every life. And *Mantra* belongs to the same level of *parā vāk* and *vimarśa*. Here, *Mantra* defines as pondering over the real nature eternally, without any interruption and discontinuity. This thinking process is the most fundamental nature of the metaphysical principle.

The etymological meaning of mantra does not hold a simply linguistic formula, rather than that it is the nature of consciousness. Derivation of *mantra* is-/*man+trai*, here *man* means 'to ponder over', 'to ruminate mentally' and *trai* means 'to protect'. *Mananāt trayate iti mantraḥ*-this etymological interpretation points out its characteristic of *manana* i.e. pondering over the highest *aham vimarśa*, and the other characteristic of *trāṇa* i.e. protection by terminating the transmigratory existence that is full of differences. In the commentary of *Tantrāloka* of Abhinavagupta (the 10th century Kashmir Shaiva Philosopher), Jayaratha elaborates the same point-*mananam sarvavettṛtvam trāṇam saṇsāryanugrahaḥ* [5]. Same structure of *Mantra* is supported by the first formula of *īivasītra* text also as *Cittam mantr*a[6]. The formula directly relates *Mantra* with the consciousness. Accordingly-that by which one de-

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[4] *Parātriśikāvivaraṇa*, com. on verse 5-8, p. n. 45.
[5] *Tantrīloka*, com. on 3.225
[6] *īivasītravimarüni*, 1.1

liberates secretly i.e. ponders inwardly as being non-different from the highest metaphysical element is *Mantra*. Thus that *citta* itself is *Mantra* [7], although, here *citta* means limited self. In this way, the definition presents two significant characteristics of *mantra*-first, thinking to the Ultimate Reality and recognizing our own real nature and second, protection from the temporary and unreal existence. Even, thinking is one of the most essential characteristics of the metaphysical element *Parama Śiva* (Ultimate Consciousness), as the thinking process aware the one regarding his or her existence. So, the very first thinking occurs regarding own existence into the form of 'I'. The thinking process is the constituting element of the consciousness.

Thus, *Mantra* is not a type of uttering in the sentential sequence. *Mantra* is the potency, but due to the concealment of this potency, only the sequential letters are seen. Potency of *Mantra* is the *aham vimarśa* (*parāmarśa*), which is the cause of everything, even of the emergence of the world. It is the seed which gets sprouted from simpler one to the complex empirical world. The luminous being of the perfect *aham-vimarśa* which is non-different from the entire cosmos and which is inherent in multitude of words whose essence consists in the knowledge/awareness of the highest non-dualism is the secret of *Mantra* [8]. The potency of *mantra* is a means of the mental union with the supreme. *Mantras* are full of I consciousness, therefore they are always remains as subjects and can never be reduced to the category of object. It is like the heart of all elements; even a *mantra* is quiescent without the *aham-parāmarśa*. So mantras should be associated with *aham vimarśa* that's why it is said as potency (*bala*) of the *Mantra* [9].

Aham-vimarśa is identical with *parā vāk* since it is the principle which animates *parā vāk* with the self-awareness. The *aham* is conjoined with the *vimarśa* and *pārāmarśa* mostly since it reflects internal activities. Kṣemarāja, disciple of Abhinavagupta, includes all these aforesaid subject matters at one place and insists that *parā vāk* or *parī* is identical with *prakāśa* eternally and *Mantra* is her nature. *Parā vāk* consists awareness of complete reality in herself[10]. Thus, *aham* is the key principle for strengthening the *Mantra*. Abhinavagupta examines of *Tantrāloka* very deeply. He sets out his *aham*-principle in the third chapter argument with the structure of *bindu* under the fundamentals of *śāmbhavopāya* (one of the paths to reach at the Ultimate Reality). The term *bindu* itself stands with the absence of diversity and holds the unvaried or uniform character, which cannot be disjoined anymore, so it is called *nirvibhāga*. This unified principle throws light into the nature of *śiva*. He keeps inhering entire world (*nikhilavācyavācakakalāpa*) as single entity,[11] while the same single entity is defined as signifier and signified at the level of empirical world. *Bindu* connotes the same nature of *śiva*. At this level, any type of notion either bifold or manifold cannot be occurred.

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[7] *Śivasūtra vimarśinī, com. on 2.1: Cetyate vimṛśyate anena parama tattvam iti cittam, pūrṇasphurattāsatattvaprāsād-apraṇavādivimarśarūpam sa vedanam tadeva mantryate guptam, antaram abhedena vimṛśyate pameśvararūpam anena, iti kṛtvā mantra.*

[8] Ibid, com. on: 2.3: *S arve varṇātmakā mantrāste ca śaktyātmakāh priye, Śaktistu mātṛkā jñeyā sā ca jñeyā śivātmikā.*

[9] *Tantrāloka, com. on 5.82: Ityādyukttayā idamvimarśaviśrāntidhāmani ahamparāmarśe viśrāntim kuryāt, yat na kevalamatra yāvanmantramaṇḍale 'pi vīryaḥ yato 'hamparāmarśānuviddhamantramaṇḍalaikātmyādeva tatphalabhūtā vicittretikartavyatākāḥ śānyādisiddhayo bhaveyurityarthḥ saṁvidviśrāntimantreṇa hi na kiñcideva bhavediti bhā-vaḥ.*

[10] *Pratyabhijñāhṛdayam, com. on 12 sūtra: Tathā hi-citprakāśāt avyatiriktā nityoditamahāmantrarūpā pūrṇāhaṁvi-marśamayī yā iyam parā vakśaktiḥ ādikṣānta-rūpāśeṣaśakticakragarbhiṇī.*

[11] *Tantrāloka, com. on 3.201: ---punaḥ pratyāvṛttya śivabindutayā Nirvibhāgātmaparaprakāśātmapramātre karūpa-tayākrodīkṛtanikhilavācyavācakakalāpaḥ san,---.*

Only, one awareness stays, that is *aham-paramarśa* [12]. The *aham parāmarśa* suggests only the self-consciousness, which is devoid of notion of thisness or otherness. At this stage, the consciousness resides in himself, there is no externality. This stage is called *svātmamātras-phurattāparāmarāa* [13]. *Aham vimarśa* is that stage wherein everything stays in their real nature and that stage is called *ātma-sphurattā* (staying in itself), so only one consciousness can exists at this place. This *aham* is all-inclusive (*sarvabhīva*), self-dependent (*nirbharatva* and *anany* self-dependent *pekīī*), nature of the *vimarśa* (*paravimarśātmā*),[14] spontaneous (*svābhāvika, akṛtrima*), eternally emerged (*udita*)[15], ultimate form of the language (*paravīī*), potency of *mantra* (*mantravīrya*)[16]. The world, which may be understood by the triad relation of knower-knowable-knowing, exists as single unified entity at this place; residing in this way is called *svātmaviśrānti* [17] of *prakāśa*. In this manner, *aham* is life (*jīvana*) of *sarvapramātā* [18] (omniscience).

The *aham* is related to the sound, but this sound is not identified with the sound of empirical world. It is the source of al the sound, so it is the ultimate sound that is called *nāda*. Identifying with the *aham vimarśa*, it is said *parāmarśarūpa ahamātmaka nāda* (*dhvani/ eternal* sound). It means the vibration is also related to the *aham*. No one is able for pronouncing (*uccāraṇa*) it and no one is able to stop it[19], she is independent and is always in the stage of pronouncing without interruption and discontinuity that's why she is said *uccharita* in *saṃvid/Parama Śiva* [20]. This *Parā vāk* is *aham-parāmarśātmā nāda* [21]. Being a complete element, *ahamātmaka vimarśa* is independent, so that it indulges in the process of creation through dividing itself, that is called *vibhāga in svātmā* [22] which is related to the space-time-causality-convention while in its original form, *aham* is unconventional and beyond to the space-time and causality[23]. During the process of creation, *aham* passes through the hierarchical order of *paśyantī, madhyamā* and *vaikharī* that are the levels of creation. And *parā vāk* who contains within herself the whole assemblage of *śaktis* formed by the sounds beginning with *a* and ending with *kīa*, brings into manifestation the sphere of the limited subject through the successive phases of *paśyantī, madhyamā* etc[24]. Thus, at the transcendental level, *Mantra*, in its original form with all these characteristics, is said *Aham-Mantra*, which is the complete awareness of reality, while at immanent level, it represents itself as limited awareness of

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[12] *Tantrāloka,* 3.203: *Anuttaravisargātmaśivaśaktyadvayātmani, Parāmarśo nirbharatvādahamityucyate.*

[13] Ibid, com. on 3.203: *Ityādidṛśā ahamiti svātmamātrasphurattāḥ parāmarśaḥ ucyate.*

[14] Ibid, com. on 3.207: -- *Ahamiti pratiyogibhūtaparāmarśāntarābhāvādekameva pramātṛprameyādiprakāśaviśrān-tidhāmatayā, paramutkṛṣ am, bhairavasya sarvabhāva-nirbharatvādananyāpekṣiṇaḥ pūrṇavṛtteḥ prakāśaikavapuṣaḥ svātmanorūpam paravimarśātmā svabhāvaḥ-ityarthaḥ.*

[15] Ibid, com. on 3.66: --- *vimarśo'pi tattadanuttarānandādyāmarśātmanodeti iti parāmarśodayakramamapyā*

[16] *Parātriśikāvivaraṇa*, com. on verse 1st, p.n. 18: *Prakāśasya hi svābhāvikākṛtrimaparavāṅmantravīryacamat-kārātma ahamiti.*

[17] Ibid, com. on 3.203: *Prakāśasyātmaviśrāntirahambhāvo hi kirtitaḥ.*

[18] Ibid, com. on 2nd verse, p.n. 21: *Ahamityanena sarvapramātṛjīvanarūpameva satatam parāmṛśyate* ---.

[19] *Tantrāloka,* 4.181: ---- *Parāmarśasvabhāvatvādetasyā yaḥ svayam dhvaniḥ.*

[20] Ibid, com. on 4.181: *Nāsyoccārayita kaścitpratihantā na vidyate.*

[21] Ibid, com. on 4.181: *Yaḥ khalu paravāgrūpaḥ svarasodito dhvaniḥ-ahamparāmarśātmā nādaḥ.*

[22] Ibid, 3.235: *Tasya pratyavamarśo yaḥ paripūrṇo'hamātmakaḥ.*
    Sa svātmani svatantravādvibhāgamavabhāsayet.

[23] Ibid, com. on 3.235: ---*Ahamātmaka iti=asāṃketikaparaparāmarśarūpaḥ ityarthaḥ.*

[24] *Pratyabhijñāhṛdayam*, com. on 12 sūtra:---- *yā iyam parā vākśaktiḥ ādi-kṣānta-rūpāśeṣaśakticakragarbhiṇī sā tāvat paśyantīmadhyamādikrameṇa grāhakabhūmikām bhāsayati.*

reality. *Aham* is designated as *Mantra* because the essence of reality should be always keeping experienced so that one would get direct connection with.

Mantravīrya is another essential feature of *Mantra*. The *aham-vimarśa* is called *Aham Mantra* and *mantravīrya*. Fundamentally, concept of *mantravīrya* delineates relation between the *Mantra* and the *mantras*. But the question is that by what means *mantravīrya* relates *Mantra* with *mantras*? In response to this question, Abhinavagupta asserts that *mantravīrya* is eternal (*nitya, avirata, udita*), independent (*ananyapekṣa*), pervasive (*vyāpaka, avyabhicarita*) and is the essence (*sāra*) of *saṁvid* as well as heart (*hṛdayarūpa*) and real nature (tathya rūpa). It is the source of all *mantras*. Each and every mantra must be animated by *aham mantravīrya*, otherwise *mantra* would be insentient and useless. Anyway, this is not so much relevant to this paper, since the purpose of this paper is to describe that aspect of *Mantra*, which has harmonious relationship with supreme reality, while *mantravīrya* is much closer to the *mantras*. In spite of this, it has been mentioned in the article briefly because it is the source for making capable to the mantras to become the emerging of the potency of awareness.

In this manner, all of these characteristics of *Mantra*, explored in Kashmir Shaiva Tantra, differ from the ritualistic schools, which are submissive to the authority of the Vedas. Since some scholars like Sayana explains *mantra* under the shadow of rituals. On that aspect, a pretty numbers of research oriented studies have been running, while the features, which help to uncover the transcendental and spiritual aspect of *Mantra*, are still overlooked. So, the afresh study of *Mantra*, under the domain of Advaitic Tantric schools reveal the deeper functioning aspects of *Mantra*.

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