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**LANGUAGE AS RITUAL:  
SAYING WHAT CANNOT BE SAID  
WITH WESTERN AND CONFUCIAN RITUAL THEORIES**

by

**LAWRENCE ARNOLD WHITNEY, LC†**

B.M., Ithaca College, 2005  
M.Div., Boston University, 2009

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
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Approved by

First Reader

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Robert Cummings Neville, Ph.D.  
Professor of Philosophy, Religion, and Theology

Second Reader

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Wesley J. Wildman, Ph.D.  
Professor of Philosophy, Theology, and Ethics

“No one can tell you how to love;  
No one can tell you how to grieve;  
No one can tell you how to worship your God.”

-Dr. Omari Daniel

to the glory of God

and

for the professed and clergy of

The Lindisfarne Community

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**LANGUAGE AS RITUAL: SAYING WHAT CANNOT BE SAID WITH  
WESTERN AND CONFUCIAN RITUAL THEORIES**

**LAWRENCE ARNOLD WHITNEY, LC†**

Boston University School of Theology, 2019

Major Professor: Robert Cummings Neville, Professor of Philosophy,  
Religion, and Theology

**ABSTRACT**

This dissertation addresses one of the classical philosophical and theological problems of religious language, namely, how to speak meaningfully about matters that appear to be inexpressible. While addressed extensively in a variety of literatures across cultures, the problem persists, particularly in regard to harmonizing theological, philosophical, and linguistic perspectives. The dissertation argues that (i) language is best understood as a species of ritual; (ii) so understood, religious language speaks to and about religious realities subjunctively, that is, *as if* such realities could be talked about; and (iii) this way of understanding language achieves greater harmony among philosophical and linguistic approaches while achieving some degree of cross-cultural generality.

The argument begins with a cross-cultural comparison between modern social scientific ritual theories, especially that of Roy A. Rappaport, and the

Confucian ritual theory of Xunzi. This generates a novel theory of ritual capable of engaging theories of language that have emerged in modern linguistics, philosophy of language, logic, and hermeneutics. The semiotics of Charles Sanders Peirce provides the unifying framework for the theory, which leads to the first conclusion that language can be understood as a species of ritual.

When language is understood as ritual, there are several options for interpreting religious speech as meaningful. An analysis of these alternatives on terms semantically demarcated by Hilary Putnam leads to the conclusion that language expresses theological insights in the same way it expresses anything else: *as if* reality and its elements were the way the language form and process construes and renders them. This analysis both advances critiques of language as understood under the linguistic turn, especially by Terrence W. Deacon and Daniel L. Everett, and establishes the second and third conclusions of the thesis.

The proposed theory of language as ritual is in need of further development in the directions of a philosophy of mind, an underlying metaphysical semiotics, and a comparative logic. But it does formalize a novel solution to a long-standing problem in religious language that is applicable to a wide variety of religious-cultural contexts and capable of registering insights from several relevant disciplinary domains.

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## THE PROBLEM OF RELIGIOUS LANGUAGE

This dissertation sets out to address a problem both antique and persistent: how can language refer to God? To state the problem philosophically, how can something finite, like language, refer to something infinite, like God? To state it theologically, how can we speak to or about God if God cannot be spoken, i.e. God is ineffable? The dissertation defends the thesis that language is ritual and therefore capable of engaging ineffables, such as God, as if they are effable. Arriving at this solution to the problem, however, first requires unscrewing the hermeneutical spiral<sup>1</sup> so as to undertake a reconstruction of the problematic, which is to say the “knowing” out of which the problem is generated: “within each question, which *qua* question is a ‘not-knowing,’ there is some kind of ‘knowing;’ otherwise the question could not be grasped as pertinent.”<sup>2</sup> The main thing known in posing the problem of religious language is language, but standard accounts of language are to be found wanting on their own terms and so requiring reconstruction. The reconstruction is undertaken in conversation with a novel theory of ritual derived in dialogue between modern social scientific

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<sup>1</sup> Ray L. Hart, *Unfinished Man and the Imagination: Toward an Ontology and a Rhetoric of Revelation* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000), 60–68.

<sup>2</sup> Hart, 54.

accounts of ritual and the Confucian ritual theory of Xunzi 荀子 (ca. 310 – 210 BCE). Rendered together in a theory of language as ritual, language may be seen to engage God in much the same way that it engages any and every other element of reality. This is to say that the bolt turns much more easily in the reconstructed nut, to the point that the problem fades as problematic.

This introductory chapter proceeds in four parts, beginning with a topography of the intellectual terrain of the dissertation as religious philosophy. This being the sandbox in which the dissertation plays, the problem of religious language is located along its contours, and the metaphysics of divine ineffability is explored such that the problem is in fact problematic. A form of critical realism is construed as the walls of the sandbox, constraining the flight of inquiry beyond its bounds. The second section elaborates the method of religious philosophy as multidisciplinary comparative inquiry. The problems of incommensurability and reduction are often posited as roadblocks to multidisciplinary and comparison. Here these problems are revealed instead to justify and even necessitate multidisciplinary comparison so long as the concepts are properly tricated in the matrices of theory, method, norms, categories, concepts, texts, figures, and so on, in which they are embedded in a tradition or discipline. The third section considers the problem of religious language as it

arises classically in Western, Chinese, and South Asian contexts, and how it resonates among other issues at play in religious philosophy. The introduction concludes with an outline of the subsequent chapters.

### Religious Philosophy

Employing “religious philosophy” to describe the present undertaking is largely a pragmatic move attempting to avoid the pitfalls of identifying the project as either theology, philosophy of religion, or religious studies. The nomenclature of theology frequently implies a discipline tied to confessional belief systems and therefore of questionable legitimacy in the academy, whereas religious studies demurs from making any kind of normative claim with regard to religious realities. Philosophy of religion, meanwhile, “suffers from unresolved contradictions about method and scope arising from internal diversity of its activities and fundamental disagreements about human reason, and it is significantly out of step with the academic study of religion.”<sup>3</sup> Another option to describe this mode of inquiry is philosophical theology, which has indeed been pressed into profitable and effective service for a highly compatible

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<sup>3</sup> Wesley J. Wildman, *Religious Philosophy as Multidisciplinary Comparative Inquiry: Envisioning a Future for the Philosophy of Religion* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2010), ix.

project.<sup>4</sup> Alas, it nevertheless suffers from having been specified in so many different ways by so many different thinkers that any focus and clarity it may have once registered has become diffuse. Religious philosophy, by contrast, is relatively novel as a term to describe an intellectual project, and yet retains connection with these other terms that have become problematic in these ways.

Largely following the lead of Wesley Wildman, the present project proceeds with the conception of religious philosophy as multidisciplinary comparative inquiry. Broadly speaking, the subject matter of inquiry is God, how God relates to the world, and how to live in light of God. The inquiry proceeds by integrating insights from a variety of disciplinary perspectives<sup>5</sup> and by comparison among ideas and practices in a variety of religious and philosophical traditions.<sup>6</sup> A friendly amendment to Wildman, relevant to this project, arises from the theological methodology of Robert Neville, who argues for a third trajectory to be integrated alongside diverse disciplinary perspectives and

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<sup>4</sup> Robert C. Neville, *On the Scope and Truth of Theology: Theology as Symbolic Engagement* (New York, NY: T&T Clark, 2006); Robert C. Neville, *Ultimates: Philosophical Theology*, vol. I (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2013); Robert C. Neville, *Existence: Philosophical Theology*, vol. 2 (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2014); Robert C. Neville, *Religion: Philosophical Theology*, vol. 3 (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2015).

<sup>5</sup> Wildman, *Religious Philosophy as Multidisciplinary Comparative Inquiry*, 86.

<sup>6</sup> Wildman, 125.

comparisons: “Dialectical systematic thinking provides kinds of feedback that do not readily come to mind with the empiricistic rhetoric that Wildman employs.”<sup>7</sup> Neville has been a longtime advocate of systematic reflection: “Comparative theology ought to be undertaken systematically, for there is no other way to protect against bias.”<sup>8</sup> The purpose of system, in Neville’s view, is to make publicly clear, to the theologian or philosopher as much as to anyone else, the full range of implications of a set of positions for each other and for any other claim about anything insofar as it eventually relates back to the domain of inquiry at hand. This is so that any discipline or perspective or piece of evidence can have purchase for offering criticism of the derived positions on the basis of rational (coherence and consistency) or empirical (adequacy, or applicability) evidence. In short, system is Neville’s way of dealing with the problem of the incommensurability of disciplinary and traditional discourses. Whereas rational and empirical evidence address the implications of theological positions as they emerge systematically, dialectical thinking provides “feedback concerning the

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<sup>7</sup> Neville, *On the Scope and Truth of Theology*, 193.

<sup>8</sup> Robert C. Neville, *Behind the Masks of God: An Essay Toward Comparative Theology* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1991), ix.



grounds of rationality itself”<sup>9</sup> by bringing those grounds into conversation, dialogue, and debate with their alternatives. Alas, such dialectical systems are necessarily the most inefficient rational processes for providing feedback<sup>10</sup> as the communities that inhabit them test them over the long haul.<sup>11</sup> Thus, patience is a virtue in religious philosophy.

An immediate problem arises from this conception of the task at hand: how to get a handle on the myriad perspectives and traditions invited to the table. One option would be to assert religious philosophy as the queen of the sciences, as John Milbank does, by offering an account of scientific and humanistic discourses, and really the entire modern project, as parasitic upon theology: “If theology no longer seeks to position, qualify or criticize other discourses, then it is inevitable that these discourses will position theology.”<sup>12</sup> Milbank argues that modern, “secular” epistemologies are both arbitrary and ultimately theological,<sup>13</sup> while Christianity “is *not* deconstructible by modern

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<sup>9</sup> Neville, *On the Scope and Truth of Theology*, 193.

<sup>10</sup> Wildman, *Religious Philosophy as Multidisciplinary Comparative Inquiry*, 182.

<sup>11</sup> Neville, *On the Scope and Truth of Theology*, 193–94.

<sup>12</sup> John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason* (Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 2008), 1.

<sup>13</sup> Milbank, 3.

secular reason; rather, it is Christianity which exposes the non-necessity of supposing ... that difference, non-totalization and indeterminacy of meaning necessarily imply arbitrariness and violence." He wants theology to be self-aware, the one gift he acknowledges from modernity, "yet able to elaborate its own self-understanding in terms of a substantive and critical theory of society in general." This "third voice" would be "counter-modern:" "historicist and pragmatist, yet *theologically* realist."<sup>14</sup> Wildman also advocates a historicist, pragmatist, and realist strategy for handling the disciplines and perspectives he invites into the arena of religious philosophy. But whereas Milbank places Christian theology in a dominant position over other disciplines and perspectives, Wildman makes religious philosophy a generous host at the banquet table of inquiry. As host, he furnishes "an underlying theory of rationality"<sup>15</sup> arising from the American pragmatist tradition of Charles Sanders Peirce (1839 – 1914), John Dewey (1859 – 1952), and William James (1842 – 1910). "A pragmatic theory of inquiry treats inquiry fundamentally as a kind of

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<sup>14</sup> Milbank, 6.

<sup>15</sup> Wildman, *Religious Philosophy as Multidisciplinary Comparative Inquiry*, xi.

spontaneous interest-driven problem-solving instinct in organisms.”<sup>16</sup> Its

emphases include:

- Biology: inquiry is an embodied activity made possible by senses and brains.
- Evolution: inquiry serves survival through helping human beings solve problems.
- Sociality: inquiry is a social process depending on cooperation and consensus.
- Correction: inquiry is tentative formulation of hypotheses, continually seeking correction.
- Fallibilism: beliefs are always subject to correction.
- Critical realism: the source of correction is a feedback potential or an experienced resistance to hypotheses; this is the proper empirical basis for speaking of sensible, structured reality external to human experience.<sup>17</sup>

He also suggests three distinctive features of religious philosophy beyond its multidisciplinary and comparative character: the existential entanglement of the expert inquirer, the distinction between first-level inquiries by non-experts and second-level inquiries by experts, and formal inquiry into ultimate concerns and ultimate matters.<sup>18</sup> Decisively alternative to Milbank, “religious philosophy is socially and intellectually and ideologically located not in a particular religious tradition but in the modern academy” and accepts the academy’s “normative assumptions” and “orbit of inquiry.”<sup>19</sup> And yet, Wildman even provides hospitality to Milbank: “religious philosophy is just as vulnerable as any other

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<sup>16</sup> Wildman, 168.

<sup>17</sup> Wildman, 170.

<sup>18</sup> Wildman, 233–34.

<sup>19</sup> Wildman, 236–37.

evaluative enterprise to critique based on ideological tainting.”<sup>20</sup> Rather than the “master-discourse” Milbank envisions for theology, Wildman wants to learn the discourses of the various disciplines, overcoming their incommensurability,<sup>21</sup> and weave them into a mutually informative conversation.

Wildman espouses an underlying critical realism as the grounding for the feedback potential constitutive of a pragmatic theory of inquiry,<sup>22</sup> but the full force of the importance of realism for the field never fully registers. In fact, it would be hard for religious philosophy to integrate disciplines that do not have an underlying realism as the epistemology, if not metaphysics, of their inquiries. Realism, in the medieval sense, contrasts with nominalism as commitment to the reality of generals as well as particulars, wholes as well as parts, and thus the ability to refer thereunto.<sup>23</sup> This sort of realism contrasts with the ultimate ontological reductionism Mark Sidertis holds as characteristic of Buddhism, whereby things like tables, and even people, that are made up of other things,

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<sup>20</sup> Wildman, 237.

<sup>21</sup> Wildman, 114–24.

<sup>22</sup> Wildman, 78, 170, 186.

<sup>23</sup> Robert C. Neville, *Realism in Religion: A Pragmatist's Perspective* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2009), 1–5.

such as atoms and organs, are not ultimately real, even though they are conventionally real.<sup>24</sup> He further argues that this mereological reductionism in the context of the Buddhist two truths device is superior to Western analytic approaches without the conventional/ultimate distinction.<sup>25</sup> An extended analysis of the implications of the two truths leads to the conclusion that the reduction of conventional truths to ultimate truths is necessarily ineffable.<sup>26</sup> This sort of reductionism is nominalistic. Realism also contrasts with idealism in committing to the reality of things independent of their being known. This is important for Wildman's strong sense of critical realism as it is the capacity of unknown things nevertheless to "push back" on an interpretation or "knowing" of them that really is the engine, or perhaps the fuel, driving his theory of inquiry.<sup>27</sup> For religious philosophy as multidisciplinary comparative inquiry, realism puts its foot down and insists that all of the disciplines and comparisons participate in the same reality, even if they pick up on different and seemingly

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<sup>24</sup> Mark Siderits, "Is Reductionism Expressible?," in *Pointing at the Moon: Buddhism, Logic, Analytic Philosophy*, ed. Jay L. Garfield, Tom J. F. Tillemans, and Mario D'Amato (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2009), 65.

<sup>25</sup> Siderits, 66.

<sup>26</sup> Siderits, 73.

<sup>27</sup> Wildman, *Religious Philosophy as Multidisciplinary Comparative Inquiry*, 183–89.

incommensurate aspects of it, and that all, as inquirers, at a base level are more or less equally capable of accessing this reality. Realism makes integration possible by providing the “ontological context of mutual relevance,”<sup>28</sup> the container, the laboratory, in which the disciplines and comparisons undertake inquiry, and without which inquiry would be impossible.

Sitting around the table of inquiry and letting the conversation flow is likely highly enjoyable, but at some point, one of the guests is bound to wonder why the religious philosopher is bothering to play host. After all, inquiry is supposed to be oriented around problem solving, according to Wildman, and so the guests should inevitably train their inquiring minds in the direction of whichever problem it is they have been called together to address. (Peirce only made one exception to inquiry as *the* mode of human thought, and that was “musement,” or purely playful thinking without purpose, which he recommended in moderation, “some five to six percent of one’s waking time”).<sup>29</sup> Alas, at precisely this turn, Wildman becomes frustratingly vague, and not in the philosophically sophisticated sense he intends: “Religious philosophy involves

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<sup>28</sup> Neville, *Ultimates*, I:212–14.

<sup>29</sup> Charles Sanders Peirce, *The Essential Peirce: Selected Philosophical Writings (1893-1913)*, vol. 2 (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1998), 430.

investigation into every kind and degree of religious phenomena.”<sup>30</sup> He goes on to provide a list of five features of religion, but qualifies his claim by noting that the list could be much longer.<sup>31</sup> He further suggests that “the most adventurous forms of religious philosophy intend to inquire into ultimacy, in the double sense of matters that are ultimately religiously important and of ultimate reality itself.”<sup>32</sup> This last leaves open both what the less adventurous forms might be about and the proportion of the field each encompasses. Alas, the impoverished attention to what his theory of inquiry is supposed to attend to leaves the project of religious philosophy somewhat untethered. This is no reason to abandon religious philosophy as multidisciplinary comparative inquiry, but rather an opportunity for development such that religious philosophy not only potentially but actually integrates the various disciplines and comparisons that fall under its scope into something.

For the purposes of the present project, religious philosophy as multidisciplinary comparative inquiry integrates multiple disciplinary perspectives and comparisons by interpreting their value for understanding and

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<sup>30</sup> Wildman, *Religious Philosophy as Multidisciplinary Comparative Inquiry*, 19.

<sup>31</sup> Wildman, 37.

<sup>32</sup> Wildman, 26.

articulating God, how God relates to the world, and how to live in light of God. Wildman tends to demur from god-language, decamping to the vocabulary of ultimacy, and with good reason. Not all religious traditions are theistic, for starters. That said, the language of ultimacy, ultimate reality, and ultimate concern also brings on board significant intellectual and spiritual baggage, not least of all that not all traditions or subsets of traditions understand their god or gods to be ultimate.<sup>33</sup> Other replacements, such as the Infinite and the Real, have similar problems. Thus, God language is retained in this project with the caveat that who or what God is for religious philosophy is a result and not a presupposition of the multidisciplinary comparative inquiry it pursues. It is arguable that all disciplines should be multidisciplinary, comparative, systematic, dialectical, empirical, rationalist, and realist in their inquiries into their own problematics; certainly, religious philosophy should be. To be so as religious philosophy requires hosting as many disciplinary perspectives and comparisons at the table as possible, making sure to be clear that the topic of conversation is God, whoever or whatever God turns out to be pending the results of the inquiry. Religious philosophy is not a master-discourse but rather

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<sup>33</sup> Lawrence A. Whitney, "Experience and the Ultimacy of God," *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 26, no. 1 (2012): 43–60, <https://doi.org/10.5325/jspecphil.26.1.0043>.



seeks to overcome incommensurability among discourses for the sake of bringing those discourses to bear for the sake of inquiry into its unique problematic. Furthermore, it is the responsibility of religious philosophy to advance a hypothesis regarding God, the relationship between God and the world, and how to live in light of God, and to elaborate the hypothesis systematically so that other disciplines and comparisons can be brought to bear in the proper respects. The hypothesis may be a novel metaphysical system, such as Neville proposes. It may also be arrived at through musement, as Peirce suggests, only achieving systematicity as it engages the process of inquiry and refines itself in light of the implications it draws, correctly or incorrectly, for other disciplines and traditions.<sup>34</sup> Religious philosophy as multidisciplinary comparative inquiry is to be measured not by its loyalty to a religious tradition or institution, but by its loyalty to broad reaching inquiry, which it takes to be the best means of access to truth. Of course, integration of the various disciplines and comparisons is only a means to an end for religious philosophy; keeping the end

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<sup>34</sup> Elizabeth Cooke, "Peirce on Musement. The Limits of Purpose and the Importance of Noticing," *European Journal of Pragmatism and American Philosophy* X, no. 2 (January 11, 2019): 1–18, <https://doi.org/10.4000/ejpap.1370>.

in sight – God, the relationship between God and the world, and how to live in light of God – is what makes it religious.

*Religious Philosophy and Religious Language*

Having charted the topography of the sandbox in which this dissertation intends to play, i.e. religious philosophy, it is important to locate the particular topic of the dissertation, i.e. religious language, therein. Since religious philosophy seeks to inquire about God, the relationship between God and the world, and how to live in light of God, the problem of religious language must be addressed via inquiry into one of these three topics. Inquiry into God to resolve the problem would require developing an understanding of God that would be amenable to linguistic engagement in at least some sense. To be sure, there are many such conceptions of God, such as that postulated in the final chapter of Alfred North Whitehead's *Process and Reality*.<sup>35</sup> Instead, the metaphysics of divine ineffability that functions as something of an assumption underlying the rest of the project will be considered briefly in the next section. Leaving God alone for the time being, the second option is to inquire into the relationship between God and the world in hopes of uncovering a point of

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<sup>35</sup> Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 2nd ed. (New York, NY: Free Press, 1979). 342-52.

traction for linguistic engagement with the divine. This approach would enable language to engage God as in some sense revealed, and so is parasitic upon some notion of revelation.<sup>36</sup> Of the various sorts of revelation, two basic approaches may be demarcated: revelation as supernatural intervention in reality, and revelation as reality itself. The first fails to meet the plausibility conditions of religious philosophy as a pragmatist form of critical realism, the contours of which will be explored in greater detail below. The second, a form of natural theology, presumes that something about God might be known on the basis of what God makes, i.e. reality, but this may not be the case if the relationship between God and the world is asymmetric.<sup>37</sup> This insight reflexes back onto the supernatural intervention approach as what is revealed through intervention may not actually be God in Godself. Thus, it is not at all clear that inquiry into the relationship between God and the world is likely to result in a satisfactory resolution of the problem of religious language.

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<sup>36</sup> Avery Robert Dulles, *Models of Revelation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1992); Herman Bavinck, *The Philosophy of Revelation*, Stone Lectures, Princeton Theological Seminary 1908–09 (New York, NY: Longmans Green, 1909).

<sup>37</sup> Lawrence A. Whitney, "Symmetry and Asymmetry: Problems and Prospects for Modeling," in *Models of God and Alternative Ultimate Realities*, ed. Jeanine Diller and Asa Kasher (Dordrecht: Springer, 2013), 35–42, <http://link.springer.com/10.1007/978-94-007-5219-1>.

The third option for resolving the problem of religious language through religious philosophy is to inquire into how to live in light of God, and this is indeed the approach taken throughout the remainder of this project. Language is a fact of human life, and so the question of how to live, e.g. how to speak, in light of God holds promise for a productive result to the question. The way of going about this, however, is quite distinct from the metaphysical machinations of inquiry into God or the cosmological analysis of the relationship between God and the world. Inquiry into how to live in light of God is inevitably far more mundane, reconstructing decidedly human states of affairs that respond to divinity in some way, in this case human speech that seeks to engage God. Such inquiries must necessarily tarry at some length in the domain of their mundane, as opposed to ultimate, concern, seeking to get their own house in order such that divinity might be provided adequate hospitality therein. In the case of the present project, this means that the bulk of the project will be given over to developing a theory of language. First and foremost, the theory must be coherent, consistent, adequate, and applicable in all instances of language, not just with respect to God. Only once such a theory is constructed may it be tested with respect to adequacy for engaging divinity, and thus its potential for resolving the problem of religious language.

Implied in the move to develop or construct a theory of language is the criticism that extant theories of language are inadequate. Indeed, much of literature attempting to solve the problem of religious language seeks to tweak some aspect or another of a theory of language in order to enable a solution, as will be elaborated at the beginning of chapter two. The implicit critique of this project, rendered explicit here, is that available theories of language writ large are inadequate, inapplicable, inconsistent, and frequently incoherent, and so require a degree of renovation that might better be termed reconstruction.<sup>38</sup> This is a large claim, and the best demonstration of it is in the elaboration of the various approaches to language that dominate academic discourse at present, which takes up the bulk of chapter two. It is enough for the moment to state the central assumption of the linguistic turn in its various aspects, to be elaborated in chapter two, to which the theory to be advanced in chapter five runs counter as a means of correction.

All expressions of the linguistic turn, one way or another, rely upon the assumption that language and thought are in some form of causal relationship. The assumption is expressed by Ferdinand de Saussure (1857 – 1913) in his

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<sup>38</sup> John Dewey, *Reconstruction in Philosophy* (New York, NY: Henry Holt, 1920).

*Course in General Linguistics* in the form of the assertion that “language is a system of signs that express ideas,”<sup>39</sup> which is to say that language is conditioned by the ideas it exists to express. The theory of linguistic determinism, such that causality runs from language to mind, is expressed in the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis of linguistic relativity that language structures thought: “we dissect nature along lines laid down by our native languages.”<sup>40</sup> The reverse of this theory is that of Universal Grammar, which argues that a genetically encoded mental faculty causally determines language development so as to accord with a set of basic rules: “It is the theory of that feature of the genetically given human cognitive capacity which makes language possible, and at the same time defines a possible human language.”<sup>41</sup> Given these inextricable linkages between language and thought in the linguistic turn, language must inevitably also participate in the same representational paradigm as the ideas to which it is bound.

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<sup>39</sup> Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, ed. Roy Harris, Charles Bally, and Albert Sechehaye (Chicago, IL: Open Court, 1986), 16.

<sup>40</sup> Benjamin Lee Whorf, *Language, Thought, and Reality: Selected Writings of Benjamin Lee Whorf*, ed. John Bissell Carroll (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1956), 213; Maria Baghramian and J. Adam Carter, “Relativism,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Spring, 2016, sec. 4.1, <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2016/entries/relativism/>.

<sup>41</sup> Ian Roberts, *The Oxford Handbook of Universal Grammar* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2017), 2.

Representational theories typically portray knowledge as the apprehension and re-presentation of an aspect of the world within the so-called mind's eye. This position assumes the existence of an objective world that is *separate* from the knowing subject and *fixed* in some way so as to be capable of being known.<sup>42</sup>

In this paradigm, knowledge represents reality, often in the medium of experience,<sup>43</sup> and language represents knowledge.

The inquiry to be pursued in this dissertation regarding how to live in light of God rejects the representational theories of knowledge and language, which is what necessitates the reconstruction of language in order to adequately pursue its goals. Instead of viewing mind as representing reality and language representing mental representations of reality, ritual will be offered as a cosmological dimension of reality in which both mentality and language participate as species of its genus, and which thereby mediates the interaction between the two. This introduction of a third term enables a more adequate construal of the relationship between mind and language that adopts insights from the notion of their "co-evolution" advanced by Terrence Deacon<sup>44</sup> and of

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<sup>42</sup> Warren G. Frisina, *The Unity of Knowledge and Action: Toward a Nonrepresentational Theory of Knowledge* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2002), 2.

<sup>43</sup> Donald Davidson, *Inquiries Into Truth and Interpretation: Philosophical Essays* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2001), chap. 9; Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009).

<sup>44</sup> Terrence W. Deacon, *The Symbolic Species: The Co-Evolution of Language and the Brain* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton, 1998).

language as a “cultural tool” advanced by Daniel Everett.<sup>45</sup> While a full theory of mind exceeds the scope of the project, the emphasis of ritual as transformative that is adopted from the third century BCE Confucian thinker Xunzi enables an understanding of mind and language as transformative rather than representative vis-à-vis reality. Overall, the project seeks to locate the meaning of language not merely with respect to mind but among all of the three poles defining an ellipse of meaning outlined by Hilary Putnam (1926 – 2016), namely reality, mind, and society.<sup>46</sup> The risk of having to undertake such an extensive renovation will always be a necessary liability in inquiry into how to live in light of God since human life is always fraught and contentious in human consideration. One possibility inherent in such reconstruction, however, is also therefore that a problem that had pertained under a previous paradigm may become less problematic following its reconstruction. Indeed, this is precisely what turns out to be the case in this instance, such that the problem of religious

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<sup>45</sup> Daniel L. Everett, *Language: The Cultural Tool* (London: Profile, 2013).

<sup>46</sup> Hilary Putnam, “The Meaning of ‘Meaning,’” in *Language, Mind, and Knowledge*, ed. K. Gunderson, Minnesota Studies in Philosophy of Science 7 (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1975), 131–93.



language is not so much resolved as dissolved in this particular instance of religious philosophy.

*The Metaphysics of God*

Since God is not the primary topic when religious philosophy inquires into how to live in light of God, the concept of God at play is secondary and so may be assumed, as it is in this case. That said, it is therefore even more important to be very clear about the concept of God at play given its function as that in which light life is lived. Moreover, there are a number of frameworks for conceiving God at play in the theological literature that fall afoul of the problem of religious language, but it is hardly clear that they are mere linguistic variations on one and the same conception. Frequently the conception of God in question delimits possibilities for the relationship between God so conceived and the world, so the divine-world relation creeps into the frame as well. This is all to say that ineffability has to do with how life is lived in light of God, but there are multiple ways in which God could be metaphysically in Godself and could relate to the world so as to be ineffable. Thus, it is necessary to tarry briefly over the issue of the metaphysics of God, and related cosmologies of divine-world interaction, so as to be able to press onward in the inquiry at hand from a relatively stable starting point.

To give the conclusion away at the outset, the set of conceptions of God of interest for their resulting in divine ineffability are those in which God is such as to relate to all of reality all at once. The reason that God is ineffable in this case, on standard accounts of language as representational, is that such a God cannot be thought since thinking involves representation of an aspect of reality, not the whole of reality, which is itself not to be confused with the wholeness of reality, which is properly an aspect. If God relates to the whole of reality, and the whole of reality cannot be thought, then the relation itself is likewise unthinkable and God falls away in mystery. As Anselm (1033 – 1109) taught, and as John Clayton (1943 – 2003) reminds us,<sup>47</sup> such a God is both “something than which nothing greater can be thought,”<sup>48</sup> and “something greater than can be thought.”<sup>49</sup> So too such a God must be greater than can be said, that is, must exceed speech, on the logic of representation elaborated above.

Already this notion of a metaphysics that distinguishes the whole of reality from the myriad things that make up the whole evokes the classical

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<sup>47</sup> John Clayton, *Religions, Reasons and Gods: Essays in Cross-Cultural Philosophy of Religion* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006), chap. 7.

<sup>48</sup> Anselm, “Proslogion,” in *Complete Philosophical and Theological Treatises of Anselm of Canterbury*, trans. Jasper Hopkins and Herbert Richardson (Minneapolis, MN: Arthur J. Banning, 2000), chap. 2.

<sup>49</sup> Anselm, chap. 15.

problem of the one and the many. Frederick Copleston (1907 – 1994) and Robert Neville are notable in the history of religious philosophy for their historical and constructive, respectively, codifications of the cross-cultural prevalence of this metaphysical framing for God, i.e. the one, relating to all of reality, i.e. the many, all at once.<sup>50</sup> The metaphysics of the one for the many says that the one serves as an ultimate matrix in which all of the things in reality, which are really different from one another, in some cases in virtually every other respect, are nonetheless able to relate to one another. Neville calls this one for the many the “ontological context of mutual relevance,”<sup>51</sup> which is a rather minimalist program for the one to serve in relation to the many by comparison with most of the other roles prescribed for the one across philosophical history. For example, positing the category of being as the one for the many has been particularly prominent among Western philosophers inheriting the Greek legacies of the pre-Socratics, Plato (ca. 429 – 347 BCE), and Aristotle (384 – 322 BCE). When being is the one for the many, it is the being that the many beings that inhabit reality have, and thus is sometimes called “being-itself.” Paul Tillich (1886 – 1965) is notable for

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<sup>50</sup> Frederick Charles Copleston, *Religion and the One: Philosophies East and West* (New York, NY: Crossroad, 1981); Neville, *Ultimates*, vol. I, chap. 9.

<sup>51</sup> Neville, *Ultimates*, I:190–91.

cultivating the notion of the one for the many as the “ground of being” in an existentialist frame.<sup>52</sup> Tillich is also notable for connecting the category of being as an answer to the problem of the one and the many with the category of ultimacy: “Our ultimate concern is that which determines our being or not-being.”<sup>53</sup> Since it is the ground of being that determines our being or not-being, then the ground of being is our ultimate concern, or at least it should be. Tillich reserved the term “idolatry” to describe a mismatch between ultimate concern and ultimate reality: “Idolatry is the elevation of a preliminary concern to ultimacy.”<sup>54</sup> The logic, then, is that whatever is taken to be the one for the many, i.e. being, is the proper ultimate concern for all of the many beings that are, i.e. participate in oneness.

An important development in this legacy of answers to the problem of the one and the many, in which the one relates to the many all at once, is the introduction of a metaphysics of indeterminacy by Robert Neville. His commitment to the metaphysics and logic of indeterminacy remains consistent

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<sup>52</sup> Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol. I (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1951), 155–56.

<sup>53</sup> Tillich, I:14.

<sup>54</sup> Tillich, I:13.

from his earliest work, *God the Creator*,<sup>55</sup> through his most recent forays in systematic philosophy, the three-volume *Philosophical Theology*.<sup>56</sup> Attending to this approach is important for the role it will play in the final chapter considering the subjunctivity of ritual and thus language. Neville receives the notion of determinateness from Paul Weiss (1901 – 2002), who notes that “to be determinate is to be opposed to and opposed by” some other determinate thing, without which the thing would be “radically indeterminate.”<sup>57</sup> Neville develops this logic to say that “to be determinate is, minimally, to have some identity over against or in difference from what is other than that identity.”<sup>58</sup> For a thing to be indeterminate is thus the opposite, “it lacks a determinate real distinction from some other determination.”<sup>59</sup> What makes the one for the many different is that it is completely indeterminate with respect to absolutely anything and everything, including even nothing. It “is indeterminate, that is, nothing, not something

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<sup>55</sup> Robert C. Neville, *God the Creator: On the Transcendence and Presence of God* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1992).

<sup>56</sup> Neville, *Ultimates*; Neville, *Existence*; Neville, *Religion*.

<sup>57</sup> Paul Weiss, *Modes of Being* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1958), 512.

<sup>58</sup> Neville, *God the Creator*, 44.

<sup>59</sup> Neville, 60.

rather than nothing nor something rather than something else.”<sup>60</sup> It is only in the act of creating the many, that is, all of the determinate things as determinate with respect to one another, with respect to which the one is determinate, and this creative act is itself a reflexive act of self-determination.<sup>61</sup> The force of the logic and metaphysics of the determinacy of reality is that the creative movement from sheer indeterminacy to the world of more or less determinate things is not only singular, as the notion of the one for the many indicates, but utterly asymmetrical, from nothing to everything all at once.<sup>62</sup>

The idea that the one relates to the many “all at once” admits of at least two potential misunderstandings that should therefore be explicitly rejected. The first is that the notion of “at once” implies that the one relates to the many at a single, discrete temporal point. The risk of this misunderstanding is particularly acute when the notion of creation is deployed because it implies a temporality prior to and then following from the act of creation at a discrete point in time, as in the case of deism. Such a conception is a misunderstanding precisely because the one would no longer be a source of unity in relation to the many beyond the

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<sup>60</sup> Neville, *Ultimates*, I:1.

<sup>61</sup> Neville, vol. I, chap. 11.

<sup>62</sup> Neville, I:44; Whitney, “Symmetry and Asymmetry: Problems and Prospects for Modeling.”

moment of discrete temporality in which that relation were to pertain. Such a view would necessitate a form of occasionalism<sup>63</sup> whereby either the one would relate anew to the many in each successive moment, or a succession of ones would have to step in, one after another through the course of time. The misunderstanding involved is mistaken precisely because it assumes that the one being for the many happens within time instead of time being one of the many determinate things the one unifies within its matrix. The one is thus also eternal on the account of eternity as pure atemporalism,<sup>64</sup> which like the metaphysics of indeterminacy finds its greatest contemporary champion in Neville.<sup>65</sup> In relating to the many all at once, the one is not relating to them temporally but eternally, at all points of time and in all of the temporal modes together.

The second misunderstanding evoked by the idea of the one relating to the many “all at once” is parallel to the first except that it is spatial, taking its cue from the notion of “all,” rather than temporal. Clearly, “all” encompasses a

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<sup>63</sup> Jason Jordan, “Occasionalism,” *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, accessed March 16, 2019, <https://www.iep.utm.edu/occasion/>.

<sup>64</sup> Natalja Deng, “Eternity in Christian Thought,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Fall, 2018, sec. 4.1.1, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2018/entries/eternity/>.

<sup>65</sup> Robert C. Neville, *Eternity and Time's Flow* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1993).

greater quantity of the many than “at once” does of their temporal progression, but it is precisely the very notions of quantity and quantification that lead to the possibility of misunderstanding. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770 – 1831) in his *Science of Logic* provides a metaphor for distinguishing two meanings of “all” in terms of infinity, which proves useful irrespective on ongoing debates about what “true infinity” actually means for him in the context of his system.<sup>66</sup>

The image of the progression in infinity is the straight *line*; the infinite is only at the two limits of this line, and always only is where the latter (which is existence) is not but *transcends itself*, in its non-existence, that is, in the indeterminate. As true infinite, bent back upon itself, its image becomes the *circle*, the line that has reached itself, closed and wholly present, without *beginning* and *end*.<sup>67</sup>

The many are infinite in the first sense of the infinite straight line to which, in principle, more could always be added, thereby increasing the quantity of the infinite many that there are. By contrast, the one is infinite in principle such that quantification is simply not applicable as a process since there is no quantity of the one to be discerned, in spite of its being named “one;” the one is only one by virtue of its unifying function for the many. Just as the eternal one is for the temporal many in an eternal way with all of the moments and modes of time

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<sup>66</sup> Robert R. Williams, “Hegel’s Concept of the True Infinite,” in *Tragedy, Recognition, and the Death of God: Studies in Hegel and Nietzsche* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2012), 161–89, <http://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199656059.003.0007>.

<sup>67</sup> Georg Wilhelm Fredrich Hegel, *The Science of Logic*, ed. George Di Giovanni (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 119.



together, the infinite one is for the quantifiable many in an infinite way with all of the many that there are together.

The set of conceptions of God such that God, i.e. the one, relates to reality, i.e. the many, all at once includes God as ultimate, indeterminate, eternal, and infinite. Alas, this set of conceptions appears to run headlong into the critique of metaphysics as ontotheology launched by Martin Heidegger (1889 – 1976), who sought to deconstruct the Western philosophical tradition through the radically historicized notion that “metaphysics grounds an age.”<sup>68</sup> What unites metaphysics across epochs is a common topic of inquiry: “Metaphysics speaks of the totality of entities as such, [and] thus of the *being* of entities,”<sup>69</sup> formulating “a truth about the totality of entities as such.”<sup>70</sup> Heidegger discerns within the metaphysical topic two intertwined questions:

The question of being, as the question of the being of entities, is double in form. On the one hand, it asks: What is an entity in general as an entity? In the history of philosophy, reflections which fall within the domain of this question acquire the title ontology. The question “What is an entity?” [or “What is that which is?”] simultaneously asks: Which

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<sup>68</sup> Martin Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology, and Other Essays* (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1977), 115; Iain Donald Thomson, *Heidegger on Ontotheology: Technology and the Politics of Education* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 8.

<sup>69</sup> Thomson, *Heidegger on Ontotheology*, 12; Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche: The Will to Power as Knowledge and as Metaphysics & Nihilism*, ed. David Farrell Krell, vol. III & IV (San Francisco, CA: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991), vols. IV, 115.

<sup>70</sup> Thomson, *Heidegger on Ontotheology*, 12; Heidegger, *Nietzsche: The Will to Power as Knowledge and as Metaphysics & Nihilism*, vol. III & IV, vols. III, 187.

entity is the highest [or supreme, *höchste*] entity, and in what sense is it? This is the question of God and of the divine. We call the domain of this question theology. This duality in the question of the being of entities can be united under the title ontotheology.<sup>71</sup>

In conceiving the one to relate to the many all at once, the metaphysics of God presented here “speaks of the totality of entities as such,” and so it is properly metaphysics according to Heidegger. Insofar as this metaphysics also speaks of the one as the being that the many beings are, it is a response to the ontological side of metaphysics, and insofar as it speaks of being as the highest, i.e. ultimate, then it is also a response to the theological side of metaphysics. Hence, the conceptions of God advanced here do in fact run headlong into the Heideggarian ontotheological paradigm.

One possibility upon running headlong into a critique is that the resulting conflagration reveals the basis of criticism to be less than properly established, as turns out to be the case with respect to the accusation implied in the moniker of ontotheology. Heidegger takes the paradigm of being to be of central metaphysical concern and then divides it between ontological and theological substrates. The conceptualizations of God engaged here do not start with the question of being, however. They start with the problem of the one and the many

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<sup>71</sup> Thomson, *Heidegger on Ontotheology*, 13; Martin Heidegger, *Pathmarks*, ed. William McNeill (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 340.

and then offer being as one possible construal of the one, thereby subordinating the metaphysics of being to the ontology of the one, rather than ontology being subordinated to metaphysics as Heidegger would have it. As Heidegger notes, and as has been acknowledged above, the metaphysics of being has been prominent in the Western philosophical tradition, but by no means predominant in the way that he imagines. Alongside the metaphysics of being are other schematizations of the one, including personhood as in personalism,<sup>72</sup> thinking mind as in idealism,<sup>73</sup> and as pervasively in process running from Heraclitus<sup>74</sup> through Whitehead<sup>75</sup> and beyond. Admittedly, a number of avowed personalists, idealists, and even the occasional process thinker, have ventured into the idiom of being to mine its resources, but to interpret them as therefore reducible to the ontology of being is at best exegetically dishonest. Further, the parochialism reducing metaphysics to the ontology of being converts to outright myopia when

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<sup>72</sup> Thomas D. Williams and Jan Olof Bengtsson, "Personalism," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Winter, 2018, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2018/entries/personalism/>.

<sup>73</sup> Paul Guyer and Rolf-Peter Horstmann, "Idealism," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Winter, 2018, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2018/entries/idealism/>.

<sup>74</sup> Daniel W. Graham, "Heraclitus," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Fall, 2015, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2015/entries/heraclitus/>.

<sup>75</sup> Whitehead, *Process and Reality*.

measured against the global scope of philosophical inquiry. The attempt to deconstruct metaphysics by rendering it historical falls apart upon a proper historical rendering of the global philosophical scene with regard to metaphysical and ontological issues. Copleston and Neville provide a necessary corrective to this Heideggarian overreach by demonstrating the cross-cultural pervasiveness of the question of the one and the many and the diversity of metaphysical schemes for schematizing the one.

The importance of correcting the Heideggarian metaphysical imaginary for the purposes of understanding the metaphysics of God as it results in divine ineffability is that the metaphysics of God are properly ontological and therefore logically prior to any metaphysical scheme that might be applied *a posteriori*. Metaphysics is important for generating the conceptions of God according to which God functions as the one for the many all at once, but there are multiple metaphysical systems compatible with elaborating that more basic ontological insight. The metaphysics that will be detailed in chapter two and deployed in chapters five and six is generally of the process type, taking the semiotics of Charles Sanders Peirce as properly metaphysical and adding the category of ritual as the means by which harmony emerges among otherwise spontaneous semiotic emergence. The full metaphysical scheme requires more elaboration

than is relevant for the sake of this project, but it is important for understanding the role of language as part and parcel of the ongoing procedural apparatus of reality. It includes within it the analysis of determinacy and indeterminacy described above from Neville, which is how it links up with the ontological program of the one and the many and the resulting problem of religious language. The plausibility of such a metaphysical semiotics result from its adherence to a form of critical realism that sets the conditions therefore, which is the last aspect of religious philosophy to receive its due methodological attention for the time being.

### *Critical Realism*

One of the risks in religious philosophy is that, lurking as it does at the edges of reality, life, knowledge, and everything, the program is prone to flights of fancy that press so far beyond the practical engagement of everyday affairs that the outcome fails as any kind of solution to any kind of problem. In order to provide some grounding, Wildman introduces critical realism as a means of setting plausibility conditions for religious philosophy. What he says about critical realism is that reality provides feedback such that incorrect hypotheses about reality, which is independent of the both the hypothesis and the philosopher who constructs it, may be corrected to better accord with and

engage reality as it is. He also promises to explain his theory of critical realism, having noted it: “The pragmatic theory of inquiry has six main emphases, and I will explain each in what follows.”<sup>76</sup> Alas, he never quite gets around to doing so. This is especially problematic given that there are multiple theories and applications of critical realism in the literature, and they are not necessarily consistent with one another.<sup>77</sup> This oversight in giving rigorous annunciation of the religious philosophy program is especially problematic for the present endeavor since its reconstruction draws from all three domains in which different theories of critical realism are at play: philosophy, theology, and social theory. It is therefore particularly incumbent here to be precise about how religious philosophy is situated amongst these disparate uses of the term.

The principally philosophical version of critical realism emerges in response to the problem of the external world, which calls for explanation of “how perception could give us knowledge or justified belief about an external world, about things outside of ourselves.”<sup>78</sup> As an approach to this problem,

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<sup>76</sup> Wildman, *Religious Philosophy as Multidisciplinary Comparative Inquiry*, 170.

<sup>77</sup> Andreas Losch, “On the Origins of Critical Realism,” *Theology and Science* 7, no. 1 (February 1, 2009): 85–86, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14746700802617105>.

<sup>78</sup> Jack Lyons, “Epistemological Problems of Perception,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Spring, 2017, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2017/entries/perception-episprob/>.

critical realism attempts to split the baby between affirming a mind-independent reality, which idealism would deny, and denying the appearance of that reality in mind apart from its mediation in the sensory apparatus as interpreted through cognitive processes, which direct realism would affirm. René Descartes (1596 – 1650) and John Locke (1632 – 1704) are early proponents of something like this view, although each are often also interpreted as its antagonists in various respects. A distinctively American tradition of critical realism in this vein emerged, with one of its principal proponents being Roy Wood Sellars (1880 – 1973), who claimed that “it holds that knowledge of objects is mediated by ideas which are *in some sense* distinct from the objects of knowledge.”<sup>79</sup> His son, Wilfrid Sellars (1912 – 1989), is also an important critical realist, whose approach “attempts to balance competing insights in several different dimensions — empiricist-rationalist, foundationalist-coherentist, externalist-internalist, realist-phenomenalist-idealist — while also keeping an eye on the deep connections between epistemology and the metaphysics of mind.”<sup>80</sup> Not only does this

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<sup>79</sup> Durant Drake et al., *Essays in Critical Realism: A Co-Operative Study of the Problem of Knowledge* (London: MacMillan, 1920), 190.

<sup>80</sup> Willem deVries, “Wilfrid Sellars,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Winter, 2016, sec. 4, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2016/entries/sellars/>; Wilfrid Sellars et al., *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997).

approach demonstrate the attempt on the part of critical realism to harmonize diverse insights, the younger Sellars also demonstrates that critical realism sits at a point of apparent paradox between resisting the mediation of perception and yet acknowledging perception as irreducibly conceptual.<sup>81</sup> Despite sympathies with the generosity of spirit, desire for integration, and commitment to fallibility espoused by this set of critical realists, it is hard to imagine that anything quite so restricted as this set of issues in the philosophy of mind could adequately fulfill the role Wildman espouses for critical realism in religious philosophy. Moreover, the apparently necessary commitment of this critical realism to some form of representationalism,<sup>82</sup> which the present endeavor denies, makes it particularly unsuitable, beyond its insufficiency to provide the requisite plausibility conditions.

A second form of critical realism emerges in the science and theology literature, which is a much safer guess as to the intended referent of the invocation of critical realism by Wildman given his involvement therein.

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<sup>81</sup> Steven M. Levine, "Sellars' Critical Direct Realism," *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 15, no. 1 (January 26, 2007): 53–76, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09672550601003280>.

<sup>82</sup> William G. Lycan, "Representational Theories of Consciousness," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Summer, 2015, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2015/entries/consciousness-representational/>.



Whereas Kees van Kooten Niekerk sees continuity between the critical realism of the philosophy of perception, via a supposed influence on scientific realism,<sup>83</sup> on the theology and science usage, Andreas Losch challenges this genealogy on the grounds of lack of reference to the relevant literature.<sup>84</sup> This skepticism is further inculcated by a lack of reference to critical realism in the scientific realism literature,<sup>85</sup> and the need of at least one philosopher to develop an explicitly *Critical Scientific Realism*.<sup>86</sup> Yet, Ian Barbour (1923 – 2013), who first articulated critical realism as a framework for work in theology and science, exhibits the same impulse as the philosophers of perception to register the objectivity of external reality and the contributions of cognitive processes: Critical realism “must acknowledge both the creativity of man’s mind, and the existence of patterns in events that are not created by man’s mind... *Critical realism* acknowledges the indirectness of reference *and* the realistic intent of language as

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<sup>83</sup> Kees van Kooten Niekerk, “Critical Realism,” in *Encyclopedia of Science and Religion*, ed. J. Wentzel Van Huyssteen (New York, NY: Macmillan, 2003).

<sup>84</sup> Losch, “On the Origins of Critical Realism,” 89–90.

<sup>85</sup> Anjan Chakravartty, “Scientific Realism,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Summer, 2017, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2017/entries/scientific-realism/>.

<sup>86</sup> Ilkka Niiniluoto, *Critical Scientific Realism* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1999); Losch, “On the Origins of Critical Realism,” 94–95.

used in the scientific community.”<sup>87</sup> Arthur Peacocke (1924 – 2006) and John Polkinghorne are luminaries in the theology and science field who adopted similar forms of critical realism in the wake of Barbour, in the former case with some influence by Wilfrid Sellars, and in the latter with influence from Michael Polanyi (1891 – 1976).<sup>88</sup> The influence of Roman Catholic philosopher and theologian Bernhard Lonergan (1904 – 1984) has also been influential in the development of this trajectory.<sup>89</sup> Clearly, this set of derivations of critical realism are much better candidates for the role Wildman envisions for it in religious philosophy for being far more extensively construed than the limitations of the philosophy of perception. It is not clear that this vision of critical realism is at all adequate for the present project, however, due to the centrality of modeling, especially on the articulation of Barbour:

“Yes, science is trying to describe reality, but it does so only very indirectly in highly symbolic and abstractive language.” One has to use models, but one has to recognize their limitations; one has to realize that they are partial and limited, that each one selects

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<sup>87</sup> Ian G. Barbour, *Issues in Science and Religion* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1966), 172.

<sup>88</sup> Arthur Robert Peacocke, *Intimations of Reality: Critical Realism in Science and Religion*, Mendenhall Lectures, DePauw University (South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984); John Polkinghorne, *Reason and Reality: The Relationship Between Science and Theology* (Philadelphia, PA: Trinity, 1991).

<sup>89</sup> Kees van Kooten Niekerk, “Critical Realism in Theology and Science,” in *Encyclopedia of Sciences and Religions*, ed. Anne L. C. Runehov and Lluís Oviedo (Dordrecht: Springer, 2013), 556–57, [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4020-8265-8\\_275](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4020-8265-8_275).

certain aspects and emphasizes those that none of them corresponds exactly in any simple way to reality.<sup>90</sup>

The models Barbour invokes, which seek to correlate with but not correspond to reality, are once again mental representations of reality and thus fall afoul of the same representationalism as the critical realism that emerges from the philosophy of perception.

The two earlier paradigms of critical realism, in the philosophy of perception and in the theology and science dialogue, are relatively niche approaches designed for the particularities of the inquiries they seek to frame. The most recent, and by far the most widely recognized paradigm of critical realism is the philosophy of science generally, and of the social sciences particularly, developed by Roy Bhaskar (1944 – 2014). Like the earlier paradigms, Bhaskar is keen to harmonize a commitment to an independent reality from human thought about it with the necessity of distinctively human modes of engagement for the production of knowledge:

It is “realist” in the generic sense that it takes a “mind-independent” nature as a fundamental “condition of possibility” for natural science. But it is also realist in the

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<sup>90</sup> Ian G. Barbour, “Commentary on ‘Theological Resources from the Physical Sciences,’” *Zygon* 1, no. 1 (March 1966): 30, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9744.1966.tb00430.x>.

“critical” sense that it sees science as a human activity that is inevitably mediated (if not determined) by human language and social power.<sup>91</sup>

Unlike the earlier paradigms, Bhaskar provides a fully systematic philosophy of science that recognizes the relative autonomy of different strata and domains of nature and the emergence of one stratus from another, and fully affirms both a fallibilistic epistemology and a probabilistic ontology of causal norms rather than causal laws.<sup>92</sup> This “transcendental realism,” as Bhaskar calls it, leads to a “critical naturalism,” which “is ‘naturalistic’ insofar as it rejects any sharp divide between the natural and social sciences. It is ‘critical’ insofar as it rejects any reduction of the social to the natural.”<sup>93</sup> Bhaskarian critical naturalism also distinguishes natural from social reality: “Unlike natural reality, social reality is not independent of human minds,” although it is independent of any individual

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<sup>91</sup> Philip S. Gorski, “What Is Critical Realism? And Why Should You Care?,” *Contemporary Sociology* 42, no. 5 (September 1, 2013): 664, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0094306113499533>. The whole of the footnote that appears at the end of the first sentence in this quote bears full transcription here for situating realism among the varieties of modernisms: “As such, it is opposed to: 1) skeptical methods involving radical doubt about external reality (e.g., Descartes’ Meditations); 2) empiricist epistemologies which see scientific knowledge as built up out of sense impressions either via association (Locke) or induction (Hume); 3) transcendental idealisms which make causality into a feature of human understanding rather than of the world itself (i.e., Kant).”

<sup>92</sup> Gorski, 664–65; Roy Bhaskar, *A Realist Theory of Science*, Classical Texts in Critical Realism (London: Routledge, 2008).

<sup>93</sup> Gorski, ““What Is Critical Realism?,”” 665; Roy Bhaskar, *The Possibility of Naturalism: A Philosophical Critique of the Contemporary Human Sciences* (London: Routledge, 1998).

human mind.<sup>94</sup> In a second stage of his thinking, Bhaskar adds a dialectical element to his notion of critical realism in order to give “a more adequate ontology of change, a better account of the real forms and processes of change, and one that is more adequate to the radical implications of emergence than basic CR was.”<sup>95</sup> It is unlikely that Wildman would be terribly excited about a critical realism in the form a systematic philosophy, so the critical realism that emerges in the theology and science discussion remains the strongest contender for what he intends to invoke as a framework for religious philosophy. Neither is it of interest for present purposes to onboard a whole systematic philosophy, but the basic outlines of especially the pre-dialectical version of critical realism as proposed by Bhaskar are rather compatible with impulses that will play out especially in the later chapters of this dissertation. Even the motivation for the dialectical version of critical realism in providing a more adequate account of change resonates with a similar goal in the present project, although it is accomplished here through a massively processive metaphysics rather than a dialectical ontology. Moreover, the causal norms that Bhaskar seeks to replace for causal laws in positivistic science are given detailed expression in this project as

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<sup>94</sup> Gorski, ““What Is Critical Realism?,”” 666.

<sup>95</sup> Gorski, 668; Roy Bhaskar, *Dialectic: The Pulse of Freedom* (London: Verso, 1993).

rituals. Finally, the idea that natural reality is entirely independent of mind whereas social reality is independent of any individual mind sets the stage for locating linguistic meaning in the ellipse defined by the poles of reality, mind, and society as was elaborated above from the work of Hillary Putnam.

None of the three paradigms of critical realism outlined here are adopted wholesale. However, both the integrative emphasis and the attempt to reconcile the paradox of a mind-independent reality with the necessity of conceptual schemata for knowing that reality, which cross all three, are adopted here as a framework for the plausibility conditions of religious philosophy. The theory to be elaborated over the course of the dissertation is only plausible if it rigorously defends the independence of reality from thought, language, and society, which is its commitment to realism. Yet, in order to be plausible, the theory must also recognize that thought, language, and society are themselves elements of reality that reflex on reality so as to engage it in ways that are not merely representational but in fact transformative. Thus, as will be elaborated in greater detail in chapter five, reality is to be understood as not only real, i.e. independent, but also singular and opaque. The singularity of reality is important for maintaining that all processes that engage reality, regardless of time, place, or manner, which are to be understood as rituals, are in fact engaging

one and the same reality. There is only one reality to engage, which is to say that there is only one table of inquiry at which the religious philosopher may host guests from many disciplines. That said, that singular, common reality is also opaque, which is why inquiry is necessary in the first place. Part of that opacity has to do with the fact that reality is inherently less determinate than either modern or postmodern attempts to interpret it have allowed. Moreover, reality is opaque because it is constantly undergoing multiple processes of transformation, i.e. ritualization, at multiple levels simultaneously such that anything that might count as knowledge must inevitably be too discrete and is necessarily immediately obsolete. This is what it means for critical realism to be both probabilistic and fallibilistic. Critical realism, then, is something of an exercise in futility if the end goal is understood as some kind of final, certain knowledge. If the goal of certainty is abandoned, however, then critical realism becomes a sandbox in which the game of inquiry may be played unto infinity. When the game is for the sake of solving a problem, which is to say for the sake of improving reality, then inquiry itself transcends the category of a game and itself becomes a ritual activity. It is for the next section to outline how such rituals are to be played.

## Multidisciplinary Comparative Inquiry

Having adopted the framework of religious philosophy, and having clarified its topic of inquiry that makes it religious, the question of how inquiry is to proceed comes to the fore. Inquiry has already been identified as an activity aimed at solving problems, which is to say that it is a process by which problems, whether practical, abstract, or troublesome lacunae in knowledge, may be brought toward resolution. Inquiry writ large is thus highly abstract, residing in the philosophical domain of logic, and having been addressed extensively in the literature.<sup>96</sup> Of greater present moment are the qualifiers appended to the notion of inquiry for the purposes of religious philosophy, namely “multidisciplinary” and “comparative.” This section addresses the related problems of

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<sup>96</sup> John Dewey, *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry* (New York, NY: Henry Holt, 1938); John Dewey, *The Public and Its Problems: An Essay in Political Inquiry*, ed. Melvin L. Rogers, annotated edition (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2012); Elizabeth Cooke, *Peirce's Pragmatic Theory of Inquiry: Fallibilism and Indeterminacy* (London: Continuum, 2006); Brandon Daniel-Hughes, *Pragmatic Inquiry and Religious Communities: Charles Peirce, Signs, and Inhabited Experiments* (Cham, Switzerland: Springer, 2018); Susan Haack, *Putting Philosophy to Work: Inquiry and Its Place in Culture - Essays on Science, Religion, Law, Literature, and Life* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus, 2013); Isaac Levi, *The Fixation of Belief and Its Undoing: Changing Beliefs Through Inquiry* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Isaac Levi, *Pragmatism and Inquiry: Selected Essays* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2012); Cheryl J. Misak, *Truth and the End of Inquiry: A Peircean Account of Truth* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon, 2004); Nicholas Rescher, *Scientific Inquiry in Philosophical Perspective* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1987); Nicholas Rescher, *Inquiry Dynamics* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 2000); Nicholas Rescher, *Dialectics: A Classical Approach to Inquiry* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2007); Israel Scheffler, *The Anatomy of Inquiry: Philosophical Studies in the Theory of Science*, Routledge Revivals (London: Routledge, 2014).



incommensurability and reduction, and then shows how multidisciplinary comparative inquiry mitigates their threats, concluding with a schematic rendering of the process of inquiry that will be pursued through the remainder of the project.

### *Incommensurability*

Incommensurability has to do with domains of interpretation being sufficiently unrelated to one another that they are inherently incapable of discerning whether or not they are interpreting the same object. Drawing on a metaphoric application of a mathematical notion indicating a lack of common measure, incommensurability is classically deployed in philosophy of science by Thomas Kuhn (1922 – 1996) and Paul Feyerabend (1924 – 1994) to describe the disjunctures between successive scientific paradigms.<sup>97</sup> Comparative philosophers have given due attention to the problem of incommensurability among various philosophical traditions, that is, to tradition incommensurability, particularly between traditions originating in East and South Asia and the

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<sup>97</sup> Eric Oberheim and Paul Hoyningen-Huene, “The Incommensurability of Scientific Theories,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Fall, 2018, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2018/entries/incommensurability/>.

West.<sup>98</sup> This is not to say that the problem has been resolved, but rather to suggest that this vector of tradition incommensurability is the dominant consideration of incommensurability for comparativists. It is only quite recently that the disciplinary vector of incommensurability, that is, the disparity in discourse among academic disciplines including but also beyond the sciences, is available for philosophical consideration. This is hardly surprising since on standard accounts philosophy is philosophy and not some other discipline, so ostensibly there is no disciplinary incommensurability because all philosophy participates in a common conceptual framework, albeit not necessarily a common language. Since philosophy involves at its heart the articulation and interrogation of any and all conceptual frameworks, however, it is in fact questionable whether philosophy could, should, or would have a common conceptual framework. Thus, the extant focus by comparativists on tradition incommensurability would benefit greatly from closer consideration of intra-tradition incommensurabilities, e.g. disciplinary and successive, alongside the extant concern with inter-tradition incommensurability.

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<sup>98</sup> David Wong, "Comparative Philosophy: Chinese and Western," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Spring, 2017, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2017/entries/comparphil-chiwes/>.

Further consideration of the details of tradition incommensurability demonstrates the inevitable crossover into issues of disciplinary incommensurability. One of the side effects of tradition incommensurability is that the conceptual frameworks of, for example, Western philosophies, and those of, for example, East Asian philosophies, do not draw their own boundaries as a discipline of philosophy in the same places. This is not to say that traditions cannot be shoehorned into one another, as all too frequently happens under the colonialism of Western philosophical discourse in the global academy.<sup>99</sup> Of course, the requisite contortions to do so must of necessity leave some, if not significant, unaccounted remainder. One prevalent attitude toward this remainder is to slough it off as unphilosophical and therefore requiring no accounting. Such has been the fate, for example, of the songs and poetry of the Warring States Confucian thinker Xunzi in virtually all of the English-language philosophical literature pertaining to him. When failure to account for some aspect of the remainder threatens the coherence of the desirable material, however, then it is often treated as a novelty to be acknowledged for its function in the philosophical project but accounted as a sideshow of interest merely for

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<sup>99</sup> Bryan W. Van Norden, *Taking Back Philosophy: A Multicultural Manifesto* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2017).

titillation. This fetishizing of aspects of traditions is rightly deplored as exoticizing orientalism, and yet remains a prevalent aspect of too many comparative projects. Xunzi is exemplary here as well with respect to his consideration of ritual (li 禮). Three works represent the predominant trends vis-à-vis dealing with remainders. Paul Goldin is deeply appreciative of the contributions Xunzi makes to ritual theory, on the terms of Western social scientific ritual theories, but fetishizes what Xunzi understood to be the actual practice of ritual, “as of salutation, of mourning, of eating,” as “of only secondary importance to his argument.”<sup>100</sup> In a similar move, Kurtis Hagen makes the case for a constructivist interpretation of ritual in Xunzi, from which he argues that the actual practice of ritual is contextual and must be made appropriate to circumstance.<sup>101</sup> Like for Goldin, Hagen identifies a remainder of ritual practice and casts it onto the slaughter bench of history so that his interpretation of Xunzi may more adequately conform to his desired constructivism on a modern Western account. A somewhat different form of shoehorning emerges in a recent volume edited by T.C. Kline and Justin Tiwald that takes ritual to be the Xunzian

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<sup>100</sup> Paul R. Goldin, *Rituals of the Way: The Philosophy of Xunzi* (Chicago, IL: Open Court, 1999), 68.

<sup>101</sup> Kurtis Hagen, *The Philosophy of Xunzi: A Reconstruction* (Chicago, IL: Open Court, 2007), 32–35, 99–103.

philosophy of religion.<sup>102</sup> This is a very interesting interpretation except for the fact that the Western categories of philosophy and religion are never interrogated with regard to fit for Xunzi, his context, and his orientation. Furthermore, regardless of what Xunzi thought about religion and its various aspects, dimensions, realities, and practices, his theory of ritual is not primarily interested in such matters. It is first and foremost his political philosophy, as will be demonstrated in chapter four, aimed at achieving sociopolitical order in the war-torn ravages of the Warring States. Any religious implications would be secondary to that focus.

The problem with philosophical engagement with Xunzi on the topic of ritual is that Xunzi would not have considered himself a philosopher in anything like the modern Western sense of the disciplinary category. His project was not bound by modern Western disciplinary methods, norms, and categories. Rather, his project of articulating a strategy for addressing the sociopolitical disintegration of the Warring States was one among many such strategic proposals vying for attention and acceptance by the rulers of the day. This being the case, Xunzi appropriated good ideas from other strategists, and protested

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<sup>102</sup> T. C. Kline and Justin Tiwald, *Ritual and Religion in the Xunzi* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2014).

vehemently against ideas he considered not only bad but likely dangerous to future social stability. Rather than a philosophical concept or category, his consideration of ritual is part of a larger social theory. Related to philosophy but more properly located in sociology and related social scientific disciplines, social theory attends to not only what would constitute a good society but also the mechanisms for bringing such a society about and sustaining it. Comparative philosophers who want to take Xunzi on as close to what might plausibly be considered his own terms as achievable must now cope with not only tradition incommensurability but also with disciplinary incommensurability. Given the extensive development of ritual theory and ritual studies in the Western social scientific literature, this disciplinary incommensurability is operating intratraditionally, i.e. between Western philosophy and modern social science, as well as intertraditionally, i.e. between Chinese and Western philosophies.

Incommensurability, of whatever sort, is often invoked as a methodological trump card, arguing that the conceptual differences between traditional and disciplinary paradigms or successive iterations thereof create insurmountable barriers that block their communication with one another.

Wesley Wildman helpfully summarizes this incommensurability hypothesis in three steps:

- (1) Conceptual schemes are inextricably embedded in practices and assumptions of worldly realities (theories, disciplines, languages, cultures).
- (2) Conceptual schemes are incommensurable when all attempts to take the measure of one family of ideas or one web of practices in the terms of another necessarily distort what is interpreted to such a degree that co-measuring is rightly deemed a pernicious waste of time.
- (3) Conceptual schemes are often incommensurable in this sense.<sup>103</sup>

The first step is important for the incommensurability hypothesis even as it is the very justification for a comparative philosophical project: good comparison demands interrogating concepts, at least at first, on the terms of the theories, disciplines, languages, and cultures in which they are embedded. The fact that not all comparisons are good comparisons does not justify abandoning the project, and so what it means to interrogate concepts on the terms of their intellectual context is elaborated below as the approach of trication. The third step, by contrast to the first, is a premature answer to the empirical question of the frequency of incommensurable conceptual schemes. Whether or not concepts may be fruitfully brought into comparison across their embeddedness in traditions or disciplines after having been properly tricated therein remains rather open as there are relatively few examples of good comparison that achieve this. This dissertation aspires to be an example of good comparison that tricates its terms for comparison deeply and carefully. The empirical prematurity of this

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<sup>103</sup> Wildman, *Religious Philosophy as Multidisciplinary Comparative Inquiry*, 118–19.

third step is sufficient in and of itself to justify rejecting the incommensurability hypothesis. That said, it is the second step, which takes the inextricability of conceptual embeddedness from the first step and insists that this situation results necessarily in extreme distortion, where the incommensurability hypothesis proves philosophically deficient.

The underlying assumption in the second step is that in order to communicate across the contexts of the disciplines or traditions in which they are embedded, let alone make a meaningful comparison, concepts must first be abstracted from the practices and assumptions of those disciplines and traditions. According to this assumption, comparison requires that concepts be plucked out willy-nilly, dusted off until they achieve “clarity,” and then replanted in what might be hoped is fertile, albeit also foreign, soil. Such a procedure could certainly be expected to distort the so-extracted concepts since it involves extrication of the inextricable. The meaning of a concept does in fact depend on its location in the matrix of other concepts at play in the context of the discipline or tradition in which it emerges, and so is inextricable to this extent. However, it is far from clear that this is the only procedure for dealing with inextricably embedded concepts. Rather, the concepts can be left tricated. That is, concepts may be brought into multidisciplinary or comparative engagement



along with all of their disciplinary and traditional baggage. This baggage includes the matrices of theory, method, norms, categories, concepts, texts, figures, and so on, in which the concept is embedded. There are two advantages to this procedure with regard to incommensurability. First, any distortion of the concept as a result of multidisciplinary or comparative engagement will more easily register because the concept will lose coherence with its native matrix. Once registered, any distortions can then be corrected using the very toolkit of the disciplinary or traditional matrix. Second, the matrices involved bring with them tools for evaluating and adjusting their own measurement mechanisms so as to avoid distortion of what is measured. This adjustment capacity empowers a strong skepticism toward the claim that conceptual schemes are incommensurate with anything like the frequency or pervasiveness that the incommensurability hypothesis suggests.

### *Reduction*

A related problem to that of incommensurability is that of reduction, and indeed reduction may be understood as a special case of commensurability between theories, concepts, or phenomena. Even though the notion of reductionism is “one of the most used and abused terms in the philosophical

lexicon,"<sup>104</sup> it is nevertheless distinguishable among ontological, methodological, and theoretical types, corresponding to the types of incommensurability addressed above. Ontological reduction, or reduction as translation, addresses the whole of reality as reducible to some minimal quantity of basic elements, which corresponds to tradition incommensurability because different traditions give different accounts of those minimal basic elements such that they may not be able to interact.<sup>105</sup> Methodological reduction, or reduction as derivation, sees higher levels of reality as reducible to smaller constituent parts, which corresponds to disciplinary incommensurability because different disciplines may be construed as operating descriptively at different levels that are themselves isolated from one another.<sup>106</sup> Theory reductionism, or reduction as explanation, sees older theories as reducible to the terms of newer theories, which is the successive theory from which the classical notion of incommensurability among scientific paradigms first emerged.<sup>107</sup> As was the case

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<sup>104</sup> Michael Ruse, "Reductionism," in *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*, ed. Ted Honderich (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2005).

<sup>105</sup> Ruse; Alyssa Ney, "Reductionism," *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, sec. 1.a, accessed March 12, 2019, <https://www.iep.utm.edu/red-ism/>.

<sup>106</sup> Ruse, "Reductionism"; Ney, "Reductionism," sec. 1.b.

<sup>107</sup> Ruse, "Reductionism"; Ney, "Reductionism," sec. 1.c.

in the consideration of incommensurability above, ontological and methodological forms of reduction are of interest for present purposes.

Perhaps the most stringent form of reductionism, largely ontological but also grounding many methodological accounts, is that of strict materialist physicalism, which is “the thesis that everything is physical, or as contemporary philosophers sometimes put it, that everything supervenes on the physical.”<sup>108</sup> Even to say that “everything is physical” is already to presuppose that everything could be construed otherwise, perhaps as mental, as it is in idealism.<sup>109</sup> Indeed, the tension between, or dualistic combination of, physicalism and idealism as responses to the mind-body problem have been central to the modern Western philosophical project.<sup>110</sup> A somewhat softer form of physicalist reductionism is (weak) emergence physicalism in which complex combinations of more simple physical elements may exhibit properties that, in principle, could not have been predicted from an analysis of the elements apart from their

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<sup>108</sup> Daniel Stoljar, “Physicalism,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Winter, 2017, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2017/entries/physicalism/>.

<sup>109</sup> Guyer and Horstmann, “Idealism.”

<sup>110</sup> “Dualism,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Fall, 2017, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2017/entries/dualism/>.

complex relations in the system.<sup>111</sup> Antireductionists, by contrast, posit that “other forms of understanding may be needed, or perhaps there is more to reality than even the most fully developed physics can describe,”<sup>112</sup> thereby accusing reductionists of being unjustified in either their epistemological hubris or ontological certainty. At stake for antireductionists is the resulting dominance granted to the natural sciences by reductionism in terms of controlling all other discourses, and the potential justification of deeply unethical abuses on its basis.<sup>113</sup>

Reductionism, whether of an ontological or methodological type, raises a particular set of challenges for comparative and multidisciplinary inquiry

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<sup>111</sup> Mark A. Bedau, “Weak Emergence,” in *Mind, Causation, and World*, ed. J. Tomberlin, vol. 11, *Philosophical Perspectives* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1997), 375–99; Philip Clayton, *Mind & Emergence: From Quantum to Consciousness* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2004); Philip Clayton and Paul Davies, *The Re-Emergence of Emergence: The Emergentist Hypothesis from Science to Religion* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2006); David Blitz, *Emergent Evolution: Qualitative Novelty and the Levels of Reality* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2010); Terrence W. Deacon, Bruce H. Weber, and David J. Depew, “The Hierarchic Logic of Emergence: Untangling the Interdependence of Evolution and Self-Organization,” in *Evolution and Learning: The Baldwin Effect Reconsidered* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003), 273–308; Terrence W. Deacon, *Incomplete Nature: How Mind Emerged from Matter* (New York, NY: W. W. Norton, 2012).

<sup>112</sup> Thomas Nagel, *Mind and Cosmos: Why the Materialist Neo-Darwinian Conception of Nature Is Almost Certainly False* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2012), 14.

<sup>113</sup> Francisca Cho and Richard K. Squier, “Reductionism: Be Afraid, Be ‘Very’ Afraid,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 76, no. 2 (2008): 412–17, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jaarel/lfn005>; Francisca Cho and Richard K. Squier, “‘He Blinded Me with Science’: Science Chauvinism in the Study of Religion,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 76, no. 2 (2008): 420–48, <https://doi.org/10.193/jaarel/lfn001>.

because it interpolates the perspective on reality to which it proposes reduction uninvited. For example, consider attempting to carry out a comparison between the conceptions of human nature proposed by Xunzi and Mencius during the Warring States period in ancient China on a reductionist model. The dispute between them may be interpreted as a disciplinary dispute as they both inhabit the same Warring States Confucian tradition and they operate using fundamentally different understandings of Xing 性 (human nature). This difference in their conception of what they are talking about, as will be discussed in chapter four, is roughly equivalent to a difference in disciplinary perspective. For a reductionist, carrying out the comparison would first require unpacking what each is talking about according to the terms of the reduction to which they ascribe rather than on their own terms. This has the effect of changing the requirements for attending the inquiry banquet the religious philosopher is hosting. Just as Milbank seeks to make Christian theology the controlling discourse for inquiry, reductionism seeks to make its ontological, or at least methodological, commitments determinative of how the inquiry will proceed. Whereas the historicist, pragmatist, and realist framing Wildman advocates are relatively vague in how they might be specified, and therefore allow the guests to play them out in relatively idiosyncratic, and even divergent, ways,

reductionism requires a stronger commitment to the method or metaphysics to be reduced to. Whereas two traditions or disciplines may not necessarily be incommensurable with respect to each other, it is possible that one or the other or both will prove incommensurable with respect to the method or metaphysics to which they are asked to reduce.

Alas, adopting an antireductionist posture is at least as problematic as the reductionist one. Carrying out a comparison between Xunzi and Mencius on their own terms, carefully unpacking their positions in the conceptual matrix of their time period even as it was evolving therein, fails to meet the threshold for problem-solving activity if that conceptual matrix bears no relation to any plausible interpretation of reality in the present. Reductionist physicalists tend to deny any meaningful concept of human nature precisely because they reduce any such conception successively to biological, chemical, and physical elements and states. Antireductionists are often enough equally troubled by a definitive conception of human nature because any such conception appears reductive of a highly complex system with diverse expressions in reality. If there is no plausible conception of human nature such that it even could be problematic, then there is no purpose in comparing Xunzi and Mencius on this topic. Here the notion of critical realism comes back in to insist that Xunzi and Mencius are in fact

oriented toward a shared reality with the inquiry at hand. This then presses the host to find some way of accommodating their perspective without reducing it to either the reductionist or antireductionist rejections of human nature. Note the irony here that antireductionism is something to which other perspectives may themselves be reduced.

As in the case of incommensurability, trication does wonders for overcoming the damned if you do, damned if you do not paradox of reductionism and antireductionism as approaches to inquiry. Once again, trication involves carrying a concept over into inquiry along with the full range of the matrices of theory, method, norms, categories, concepts, texts, figures, and so on, in which the concept is embedded. While the concept itself may not register with anything like clarity amidst contemporary plausibility structures, a careful mapping of its matrices may nevertheless reveal ways in which the concept may yet indirectly inform matters of present concern. For example, the different framings of Xing 性 between Xunzi and Mencius may yet provide insight into the role of Li 禮 ritual in guiding human affairs that may in fact be highly relevant to present concerns, as they prove in chapter four and following. Moreover, it is at least possible to conceive of a recovery of a concept of human

nature that avoids the pitfalls of both reductionist and antireductionist skepticism while still abiding by the plausibility conditions of the present.<sup>114</sup>

Speaking of those plausibility structures, the tension between physicalism and idealism, and each with their combination in dualism or some forms of emergentism, remains a potent point of contention in contemporary debates ranging across the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences. Resolution of this age-old dispute falls far beyond the scope of the present project, but it seems inevitable that any project that aspires to operate as religious philosophy must engage it in one way or another. The way of doing so here will be to deny the whole complex by rejecting the distinction between mind and body as meaningful and replacing both the physical and the mental with the semiotic. The details of this approach will be elaborated briefly at the end of chapter two. For now, it is enough to say that the semiotics of Charles Sanders Peirce trailblazes a way forward by shifting the metaphysical terms such that to be a thing is to be neither physical nor mental but rather it is to be a sign. The massively processive metaphysics that derives from this fundamental insight, coupled with a detailed analysis of semiosis, or sign processes, provides a way

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<sup>114</sup> Agustin Fuentes and Aku Visala, eds., *Verbs, Bones, and Brains: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Human Nature* (South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2017).



around the mind-body problem such that it is not a problem and so requires no solution. In principal, having successfully avoided the quicksand of the mind-body problem, this metaphysical semiotics should prove capable of integrating tricated concepts in the vaguely historicist, pragmatist, and realist terms by which religious philosophy intends to proceed.

### *Theory of Inquiry*

Tricating embedded concepts does wonders for overcoming the incommensurability and reduction problems, but introduces another threat to the viability of multidisciplinary and comparative projects in the process. The neologism of “to tricate” strips the prefixes in- and ex- from “inextricable” and then relies on the meaning of the Latin root “*tricae*,” meaning perplexities or complexities. The first challenge for tricated concepts is that they introduce a vast degree of complexity, by contrast to the promise of clarity in the extrication process. Since the assumption here is of multidisciplinary and comparative engagement, at least two concepts are bringing this complexity with them to the table, which may in turn generate an experience of perplexity. The second challenge is the sheer size of each disciplinary matrix, requiring a great deal of time to learn and then a great deal of space to explain. Together, these challenges of high complexity and vast scope can make the project of multidisciplinary and

comparative engagement, undertaken in such a way as to avoid the pitfalls of incommensurability and reduction, seem more trouble than worthwhile.

Attaining traction on these challenges requires a way to simplify the conceptual range and limit the scope of the material while avoiding becoming simplistic and parochial. The best way to do this is by being extremely clear, focused, and precise about the topic, method, and scope of inquiry.

Before attending to topic, method, and scope, however, it is important to get clear about the theory of inquiry at play. Wesley Wildman is here again helpful in defining inquiry as “a kind of spontaneous interest-driven problem-solving instinct in organisms.”<sup>115</sup> This theory of inquiry arises from the philosophical outlook of American pragmatism, especially that of John Dewey and Charles Sanders Peirce, but stretches beyond philosophy as a discipline by making inquiry fundamental to nature and life. Inquiry is a basic orientation of life forms, and at the heart of what keeps life alive. Disciplinary methods, then, are more specific strategies for carrying out inquiry, sometimes in order to address a particular domain of problems, and in other instances to get at a domain of problems from another angle. For example, Xunzi develops his

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<sup>115</sup> Wildman, *Religious Philosophy as Multidisciplinary Comparative Inquiry*, 168.

concept of ritual as a response to the problem of sociopolitical disintegration in Warring States China, which is a rather particular domain of problems. Western social scientists, by contrast, develop their concepts of ritual in order to explain a cross-culturally prevalent phenomenon that otherwise appears arbitrary, ineffectual, and wasteful, which is getting at the problem of explaining these behaviors from an angle that does not simply write them off.

The *topic* of inquiry, then, refers to the problem a given line of inquiry is trying to solve. The topic is usually best identified in terms of a question. For example, “How does Xunzi understand ritual?” is a topic of inquiry, and not just any topic of inquiry but a recursive topic that inquires about another inquiry; such recursive topics are typical in philosophy generally and especially in religious philosophy. Being clear about the topic is important because when concepts are being left embedded in their intellectual ecosystems it is very easy to wander off into lengthy digressions about related concepts beyond the needs of the topic of inquiry at hand. For example, ritual for Xunzi is embedded deeply in his whole system of thought, and so it would be easy to spend a great deal of energy exploring his concept of heaven (tian 天) beyond what is needed for understanding ritual. Furthermore, ritual for Xunzi is an important part of addressing the sociopolitical disintegration China was undergoing in his time,

but ritual does not address every aspect of that disintegration in his thought, and so aspects beyond what ritual addresses for him do not fall under this topic of inquiry. Maintaining focus on the topic of inquiry helps prevent complexity from turning into perplexity.

The *scope* of inquiry refers to the range of places where the topic of inquiry manifests; that is, the scope of inquiry is the locus of the problem the inquiry seeks to address. Whereas the inquirer can constrain the topic of inquiry by adjusting the question the inquiry seeks to address, the scope of inquiry is determined much more by the ecosystem of whatever is being inquired into. For example, Mencius' understanding of ritual plays less of a key role in the system of his thought, and that system of thought is less extensively caught up in alternative systems of thought in play at the time as is that of Xunzi. Thus, the scope of inquiry into Xunzi's understanding of ritual is much broader than that of Mencius. In order for the scope of inquiry into Xunzi's understanding of ritual to remain tractable, the extent to which the alternative systems of thought are considered must precisely adhere to the standard of the extent to which they impinge on his understanding of ritual. For Western social scientific approaches to ritual, the scope is massively vast because ritual pops up in virtually every social context in one form or another. The result is that ritual has been addressed

from virtually every social scientific discipline, especially anthropology, sociology, and psychology, but also economics and political science, although none of these disciplines takes ritual to be its exclusive or even primary topic of concern. Determining the extent of the scope of inquiry is far more art than science, as the very notion of being embedded means that everything impinges to some degree, and determining which degrees are significant can never be as methodologically precise in philosophy as in statistics.

The *method* of inquiry, then, is the particular process or set of processes for evaluating what is within the scope of inquiry with respect to the topic of inquiry. Determining which methods are most appropriate can be quite challenging. For example, is Chinese philosophy best inquired into via philosophical methods, historical methods, or some combination thereof? Different methods of inquiry will necessarily produce different results, and every method of inquiry necessarily distorts the data it interprets in various ways and to various degrees, but there is no inquiry without a method, so some degree of distortion must be tolerated and even accepted. This is yet another argument for multidisciplinary approaches to inquiry: the method each discipline brings to a domain of problems can help counteract the distortions introduced by the others. Furthermore, comparative approaches can open up entirely new methodological

toolkits that were hitherto unavailable. However, careful adherence to methodological norms is important prior to moving to multidisciplinary and comparative approaches in order not to magnify the existing and necessary distortions.

Clarity, focus, and precision with regard to topic, scope, and method of inquiry thereby provides traction on the challenges of complexity and scope for multidisciplinary and comparative projects while also skirting the problems of incommensurability and reduction. While it is possible to imagine comparative projects that avoid the challenge of disciplinary disjunction, such projects must nevertheless be few and far between. This is because extricated concepts are by definition tradition incommensurable and so must engage in trication to an extent that is quite likely to stray into the disciplinary remainder on one side of the comparison or the other. In addition to highlighting the wide scope of the relevance of this methodological discussion, the extensive and necessary overlap between multidisciplinary and comparative programs requires the elaboration of a particular method by which their integration is to be achieved.

#### *Method for Multidisciplinary Comparison*

There are at least five trajectories of inquiry in any multidisciplinary comparison: the trajectory of the first side of the comparison, the inquiry into the

trajectory of the first side of the comparison, the trajectory of the second side of the comparison, the inquiry into the trajectory of the second side of the comparison, and the trajectory of the inquirer against which the sides of comparison are measured. In the terms of the present project of comparative ritual theory, there is the inquiry Xunzi undertakes to arrive at his theory of ritual, the inquiry into Xunzi's inquiry, the inquiries Western social scientists undertake to arrive at their theories of ritual, the inquiry into their inquiries, and the inquiry that drives the comparison. The result of the comparison is a novel ritual theory, which then itself becomes the first side of a new multidisciplinary comparison between ritual and language. The first four inquiries in each case will be addressed in the respectively relevant chapters (chapters two through five), but the inquiry that drives the comparison in each case benefits from some consideration here.

If it is in fact the case that inquiry is at the root of life in nature, then all intellectual activity is a form of inquiry. Furthermore, inquiry implies purpose, so all intellectual activity is purposive. This means that multidisciplinary comparisons are not undertaken arbitrarily, throwing together disciplines and traditions willy-nilly just for the fun of it. Rather, they are undertaken to achieve something greater than what the disciplines and traditions in question can

achieve on their own. What is it that an inquirer undertaking multidisciplinary comparison is attempting to achieve? What is being inquired into? What is the present inquiry, that the multidisciplinary comparison is being invited to inform? These questions can be answered in terms of the topic of inquiry as described above, zoomed out to the wider frame of multidisciplinary comparison. The topic of a multidisciplinary comparison between Xunzi's concept of ritual and Western social scientific ritual theories might be articulated as the question, "how can the concept of ritual as elaborated by Xunzi enhance, refine, and render more precise ritual theory as developed in Western social science?" The topic of a multidisciplinary comparison between the resulting novel theory of ritual and an inquiry into language might be articulated as the question, "what is the relationship between language and ritual and what results from their relationship to one another in this way?"

The five trajectories of inquiry involved in a multidisciplinary comparison provide a great deal more traction with regard to the complexity and scope of tricated concepts than any of the trajectories can achieve otherwise on their own. This is because the overall inquiry of a multidisciplinary comparison is very precisely defined by the intersections among the five trajectories: The place where the five trajectories intersect, or some subset thereof, is the locus of



greatest value for the multidisciplinary comparison. The fifth trajectory, that of the inquirer undertaking the multidisciplinary comparison, is most important because it is the final aim of the inquiry, and so where the other four trajectories intersect with the fifth is much more significant than where they might otherwise intersect with each other. In this way, the scope of the multidisciplinary comparison is constrained by the intersections of the trajectories.

Nevertheless, the fifth trajectory also introduces a whole extra realm of complexity and scope all its own. Consider the inquiry into ritual under the aspect of method. Xunzi pursued his trajectory of inquiry using the methods of Chinese philosophy as conceived in the Warring States period. The inquiry into his trajectory is undertaken historically. Western social scientists pursue their trajectory of inquiry using the methods of Western social science. The inquiry into their trajectory may also be undertaken historically, but benefits primarily from theoretical explication. The inquiry guiding the multidisciplinary comparison, however, is pursued philosophically by means of comparison and construction. A similar analysis applies to the inquiry into ritual and language. The novel theory of ritual resulting from the first comparison is developed historically and theoretically, while the inquiry into this comparison is further delimited for the sake of this new comparison to purely theoretical elaboration.

The inquiry into language proceeds according to the methods of linguistics, analytic philosophy, continental philosophy, and semiotics, and the inquiry into these inquiries proceeds by theoretical elaboration. The inquiry guiding the multidisciplinary comparison between ritual and language proceeds primarily by means of theoretical and semiotic integration. Each of these methods must be pursued fully and carefully with regard to its particular trajectory so as to avoid the pitfalls of incommensurability. However, the methods themselves must be appropriately tricated so as to make transparent the distortions introduced by each in hopes of reducing the overall distortion.

The value of multidisciplinary comparison lies primarily in its ability to correct the distortions necessarily introduced by individual disciplines and traditions when left to their own methodological devices. In this sense, far from exacerbating the problems of incommensurability and reduction, multidisciplinary comparison is actually the mechanism to correct distortions produced by individual disciplinary and traditional methods. If multidisciplinary comparisons insist upon extricating concepts in order to compare them, however, they are then merely magnifying these distortions instead of correcting them. Concepts must be tricated, that is, embedded in the matrix of theory, method, norms, categories, concepts, texts, figures, etc., from

which they arise. The resulting complexity and vast scope of material becomes manageable through processes of inquiry and especially through the particular type of inquiry that is multidisciplinary comparison. Instead of heralding the end of comparative philosophy, incommensurability between traditions and disciplines and their inherent tendency toward reduction to one or the other is instead its very justification.

### A Cross-Cultural History of the Problem of Religious Language

As has already been stated, the problem of religious language is hardly new. Neither is the problem unique to a Western philosophical and theological context. While the particular way of going about addressing the problem will take Western consideration of language in linguistics, philosophy of language, logic, and hermeneutics as its point of departure, the end result will be a theory of language that upends the whole of that project. As a dissertation, this project seeks to make an original contribution to scholarship, but the originality of the conclusion may only be determined as it relates to other ways of addressing the problem. Since part of what makes this dissertation original is that its way of addressing the problem requires first reframing it, it is important to emphasize how the problem of religious language has been framed across cultural and historical contexts in the past. Of course, it is impossible to give an exhaustive

account in this regard, as doing so would be a dissertation in its own right, and one in a particularly historical mode of religious philosophy at that. Instead, what follows provides some highlights of the history and development of the problem of religious language in a variety of epochs and modes of thinking that provides particular attention to the intersection of the ontology of divinity and linguistic reference in each case. The last subsection turns to bringing the various insights of different traditions of thought regarding the problem of religious language into a broader set of conversations in religious philosophy regarding ultimate realities, religious truth, and the human condition. If nothing else, this section aspires to demonstrate that the problem of religious language may at first glance appear arcane, but is in fact deeply humane, transcending culture, time and place. At the same time, neither the construal of the problem nor the solutions advanced by various thinkers are in any way approaching unity.

#### *Platonism and the Abrahamic Traditions*

Western approaches to the problem of religious language are given nascent articulation in Plato and then flower among the neoplatonists and the Augustinian theological tradition. While Plato (ca. 429-347 BCE) articulates the

problem in a number of places,<sup>116</sup> the text that became of central interest to those exploring the problem of religious language is *Parmenides*:

Therefore the one in no sense *is*. It cannot, then, 'be' even to the extent of 'being' one, for then it would be a thing that is and has being. Rather, if we can trust such an argument as this, it appears that the one neither is one nor is at all. And if a thing is not, you cannot say that it '*has*' anything or that there is anything '*of*' it. Consequently, it cannot *have* a name or be spoken of, nor can there be any knowledge or perception or opinion *of* it. It is not named or spoken of, not an object of opinion or of knowledge, not perceived by any creature.<sup>117</sup>

In reflection on this passage, the neoplatonist Plotinus (ca. 205 – 270) distinguishes between the inability to state "the one," one of the Platonic terms for ultimate reality, and the ability to speak about it by reference to its effects:

If we are led to think positively of The One, name and thing, there would be more truth in silence: the designation, a mere aid to inquiry, was never intended for more than a preliminary affirmation of absolute simplicity to be followed by the rejection of even that statement: it was the best that offered, but remains inadequate to express the nature indicated. For this is a principle not to be conveyed by any sound; it cannot be known on any hearing but, if at all, by vision; and to hope in that vision to see a form is to fail of even that. We do not, it is true, grasp it by knowledge, but that does not mean that we are utterly void of it; we hold it not so as to state it, but so as to be able to speak about it. And we can and do state what it is not, while we are silent as to what it is: we are, in fact, speaking of it in the light of its sequels; unable to state it, we may still possess it.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> Plato, "Republic," in *Complete Works*, ed. Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989), 509b; Plato, "Timaeus," in *Complete Works*, ed. Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989), 28c.

<sup>117</sup> Plato, "Parmenides," in *Complete Works*, ed. Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989), 141e–42.

<sup>118</sup> Plotinus, *The Enneads* (London: Penguin, 2005), V.v.6. See also Proclus, *Commentary on Plato's Parmenides*, trans. Glenn R. Morrow and John M. Dillon (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), VII.

Augustine of Hippo (354 – 430) echoes this concern with the human capacity to grasp, and thus in the platonic tradition to state, anything directly about God:

Perhaps it was hard even for Moses himself, as it is much also for us, and much more for us, to understand what was said, “I am who I am” and “He who is has sent me to you.” And if by chance Moses understood, when would they to whom he was being sent understand? Therefore the Lord put aside what man could not grasp and added what he could grasp. For he added and said, “I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.” This you can grasp. But what mind can grasp, “I am who I am”?<sup>119</sup>

Notably, Plato had located the problem of religious language in “the one” itself as a problem of the metaphysics of “oneness” such that language cannot apply.

By the time of Augustine, the problematic has shifted to epistemology as a problem of human reason conceiving the essence of divinity, which is taken as prerequisite for the applicability of language. Certainly, this transition is prefigured in Plato, but it is the epistemic turn that is picked up when Aristotle is brought back into the picture in the medieval period.

Jewish, Muslim, and Christian philosophical theologies exemplify the intersection of Aristotelian and Neoplatonic thought in articulating the terms of the problem of religious language for the medieval period. The central issue of debate is the proper understanding of the relationship between concepts,

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<sup>119</sup> Augustine, *Tractate on the Gospel of John* 38.8.3 in Joseph T. Lienhard, *Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy*, Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2014), 21.

expressed in language, and God, which relationship is termed “predication.” Maimonides (ca. 1135 – 1204) claims “that every attribute predicated of God either denotes the quality of an action, or—when the attribute is intended to convey some idea of the Divine Being itself, and not of His actions—the negation of the opposite.”<sup>120</sup> One problem left open, however, is how an action can be distinguished from the qualities or attributes thereof, which for Islamic thinkers are identified with the names of God. The Islamic philosopher Ibn ‘Arabî (1165 – 1240) resolved this problem with the concept of the *barzakh*, which “simultaneously divides and brings together two things, without itself having two sides, like the ‘line’ that separates sunlight and shade.”<sup>121</sup> The names or attributes of God function in the human imagination to both distinguish humanity from God and to bring humanity together with God. Thomas Aquinas (1225 – 1274) in a sense gives logical expression to the *barzakh* in his articulation of an analogical relationship between God and divine qualities and the world and mundane qualities:

Therefore if there is an agent not contained in any "genus," its effect will still more distantly reproduce the form of the agent, not, that is, so as to participate in the likeness of the agent's form according to the same specific or generic formality, but only according

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<sup>120</sup> Moses Maimonides, *The Guide for the Perplexed* (New York, NY: Dover, 1956), chap. LVIII.

<sup>121</sup> William Chittick, “Ibn Arabi,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Spring, 2014, <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2014/entries/ibn-arabi/>.

to some sort of analogy; as existence is common to all. In this way all created things, so far as they are beings, are like God as the first and universal principle of all being.<sup>122</sup>

The logic is that God is to divine qualities as the world is to mundane qualities such that the qualities applied to both the world and God both distinguish God from the world and relate God to the world. Aquinas' employment of analogical predication of concepts to God contrasts with the insistence on univocal predication of concepts to God, such that concepts are applied to God and the world in the same sense, by John Duns Scotus (ca. 1266 – 1308).<sup>123</sup>

### *South Asian Trajectories*

If the western traditions can be said to start with the nature of God and wonder about the applicability of language, the South Asian trajectories, both Vedic and Buddhist, start with language and wonder if there is anything to which it might refer. For example, the Vedic Mīmāṃsā school begins with the eternity of the Vedas such that they are understood to be authorless, relying on neither divine nor human authority. Furthermore, the author of the founding text of the Mīmāṃsā school, Jaimini (ca. 200 BCE), roots the authorlessness of the Vedas in the inherent meaningfulness of the Vedic Sanskrit language: "Certainly

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<sup>122</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (New York, NY: Benzinger, 1947), QQ4, Art.3.

<sup>123</sup> John Duns Scotus, *Philosophical Writings: A Selection* (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1987), 13–33.



there is eternal connection between the word and its meaning.”<sup>124</sup> The Vedic Naiyāyikas disagreed, claiming instead that the authority of the Vedas rests in their divine authorship, and that God establishes the meanings of Sanskrit words.<sup>125</sup> These claims become three of the proofs for the existence of God argued by Udayana (ca. 960 - 1050) in his *Nyāyakusumāñjali*: from human usages (Padāt), from authoritativeness or faith (Pratyayataḥ), and from the sacred scriptures (Shrutéh).<sup>126</sup> The argument from human usages is that the meaning of words can only come about by divine will; without God, words would have no meaning, and since they have meaning, there must be God.<sup>127</sup> The argument from authoritativeness or faith is that since the Vedas are true, truth can only come from infallible omniscience, and since only God is infallibly omniscient, then only God can be the author of the Vedas, which in turn thereby proves God’s existence.<sup>128</sup> Finally, the argument from the sacred scriptures is that the Vedas

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<sup>124</sup> Jaimini, *Mīmamsa Sutra*, trans. Mohan Lal Sandal (Allahabad, Uttar Pradesh, India: Panini Office, 1923), 1.1.5.

<sup>125</sup> Madhav Deshpande, “Language and Testimony in Classical Indian Philosophy,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Fall, 2014, <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2014/entries/language-india/>.

<sup>126</sup> George Chemparathy, *An Indian Rational Theology: Introduction to Udayana’s Nyāyakusumāñjali* (Leiden: Brill, 1972), 85–86.

<sup>127</sup> Chemparathy, 95–97, 118–22.

<sup>128</sup> Chemparathy, 97–98, 122–25.

speak of God as existing, and since the Vedas are authoritative, they prove that God exists.<sup>129</sup>

Both Vedic trajectories arise in response to criticism of the authority of the Vedas and their author(s) by Buddhist and Jain interlocutors. Nāgārjuna exemplifies a particularly philosophic angle on the Buddhist challenge to the Vedic approaches to language by identifying language with Pratītyasamutpāda, dependent arising, and therefore negligent of the truer reality, emptiness:

Whatever is dependently co-arisen  
That is explained to be emptiness.  
That, being a dependent designation  
Is itself the middle way.<sup>130</sup>

Jay Garfield comments on this saying that “whatever is dependently co-arisen is verbally established. That is, the identity of any dependently arisen thing depends upon verbal conventions. To say of a thing that it is dependently arisen is to say that its identity as a single entity is nothing more than its being the referent of a word.”<sup>131</sup> Language is thus constitutive of Duḥkha, suffering, the primary Buddhist understanding of the human condition. In principle, then,

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<sup>129</sup> Chemparathy, 98–99, 125–27.

<sup>130</sup> Jay L. Garfield, *The Fundamental Wisdom of the Middle Way: Nagarjuna’s Mulamadhyamakakarika* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1995), XXIV.18.

<sup>131</sup> Garfield, 305.

language could never refer to the ultimate reality of emptiness, thus giving rise to Nāgārjuna unsaying even the word “empty” via the concept of the emptiness of emptiness.

Another set of contentions emerging in the South Asian context regarding the problem of religious language is the dispute regarding the relationship between language and metaphysics undertaken among Bhartṛhari (ca. 400 CE), Dignāga (ca. 480 – 540), and Dharmakīrti (ca. 550 – 640). Radhika Herzberger summarizes Bhartṛhari on this point: “words do not designate objects in the external world directly, but indirectly through the intervention of universals which are mental, and which reside in words. Universals which are thus intimately connected with language and mind, on the one hand, and with the Great Plenum of Being, on the other, constitute the basis for our knowledge of the external world.”<sup>132</sup> By contrast, Dignāga argued that language is neither eternal nor an independent source of truth, but rather “a construct which shares structures with inference:” “Knowledge derived from words is not a separate means to truth from inference; for a name signifies its own object by excluding what is other in the same way as [the Reason] ‘being an artifact’ [establishes what

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<sup>132</sup> Radhika Herzberger, *Bhartṛhari and the Buddhists: An Essay in the Development of Fifth and Sixth Century Indian Thought* (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1986), 13.

is to be proved]” (*Pramāṇa-samuccaya* 5.1).<sup>133</sup> If for Bhartṛhari language is eternal, universal, and *a priori*, and for Dignāga language is temporal, artificial, and conventional, for Dharmakīrti language is “a beginningless habit energy or propensity,” a fiction that becomes useful when coordinated with phenomenal reality by constituting knowledge thereof.<sup>134</sup> With respect to the problem of religious language, for Bhartṛhari language and ultimate reality verge on identity, whereas for Dignāga they are separated by an impassible chasm; Dharmakīrti allows for a bridge, although it is ultimately an illusion.<sup>135</sup>

### *Chinese Expressions*

Of the Chinese expressions of the problem of religious language, that of the *Daodejing* 道德經 is decidedly the most recognizable:

Way-making that can be put into words is not really way-making,  
And naming that can assign fixed reference to things is not really naming.  
The nameless is the fetal beginnings of everything that is happening,  
While that which is named is their mother.<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> Herzberger, 107, 117.

<sup>134</sup> Herzberger, 218.

<sup>135</sup> Herzberger, 234.

<sup>136</sup> Laozi, *Daodejing: “Making This Life Significant” - A Philosophical Translation*, trans. Roger T. Ames and David L. Hall (New York, NY: Ballantine, 2003), 1.

This enigmatic passage has been the subject of many and diverse interpretations. On one hand, it is the primordial Chinese creation myth that receives further outworking in the cosmological developments especially of the Neo-Confucian synthesis from the Tang through the Ming dynasties (618 – 1644). On the other hand, it contests a central project of rival contemporary Confucians, namely the rectification of names. Xunzi articulates the goal of rectifying names in terms of establishing and maintaining socio-political order: “Because fixed names keep objects distinguished and because when [a True King’s] Way is practiced his goals are universally understood, he takes pains to produce uniformity [in regard to names and his Way] among the people.”<sup>137</sup> The means of accomplishing this project is through investigating “(1) the purpose for having names together with (2) what is the basis for distinguishing the similar from the different and (3) the crucial considerations for instituting names.”<sup>138</sup> Whereas for Xunzi it is crucial for language to reflect the natural distinctions among the objects that make up reality so that order may be established and maintained in harmony with those distinctions, the processual view of the *Daodejing* denies that any natural

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<sup>137</sup> Xunzi, *Xunzi: A Translation and Study of the Complete Works*, trans. John Knoblock (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1988), 22.1c (III: 128).

<sup>138</sup> Xunzi, 22.2a (III: 128).

distinctions are permanent enough to be so named. For the *Daodejing*, naming is a way of participating in the process, rather than controlling it. Notably, this way of construing the problem of religious language focuses on the possibility of language to orient speakers toward reality, which proper orientation is at the heart of Chinese ways of being religious.

A very different sort of Daoist than those of the *Daodejing* community, Zhuangzi 莊子 (ca. 315 – 225 BCE) is nonetheless similar in his ambivalence toward language connecting up with reality:

Ziyou said, “So the piping of the earth means just the sound of these hollows. And the piping of man would be the sound of bamboo panpipes. What then is the piping of heaven?”

Ziqi said, “It gusts through all the ten thousand differences, allowing each to go its own way. But since each one selects out its own, what identity can there be for their rouser?”<sup>139</sup>

Invoking here the three anchors of Chinese cosmology: heaven, earth, and humanity, Zhuangzi indicates that the wind of heaven blows through the diverse pipes of humanity resulting in contradictory sounds, indicating that language is at best ambiguous with respect to reality. However, Zhuangzi also sought to avoid articulating this ambiguity in terms of the metaphysical monism characteristic of the earlier thinker Hui Shi 惠施 (ca. 380 – 310 BCE), a

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<sup>139</sup> Zhuangzi, *Zhuangzi: The Essential Writings with Selections from Traditional Commentaries*, trans. Brook Ziporyn (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 2009), 2.4-5.

representative of the School of Names (Mingjia 名家), such that all distinctions are ultimately reducible.<sup>140</sup> Instead, he offers something like a democratization of the rectification of names: “Now courses have never had any sealed borders between them, and words have never had any constant sustainability. It is by establishing definitions of what is ‘this,’ what is ‘right,’ that boundaries are made.”<sup>141</sup> For Zhuangzi, then, the problem of religious language is less figuring out how language correlates with reality than it is of how to go about participating in the natural process of way-making.

#### *Modern Western Philosophical Approaches*

Since the western modes of analytic and continental philosophy have largely dominated the global philosophical scene in the modern period, and defined the terms of critical reflection, they are the primary orientations for considering contemporary engagement with the problem of religious language. The emergence of the analytic approach might be traced back to the logical positivists of the Vienna Circle, whose theory of meaning, adopted from the early Wittgenstein, insisted that only logically consistent statements with reference to

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<sup>140</sup> Zhuangzi, 2.23-25, 32.

<sup>141</sup> Zhuangzi, 2.33.

empirically verifiable reality may be considered true.<sup>142</sup> The force of this verification program against religious statements is that it does not even bother to claim that religious statements are false, but rather that they are meaningless and so not even worthy of being put through the process of analysis. Similarly, the inverse of verification, or falsification, likewise renders religious statements meaningless on account of their inability to demonstrate the grounds of their own potential disproval.<sup>143</sup> A related debate regarding religious language has to do with whether religious statements should be understood as cognitive, that is, they express a proposition that can be true or false, or non-cognitive, i.e. non-propositional. Richard Hare, with his notion of “bliks,” demonstrates that religious statements may be meaningful by influencing human behavior even if they are non-cognitive.<sup>144</sup> Basil Mitchell, alternatively, argues that religious people may hold their religious statements to be cognitively true in spite of evidence to the contrary because different people differ in the amount of

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<sup>142</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (New York, NY: Harcourt Brace, 1922), 6.53.

<sup>143</sup> Anthony Flew and Alasdair MacIntyre, *New Essays in Philosophical Theology* (New York, NY: MacMillan, 1955), 96–108.

<sup>144</sup> Flew and MacIntyre, 99–103.



evidence necessary to prove to them that a statement is false.<sup>145</sup> Much greater nuance is introduced via the theory of meaning in the later Wittgenstein that words have multiple meanings determined by how they fit within the language game in which they are being played within the context of a form of life.<sup>146</sup> Under the rubric of religion as a form of life, different religions and divergent sub-traditions thereof deploy language in various ways according to the rules of the language game of the religion or sub-tradition in question, which rules are then the basis for evaluating the meaning of particular religious statements. The work of philosophy, then, is the work of clarifying, rendering consistent, and making logically rigorous religious statements within the ordinary language of a religious community in the wider context of societal and cultural rules for language use. Notably, this way of construing the project leaves philosophy entirely concerned about the sense of religious language but not its reference.<sup>147</sup> As a result, addressing issues of reference remains a live and sensitive problem among analytic philosophers of religion.

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<sup>145</sup> Flew and MacIntyre, 103–5.

<sup>146</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, ed. P. M. S. Hacker and Joachim Schulte, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe, 4th ed. (New York, NY: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), paras. 2, 7, 23, etc.

<sup>147</sup> Maria Baghramian, *Modern Philosophy of Language* (Washington, DC: Counterpoint, 1998), 3–25.

On the continental front, the emergence of structuralism demurs from approaching religious language propositionally in order to interrogate how the symbols that make up a given statement (i.e. words) are positioned by the structure of language and the analogous structures of human culture. This is a significant shift away from the classical understanding of the speaker/author as the source of meaning for statements/texts, toward seeing meaning as generated by the interactions among speakers/authors and hearers/readers via statements/texts.<sup>148</sup> Post-Structuralism then shifts from this synchronic mode of interpretation to reintroduce the diachronic mode of history, but this time on the side of the hearer/reader such that the primary questions have to do with the formation and biases of the hearer/reader. This means that statements, including religious statements, have no fixed meaning but rather the meaning varies with the interpreter.<sup>149</sup> Hans Georg Gadamer (1900 – 2002), alternatively, locates meaning at the intersection of the historical and linguistic horizons each of text and interpreter such that the fusion thereof results in understanding not so much

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<sup>148</sup> Michael Lane, *Structuralism: A Reader* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1970). 11-39.

<sup>149</sup> Gary Gutting, "Post-Structuralism," in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Volume 7*, ed. Edward Craig (London: Routledge, 1998). 596-600.

of the text as of the world in which text and interpreter mutually participate.<sup>150</sup> Similarly for Paul Ricœur, “there is no self-understanding that is not mediated by signs, symbols, and texts; in the final analysis self-understanding coincides with the interpretation given to these mediating terms.”<sup>151</sup> The implication is that engagements with texts contribute to the constitution of the interpreter in such a way that the interpreter does not become what they interpret but becomes their ongoing process of interpretation.<sup>152</sup> At least for some within the continental approach, then, religious language does not transmit epistemic content about a religious object (i.e. God), but rather contributes to the very being (ontology) of the interpreter. Furthermore, communal interpretation involves the becoming of communities out of various discourses, including religious discourses, which Jürgen Habermas identifies as requiring translation into publicly accessible reasons.<sup>153</sup>

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<sup>150</sup> Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (London: Continuum, 2004), 305.

<sup>151</sup> Paul Ricœur, *From Text to Action* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1991), 15.

<sup>152</sup> Hart, *Unfinished Man and the Imagination*.

<sup>153</sup> Jürgen Habermas, “Religion in the Public Sphere,” *European Journal of Philosophy* 14, no. 1 (April 1, 2006): 1–25, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0378.2006.00241.x>.

### *A Problem Among Problems*

While the problem of religious language has a number of articulations, trajectories, and expressions across cultures and historical epochs, it also registers among other problems and categories of theological interest. Elaborating these registrations briefly with respect to three core categories identified by the Comparative Religious Ideas Project hosted at Boston University from 1995 to 1999 provides a wider frame of context for the particular problem at hand.

The problem of religious language connects up with the category of the human condition first and foremost because language is a fundamentally human phenomenon. The human condition includes needs for a sense of environmental coherence, a sense of human contingency, a sense of the value of life, and a sense of causation and transformation, in addition to conceptions of personal identity, of obligations to norms, of a human predicament, and of ways of relating to one another.<sup>154</sup> It is a result of human contingency and the human predicaments frequently understood to result therefrom that leads to the suspicion that human language is somehow inadequate for expressing the unconditioned and perfect. Moreover, it is the persistence of human failure to meet our obligations that

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<sup>154</sup> Robert C. Neville, ed., *The Human Condition: A Volume in the Comparative Religious Ideas Project* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2001), 175–264.

makes human speech untrustworthy, not merely because language fails but because speakers cannot be taken to be authoritative. Of course, all of these senses and conceptions are necessarily articulated in language, which if understood to be fallible may leave these needs only contingently fulfilled. This is a significant expansion of the problem of religious language beyond the usual parameters of its articulation in Western philosophy and theology. In fact, it is the South Asian trajectories that most directly emphasize the problem of religious language arising from the realities of the human condition.

The problem of religious language connects up with the category of ultimate realities because if language is understood to be incapable of correlating with ultimate reality, and religious philosophy is expressed in linguistic forms, then the whole project becomes moot with respect to ultimate realities. Ultimate realities may be understood as “that which is most important to religious life because of the nature of reality.”<sup>155</sup> Two things are notable with regard to this definition with respect to the problem of religious language. First, since ultimate realities are most important to religious life, it is hard to imagine that they would not be spoken about, or how it would be that they are most important if they are

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<sup>155</sup> Robert C. Neville, ed., *Ultimate Realities: A Volume in the Comparative Religious Ideas Project* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2001), 151.

not spoken about. Second, if ultimate realities are taken to be ultimate precisely because of the nature of reality, then the nature of reality also becomes an important point of discussion for religious philosophy. As several of the engagements between language and ultimate realities elaborated above reveal, it is not only ultimate realities themselves but also the nature of reality itself that is frequently called into question with respect to the capacity of language to correspond therewith. The Abrahamic traditions primarily locate the problem of religious language at the intersection of language and the category of ultimate realities, and it is this lineage that gives rise to the articulation of the problem in Western philosophical and theological discourse.

That the problem of religious language should connect up with the category of religious truth may seem obvious, as expressing truth is a fundamental goal of linguistic expression. However, religious truth need not be understood to address issues of reference, meaning, and interpretation only, but also pertains to the authority of scripture and other religious texts and objects, and to the achievements of spiritual cultivation and embodiment.<sup>156</sup> This is yet another expansion of the problem of religious language beyond the typical

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<sup>156</sup> Robert C. Neville, ed., *Religious Truth: A Volume in the Comparative Religious Ideas Project* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2001), 171–201.

bounds of classical Western theologies. The problem of authority in many cases shifts the problem of religious language to ask about the linguistic capacities of what is taken to be ultimate (i.e. God) and the human capacity to hear and understand divine speech. Religious truth understood as the achievement of cultivation and embodiment presses analyses of religious language beyond questions of propositional statements and includes questions of ritual enactments of language and analysis of the propriety of language use. Chinese expressions of the problem of religious language particularly focus on the connections between the epistemic questions regarding the capacities of language and their implications for cultivation and embodiment.

### *Stating the Problem*

This historical analysis enables a more precise statement of the problem of religious language as it will be addressed in this dissertation: The problem of religious language inquires about the adequacy, capacity, correlation, and propriety of language, speech, texts, and their enactments, on one hand, and ultimate realities as they relate to the human, cosmic, and environmental dimensions contingent thereon, on the other. The primary focus will be on religious philosophy as inquiry into how to live in light of God, but as this historical survey demonstrates, such focus must inevitably gloss over into the

related inquiries into God and the relationship between God and the world. Because the primary focus is on how to live in light of God, the lived element is the point of departure, in this case language. This dissertation is properly a theological dissertation, insofar as religious philosophy is a form of theology, but due to this focus on language, God will only be directly addressed in the latter part of the final chapter. The contours of the path to reach that discussion is the topic of the final section of this chapter.

### Chapter Outline

As was indicated in the prologue to this chapter, the course of the inquiry to be undertaken in the remainder of this dissertation first requires unscrewing the hermeneutical spiral with regard to the problematic it seeks to address. The problematic, of course, is religious language, but because the approach of the project privileges the question as one of how to live in light of God, the problematic shifts to language itself when the hermeneutical spiral is backed out even just a half turn. This is because language is the domain of life at issue by which humans seek to live in light of God with regard to the problematic of religious language. The second chapter of the dissertation, then, addresses the contours of how language has come to be understood under the several incarnations of the linguistic turn in modern philosophy and linguistics. These



perspectives on language serve as the norm to be reconstructed even as they are systematized by their comparative engagement with a novel theory of ritual itself comparatively derived from Western social scientific and Confucian ritual theories in chapters three and four. The fifth chapter renders this twofold comparison in order to give a systematic account of language as ritual, the subjunctive character of which then enables consideration of how language engages God in chapter six.

### *Language*

While the modern project under the influence of the linguistic turn may be characterized with a preoccupation with language, the various approaches to language carried out under its auspices are remarkable principally for being incomplete, inconsistent, and far from settled. This is particularly troubling given how influential the various considerations of language under the linguistic turn have been across a wide array of academic disciplines, including in the very conception of disciplinarity. This chapter seeks to give an account first of the linguistic turn itself, in its various guises, and then charts the contours of how language has come to be understood in linguistics, philosophy of language, logic, and hermeneutics under its sway. Of particular interest are the influences of Ferdinand de Saussure and his notion that all structures are analogous to

linguistic structure, and of the causal linkages between language and thought as conceived both by linguistic relativists and advocates of the theory of universal grammar. Each linguistic level, from phonology through pragmatics, is presented with respect to a framework of analysis at that level and then the theoretical approaches that predominate in the respective fields. Another subsection presents the issues of linguistic universality, variation, change, and relation to mental and cognitive functions. Logical strategies for formalizing language structures and functions are first presented in turning to philosophy of language, with subsequent subsections addressing issues of reference and meaning, and the philosophical problem of universals. Hermeneutics shifts from the meaning of language at the point of generation to the interpretation of language that has been generated. The presentation proceeds in something of a spiral, turning from theories of interpretation proper to theories of effective language use in rhetoric and then the abandonment of aspiration to universality in critical theory and criticism. The final two subsections shift from theory to practice in the analysis of style in stylistics and valuational principles for approaching the art of translation. The chapter concludes with a turn to semiotics, first presenting the development of the study of signs in medieval Europe and then turning to a metaphysical interpretation of the semiotics of

American pragmatist Charles Sanders Peirce. The chapter concludes by setting up the interpretation of language as ritual to be fully elaborated in chapter five by pointing to some inadequacies in the theory of language advanced by Terrence Deacon in *The Symbolic Species*.

### *Western Ritual Theory*

Rather than attempting a comprehensive review of the ritual theory literature, which has already been accomplished by others, chapter three sets out to construct a systematic theory of ritual in dialectical engagement with a range of theories at play in that literature, largely emerging from the social sciences. It begins by laying out what an adequate theory of ritual should involve in dialogue with Ronald Grimes, and then proceeds to systematically develop such a theory under nine aspects: definition, origins, structure, process, function, performance, sincerity and efficacy, communication, and semiotics. Each aspect is developed theoretically especially in conversation with Roy A. Rappaport (1926 – 1997) in his seminal work, *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity*, and then also with other relevant ritual theory literature. The theory is then applied to a ritual generally accepted as such in order to demonstrate its adequacy, namely The Great Vigil of Easter at Washington National Cathedral on April 4, 2015 as encoded in a video recording supplemented by the service

bulletin and other liturgical materials. A concluding section turns to the issue of the relationship between ritual and language as they have been interpreted together in various ways in the ritual theory literature. The options for construing their relationship include ritual as a species of language, ritual and language as each species of another genus, i.e. “rule-governed activities,” or language as a species of ritual. This last, which was universally panned following its promotion by Edmund Leach (1910 – 1989), is the approach advocated through the remainder of the dissertation, especially chapters five and six.

### *Confucian Ritual Theory*

The principal comparator for the Western ritual theories explored in chapter three is the Confucian ritual theorist Xunzi 荀子, a third century BCE Chinese thinker who prescribed ritual as a solution to the violent conflicts of the Warring States period. Alas, the literature regarding Xunzi, while rapidly becoming more profuse, is mutually contradictory in its interpretations of Xunzi and his texts, and so the chapter spends a great deal of time setting Xunzi in his proper socio-political, intellectual, and textual context. This chapter is notable for being the first attempt to interpret Xunzi in dialogue with the developmental history of the *Analects* as reconstructed by Bruce and Takeo Brooks. Three doctrines distinguish Xunzi from the other most prominent Confucians of the

Warring States period, namely his doctrines of human nature, heaven/nature, and ritual. This careful historicizing, in continuity with the historicism of religious philosophy, makes it possible to interpret Xunzi within the literature that has accrued about him in English. This interpretation then further enables the derivation of three key aspects of a theory of ritual that are adopted into the theory that had been elaborated in the previous chapter, namely that ritual is pervasive, conventional, and transformative. The chapter concludes with a summation of the whole theory of ritual as developed over the course of chapters three and four and its application to the Autumnal Sacrifice to Confucius at the Confucius Temple in Tainan, Taiwan as video recorded by Thomas A. Wilson and Brooks Jessup.

### *Language as Ritual*

The purpose of the fifth chapter is to interpret together the theory of ritual developed over the course of chapters three and four together with the various perspectives on language engaged in chapter two in order to make the case that language is best understood as a species of ritual. After a review of the semiotic theory in which language as ritual is grounded, the interpretive work of the chapter moves in two directions in succession. First, language is interpreted as it registers in each aspect of the theory of ritual. Then, more provocatively, each

dimension of language is reinterpreted as the ritual theory would construe it, transforming the whole apparatus of the linguistic turn as it has played out across a wide variety of disciplines along the way. Since this chapter is more properly philosophical, hypothetical examples are employed, rather than the empirical examples employed in the previous two chapters, which are normal in the social sciences whence ritual theory has largely arisen. Overall, the chapter seeks to interpret linguistic meaning among the ellipse defined by reality, mind, and society, as Hillary Putnam demonstrates that it must, and shows how language as ritual accomplishes this when so many other theories fail. Moreover, the ellipse of meaning is itself identified as a subjunctive space, which notion is spelled out in detail in chapter six. Chapter five, meanwhile, concludes by engaging the theory of language as ritual with three alternatives: the project of rectifying names as elaborated by Xunzi, Wittgensteinian language games, and the universal grammar of Noam Chomsky.

#### *Subjunctive Ritual and Religious Language*

Meaning is taken to depend on the subjunctive space among language, reality, mind, and society as discussed in chapter five. The purpose of chapter six is to interrogate the notion of subjunctivity and show how it enables a solution to the problem of religious language. In the end, it turns out, the subjunctive

character of meaning means that even a God as indeterminate as the one elaborated above in this chapter registers as meaningful on the same terms as anything else. This is to say that the problem of religious language falls out as properly problematic. The chapter begins with consideration of the notion of the subjunctive as it emerges in linguistics, social theory, and logic, and the allergies to this notion in modern and postmodern philosophy and theology. This notion of subjunctivity is then brought into engagement with the theory of language as ritual so as to render it consistent with the metaphysical semiotics that underlies the theory and to itself ground a particular form of critical realism, i.e. subjunctive realism. The following section shows how subjunctivity enables language to engage minds in society with a range of sorts of elements of reality, building up from description of simple objects and then conversation about them through the linguistic constitution of community through subjunctivity and engagement with indeterminate realities. This analysis enables the development of a typology of religious language in which metaphysical language hews to the pole of reality, liturgical language to that of society, and mystical language to the mental pole such that each is meaningful in its own way but becomes more so as it moves toward the others. The conclusion, then, is that all of the types of language, and indeed all language, is poetic, which is to say that language is

transformative of the reality it engages, including divinity. This theory of religious language, rooted in the subjunctivity of language as ritual, is contrasted with theories of religious language as metaphor and model, and then the project concludes with a theopoetic postscript.

*Original Contribution to Scholarship*

The goal of any dissertation is to make an original contribution to scholarship, and indeed the project, by definition, stands or falls on having done so. This dissertation makes several contributions to scholarship. It develops a novel theory of ritual via comparative engagement between modern social scientific ritual theories and that of the Warring States Confucian thinker Xunzi. As was noted, it is the first attempt to interpret Xunzi in dialogue with the development of the text of the *Analects* as reconstructed by Bruce and Takeo Brooks. It develops a theory of language out of its novel theory of ritual that seeks to correct a number of distortions that have come about under the dominance of the linguistic turn. It counters the view that signification is arbitrary and all structures are analyzable on analogy to linguistic structures as claimed by Ferdinand de Saussure. It also rejects the causal connections between language and mind presumed from language to mind by linguistic relativists and from mind to language by advocates of the theory of universal grammar.



Instead, it seeks to locate linguistic meaning among the poles of reality, mind, and society as suggested by Hillary Putnam. The dissertation begins to develop a theory of mind as ritual, in parallel to the theory of language as ritual, and identifies ritual as a properly metaphysical category, but a systematic philosophy of mind and metaphysical semiotics await further development. The project would also benefit from engagement with South Asian philosophies of language and ritual, and a comparative logic remains on the horizon. Nevertheless, the central contribution of the project as it stands is to provide the first philosophy of language based in a view of reality as pervasively in process such that the problem of religious language, which has plagued philosophers across cultures for over two millennia, drops out as problematic.

## LANGUAGE

One way of going about solving the problem of religious language involves finding a set of moves in philosophy of language (broadly construed) to articulate the special ways in which language is meaningful with respect to religious realities.<sup>157</sup> In fact, this is the most commonly employed strategy in the religious language literature. William P. Alston (1921 – 2009) employs arguments advanced by Saul Kripke against descriptive reference<sup>158</sup> in order to argue for direct reference to God.<sup>159</sup> Ernst Cassirer (1874 – 1945) elaborates the insight that language as an instrument of reason is more reflective of the creative work of imagination in mythmaking than of the discursive logic of rationalization. So, theories of knowledge and mind should attend carefully to the genesis of human conception in language and myth as they are then embodied in symbolic expression.<sup>160</sup> Edward Cell appreciatively engages a number of positions in the history of analytic philosophy of language but ultimately largely abandons them

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<sup>157</sup> Ron Holt, "A Socio-Linguistic Approach to Religious Language," *Australian E-Journal of Theology* 6 (February 2006): 1–14, [http://aejt.com.au/2006/vol\\_6\\_no\\_1\\_2006?article=395193](http://aejt.com.au/2006/vol_6_no_1_2006?article=395193).

<sup>158</sup> Saul A. Kripke, *Naming and Necessity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980).

<sup>159</sup> William P. Alston, *Divine Nature and Human Language: Essays in Philosophical Theology* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989), chap. 5.

<sup>160</sup> Ernst Cassirer, *Language and Myth*, trans. Susanne K. Langer (New York, NY: Dover, 1946).

in favor of a Tillichian existentialist argument for the meaningfulness of linguistic statements with regard to divine action.<sup>161</sup> Malcolm L. Diamond (1924 – 1997) and Thomas V. Litzenberg, Jr. (1933 – 2018) present a variety of responses to the philosophical challenges posed by the verificationist project of the logical positivists with regard to the meaningfulness of theological language.<sup>162</sup> Gerhard Ebeling (1912 – 2001) diagnoses a problem for Christian theology rooted in the linguistic intervention of the “Word of God” when the power of language to transform becomes suspect in the wider culture. He prescribes critical appraisal of theological vocabulary and creative yet faithful interpretation toward mutual agreement with wider cultural linguistic usage.<sup>163</sup> Frederick Ferré (1933 – 2013) goes to great lengths to carve out space in the midst of contrary philosophical trends, which he spells out in exquisite detail, for the logic, hermeneutics, and metaphysics of theological discourse, but in the end relies on something like a Kierkegaardian leap of faith to instantiate personal theism.<sup>164</sup> Garth L. Hallett

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<sup>161</sup> Edward Cell, *Language, Existence and God: Interpretations of Moore, Russell, Ayer, Wittgenstein, Wisdom, Oxford Philosophy and Tillich* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1971).

<sup>162</sup> Malcolm Luria Diamond and Thomas V. Litzenburg, *The Logic of God: Theology and Verification* (Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs-Merrill, 1975).

<sup>163</sup> Gerhard Ebeling, *Introduction to a Theological Theory of Language* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1973).

<sup>164</sup> Frederick Ferré, *Language, Logic, and God* (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1961), chap. 12.

advocates a Wittgensteinian “Principle of Relative Similarity” whereby truth is determined by degree of resemblance to established uses of words as opposed to any other word in order to recover everyday uses of language for theology, as opposed to metaphysical uses.<sup>165</sup> Similarly, Kevin W. Hector focuses on pragmatics in developing an account of language as historically conditioned and evolving but stabilized by a commitment to prior uses in relevant respects, which he prescribes as therapy for grief at the loss of metaphysical assumptions about the correspondence between language and reality.<sup>166</sup> D. Stephen Long advocates for a metaphysics subordinated to the doctrine of the incarnation as inoculation for the ills of the linguistic turn such that language might be understood to signify in the same way as the humanity of Christ.<sup>167</sup> John Losee turns to scientific paradigms as he draws an analogy between religious language and quantum theory in order to explain a type of complementarity between rhetorical frames of divine immutability and rhetorical frames of divine

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<sup>165</sup> Garth L. Hallett, *Theology within the Bounds of Language: A Methodological Tour* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2012).

<sup>166</sup> Kevin Hector, *Theology without Metaphysics: God, Language, and the Spirit of Recognition* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

<sup>167</sup> D. Stephen Long, *Speaking of God: Theology, Language, and Truth* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2009).

participation in dialogue with humanity.<sup>168</sup> John Macquarrie (1919 – 2007) argues that religious or theological language is a mode of discourse that seeks to bring its recipient into “encounter with holy Being.”<sup>169</sup> Felicity McCutcheon returns to the work of Ludwig Wittgenstein in order to argue, against most Wittgensteinian philosophy of religion, that religious language makes coherent metaphysical claims within the realm of meaningful language rather than attempting to escape that realm, as Wittgenstein rightly admonished.<sup>170</sup> Sallie McFague describes religious language as metaphorical, identifying abstract realities by their likeness to concrete ones, and sophisticated metaphors become stabilized as models, which are the building blocks of theologies.<sup>171</sup> John Milbank seeks to unite a Thomistic understanding of linguistic analogy with a contemporary understanding of the social construction of the humanly meaningful world via language in order to contextualize the metaphysical claims of religious language

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<sup>168</sup> John Losee, *Religious Language and Complementarity* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1992).

<sup>169</sup> John Macquarrie, *God-Talk: An Examination of the Language and Logic of Theology* (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1967), 83.

<sup>170</sup> Felicity McCutcheon, *Religion within the Limits of Language Alone: Wittgenstein on Philosophy and Religion*, Heythrop Studies in Contemporary Philosophy, Religion & Theology (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2001).

<sup>171</sup> Sallie McFague, *Metaphorical Theology: Models of God in Religious Language* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1982).

within this realm of the humanly meaningful.<sup>172</sup> Ian T. Ramsey (1915 – 1972) construes the varieties of language for God as models of cosmic disclosures with a common referent, and thus, in principle, capable of being rendered coherent with one another.<sup>173</sup> The contributors to *God in Language*, edited by Robert P. Scharlemann and Gilbert E. M. Ogutu, approach the problem of religious language from multiple religious traditions and vantage points but are united by the Gadamerian hermeneutical insight that language is a tool and medium between meanings and things.<sup>174</sup> James K. A. Smith argues that the incarnation of God in the person of Jesus Christ provides the basis for a phenomenology that bridges the gap between the finite and the infinite by being divine speech and so compelling a response so as to make this revelation visible.<sup>175</sup> Janet Martin Soskice elaborates an interanimative account of metaphor as irreducibly figurative language about one thing that suggests another in order to ground the

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<sup>172</sup> John Milbank, *The Word Made Strange: Theology, Language, Culture* (Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 1997), chaps. 1–4.

<sup>173</sup> Ian T. Ramsey, *Words About God: The Philosophy of Religion* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011), 202–23; Ian T. Ramsey, *Religious Language: An Empirical Placing of Theological Phrases* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011); Ian T. Ramsey, *Models and Mystery* (London: Oxford University Press, 1964).

<sup>174</sup> Robert P. Scharlemann and Gilbert E. M. Ogutu, eds., *God in Language* (New York, NY: Paragon House, 1999).

<sup>175</sup> James K. A. Smith, *Speech and Theology: Language and the Logic of Incarnation* (London: Routledge, 2005).

conceptual possibility of religious language having real reference.<sup>176</sup> Dan R. Stiver largely chronicles the history of late modern developments in the philosophy of religious language, but then heralds a paradigm shift toward understanding language as a frame in a window of translucent or colored glass through which we understand our world. He considers that different people and communities will have different colors and degrees of opaqueness of their respective glass.<sup>177</sup> Paul M. van Buren (1924 – 1998) positions religion at the farthest frontier of language, expressing as much as could possibly be said, and so seeking to circumvent debates between theism and atheism as of little interest or value for Christianity.<sup>178</sup> Finally, Roger M. White strives to rehabilitate the doctrine of analogy for rendering religious language meaningful between the Scylla of anthropomorphism and the Charybdis of agnosticism.<sup>179</sup>

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<sup>176</sup> Janet Martin Soskice, *Metaphor and Religious Language* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon, 1987).

<sup>177</sup> Dan Stiver, *The Philosophy of Religious Language: Sign, Symbol and Story* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1996).

<sup>178</sup> Paul Matthews van Buren, *The Secular Meaning of the Gospel: Based on Analysis of Its Language* (New York, NY: Penguin, 1968); Paul Matthews van Buren, *The Edges of Language: An Essay in the Logic of a Religion* (New York, NY: MacMillan, 1972).

<sup>179</sup> Roger M. White, *Talking about God: The Concept of Analogy and the Problem of Religious Language* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2013).

The main problem with this approach to the problem of religious language is that the orientation adopted within philosophy of language is inevitably quite narrow, even as language itself is an exceedingly broad phenomenon, which contrast begs the question of the adequacy of such approaches. The present project avoids myopia by pursuing multiple approaches to language arising from various disciplines, which together achieve something like breadth.<sup>180</sup> Instead of developing a distinctive theory of language, the approach in this chapter is to explore various vantage points on the phenomenon of language, which, if they were to be made coherent and systematic, could then constitute a singular theory of language, which will be the task of chapter five. Moreover, the present project rejects the tendency in the literature to turn to a single feature of language, or a single level of linguistic analysis, for the key to unlock the mysteries of particularly religious language. Instead, as will be elaborated in chapter five, the various aspects of and perspectives on language to be articulated in this chapter may be rendered coherent and systematic when language is understood as itself a species of ritual. It is capacities inherent in the

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<sup>180</sup> An early collaborative attempt to consider religious language in a broader frame, albeit exclusively in relation to Christian theology, is represented in Stanley E. Porter, ed., *The Nature of Religious Language: A Colloquium*, Roehampton Institute London Papers 1 (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield, 1996).



broader realm of ritual, then, and especially ritual subjunctivity as elaborated in chapter six, that reveal instances of religious language to be part and parcel of common linguistic activity. Language, it turns out, simultaneously picks up on and misses important aspects of the realities it purports to depict.

After considering what is frequently referred to as the “linguistic turn” in modern philosophy, this chapter turns to the various foci of the contemporary scientific approach to language, namely linguistics, which are deeply interrelated with issues philosophically explored in the subsequent section on philosophy of language and logic. The chapter then takes up questions of interpretation of language, or hermeneutics, which includes approaches to language most common in continental philosophy. Finally, semiotics provides a perspective on language that abstracts from the phenomenon of words to the more general category of signs.

## *The Linguistic Turn*

Richard Rorty popularized the notion of the linguistic turn in philosophy,<sup>181</sup> citing Gustav Bergmann as the progenitor of the phrase.<sup>182</sup> Rorty describes the linguistic turn as the latest, as of 1967, philosophical revolution in a long history thereof, oriented around the view that “philosophical problems are problems which may be solved (or dissolved) either by reforming language, or by understanding more about the language we presently use.”<sup>183</sup> Historically, the nascent expression of the linguistic turn may be ascribed to Gottlob Frege (1848 – 1925), who understood his own project to be an analysis of thought, not of language.<sup>184</sup>

"Although he continued to reiterate that it is inessential to thoughts and thought-constituents that we grasp them as the senses of sentences and their parts respectively, it is unclear that his account of the senses of linguistic expressions is capable of being transposed into an account of thoughts considered independently of their expression in

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<sup>181</sup> Richard Rorty, *The Linguistic Turn: Essays in Philosophical Method* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

<sup>182</sup> Richard Rorty, *Essays on Heidegger and Others: Philosophical Papers* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 50; Neil Gross, *Richard Rorty: The Making of an American Philosopher* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 180–82.

<sup>183</sup> Rorty, *The Linguistic Turn*, 3.

<sup>184</sup> Michael A. E. Dummett, *Origins of Analytical Philosophy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), 5.

words. When philosophers consciously embraced the strategy that Frege had pursued, the linguistic turn was thereby decisively taken."<sup>185</sup>

Such conscious embrace arrives with the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (1922) of

Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889 – 1951): “All philosophy is a ‘critique’ of language.”<sup>186</sup>

The turn then developed in two phases, the first concerned with ideal language, which is language constructed from logical principles, and the second concerned with ordinary languages, or natural languages, which have developed through use in human societies, e.g. English, Hebrew, Greek, Chinese, Sanskrit, etc.

Ironically, it was just as Rorty was publishing his book on the linguistic turn that the turn itself was waning in the mid-1960s as debates about the nature of language and meaning, and about philosophical method, deepened. Of particular note are the reemergence in analytic philosophy, among many areas of inquiry, of metaphysics, the illegitimacy of which was central to the turn itself, and of historical philosophical approaches and ideas, even particularly religious ideas.<sup>187</sup>

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<sup>185</sup> Dummett, 128.

<sup>186</sup> Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 4.0031. see also Peter M. S. Hacker, “The Linguistic Turn in Analytic Philosophy,” in *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Analytic Philosophy*, ed. Michael Beaney (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2013), 32.3.

<sup>187</sup> Aaron Preston, “Analytic Philosophy,” in *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 5a-c, accessed July 8, 2016, <http://www.iep.utm.edu/analytic/>.

This classic account of the linguistic turn belies the fact that Frege was preceded in his interest in language by a number of earlier modern philosophers, among them John Locke (1632 – 1704), Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646 – 1716), Étienne Bonnot de Condillac (1714 – 80), and Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767 – 1835).<sup>188</sup> Locke argued that language is made up of signs referring to ideas in the mind of the user,<sup>189</sup> thereby uniting “the study of language with the study of the human understanding, particularly its cognitive capacities.”<sup>190</sup> From there, Leibniz inaugurated a return to Scholastic conceptions of the underlying logical form of natural languages, whereas Condillac carried forward the Renaissance interest in language use.<sup>191</sup> While von Humboldt made a herculean attempt to reunite these two strains, resulting in his being claimed as a progenitor of both

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<sup>188</sup> Michael Losonsky, *Linguistic Turns in Modern Philosophy* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2006), xii.

<sup>189</sup> John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Alexander Campbell Fraser, vol. 2 (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1894), bk. III chap. IV; Losonsky, *Linguistic Turns in Modern Philosophy*, chap. 1; Hannah Dawson, *Locke, Language and Early-Modern Philosophy* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

<sup>190</sup> Losonsky, *Linguistic Turns in Modern Philosophy*, 52.

<sup>191</sup> Losonsky, chaps. 2 & 3; Gottfried Wilhelm Freiherr von Leibniz, *New Essays on Human Understanding*, ed. Peter Remnant and Jonathan Bennett (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Étienne Bonnot De Condillac, *Essay on the Origin of Human Knowledge*, ed. Hans Aarsleff (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

linguistic generativism (i.e. innate grammar) and linguistic relativism,<sup>192</sup> Michael Losonsky persuasively argues that they have in fact remained divided to the present.<sup>193</sup> The common assumption shared among these earlier thinkers is Locke's insight that language refers to ideas, which is abandoned by John Stuart Mill (1806 – 73),<sup>194</sup> and in turn by Frege, for linguistic reference to things in the world,<sup>195</sup> thus signaling what Rorty identified as the linguistic turn. The account of language as ritual in this project harmonizes the logical structure of language with its varieties of use and shows how language serves to mediate between ideas and things in the world.

The linguistic turn has a wider connotation beyond the scope and field of analytic philosophy. Continental philosophy has deep concerns with language as well, approached in terms of linguistic and textual interpretation, and so hermeneutics became central to its project, as well as to the disciplines in the

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<sup>192</sup> Losonsky, *Linguistic Turns in Modern Philosophy*, chap. 4.

<sup>193</sup> Losonsky, xiii–xv, chaps. 6–8.

<sup>194</sup> Losonsky, chap. 5; John Stuart Mill, *A System of Logic, Ratiocinative and Inductive: Being a Connected View of the Principles of Evidence and the Methods of Scientific Investigation*, vol. 1 (London: John W. Parker, 1843); John Stuart Mill, *A System of Logic, Ratiocinative and Inductive: Being a Connected View of the Principles of Evidence and the Methods of Scientific Investigation*, vol. 2 (London: John W. Parker, 1843).

<sup>195</sup> Michael Morris, *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Language* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 1.

humanities and social sciences in which continental thought has been influential.<sup>196</sup> In the continental vein, the linguistic turn encapsulates two related theories, to be considered in turn: first, the sociological theory that all knowledge, and the realities that depend upon knowledge, are socially constructed; and second, the philosophical theory that all knowledge is contingent upon and relative to the interpretive frameworks and processes from which it arises.<sup>197</sup>

The sociology of knowledge operates at the intersection of sociology and philosophy, employing the philosophical concepts of “knowledge” and “reality” but asking a different set of questions about them. Whereas philosophers ask about what knowledge and reality are and how they can be known, sociologists of knowledge inquire about the social contexts that make knowledge and reality plausible and construct them so, pursuing the inquiry via phenomenological analysis of the subjective experience of everyday life in society.<sup>198</sup> While Peter

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<sup>196</sup> Kurt Mueller-Vollmer, *Hermeneutics Reader: Texts of the German Tradition from the Enlightenment to the Present* (New York, NY: Continuum, 1998), ix. see also Cristina Lafont and José Medina, *The Linguistic Turn in Hermeneutic Philosophy* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999).

<sup>197</sup> Phillip M. Carter, “Poststructuralist Theory and Sociolinguistics: Mapping the Linguistic Turn in Social Theory: Poststructuralist Theory and Sociolinguistics,” *Language and Linguistics Compass* 7, no. 11 (November 2013): 580–96, <https://doi.org/10.1111/lnc3.12051>.

<sup>198</sup> Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality* (New York, NY: Penguin, 1966), 15.

Berger (1929 – 2017) and Thomas Luckmann (1927 – 2016), in their seminal text for social constructivism, insist on the importance of remembering the subjective starting point for their phenomenology,<sup>199</sup> too often this is precisely what subsequent social constructivists forget, such that reality as that which is independent of human interpretation of it becomes confused with reality as that which human interpretation constructs. Both conceptions of reality are philosophically defensible in their own way,<sup>200</sup> but the latter is dependent upon a Cartesian and Kantian subjective captivity that makes reality independent of interpretation unavailable. Just as analytic philosophers who take the linguistic turn rely upon language as the only medium for accessing thought or experience, which are the ultimate objects of philosophical reflection for them,<sup>201</sup> continental thought following its own linguistic turn relies upon language as the primary medium for constructing reality.<sup>202</sup> The result is that reality in the sense of that which is independent of human knowledge or interpretation of it is forgotten, which amnesia is the likely culprit for the confusion of the two senses of reality.

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<sup>199</sup> Berger and Luckmann, 34.

<sup>200</sup> See John R. Searle, *The Construction of Social Reality* (New York, NY: Free Press, 1995).

<sup>201</sup> Dummett, *Origins of Analytical Philosophy*, 10–11.

<sup>202</sup> Berger and Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality*, 49–61.

In the present project, the social construction of humanly significant realities and the central role of language in this construction is understood to be valid so far as it goes, but without forgetting the alternative sense of reality as independent of human programs. To accomplish this, “reality” will be used exclusively in this latter sense, while “knowledge” and “interpretation” will be used for socially constructed, humanly significant realities.

Poststructuralism outright rejects the notion of objective realities independent of human knowledge and interpretation, including the objective reality of subjectivity. Instead, poststructuralists are interested in the processes by which individuals, societies, and cultures, largely through the medium of language, produce and represent reality as objective, individuals as subjects, and theories as universal.<sup>203</sup> The poststructuralist contention is that it is the process represented in language, and not the product, that is the primary scope of philosophic inquiry, an orientation shared with structuralism. The distinguishing feature of poststructuralism is the view that structures are not unconditional but rather themselves conditioned by historical and contextual processes, and so are never fully determinate but rather dynamic.<sup>204</sup> Furthermore, since the

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<sup>203</sup> Carter, “Poststructuralist Theory and Sociolinguistics,” 585.

<sup>204</sup> Gutting, “Post-Structuralism,” 596–97.



conditioning processes of history and context are themselves conditioned, they can provide no neutral ground, or foundation, from which to either evaluate or adjudicate between the conditioned, dynamic systems and structures that make up the life-worlds of individuals, societies, and cultures.<sup>205</sup> Hans-Georg Gadamer notably claims that hermeneutics, or the process of coming to an understanding, is conversational by nature and mediated in language, with the further implication that hermeneutical experience and language are universal, albeit as general categories for explaining human experience, not in any of their particular occurrences or events.<sup>206</sup> The process of a given conversation will both serve to further condition the language employed therein and generate a novel understanding of the topic of conversation. It is not clear, however, that the novel understanding will correspond with what is being interpreted, (usually a text), in any sense, since meaning is defined as the generation of the novel understanding. Neither is it clear that the novel understanding will be fully or at least substantially mutually shared among participants in the hermeneutical

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<sup>205</sup> Baghramian and Carter, "Relativism."

<sup>206</sup> Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 385–406, 436–84. This universality is questioned by post-structuralists who reject all notions of universality. See Diane P. Michelfelder and Richard E. Palmer, *Dialogue and Deconstruction: The Gadamer-Derrida Encounter* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1989); Gayle L. Ormiston, *The Hermeneutic Tradition: From Ast to Ricoeur* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1990).

conversation. Again, reality as that which is independent of human knowledge or interpretation has dropped from view as philosophically, or even humanly, available, and now even the socially constructed reality has been destabilized vis-à-vis its participants. Language, in the continental perspective, is thus the ultimate framework, process, and outcome of the hermeneutic pursuit of knowledge and understanding, which is why it may be said that there has been a parallel linguistic turn in continental thought.

A third arena in which a linguistic turn has played out is semiotics,<sup>207</sup> which has become an interdisciplinary field with extensive reach in the academy and in the professional world, such as in marketing and communications. Semiotics is the study of signs, sign systems, and their interactions. There are two trajectories of semiotic inquiry in the modern period, which are, in a sense, inversely related to one another. The first, associated with Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913) as articulated in his *Course in General Linguistics*,<sup>208</sup> seeks to analyze signs, sign systems, and their interactions using various modes of linguistic analysis. This is to say that this mode of inquiry takes the structure of language to be the normative structure for all sign systems. The further implication of this

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<sup>207</sup> John Deely, *Basics of Semiotics* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1990).

<sup>208</sup> de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*.

approach is that signs are understood in dyadic relation to what they signify and the relationship between a sign and the signified is arbitrary. It is this trajectory that gave birth to structuralism in continental philosophy. The second trajectory of semiotic inquiry, initially articulated by Charles Sanders Peirce,<sup>209</sup> inverts the first trajectory by making language but one species of the more general class of semiotic systems. According to Peirce, then, there is a triadic relation among sign, signified, and interpretant, the last being the effect of taking the sign for the signified. Moreover, signs, their objects, and their interpretants mutually determine each other, albeit not necessarily causally, in various ways, and each element and their relationships are themselves signs of further objects and generating further interpretants.<sup>210</sup> This second trajectory is the perspective adopted in the present project and will be engaged in significant detail in the last section of this chapter and in chapter five. For the moment, the important point has to do with the linguistic turn, or making language the central object of inquiry. While the Saussurean tradition of semiotics and later American pragmatists took the linguistic turn, Peirce and the American semiotic tradition

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<sup>209</sup> Charles Sanders Peirce, *Peirce on Signs: Writings on Semiotic* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1991).

<sup>210</sup> Albert Atkin, "Peirce's Theory of Signs," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Summer, 2013, <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2013/entries/peirce-semiotics/>.

more broadly has resisted the linguistic turn and instead understands language as a particular sign system among many other systems of signs. Nevertheless, this lineage remains a minority report among approaches to language, most of which at this point presume the linguistic turn in one or another of its incarnations. These majority positions dominate the discussion of language until the last section of this chapter.

A significant limitation of this dissertation is that the literature it engages with respect to language lies almost exclusively within the confines of the linguistic turn. While antecedent alternatives to the present view in the West will be engaged in the final section of this chapter, the project would benefit from sustained comparative engagement with alternative conceptions of language and logic that have developed in India, but this lies beyond the scope of the undertaking at present. Nevertheless, it is important to note that registering such an alternative, among other things, would highlight the particularity, contingency, and relativity of the view from within the linguistic turn.

Finally, the linguistic turn has had a dramatic effect on disciplinarity in late modern scholarship, which is of particular interest given that the present undertaking is so intentionally, carefully, and unrelentingly multidisciplinary and comparative. One outcome of the linguistic turn in the academy has been to

circumscribe the results of inquiry within the boundaries of the methods and frameworks of a given discipline. The knowledge generated from a particular inquiry is contingent upon the discipline in which the methods employed are taken to be determinative and productive. Disciplines are like languages, and their methods the grammar thereof; assertions of disciplinary incommensurability, on this analogy, amount to claiming the impossibility of adequate translation. It is hardly surprising, then, that disciplines have become siloed and inquiries have become increasingly narrow in scope. Given this socially constructed reality of academia in the present moment, claims to the production of knowledge that merely deny this taken-for-granted knowledge are doomed. Instead, multidisciplinary inquiry, as argued in the first chapter, must proceed by carefully tricating its concepts in the relevant disciplines in order to register within their hermeneutical processes and frameworks. Only then can the painstaking work of translation begin, taking account of not only the outcomes of various disciplinary inquiries but also the varieties of interpretive frames in which those outcomes register. In this way, multidisciplinary inquiry seeks not to reject the claim, arising from the linguistic turn, that knowledge is contextually situated. Rather, it seeks to demonstrate that contextually situated knowledge is not *a priori* irrelevant to other contexts and situations.

## Linguistics

Linguistics is a social scientific discipline that seeks to understand and describe the nature of and communication in language. In approaching language, linguists assume their object of inquiry to be patterned such that regularities may be descriptively generalized as rules governing an unbounded, or infinite, signification system. Linguists also assume that language in general is a relatively unified phenomenon across specific instances, exhibiting a common level of complexity and detail, and displaying similar formal structures.<sup>211</sup> With regard to this latter assumption, the field is divided among linguists who take stronger and weaker views. The strong view, which has been dominant since it was inaugurated and epitomized by Noam Chomsky, takes the similarities among linguistic structures to be indicative of an innate and universal grammar such that the structure of language mirrors the structure of the human mind.<sup>212</sup> The weak view, which is gaining traction and is the perspective espoused in the present project, sees language as a cultural tool that varies, or is at least capable

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<sup>211</sup> Adrian Akmajian et al., *Linguistics: An Introduction to Language and Communication* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001), 1–11.

<sup>212</sup> Noam Chomsky, *Language and Mind* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Noam Chomsky, *Reflections on Language* (New York, NY: Pantheon, 1975).

of variance, across instances as they are embedded in cultural contexts. Similarities are then to be explained by language inevitably arising from, describing, and responding to a more or less singular reality.<sup>213</sup> Which view is taken to be correct does impact linguistic analysis in various ways, which will be elaborated in the final subsection, but the goal in the intermediate subsections is to become familiar with the main taxonomic categories and interpretive theories in linguistics that will be brought into conversation with ritual in chapter five.

### *Phonology and Phonetics*

Modern linguistics privileges spoken language as primary, taking written language to be parasitic thereon, and so phonetics, the study of the sounds of speech, and phonology, the study of speech sound organization into patterns, may be considered the most fundamental or basic mode of linguistic analysis. Physiologically, the sounds of speech are produced by a continuous flow of air from the lungs, maintained by the diaphragm and the musculature that controls the rib cage, phonating the vocal chords stretched across the larynx at the top of the trachea in the case of voiced sounds. These sounds are then formed into

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<sup>213</sup> Everett, *Language*; Daniel L. Everett, *Don't Sleep, There Are Snakes: Life and Language in the Amazonian Jungle* (London: Profile, 2010).

speech by manipulation of various parts of the anatomy found in the vocal tract. The frequency at which the vocal chords vibrate determines the pitch of the sound, and closure of the vocal chords produces a type of sound referred to as “glottal,” but the remainder of what transforms sound into speech results from varying configurations of the lips, teeth, tongue, hard palate, soft palate, nasal cavity, uvula, pharynx, and epiglottis with respect to one another.<sup>214</sup> While the actual performance of speech is always elided in a continuous flow, phonetics breaks the flow apart into a combinatorial scheme of discrete phonemes. These are best represented in writing not by the orthography developed for any particular natural language but by either a phonemic or phonetic transcription system such as the International Phonetic Alphabet.<sup>215</sup> Consonants may be classified as either voiced or unvoiced (voiceless), by their manner of articulation as stops, fricatives, affricates, nasals, liquids, or glides, and by the anatomical location in the oral cavity where articulation occurs as bilabial, labiodental, interdental, alveolar, alveopalatal, velar, or glottal.<sup>216</sup> Vowels fall under three

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<sup>214</sup> Akmajian et al., *Linguistics*, 69–73.

<sup>215</sup> International Phonetic Association, *Handbook of the International Phonetic Association: A Guide to the Use of the International Phonetic Alphabet* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

<sup>216</sup> Akmajian et al., *Linguistics*, 75–81.



types: lax (short), tense (long), or reduced (unstressed), and may be further classified by the height of the tongue in the mouth, (high, mid, low), and the depth in the mouth (front, central, back) where they are formed; diphthongs are single sounds that shift from one position in the oral cavity to another.<sup>217</sup>

Whereas the English alphabet has twenty-six letters (twenty-one consonants and five vowels), phonetic analysis reveals Standard English to have forty phonemes (twenty-seven consonants and thirteen vowels). The language with the most phonemes is !Xóõ, native to Botswana, with 161 phonemes (130 consonants, twenty-eight vowels, and three tones). The languages with the least phonemes each have eleven: Rotokas of Papua New Guinea (six consonants and five vowels), and Pirahã of Brazil (eight consonants and three vowels). Because phonetic analysis involves breaking down a continuous stream of sound into constituent parts, there is sometimes disagreement among phonetic linguists about which sounds are really distinct from others. For example, the PHOIBLE Online phonetic database reports three different counts for the number of phonemes in Mandarin Chinese: forty-nine, forty-three, or thirty-two.<sup>218</sup>

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<sup>217</sup> Akmajian et al., 81–87.

<sup>218</sup> Steven Moran, Daniel McCloy, and Richard Wright, eds., *PHOIBLE Online* (Leipzig, Germany: Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology, 2014), <http://phoible.org/>.

Two types of approaches dominate phonological analysis at present. The earlier of the two, inaugurated by Noam Chomsky and Morris Halle in *The Sound Pattern of English* in 1968, fits into the category of generative grammar associated with the strong view of linguistic structures as innate and universal grammar.<sup>219</sup> This approach begins by identifying the distinctive features available for constructing the phonemes of a language: syllabic, consonantal, sonorant, voiced, continuant, nasal, strident, lateral, distributed, affricate, labial, round, coronal, anterior, high, back, and low for consonants; syllabic, high, back, low, round, and tense (long) for vowels.<sup>220</sup> Groups of phonemes that share a small number of distinctive features are amenable to formulating rules describing phonological regularity called natural classes.<sup>221</sup> Observing the patterning of phonemes in natural classes and then formulating rules that describe phonological regularity in terms of distinctive features is the means by which this approach analyzes the internal organization of speech sounds.<sup>222</sup> The external organization of these

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<sup>219</sup> Noam Chomsky and Morris Halle, *The Sound Pattern of English* (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1968).

<sup>220</sup> Akmajian et al., 113–18. These features are likely associated with overlaps among acoustic, articulatory, and auditory stability. Kenneth N. Stevens, “On the Quantal Nature of Speech,” *Journal of Phonetics* 17 (1989): 3–45.

<sup>221</sup> Akmajian et al., *Linguistics*, 123.

<sup>222</sup> Akmajian et al., 124.

sounds specifying the allowable sequences of phonemes is analyzed based upon the basic structural unit of the syllable, made up of an onset consonant, a nucleus vowel, and an optional coda consonant, with rules specifying which phonemes are capable of combination in which ways.<sup>223</sup> Syllables are then organized by patterns of prominence or stress into unary, binary, or ternary feet, which may in turn stand alone, be linked together, or be preceded by an “unfooted,” unstressed syllable to form words.<sup>224</sup> The goal of phonology, on this paradigm, is to properly code the basic units of language sounds and then identify the rules by which the units combine to form acceptable, meaningful words.

An alternative approach to phonology emerged in the 1990s called Optimality Theory (OT).<sup>225</sup> Instead of applying rules to phonemes, this approach takes lexical entries as inputs and feeds them into a generator (GEN) module that

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<sup>223</sup> Akmajian et al., 126–30.

<sup>224</sup> Akmajian et al., 130–38.

<sup>225</sup> Diana B. Archangeli, “Introducing Optimality Theory,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 28, no. 1 (1999): 531–552; Diana Archangeli and Terence Langendoen, *Optimality Theory: An Overview* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1997); Rene Kager, *Optimality Theory* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1999); John J. McCarthy, *A Thematic Guide to Optimality Theory* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2002); John J. McCarthy, *Optimality Theory in Phonology: A Reader* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2004); Alan Prince and Paul Smolensky, *Optimality Theory: Constraint Interaction in Generative Grammar* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2008); Paul Smolensky and Géraldine Legendre, *The Harmonic Mind: From Neural Computation to Optimality-Theoretic Grammar - Cognitive Architecture*, vol. 1, 2 vols. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006); Paul Smolensky and Géraldine Legendre, *The Harmonic Mind: From Neural Computation to Optimality-Theoretic Grammar - Linguistic and Philosophical Implications*, vol. 2, 2 vols. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2011).

elaborates a potentially infinite set of possible outputs in varying degrees of correspondence with the given input.<sup>226</sup> These possibilities are then passed on to the evaluator (EVAL) module, which selects a “winner” based on a module containing a set of universal constraints (CON) ranked in different ways by particular languages. Much of the research in OT phonology concerns precise formulation of the universal constraints and their proper ranking in particular languages, but in general there are two types of constraints: “Markedness constraints evaluate the structure of the output form, while Faithfulness constraints evaluate its relationship to other forms.”<sup>227</sup> The application of ranked constraints is represented in a tableaux with the input in the upper left cell, candidate outputs from the generator in the first column, the ranked constraints listed in the first row, and violations of a constraint by a candidate output marked with an asterisk in the respective cell.<sup>228</sup> While there are certainly plenty of proponents of universal and innate grammar, that is, formalists, among phonologists using the OT approach, it has proven especially attractive to

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<sup>226</sup> Paul V De Lacy, *The Cambridge Handbook of Phonology* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 9–10, 13–14.

<sup>227</sup> De Lacy, 10.

<sup>228</sup> De Lacy, 11. An alternative style of tableaux is described on 12.

functionalists who see language generally as a cultural tool and who explain the universality of constraints in terms of human physiological limitations in articulation and perception of speech sounds.<sup>229</sup>

### *Morphology*

If the basic parts of speech sounds are called phonemes, then the basic parts of words, incapable of further analysis into meaningful parts, are called morphemes, and so the study of the internal structure of words and the relationships among word constituents is called morphology.<sup>230</sup> A simple word is made up of a single morpheme, such as “dog,” while complex words are made up of multiple morphemes, such as “dogs,” (dog + s).<sup>231</sup> Free morphemes stand alone as independent words, by contrast to bound morphemes that must be attached to another morpheme. Some bound prefixes operate as affixes, (prefixes, suffixes, or infixes), while others are bound bases such as “cran-“ in cranberry, and still others are appended contractions of other words such as “will” being

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<sup>229</sup> De Lacy, 25–26. See also chap. 3.

<sup>230</sup> Akmajian et al., *Linguistics*, 13, 19. Also, “Morphology is the study of systematic covariation in the form and meaning of words.” Martin Haspelmath and Andrea Sims, *Understanding Morphology* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2013), 2.

<sup>231</sup> Akmajian et al., *Linguistics*, 18–19.

contracted and appended to “they” to become “they’ll” meaning “they will.”<sup>232</sup>

The process by which morphemes join together to form words is called concatenation; non-concatenative words result from operations on a single morpheme.<sup>233</sup> Thus formed, words may then be classified as parts of speech such as nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, prepositions, and many more, some of which classifications are not common across languages.<sup>234</sup> These parts of speech themselves may be distinguished as open-class, which are unlimited in size, may be added to relatively easily, and contain content words, or closed-class, which are smaller and mostly fixed, and contain grammatical or function words.<sup>235</sup>

Many words can take on a variety of forms, and so the forms “live,” “lives,” “lived,” and “living” are word forms, or concrete instantiations, of the abstract core meaning expressed by the lexeme “LIVE;” related word forms are inflections of one another, while lexemes may be related to one another by derivation.<sup>236</sup>

New words added to the lexicon, (neologisms), especially in the open classes,

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<sup>232</sup> Akmajian et al., 20–21.

<sup>233</sup> Haspelmath and Sims, *Understanding Morphology*, 34–35.

<sup>234</sup> Akmajian et al., *Linguistics*, 21–24.

<sup>235</sup> Akmajian et al., 24.

<sup>236</sup> Haspelmath and Sims, *Understanding Morphology*, 15–19. See also chap. 5.

may arise by genuinely new coinage of terms, formation of acronyms (e.g. AIDS), abbreviation (e.g. “Dr.” for Doctor), blending of two or more words (e.g. education + entertainment = “edutainment”), generification (e.g. “to google” from Google™), or direct or indirect borrowing from another language.<sup>237</sup> Also, new meanings may become associated with existing words by changing their part of speech, metaphorically extending them to a new domain, broadening or narrowing their scope, or their meanings may drift over time, or even fully reverse.<sup>238</sup> Finally, new words may be generated through the derivational processes of compounding words of the same or different parts of speech (e.g. landlord or underdog), or adding derivational affixes (e.g. “-able” added to read, break, or wash), which may generate phonological, part of speech, and semantic changes.<sup>239</sup> This derivational morphology, or the study the formation of new words, should not be confused with inflectional morphology, or the study of word forms within a category, which is limited in English but includes plural and possessive suffixes on nouns, person, tense, progress, and participle markers

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<sup>237</sup> Akmajian et al., *Linguistics*, 27–30.

<sup>238</sup> Akmajian et al., 31–34.

<sup>239</sup> Akmajian et al., 34–42.

on verbs, and comparative and superlative suffixes on adjectives.<sup>240</sup> Languages fall on a continuum from more analytic, the extreme of which is termed isolating, to more synthetic, the extreme of which is termed polysynthetic, according to the extent to which they employ morphological changes to express different meanings, as opposed to using another word.<sup>241</sup> What makes morphological analysis interesting are all of the irregular cases in which words either do not behave as the taxonomy would have it or they do not mean what the interpreter would expect based on the analysis.

There are three main theoretical perspectives that guide approaches to morphological analysis. The morpheme-based model approaches its task by analogy to syntax with the goal of developing a relatively rigid set of rules for word formation by concatenation, i.e. morpheme combination.<sup>242</sup> This is a reasonable approach given that concatenation is the most common mode of word

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<sup>240</sup> Akmajian et al., 45–48.

<sup>241</sup> Haspelmath and Sims, *Understanding Morphology*, 4–6.

<sup>242</sup> Haspelmath and Sims, 41–42. See also Morris Halle and Alex Marantz, “Distributed Morphology and the Pieces of Inflection,” in *The View from Building 20*, ed. Kenneth Hale and Samuel Jay Keyser (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1993), 111–76; Morris Halle and Alec Marantz, “Some Key Features of Distributed Morphology,” *MIT Working Papers in Linguistics* 21 (1994): 275–88; Rochelle Lieber, *Deconstructing Morphology: Word Formation in Syntactic Theory* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1992); Leonard Bloomfield, *Language* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1933).



formation, and like syntax, morphology exhibits a hierarchical structure, but it does struggle to accommodate non-concatenative word forms.<sup>243</sup> Lexeme-based morphology is derivative from the morpheme-based approach, and so has the same strengths and weaknesses, but locates the rules within the lexical entries of morphemes such that the rule is effectively inherent to the morpheme rather than of a separate order to be applied to the morpheme.<sup>244</sup> The word-based model abstracts word-schemas from lexical entries of sets of words, replacing differences among the words with variables and expressing the common features with constants, and then describes morphological correspondences among sets of schemas.<sup>245</sup> This approach has the advantage of easily describing word formations that the morpheme and lexeme-based approaches struggle with, such as non-concatenation, backformation, and cross-formation. Alas, it does so at the expense of restrictiveness, thus making generalization from languages to language more difficult, and requiring a morphological system-external

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<sup>243</sup> Haspelmath and Sims, *Understanding Morphology*, 43–46.

<sup>244</sup> Haspelmath and Sims, 43. See also Robert Beard, *Lexeme-Morpheme Base Morphology: A General Theory of Inflection and Word Formation* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1995).

<sup>245</sup> Haspelmath and Sims, *Understanding Morphology*, 46–47. See also Joan L. Bybee, *Morphology: A Study of the Relation Between Meaning and Form* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1985); Harry Bochner, *Simplicity in Generative Morphology* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1993); Rajendra Singh and Stanley Starosta, *Explorations in Seamless Morphology* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2003).

explanation for concatenative dominance.<sup>246</sup> Since restrictive architecture is necessary for generalizing morphological rules across languages, which is in turn requisite for demonstrating parallels between mental and linguistic structures, the morpheme or lexeme-based models are generally preferred among proponents of innate grammar. Proponents of the view of language as a cultural tool, in turn, prefer the word-based model because it in fact demands a system-external, i.e. cultural, explanation for why certain possible word forms are infrequently realized in particular instances of natural languages.

### *Syntax*

Whereas phonology analyzes the structure of speech sounds, and morphology the structure of words, syntax analyzes the structure of language at the level of the sentence. Syntactic typology classifies the ways in which various languages allow parts of speech<sup>247</sup> to be ordered.<sup>248</sup> Noun phrases may be identified as core types of agents (e.g. subjects), patients (e.g. objects), or sole arguments (with intransitive verbs), as oblique types begun with prepositional

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<sup>246</sup> Haspelmath and Sims, *Understanding Morphology*, 47–53.

<sup>247</sup> Timothy Shopen, *Language Typology and Syntactic Description: Clause Structure.*, vol. I (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2007), chap. 1.

<sup>248</sup> Shopen, vol. I, chap. 2.

phrases, or as external to the clause structure.<sup>249</sup> In clauses with verbal predicates, the verb controls the form of the predicate, (e.g. case, transitive vs. intransitive, etc.), whereas nonverbal predicates, either adjectival, nominal, or locative, are connected to their subject by an explicit or implied copula.<sup>250</sup> Most languages distinguish declarative, interrogatory, and imperative sentence types, which accomplish different types of speech acts.<sup>251</sup> Passive constructions derive predicates from their active counterparts with an alternative argument structure serving to foreground sentence elements as topics that had been deemphasized.<sup>252</sup> Indeed, the intelligibility of discourse depends upon the information in a given sentence conveying a conceptual event being packaged such that it achieves a coherent whole as a structured series against the background of precedent and wider sociocultural knowledge.<sup>253</sup>

Sentences may become complex when their elements join with other elements of the same type via conjunctive (i.e. “and”), disjunctive (i.e. “or”),

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<sup>249</sup> Shopen, vol. I, chap. 3.

<sup>250</sup> Shopen, vol. I, chap. 4.

<sup>251</sup> Shopen, vol. I, chap. 5.

<sup>252</sup> Shopen, vol. I, chap. 6.

<sup>253</sup> Shopen, vol. I, chap. 7; Timothy Shopen, *Language Typology and Syntactic Description: Complex Constructions.*, vol. II (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2007), chap. 6.

adversative (i.e. “but”), or causal (i.e. “for”) coordination, maintaining the same semantic relations with the rest of the sentence elements.<sup>254</sup> Sentence complexity also increases by complementation, or the addition of predication to a single argument of the main verb,<sup>255</sup> and by the addition of genitive or possessive constructions, adpositional phrases, and relative clauses to noun phrases.<sup>256</sup> Thus, sentences are made up of variously interrelated words and clauses strung together in order to encode particular notions about their relationships, although these semantic elements are not necessarily expressed in a one-to-one relationship with the surface elements that make them up.<sup>257</sup>

Syntactic theories seek to articulate the rules by which sentences in a given language may be adjudicated as “well formed,” or conforming to patterns encountered in other well-formed sentences and phrases in the language.<sup>258</sup> A

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<sup>254</sup> Shopen, *Language Typology and Syntactic Description*, 2007, vol. II, chap. 1.

<sup>255</sup> Shopen, vol. II, chap. 2.

<sup>256</sup> Shopen, vol. II, chaps. 3 & 4.

<sup>257</sup> Shopen, vol. II, chaps. 7 & 5; Timothy Shopen, ed., *Language Typology and Syntactic Description: Grammatical Categories and the Lexicon*, vol. III (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2007), chaps. 2 & 5.

<sup>258</sup> Akmajian et al., *Linguistics*, 150.

diversity of theoretical perspectives arises from the need to account for<sup>259</sup> irregularities of sentence formation within a given language,<sup>260</sup> irreconcilable differences in sentence formation across languages,<sup>261</sup> and conflicts between discerned rules of syntax and other aspects of linguistic analysis,<sup>262</sup> (e.g. semantics, pragmatics, etc.). Generative grammar theories attempt to articulate a precise canon of rules that generate well-formed sentences, by contrast with constraint-based grammars that articulate a precise canon of constraints beyond which anything goes in sentence formation.<sup>263</sup> Transformational grammars, a subset of generative grammar,<sup>264</sup> posit a universal grammar as innate in human minds<sup>265</sup> to distinguish the surface structure of the grammatical rules of a particular language (e-language) from the deep structure of the inner language of

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<sup>259</sup> Edith A. Moravcsik, *An Introduction to Syntactic Theory* (London: Continuum, 2006), chaps. 1 & 7.

<sup>260</sup> Moravcsik, chap. 2.

<sup>261</sup> Moravcsik, chap. 5.

<sup>262</sup> Moravcsik, chaps. 3 & 4.

<sup>263</sup> Moravcsik, chap. 6.5; Stefan Müller, *Grammatical Theory: From Transformational Grammar to Constraint-Based Approaches* (Berlin: Language Science Press, 2016).

<sup>264</sup> Moravcsik, *An Introduction to Syntactic Theory*, chap. 6.2; Noam Chomsky, *Syntactic Structures* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2002); Noam Chomsky, *Lectures on Government and Binding: The Pisa Lectures* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1993); Noam Chomsky, *The Minimalist Program* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995).

<sup>265</sup> Chomsky, *Language and Mind*.

the mind (i-language).<sup>266</sup> The paradigm is called transformational grammar because it articulates a set of transformations, (i.e. rules), by which statements in the deep structure of the inner language are rendered in the surface structure of a given language.<sup>267</sup> Whereas transformational grammar analyzes sentences according to the terms of the constituency relation between subjects (noun phrase [NP]) and predicates (verb phrase [VP]),<sup>268</sup> dependency grammars analyze sentences as a series of dependencies between a dominant head and subordinate dependent with the top-level head, the main verb, ultimately controlling all of the subsequent dependents.<sup>269</sup> Both types of grammar may be given to grammatic formalisms such as categorial grammars, wherein sentence elements combine according to functions expressed in mathematical

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<sup>266</sup> Noam Chomsky, *Knowledge of Language: Its Nature, Origin, and Use* (New York, NY: Praeger, 1986).

<sup>267</sup> Noam Chomsky, *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1965).

<sup>268</sup> Akmajian et al., *Linguistics*, 195–98; Chomsky, *Syntactic Structures*.

<sup>269</sup> Moravcsik, *An Introduction to Syntactic Theory*, chap. 6.3; Lucien Tesnière, *Elements of Structural Syntax* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2015); Igor' Aleksandrovič Mel'čuk, *Dependency Syntax: Theory and Practice* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1988); Jim Miller, *A Critical Introduction to Syntax* (London: Continuum, 2011); P. H. Matthews, *Syntactic Relations: A Critical Survey* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

formalisms.<sup>270</sup> By contrast, constraint grammars are more given to the formalisms of statistical grammars that take a probabilistic approach to determining well-formedness.<sup>271</sup> Word grammar, a type of dependency grammar, makes the further claim that constituency relations are redundant because they are more basically contained in the dependency relations among words,<sup>272</sup> and sees the network of linguistic concepts as reflecting the same general cognitive network as all other areas of knowledge.<sup>273</sup> By contrast with these formalisms,<sup>274</sup>

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<sup>270</sup> Glyn Morrill, *Categorial Grammar: Logical Syntax, Semantics, and Processing* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2010); Richard Moot and Christian Retore, *The Logic of Categorial Grammars: A Deductive Account of Natural Language Syntax and Semantics* (Berlin: Springer, 2012).

<sup>271</sup> John Goldsmith, "Probabilistic Models of Grammar:," *Phonological Studies* 5 (2002): 21–46, <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/255057469>; Christopher D. Manning and Hinrich Schütze, *Foundations of Statistical Natural Language Processing* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999); Stefan Wermter, Ellen Riloff, and Gabriele Scheler, *Connectionist, Statistical and Symbolic Approaches to Learning for Natural Language Processing* (Berlin: Springer, 1996).

<sup>272</sup> Kensei Sugayama and Richard A. Hudson, *Word Grammar: Perspectives on a Theory of Language Structure* (London: Continuum, 2006).

<sup>273</sup> Richard A. Hudson, *Language Networks: The New Word Grammar* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2007).

<sup>274</sup> Ivan A. Sag, Thomas Wasow, and Emily M. Bender, *Syntactic Theory: A Formal Introduction* (Stanford, CA: Center for the Study of Language and Information, 2003).

functionalist theories<sup>275</sup> subordinate syntactic structures, (i.e. “constructions”),<sup>276</sup> to their communicative functions, thereby acknowledging that grammar itself has symbolic meaning,<sup>277</sup> although formalist and functionalist approaches need not necessarily be mutually exclusive.<sup>278</sup>

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<sup>275</sup> Michael Halliday, Christian M. I. M. Matthiessen, and Christian Matthiessen, *An Introduction to Functional Grammar* (London: Routledge, 2014); Christopher S. Butler, *Structure and Function: A Guide to Three Major Structural-Functional Theories: Approaches to the Simplex Clause*, vol. 1 (Philadelphia, PA: John Benjamins, 2003); Christopher S. Butler, *Structure and Function: A Guide to Three Major Structural-Functional Theories: From Clause to Discourse and Beyond*, vol. 2 (Philadelphia, PA: John Benjamins, 2003).

<sup>276</sup> Adele E. Goldberg, *Constructions: A Construction Grammar Approach to Argument Structure* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1995); Adele E. Goldberg and Inderjeet Mani, *Constructions at Work: The Nature of Generalization in Language* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2006).

<sup>277</sup> Moravcsik, *An Introduction to Syntactic Theory*, chap. 6.4; Ronald W. Langacker, *Cognitive Grammar: A Basic Introduction* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2008); Ronald W. Langacker, *Foundations of Cognitive Grammar: Theoretical Prerequisites*, vol. 1 (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1987); Ronald W. Langacker, *Foundations of Cognitive Grammar: Descriptive Application*, vol. 2 (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1987); Ronald W. Langacker, *Concept, Image, and Symbol: The Cognitive Basis of Grammar* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2010); Ronald W. Langacker, *Grammar and Conceptualization* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2010); John R. Taylor, *Cognitive Grammar* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2002); Martin Hilpert, *Construction Grammar and Its Application to English* (Edinburgh, UK: Edinburgh University Press, 2014); Mirjam Fried and Jan-Ola Östman, *Construction Grammar in a Cross-Language Perspective* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2004); Jan-Ola Östman and Mirjam Fried, *Construction Grammars: Cognitive Grounding and Theoretical Extensions* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2005); Hans Christian Boas and Ivan A. Sag, *Sign-Based Construction Grammar* (Stanford, CA: CSLI Publications/Center for the Study of Language and Information, 2012).

<sup>278</sup> Frederick J. Newmeyer, *Language Form and Language Function* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000).



## *Graphemics and Orthography*

The linguistic study of writing systems is called graphemics,<sup>279</sup> (also grammatology<sup>280</sup> or graphology<sup>281</sup>), which includes orthography,<sup>282</sup> or the formulation of rules for writing in a given natural language, itself including spelling, capitalization, punctuation, word breaks, etc. Modern linguistics privileges speech because all humans speak, whereas only humans in societies of sophistication sufficient for civilization have writing,<sup>283</sup> and writing is an

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<sup>279</sup> Florian Coulmas, *Blackwell Encyclopedia of Writing Systems* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1996), 176–77; Gerhard Augst, *New Trends in Graphemics and Orthography* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1986); Florian Coulmas, *Writing Systems: An Introduction to Their Linguistic Analysis* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Henry Rogers, *Writing Systems: A Linguistic Approach* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005); Josef Vachek, *Written Language: General Problems and Problems of English* (The Hague: Mouton, 1973).

<sup>280</sup> Peter T. Daniels and William Bright, eds., *The World's Writing Systems* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1996), pt. I; Ignace Jay Gelb, *A Study of Writing* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1963); Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, ed. Judith Butler (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2016).

<sup>281</sup> David Crystal, *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Language* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2010), chap. 33.

<sup>282</sup> Coulmas, *Blackwell Encyclopedia of Writing Systems*, 379–80; Michael Cahill and Keren Rice, *Developing Orthographies for Unwritten Languages* (Dallas, TX: SIL International, 2014); Mari C. Jones and Damien Mooney, *Creating Orthographies for Endangered Languages* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2017); *Orthography Studies: Articles on New Writing Systems by William A. Smalley and Others*, *Helps for Translators*, VI (London: United Bible Societies, 1963).

<sup>283</sup> Daniels and Bright, *The World's Writing Systems*, 1; Matthew Battles, *Palimpsest: A History of the Written Word* (New York, NY: W. W. Norton, 2015); Felipe Fernandez-Armesto, *Civilizations: Culture, Ambition, and the Transformation of Nature* (New York, NY: Free Press, 2001); Stephen Vickers Boyden, *The Biology of Civilisation: Understanding Human Culture as a Force in Nature* (Sydney, Australia: University of New South Wales Press, 2004).

important component of making civilization possible.<sup>284</sup> Writing is distinguishable from language as a sign system referring to the sign system of language when language is conceived as a mental faculty.<sup>285</sup> When language is instead conceived as a cultural artifact or tool, however, as in the subsection below on relativity, typology, cognition, and history below, then writing may better be understood as another aspect of the artifact or an alternative use for the tool.<sup>286</sup> It is also possible to conceive writing as prior to speech, as the contents of mind that are then articulated in speech,<sup>287</sup> and there is a palpable influence of writing even on modern linguistics that takes speech as primary.<sup>288</sup>

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<sup>284</sup> Rogers, *Writing Systems*, 1.

<sup>285</sup> Coulmas, *Writing Systems*, 2–4, 10–12; Rogers, *Writing Systems*, 2; Aristotle, *The Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford Translation, One-Volume Digital Edition* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014). *De Interpretatione* I.1, 16a3-5.

<sup>286</sup> Roy Harris, *The Origin of Writing* (Chicago, IL: Open Court, 1986); Roy Harris, *Signs of Writing* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1995); Roy Harris, *Rethinking Writing* (London: Bloomsbury, 2005). Chinese literary theorist Liu Hsieh points in this direction. Coulmas, *Writing Systems*, 4–5; Liu Hsieh, *The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons*, trans. Vincent Yu-Chung Shih, Calligrams (Hong Kong: Chinese University of Hong Kong Press, 2015), chap. 1.

<sup>287</sup> Coulmas, *Writing Systems*, 8–9; Jan Assman, *Stein Und Zeit: Mensch Und Gesellschaft Im Alten Ägypten* (Munich, Germany: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1991); John Baines, *Visual and Written Culture in Ancient Egypt* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2007); Nicolas Massias, *Influence de l'écriture sur la pensée et sur la langage* (Paris, France: Didot, 1828); Mark Aronoff, "Segmentalism in Linguistics: The Alphabetic Basis of Phonological Theory," in *The Linguistics of Literacy*, ed. Pamela Downing, Susan D. Lima, and Michael Noonan, Typological Studies in Language 21 (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1992), 71–82.

<sup>288</sup> Coulmas, *Writing Systems*, 13–17; Aronoff, "Segmentalism in Linguistics: The Alphabetic Basis of Phonological Theory"; Alice Faber, "Phonemic Segmentation as Epiphenomenon: Evidence from the History of Alphabetic Writing," in *Linguistics of Literacy*, ed. Pamela Downing, Susan D.

Descriptively, writing systems may be distinguished functionally in terms of the orthographies of natural languages, stenographies of shorthand, cryptographies of codes, pedographies of literacy aides, and technographies of linguistic metalanguages.<sup>289</sup> Typologies of writing systems must at least cope with the various ways in which writing may refer to the semantic, morphological, and phonetic dimensions of language.<sup>290</sup> The only purely semantic writing system is the invented<sup>291</sup> Bliss system,<sup>292</sup> which most prominently became a pedography,<sup>293</sup> and the only purely phonetic writing

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Lima, and Michael Noonan, *Typological Studies in Language* 21 (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1992), 24; David R. Olson, *The World on Paper: The Conceptual and Cognitive Implications of Writing and Reading* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Per Linell, *The Written Language Bias in Linguistics: Its Nature, Origins and Transformations* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2005).

<sup>289</sup> Daniels and Bright, *The World's Writing Systems*, 627–32.

<sup>290</sup> Rogers, *Writing Systems*, 271.

<sup>291</sup> Arika Okrent, *In the Land of Invented Languages: Esperanto Rock Stars, Klingon Poets, Loglan Lovers, and the Mad Dreamers Who Tried to Build A Perfect Language* (New York, NY: Spiegel & Grau, 2009).

<sup>292</sup> Rogers, *Writing Systems*, chap. 13.7; C. K. Bliss, *Semantography (Blissymbolics): A Logical Writing for an Illogical World* (Sydney, Australia: Semantography Blissymbolics Publications, 1965); Elizabeth S. Helfman, *Blissymbolics, Speaking without Speech* (New York, NY: Elsevier/Nelson, 1980).

<sup>293</sup> Eugene Thomas McDonald, *Teaching and Using Blissymbolics: Written for Use by Instructors of Communicatively Impaired Persons* (Toronto, ON: The Blissymbolics Communication Institute, 1980); Shirley McNaughton, *Communicating with Blissymbolics* (Toronto, ON: Blissymbolics Communication Institute, 1985).

systems are technographies such as the International Phonetic Alphabet,<sup>294</sup> whereas the writing systems associated with all natural languages are glottographic, transcribing combinations of morphemes and phonemes.<sup>295</sup> Some typologies of writing systems are hierarchical, first distinguishing, for example, between moraic (referring to parts of syllables) and segmental systems, and then further distinguishing the segmental systems into those that refer only to consonants and those that refer to all language sounds (i.e. alphabetic).<sup>296</sup> Others locate writing systems among a variety of dimensions such as amount of morphography, type of phonography, orthographic depth, and graphic arrangement.<sup>297</sup> Overall, the privileging of spoken language in linguistics has resulted in a relative poverty of linguistic research in graphemics and orthography, although movements toward preservation of endangered

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<sup>294</sup> International Phonetic Association, *Handbook of the International Phonetic Association*.

<sup>295</sup> Rogers, *Writing Systems*, 292.

<sup>296</sup> Rogers, 273; John DeFrancis, *Visible Speech: The Diverse Oneness of Writing Systems* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press, 1989).

<sup>297</sup> Rogers, *Writing Systems*, 274–75; Richard Sproat, *A Computational Theory of Writing Systems* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

languages provide some hope for increased interest in at least documenting writing systems.<sup>298</sup>

### *Semantics*

Whereas the linguistic arenas of phonology, phonetics, morphology, and syntax analyze and theorize the elements and structures of language, “semantics is the study of meaning communicated through language.”<sup>299</sup> Not only a subspecialty of linguistics, semantics as the study of the meaning of particularly linguistic signs is also a subdiscipline of semiotics,<sup>300</sup> the study of the meaning of signs in general, and is closely related to and intertwined in issues in philosophy of language, philosophy of mind, psychology, and cognitive science.<sup>301</sup> At the level of the word, lexical semantics interprets the meanings of individual words

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<sup>298</sup> David Crystal, *Language Death* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2014); David Bradley and Maya Bradley, eds., *Language Endangerment and Language Maintenance: An Active Approach* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2013); Jason Kandybowicz and Harold Torrence, *Africa’s Endangered Languages: Documentary and Theoretical Approaches* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2017); Christopher Moseley, *Encyclopedia of the World’s Endangered Languages* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2008).

<sup>299</sup> John I. Saeed, *Semantics*, 4th ed. (Malden, MA: John Wiley & Sons, 2016), 3.

<sup>300</sup> Saeed, chap. 1.2.

<sup>301</sup> Saeed, chap. 2.

and their components, and how these meanings are interrelated.<sup>302</sup> At the level of sentences, logic evaluates that individual sentences that are tautologies are necessarily true and those that are contradictions necessarily false. Also, pairs of sentences are logically evaluable as to their truth if they have the semantic relations of synonymy, contradiction, entailment, or presupposition.<sup>303</sup> Logic alone cannot, however, account for the ways in which sentences construe situations<sup>304</sup> with regard to situation type (e.g. static/dynamic, durative/punctual, telic/atelic),<sup>305</sup> tense, aspect,<sup>306</sup> modality (including mood),<sup>307</sup> or evidentiality.<sup>308</sup>

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<sup>302</sup> Saeed, chap. 3; Dirk Geeraerts, *Theories of Lexical Semantics* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2010).

<sup>303</sup> Saeed, *Semantics*, chap. 4; Jens Allwood, Lars-Gunnar Andersson, and Osten Dahl, *Logic in Linguistics* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1977); Johan F. A. K. van Benthem and Alice ter Meulen, *Handbook of Logic and Language* (St. Louis, MO: Elsevier, 2010).

<sup>304</sup> Saeed, *Semantics*, chap. 5; Shopen, *Language Typology and Syntactic Description: Grammatical Categories and the Lexicon*, vol. III, chap. 5.

<sup>305</sup> Susan Rothstein, *Structuring Events: A Study in the Semantics of Lexical Aspect* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2008); Angelika Kratzer, "The Event Argument and the Semantics of Verbs," accessed April 18, 2018, [https://works.bepress.com/angelika\\_kratzer/5/](https://works.bepress.com/angelika_kratzer/5/).

<sup>306</sup> Robert I. Binnick, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Tense and Aspect* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2016).

<sup>307</sup> Jan Nuyts and Johan van der Auwera, *The Oxford Handbook of Modality and Mood* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2016).

<sup>308</sup> Alexandra Y. Aikhenvald, *The Oxford Handbook of Evidentiality* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2018).

Neither can logic alone cope with how sentences construe participants<sup>309</sup> into thematic roles,<sup>310</sup> (i.e. vague categories),<sup>311</sup> with respect to the main verb, and then further allow different roles to be foregrounded or backgrounded through varieties of voice, (i.e. active, middle, passive).<sup>312</sup> Moreover, assessing the meaning of a sentence often requires recourse to implied inferences assumed cooperatively<sup>313</sup> between producers and receivers of language so as to optimize relevance.<sup>314</sup> Determining meaning also requires contextual knowledge in order

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<sup>309</sup> Saeed, *Semantics*, chap. 6.

<sup>310</sup> Ina Bornkessel, *Semantic Role Universals and Argument Linking: Theoretical, Typological, and Psycholinguistic Perspectives* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2006); Frank Robert Palmer, *Grammatical Roles and Relations* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Beth Levin and Malka Rappaport Hovav, *Argument Realization* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

<sup>311</sup> David R. Dowty, "Thematic Proto-Roles and Argument Selection," *Language* 67, no. 3 (September 1991): 547–619, <https://doi.org/10.2307/415037>.

<sup>312</sup> Barbara A. Fox and Paul J. Hopper, *Voice: Form and Function* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1994); M. H. Klaiman, *Grammatical Voice* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Benjamin Lyngfelt and Torgrim Solstad, *Demoting the Agent: Passive, Middle and Other Voice Phenomena* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2006).

<sup>313</sup> Stephen C. Levinson, *Presumptive Meanings: The Theory of Generalized Conversational Implicature* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000); H. Paul Grice, "Logic and Conversation," in *Syntax and Semantics: Speech Acts*, vol. 3 (New York, NY: Academic, 1975), 43–58; H. Paul Grice, "Further Notes on Logic and Conversation," in *Syntax and Semantics: Pragmatics*, vol. 9 (New York, NY: Academic, 1978), 113–28; H. Paul Grice, *Studies in the Way of Words* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989).

<sup>314</sup> Billy Clark, *Relevance Theory* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Deirdre Wilson and Dan Sperber, *Meaning and Relevance* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson, *Relevance: Communication and Cognition* (Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 1996).

to evaluate the reference of deictic expressions<sup>315</sup> and nominals,<sup>316</sup> and background knowledge of the language, specific context, and wider culture.<sup>317</sup>

Three theoretical approaches to semantics may be distinguished.

Componential approaches<sup>318</sup> derive a semantic metalanguage of meaning components from the words in the lexicon<sup>319</sup> and then compose the particular meanings of sentences by combining the components according to rules,<sup>320</sup>

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<sup>315</sup> Stephen C. Levinson, "Deixis," in *The Handbook of Pragmatics* (Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 2004), 97–121; Charles J. Fillmore, *Lectures on Deixis* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Stephen R. Anderson and Edward L. Keenan, "Deixis," in *Language Typology and Syntactic Description: Grammatical Categories and the Lexicon*, ed. Timothy Shopen, vol. 3 (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 259–308.

<sup>316</sup> Herbert H. Clark, "Inferring What Is Meant," in *Studies in the Perception of Language*, ed. W.J.M. Levelt and G.B. Flores d'Arcais (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 1978), 295–322.

<sup>317</sup> Saeed, *Semantics*, chap. 7; Robert Stalnaker, "Common Ground," *Linguistics and Philosophy* 25, no. 5–6 (2002): 701–21; Herbert H. Clark, "Discourse in Production," in *Handbook of Psycholinguistics*, ed. Morton A. Gernsbacher (San Diego, CA: Academic, 1994), 985–1021; Joseph F. Kess and Ronald A. Hoppe, "Bias, Individual Differences, and 'Shared Knowledge' in Ambiguity," *Journal of Pragmatics* 9, no. 1 (February 1, 1985): 21–39, [https://doi.org/10.1016/0378-2166\(85\)90046-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/0378-2166(85)90046-3); Raymond W. Gibbs, "Mutual Knowledge and the Psychology of Conversational Inference," *Journal of Pragmatics* 11, no. 5 (October 1, 1987): 561–88, [https://doi.org/10.1016/0378-2166\(87\)90180-9](https://doi.org/10.1016/0378-2166(87)90180-9); Neilson Voyne Smith, *Mutual Knowledge* (London: Academic, 1982).

<sup>318</sup> Saeed, *Semantics*, chap. 9; Cliff Goddard, *Semantic Analysis: A Practical Introduction* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2011).

<sup>319</sup> Anna Wierzbicka, *Semantics: Primes and Universals* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1996); Cliff Goddard and Anna Wierzbicka, *Words and Meanings: Lexical Semantics Across Domains, Languages, and Cultures* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2014).

<sup>320</sup> Keith Allan, *Linguistic Meaning* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2014).



functions,<sup>321</sup> or a semantic syntax.<sup>322</sup> Strong versions of this approach locate these semantic components or primitives in the human cognitive structure.<sup>323</sup> Rather than focusing on linguistic representations of internal concepts, formalist approaches<sup>324</sup> assess the fit between language and external reality by evaluating their correspondence and articulating their truth conditions by recourse to the metalanguage of logic<sup>325</sup> correlated with mathematical models of reality.<sup>326</sup> What

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<sup>321</sup> Ray Jackendoff, *Semantic Structures* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992); Ray Jackendoff, *Meaning and the Lexicon: The Parallel Architecture 1975-2010* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2010).

<sup>322</sup> James Pustejovsky, *The Generative Lexicon* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998).

<sup>323</sup> Ray Jackendoff, *Semantics and Cognition* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1983); Ray Jackendoff, *Foundations of Language: Brain, Meaning, Grammar, Evolution* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2002); Ray Jackendoff, *Language, Consciousness, Culture: Essays on Mental Structure* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007); Anna Wierzbicka, *Lingua Mentalis: The Semantics of Natural Language* (Sydney, Australia: Academic, 1980); Anna Wierzbicka, *Semantics, Culture and Cognition: Universal Human Concepts in Culture-Specific Configurations* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1992).

<sup>324</sup> Saeed, *Semantics*, chap. 10; Kate Kearns, *Semantics* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011); Paul H. Portner and Barbara H. Partee, *Formal Semantics: The Essential Readings* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2008).

<sup>325</sup> Allwood, Andersson, and Dahl, *Logic in Linguistics*; James D. McCawley, *Everything That Linguists Have Always Wanted to Know about Logic . . . But Were Ashamed to Ask* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1993); Benthem and Meulen, *Handbook of Logic and Language*; Davidson, *Inquiries Into Truth and Interpretation*, 2001; Donald Davidson, *Essays on Actions and Events: Philosophical Essays* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon, 2001); Susan Haack, *Philosophy of Logics* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1978); Susan Haack, *Deviant Logic, Fuzzy Logic: Beyond the Formalism* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1996); Samuel Guttenplan, *The Languages of Logic: An Introduction to Formal Logic* (Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 1997).

<sup>326</sup> Allan, *Linguistic Meaning (RLE Linguistics A)*; David R. Dowty, *Word Meaning and Montague Grammar: The Semantics of Verbs and Times in Generative Semantics and in Montague's PTQ*

gets left out, however, are the subjective intentions of language producers and receivers, and the dynamics of language use in context, although formalists have made efforts to account for these aspects of meaning.<sup>327</sup> Cognitive semantics<sup>328</sup> rejects formalism for functionalism, grounding meaning in the embodied mental categories derived from experience in the physical world and social convention, and then expressed in language. Language, on this view, is part and parcel of the whole cognitive apparatus,<sup>329</sup> and relies on more general capacities for

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(Dordrecht: Reidel, 1979); Gennaro Chierchia and Sally McConnell-Ginet, *Meaning and Grammar: An Introduction to Semantics* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000).

<sup>327</sup> Nicholas Asher and Alex Lascarides, *Logics of Conversation* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2003); J.A.G. Groenendijk, M.J.B. Stokhof, and F.J.M.M. Veltman, "Coreference and Modality," in *The Handbook of Contemporary Semantic Theory*, ed. S. Lappin (Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 1996), 179–216; John Divers, *Possible Worlds* (London: Routledge, 2006); James W. Garson, *Modal Logic for Philosophers* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Jeroen Groenendijk and Martin Stokhof, "Dynamic Predicate Logic," *Linguistics and Philosophy* 14, no. 1 (1991): 39–100, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25001418>; Hans Kamp and U. Reyle, *From Discourse to Logic: Introduction to Modeltheoretic Semantics of Natural Language, Formal Logic and Discourse Representation Theory* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2013); Hans Kamp, Josef van Genabith, and Uwe Reyle, "Discourse Representation Theory," in *Handbook of Philosophical Logic*, ed. Dov M. Gabbay and Franz Guenther, vol. 15 (Dordrecht: Springer, 2011), 125–394; Jaroslav Peregrin, *Meaning: The Dynamic Turn* (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2003); Robert D. Van Valin, *Exploring the Syntax-Semantics Interface* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

<sup>328</sup> Saeed, *Semantics*, chap. 11; Vyvyan Evans and Melanie Green, *Cognitive Linguistics* (Edinburgh, UK: Edinburgh University Press, 2006); Vyvyan Evans, Benjamin K. Bergen, and Jörg Zinken, eds., *The Cognitive Linguistics Reader* (London: Equinox, 2007); Adele E. Goldberg, *Conceptual Structure, Discourse and Language* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

<sup>329</sup> Vyvyan Evans, *The Crucible of Language: How Language and Mind Create Meaning* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2015); George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and Its Challenge to Western Thought* (New York, NY: Basic, 1999); Mark Johnson, *The Body in the Mind: The Bodily Basis of Meaning, Imagination, and Reason* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1987); Mark Turner, *The Literary Mind: The Origins of Thought and Language* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1996); George Lakoff and Mark Johnson,

constructing mental spaces<sup>330</sup> and on mental manipulation for integration and blending.<sup>331</sup>

### *Pragmatics*

“Pragmatics studies language and its meaningful use from the perspective of language users embedded in their situational, behavioral, cultural, societal and political contexts, using a broad variety of methodologies and interdisciplinary approaches depending on specific research questions and interests.”<sup>332</sup> Admittedly, a number of such contextual factors have already been incorporated in the above subsection on semantics, a situation reflecting ongoing debates as to the contours, relationship, and boundary between semantics and

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*Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2008); Zoltan Kövecses, *Metaphor: A Practical Introduction* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2010); Raymond W. Gibbs, *The Cambridge Handbook of Metaphor and Thought* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Raymond W. Gibbs, *Metaphor Wars* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

<sup>330</sup> Todd Oakley and Anders Hougaard, *Mental Spaces in Discourse and Interaction* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2008); Gilles Fauconnier, *Mental Spaces: Aspects of Meaning Construction in Natural Language* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Gilles Fauconnier, *Mappings in Thought and Language* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

<sup>331</sup> Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner, “Blending as a Central Process of Grammar: Expanded Version,” in *Conceptual Structure, Discourse, and Language*, ed. Adele Goldberg (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 113–30; Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner, *The Way We Think: Conceptual Blending And The Mind’s Hidden Complexities* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2008); Seana Coulson, *Semantic Leaps: Frame-Shifting and Conceptual Blending in Meaning Construction* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

<sup>332</sup> Gunter Senft, *Understanding Pragmatics* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2014), 3.

pragmatics.<sup>333</sup> Indeed, as the youngest subdiscipline of linguistics,<sup>334</sup> pragmatics emerged as a dramatic turn away from the assumption of a perfect language user in a community of likewise perfect users of the same language,<sup>335</sup> toward describing language as social action.<sup>336</sup> Internally,<sup>337</sup> the social dimension operates on language by constraining semantic content by recourse to implicated conversational principles of economy of information, adherence to truth, maintaining relevance, and privileging clarity.<sup>338</sup> Externally, language operates

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<sup>333</sup> Betty J. Birner, *Introduction to Pragmatics* (Malden, MA: John Wiley & Sons, 2012), chap. 1.2; Mira Ariel, *Pragmatics and Grammar* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2008); *Defining Pragmatics* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Robyn Carston, *Thoughts and Utterances: The Pragmatics of Explicit Communication* (Malden, MA: John Wiley & Sons, 2008); Ken Turner, *Making Semantics Pragmatic* (Leiden: Brill, 2011).

<sup>334</sup> Jacob L. Mey, *Pragmatics: An Introduction* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2001), 3–6.

<sup>335</sup> Chomsky, *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax*, 3.

<sup>336</sup> Rebecca Clift, Paul Drew, and Ian Hutchby, “Conversation Analysis,” in *The Pragmatics of Interaction*, ed. Sigurd D’hondt, Jan-Ola Östman, and Jef Verschueren (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2009), 50.

<sup>337</sup> Robert Harnish, “Internalism and Externalism in Speech Act Theory,” *Lodz Papers in Pragmatics* 5, no. 1 (January 1, 2009), <https://doi.org/10.2478/v10016-009-0001-2>; Putnam, “The Meaning of ‘Meaning.’”

<sup>338</sup> Senft, *Understanding Pragmatics*, chap. 1.5; Grice, *Studies in the Way of Words*; Grice, “Logic and Conversation”; Grice, “Further Notes on Logic and Conversation”; H. Paul Grice, “Presupposition and Conversational Implicature,” in *Radical Pragmatics*, ed. Peter Cole (New York, NY: Academic Press, 1981), 183–97; Levinson, *Presumptive Meanings*. See counterarguments: Wayne A. Davis, *Implicature: Intention, Convention, and Principle in the Failure of Gricean Theory* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Elinor Ochs Keenan, “The Universality of Conversational Postulates,” *Language in Society* 5, no. 1 (1976): 67–80, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4166850>; Ferenc Kiefer, “What Do Conversational Maxims Explain?,” *Linguisticae Investigationes* 3, no. 1 (January 1, 1979): 57–74, <https://doi.org/10.1075/li.3.1.04kie>; Gunter Senft, “The Case: The Trobriand Islanders vs H. P. Grice. Kilivila and the Gricean Maxims

on the social dimension by not only describing but intentionally acting on and in the social order,<sup>339</sup> and by participating in the semiotic process of establishing and maintaining that very order.<sup>340</sup> Moreover, deixis refers to how certain words

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of Quality and Manner," *Anthropos* 103, no. 1 (2008): 139–47, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40466870>.

<sup>339</sup> Senft, *Understanding Pragmatics*, chaps. 1.2, 1.3; J.L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962); Marina Sbisà, "How to Read Austin," *Pragmatics* 17, no. 3 (2007); John R. Searle, *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1969); John R. Searle, *Expression and Meaning: Studies in the Theory of Speech Acts* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1985); John R. Searle, F. Kiefer, and M. Bierwisch, *Speech Act Theory and Pragmatics* (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1980); Marina Sbisà, "Illocutionary Force and Degrees of Strength in Language Use," *Journal of Pragmatics* 33, no. 12 (December 1, 2001): 1791–1814, [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0378-2166\(00\)00060-6](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0378-2166(00)00060-6). See counterargument: Michelle Z. Rosaldo, "The Things We Do with Words: Ilongot Speech Acts and Speech Act Theory in Philosophy," *Language in Society* 11, no. 2 (1982): 203–37, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4167311>.

<sup>340</sup> Senft, *Understanding Pragmatics*, chaps. 1.4, 4.2; Pieter A. M. Seuren, *Language in Cognition, Language From Within, I* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2009); Pieter A. M. Seuren, *The Logic of Language, Language From Within, II* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2009); Berger and Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality*; Bronislaw Malinowski, "The Problem of Meaning in Primitive Languages," in *The Meaning of Meaning: A Study of the Influence of Language Upon Thought and of the Science of Symbolism*, ed. Charles Kay Ogden and Ivor Armstrong Richards, fourth revised edition; first edition: 1923 (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1936), 296–336; Roman Jakobson, "Linguistics and Poetics," in *Language in Literature*, ed. Krystyna Pomorska and Stephen Rudy (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987), 62–93; Robin Dunbar, "Why Only Humans Have Language," in *The Prehistory of Language*, ed. Rudolph Botha and Chris Knight (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2009), 12–34; John Laver, "Communicative Functions of Phatic Communion," in *Organization of Behavior in Face-to-Face Interaction*, ed. Adam Kendon, Richard M. Harris, and Mary R. Key (Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton, 1975), <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110907643.215>; John Laver, "Linguistic Routines and Politeness in Greeting and Parting," in *Rasmus Rask Studies in Pragmatic Linguistics, Volume 2, Conversational Routine*, ed. Florian Coulmas (Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton, 1981), <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110809145.289>.

and linguistic constructs function indexically<sup>341</sup> to refer to features, aspects, and contents of their context of use: situationally distinguishing among people, articulating social roles and relationships, establishing actions at points in time or temporality generally, and construing things and actions spatially, or discursively referring to prior (anaphora) or future (cataphora) referents, and transposing among various modalities.<sup>342</sup>

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<sup>341</sup> Putnam, "The Meaning of 'Meaning'"; Eros Corazza, "Indexicals and Demonstratives," in *Handbook of Pragmatics Online* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2010), <https://benjamins.com/online/hop/articles/ind2>.

<sup>342</sup> Senft, *Understanding Pragmatics*, chaps. 2.1, 2.2; Karl Bühler, *Theory of Language: The Representational Function of Language* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1990); Veronika Ehrich, *Hier und jetzt: Studien zur lokalen und temporalen Deixis im Deutschen* (Tübingen, Germany: Niemeyer, 1992); Anderson and Keenan, "Deixis."

In addition to the biological and evolutionary bases of communication,<sup>343</sup>  
and the culturally coded linguistic expression of cognitive concepts,<sup>344</sup>

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<sup>343</sup> Senft, *Understanding Pragmatics*, chap. 3; Stephen C. Levinson, "On the Human 'Interaction Engine,'" in *Roots of Human Sociality: Culture, Cognition and Interaction*, ed. Nicholas J. Enfield and Stephen C. Levinson (Oxford, UK: Berg, 2006), 39–69; Volker Heeschen, Wulf Schiefenhövel, and Irenaus Eibl-Eibesfeldt, "Requesting, Giving, and Taking: The Relationship Between Verbal and Nonverbal Behavior in the Speech Community of the Eipo, Irian Jaya (West New Guinea)," in *The Relationship of Verbal and Nonverbal Communication*, ed. Mary R. Key (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1981), 139–65, <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110813098>; Edward T. Hall et al., "Proxemics [and Comments and Replies]," *Current Anthropology* 9, no. 2/3 (1968): 83–108, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2740724>; Gunter Senft and Ellen B. Basso, eds., *Ritual Communication* (Oxford, UK: Berg, 2009); Haviland John B., "Ideologies of Language: Some Reflections on Language and U.S. Law," *American Anthropologist* 105, no. 4 (January 7, 2008): 764–74, <https://doi.org/10.1525/aa.2003.105.4.764>; William Labov, *Language in the Inner City: Studies in the Black English Vernacular* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1972); Irenaus Eibl-Eibesfeldt, *Human Ethology* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2017); Klaus Atzwanger et al., *New Aspects of Human Ethology* (New York, NY: Plenum Press, 1997); Mario von Cranach et al., *Human Ethology: Claims and Limits of a New Discipline* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1979); Stephen C. Levinson and Pierre Jaisson, *Evolution and Culture: A Fyssen Foundation Symposium* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006); James MacLynn Wilce, *Language and Emotion* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

<sup>344</sup> Senft, *Understanding Pragmatics*, 4; Dell H. Hymes, "The Ethnography of Speaking," in *Anthropology and Human Behavior*, ed. T. Gladwin and W.C. Sturtevant (Washington, DC: Anthropological Society of Washington, 1962), 13–53; Alessandro Duranti, "Ethnography of Speaking: Toward a Linguistics of the Praxis," in *Language: The Socio-Cultural Context*, ed. Frederick J. Newmeyer, *Linguistics: The Cambridge Survey, IV* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 210–28; Dell H. Hymes, "On Communicative Competence," in *Sociolinguistics* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972), 269–93; John J. Gumperz and Dell H. Hymes, eds., "The Ethnography of Communication [Special Issue]," *American Anthropologist* 66, no. 6.2 (1964): v–186, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/668158>; Richard Bauman and Joel Sherzer, *Explorations in the Ethnography of Speaking* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1989); John Gumperz and Dell Hymes, *Directions in Sociolinguistics: The Ethnography of Communication* (Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 1986); John J. Gumperz, *Discourse Strategies* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1982); Joel Sherzer, *Kuna Ways of Speaking: An Ethnographic Perspective* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1983); Joel Sherzer and Greg Urban, *Native South American Discourse* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1986); Alessandro Duranti, *A Companion to Linguistic Anthropology* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2008); Bambi B. Schieffelin and Elinor Ochs, *Language Socialization Across Cultures* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1986); William A. Foley, *Anthropological Linguistics: An Introduction* (Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 1997). For a critique of the ethnology of speaking, see Maurice Bloch, review of *Review of Explorations in the Ethnography of Speaking*, by Richard Bauman and Joel Sherzer, *Language in Society* 5, no. 2 (1976): 229–34,

pragmatics bleeds into sociolinguistics via interest in the linguistic dimension of everyday social interaction,<sup>345</sup> and in the encoding of political identities and ideologies in language.<sup>346</sup> Conversation Analysis is a robust framework for

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<http://www.jstor.org/stable/4166874>. See also reply in Joel Sherzer, "The Ethnography of Speaking: A Critical Appraisal," in *Linguistics and Anthropology*, ed. Muriel Saville-Troike, Georgetown University Round Table on Languages and Linguistics (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1977), 43–57. For discussion of linguistic relativity, see below subsection on *Typology and Relativity*.

<sup>345</sup> Senft, *Understanding Pragmatics*, chap. 5; Sigurd D'hondt, Jan-Ola Östman, and Jef Verschueren, *The Pragmatics of Interaction* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2009); Harold Garfinkel, "A Conception of, and Experiments with, 'Trust' as a Condition of Stable Concerted Actions," in *Motivation and Social Interaction: Cognitive Determinants*, ed. O.J. Harvey (New York, NY: Ronald, 1963), 187–238; Harold Garfinkel, *Studies in Ethnomethodology* (London: Prentice-Hall, 1967); Harold Garfinkel and Harvey Sacks, "On Formal Structures of Practical Actions," in *Theoretical Sociology: Perspectives and Developments*, ed. John C. McKinney and Edward A. Tiryakian (New York, NY: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1970), 337–66; Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (Edinburgh, UK: University of Edinburgh Social Sciences Research Centre, 1956); Erving Goffman, *Encounters: Two Studies in the Sociology of Interaction* (Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs-Merrill, 1961); Erving Goffman, *Behavior in Public Places: Notes on the Social Organization of Gatherings* (New York, NY: Free Press, 1963); Erving Goffman, *Interaction Ritual: Essays in Face to Face Behavior* (New Brunswick, NJ: AldineTransaction, 1967); Erving Goffman, *Strategic Interaction* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1969); Erving Goffman, *Forms of Talk* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981); Erving Goffman, *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience* (Boston, MA: Northeastern University Press, 1986); Erving Goffman, *Relations in Public: Microstudies of the Public Order* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 2010); Majorie Harness Goodwin, *The Hidden Life of Girls: Games of Stance, Status, and Exclusion* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2008); Hiroko Takanashi and Joseph Sung-Yul Park, "Reframing Framing," *Pragmatics* 21, no. 2 (2011): 185–286, <https://doi.org/10.1075/prag.21.2>.

<sup>346</sup> Senft, *Understanding Pragmatics*, chap. 6.4; Michael Silverstein, "Language Structure and Linguistic Ideologies," in *The Elements: A Parasession on Linguistic Units and Levels*, ed. Paul R. Clyne, William F. Hanks, and Carol L. Hofbauer (Chicago, IL: Chicago Linguistics Society, 1979), 193–247; Richard Bauman and Charles L. Briggs, *Voices of Modernity: Language Ideologies and the Politics of Inequality* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Jan Blommaert, *Language Ideological Debates* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1999); Piotr Cap, *Legitimation in Political Discourse: A Cross-Disciplinary Perspective on the Modern US War Rhetoric Second Edition* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge Scholars, 2013); Norman Fairclough, *Language and Power* (London: Routledge, 2013); Haviland John B., "Ideologies of Language"; Francis M. Hult and Nancy H. Hornberger, "Revisiting Orientations in Language Planning: Problem, Right, and Resource as an Analytical



understanding human capacities to anticipate and predict the flow of a conversation, such as turn-taking, based on prior sequences of actions in the context of social interaction measured against a system of conversational norms.<sup>347</sup> On the political front, Basil Bernstein developed a theory of linguistic coding, in which “restricted” codes rely heavily on shared context and are

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Heuristic,” *Bilingual Review/Revista Bilingüe* 33, no. 3 (2016), <http://bilingualreview.utsa.edu/index.php/br/article/view/118>; Miki Makihara and Bambi B. Schieffelin, *Consequences of Contact: Language Ideologies and Sociocultural Transformations in Pacific Societies* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2007); Schieffelin and Ochs, *Language Socialization Across Cultures*; Bambi B. Schieffelin, Kathryn A. Woolard, and Paul V. Kroskrity, *Language Ideologies: Practice and Theory* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1998); Jef Verschueren, *Ideology in Language Use: Pragmatic Guidelines for Empirical Research* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Kathryn A. Woolard and Bambi B. Schieffelin, “Language Ideology,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 23 (1994): 55–82, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2156006>.

<sup>347</sup> Senft, *Understanding Pragmatics*, chap. 5.4; David M. Logue and Tanya Stivers, “Squawk in Interaction: A Primer of Conversation Analysis for Students of Animal Communication,” *Behaviour* 149, no. 13–14 (January 1, 2012): 1283–98, <https://doi.org/10.1163/1568539X-00003031>; Edward Reynolds, “How Participants in Arguments Challenge the Normative Position of an Opponent,” *Discourse Studies* 17, no. 3 (June 1, 2015): 299–316, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461445615571198>; Felicia Roberts, Piera Margutti, and Shoji Takano, “Judgments Concerning the Valence of Inter-Turn Silence Across Speakers of American English, Italian, and Japanese,” *Discourse Processes* 48, no. 5 (June 30, 2011): 331–54, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0163853X.2011.558002>; Tanya Stivers et al., “Universals and Cultural Variation in Turn-Taking in Conversation,” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* 106, no. 26 (2009): 10587–92, <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.0903616106>; Clift, Drew, and Hutchby, “Conversation Analysis”; Harvey Sacks, *Lectures on Conversation* (Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 1995); Emanuel A. Schegloff, *Sequence Organization in Interaction, A Primer in Conversation Analysis, I* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Rebecca Clift, *Conversation Analysis* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2016); Jack Sidnell and Tanya Stivers, *The Handbook of Conversation Analysis* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012); Florian Coulmas, *Conversational Routine: Explorations in Standardized Communication Situations and Prepatterned Speech* (The Hague: Walter de Gruyter, 2011); D’hondt, Östman, and Verschueren, *The Pragmatics of Interaction*; Alessandro Duranti, *Rethinking Context: Language as an Interactive Phenomenon* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

common in economically disadvantaged communities, whereas “elaborated” codes make meaning linguistically explicit by recourse to specific referents and are common in middle and upper-class communities. This distinction gives rise to the “deficit hypothesis” that disparities in educational achievement resulted from innate deficiencies of poor students.<sup>348</sup> William Labov was the standard bearer of the alternative view, based in a more rigid structuralism,<sup>349</sup> that no language is deficient because all languages are functionally equivalent and so merely different.<sup>350</sup> This view won the day and remains the dominant

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<sup>348</sup> Senft, *Understanding Pragmatics*, chap. 6.2; Basil Bernstein, *Pedagogy, Symbolic Control, and Identity, Class, Codes and Control*, V (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000); Basil Bernstein, *Applied Studies Towards a Sociology of Language, Class, Codes and Control*, II (New York, NY: Routledge, 2003); Basil Bernstein, *Towards a Theory of Educational Transmissions, Class, Codes and Control*, III (New York, NY: Routledge, 2003); Basil Bernstein, *The Structuring of Pedagogic Discourse, Class, Codes and Control*, IV (New York, NY: Routledge, 2004); Basil Bernstein, *Theoretical Studies Towards a Sociology of Language, Class, Codes and Control*, I (New York, NY: Routledge, 2004); Ruqaiya Hasan, *Language, Society, and Consciousness, The Collected Works of Ruqaiya Hasan*, I (Bristol, CT: Equinox, 2005); Ruqaiya Hasan, *Semantic Variation: Meaning in Society and in Sociolinguistics, The Collected Works of Ruqaiya Hasan*, II (Bristol, CT: Equinox, 2009); Ruqaiya Hasan, *Language and Education: Learning and Teaching in Society, The Collected Works of Ruqaiya Hasan*, III (Bristol, CT: Equinox, 2011); Ruqaiya Hasan, *Context in the System and Process of Language, The Collected Works of Ruqaiya Hasan*, IV (Bristol, CT: Equinox, 2016).

<sup>349</sup> Kristin M. Langellier, “Personal Narratives: Perspectives On Theory and Research,” *Text & Performance Quarterly* 9, no. 4 (October 1989): 243, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10462938909365938>; Diane E. Goldstein, *The Stigmatized Vernacular: Where Reflexivity Meets Untellability* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2016), chap. 3; Anna De Fina and Alexandra Georgakopoulou, *Analyzing Narrative: Discourse and Sociolinguistic Perspectives* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2011), chap. 2.

<sup>350</sup> William Labov, *The Study of Nonstandard English* (Champaign, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, by special arrangement with the Center for Applied Linguistics, 1970); William Labov, *Language in the Inner City: Studies in the Black English Vernacular* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1972); William Labov, *Sociolinguistic Patterns* (Philadelphia, PA: University of

educational philosophy to present,<sup>351</sup> although it is not clear that the two positions are actually or necessarily as far apart as purported.<sup>352</sup>

*Relativity, Typology, Cognition, and History*

As promised in the introduction to this section on linguistics, this final subsection addresses the nested issues of linguistic universality and variation, of language situated among cognition, culture, and reality, of the relationship between language structures and mental structures, and of the history and evolution of language, minds, and culture.

The relationship between language and thought is hardly a recent point of contention,<sup>353</sup> but it does take shape in the contemporary literature largely with reference to the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis of linguistic relativity, that language

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Pennsylvania Press, 1972); William Labov, *Principles of Linguistic Change: Internal Factors*, vol. 1 (Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 1994); William Labov, *Principles of Linguistic Change: Social Factors*, vol. 2 (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2001); William Labov, *Principles of Linguistic Change: Cognitive and Cultural Factors*, vol. 3 (Oxford, UK: John Wiley & Sons, 2010).

<sup>351</sup> Peter E. Jones, "Bernstein's 'Codes' and the Linguistics of 'Deficit,'" *Language and Education* 27, no. 2 (2013): 161–79, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09500782.2012.760587>; Yvette R. Harris and Valarie M. Schroeder, "Language Deficits or Differences: What We Know about African American Vernacular English in the 21st Century," *International Education Studies* 6, no. 4 (March 26, 2013), <https://doi.org/10.5539/ies.v6n4p194>.

<sup>352</sup> Brook Bolander and Richard J. Watts, "Re-Reading and Rehabilitating Basil Bernstein," *Multilingua - Journal of Cross-Cultural and Interlanguage Communication* 28, no. 2–3 (January 2009): 143–73, <https://doi.org/10.1515/mult.2009.008>.

<sup>353</sup> John Leavitt, *Linguistic Relativities: Language Diversity and Modern Thought* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

structures thought, and so the structure of language constrains cognition and thus worldview.<sup>354</sup> The strong version of the hypothesis is linguistic determinism, which reduces thought to the syntax of the language of the speaker, and has been discredited.<sup>355</sup> It was likely operative, however, for the interpreters of Basil Bernstein, and perhaps Bernstein himself, who instituted compensatory education for poor students who were taken to have an intelligence deficit because of their linguistic expression in a restricted code.<sup>356</sup> Linguistic relativists find support for their view in the findings of linguistic typology,<sup>357</sup> which as a subfield is positioned either without<sup>358</sup> or at least with minimal<sup>359</sup> theoretical

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<sup>354</sup> Laura M. Ahearn, *Living Language: An Introduction to Linguistic Anthropology* (Malden, MA: John Wiley & Sons, 2011), chap. 4; Whorf, *Language, Thought and Reality*; Edward Sapir, "The Status of Linguistics as a Science," *Language* 5, no. 4 (1929): 207–14, <https://doi.org/10.2307/409588>; Edward Sapir, *Language: An Introduction to the Study of Speech* (New York, NY: Harcourt Brace, 1921); Edward Sapir, *Selected Writings in Language, Culture, and Personality* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1985).

<sup>355</sup> Steven Pinker, *The Language Instinct: How The Mind Creates Language* (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 2010), 58; Ahearn, *Living Language*, 69.

<sup>356</sup> Bolander and Watts, "Re-Reading and Rehabilitating Basil Bernstein."

<sup>357</sup> Edith A. Moravcsik, *Introducing Language Typology* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2013); William Croft, *Typology and Universals* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Jae Jung Song, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Linguistic Typology* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2013).

<sup>358</sup> Johanna Nichols, "What, If Anything, Is Typology?," *Linguistic Typology* 11, no. 1 (2007): 231–38, <https://doi.org/10.1515/LINGTY.2007.017>.

<sup>359</sup> Matthew Dryer, "Descriptive Theories, Explanatory Theories, and Basic Linguistic Theory," in *Catching Language: The Standing Challenge of Grammar Writing*, ed. Felix K. Ameka, Alan Dench,

orientation, and provides empirical evidence of a great deal of structural diversity among languages.<sup>360</sup>

The opposite end of the pendulum from linguistic determinism is the view advocated by Noam Chomsky that there is a universal language faculty innate in the human mind, in its initial conception containing a whole set of syntactic rules,<sup>361</sup> but more recently reduced to the capacity for recursion.<sup>362</sup> The structure in this faculty then gets specified somewhat variously in different languages. Linguistic typology also provides empirical credence to this innate grammar view,<sup>363</sup> especially in the findings of universality of linguistic demarcation of the

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and Nicholas Evans, *Trends in Linguistics: Studies and Monographs 167* (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 2006), <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110197693.207>.

<sup>360</sup> Johanna Nichols, *Linguistic Diversity in Space and Time* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1992); John A. Lucy, *Grammatical Categories and Cognition: A Case Study of the Linguistic Relativity Hypothesis* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1992); John A. Lucy, *Language Diversity and Thought: A Reformulation of the Linguistic Relativity Hypothesis* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

<sup>361</sup> Chomsky, *Knowledge of Language*; Chomsky, *Language and Mind*; Pinker, *The Language Instinct*.

<sup>362</sup> Mark D. Hauser, Noam Chomsky, and W. Tecumseh Fitch, "The Faculty of Language: What Is It, Who Has It, and How Did It Evolve?," *Science* 298, no. 5598 (November 22, 2002): 1569–79, <https://doi.org/10.1126/science.298.5598.1569>.

<sup>363</sup> Joseph H. Greenberg, *Language Universals: With Special Reference to Feature Hierarchies* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2010); Joseph H. Greenberg, *On Language: Selected Writings of Joseph H. Greenberg* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1990); Bernard Comrie, *Language Universals and Linguistic Typology: Syntax and Morphology*, 2nd ed. (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1981).

color spectrum.<sup>364</sup> Given the claim of a universal language faculty, proponents of innate grammar seek the origins of language in evolutionary genetics,<sup>365</sup> which has thus become an important part of the research program in biolinguistics.<sup>366</sup>

The challenge for the innate grammar view is that proposals for language structures that inhabit the language faculty keep getting shot down for not being truly universal. Even the minimalist proposal of recursion, (the nesting of clauses), as the only universal upon which all of language is based has been challenged by the counterexample of Pirahã and possibly Riau.<sup>367</sup> This has

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<sup>364</sup> Brent Berlin and Paul Kay, *Basic Color Terms: Their Universality and Evolution* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1991).

<sup>365</sup> Cecilia S. L. Lai et al., "A Forkhead-Domain Gene Is Mutated in a Severe Speech and Language Disorder," *Nature* 413, no. 6855 (October 2001): 519–23, <https://doi.org/10.1038/35097076>; Genevieve Konopka et al., "Human-Specific Transcriptional Regulation of CNS Development Genes by FOXP2," *Nature* 462, no. 7270 (November 2009): 213–17, <https://doi.org/10.1038/nature08549>; G. M. Sia, R. L. Clem, and R. L. Haganir, "The Human Language-Associated Gene SRPX2 Regulates Synapse Formation and Vocalization in Mice," *Science* 342, no. 6161 (November 22, 2013): 987–91, <https://doi.org/10.1126/science.1245079>.

<sup>366</sup> Noam Chomsky, "Biolinguistics and the Human Capacity," (May 17, 2004), <https://chomsky.info/20040517/>; Cedric Boeckx, *Language in Cognition: Uncovering Mental Structures and the Rules Behind Them* (Malden, MA: John Wiley & Sons, 2010); Rudolf Botha and Chris Knight, *The Prehistory of Language* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2009); Lyle Jenkins, *Biolinguistics: Exploring the Biology of Language* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Anna Maria Di Sciullo, *Biolinguistic Investigations on the Language Faculty* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2016); Anna Maria Di Sciullo and Cedric Boeckx, *The Biolinguistic Enterprise: New Perspectives on the Evolution and Nature of the Human Language Faculty* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2011); Anne-Marie Di Sciullo, *Towards a Biolinguistic Understanding of Grammar: Essays on Interfaces* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2012).

<sup>367</sup> Daniel L. Everett, "Biology and Language: A Consideration of Alternatives," *Journal of Linguistics* 41, no. 1 (March 2005): 157–75, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022226704003093>; Daniel L. Everett, "Cultural Constraints on Grammar and Cognition in Pirahã: Another Look at the Design

created an opening for a weak form of linguistic relativism developed in conversation with cognitive science such that language influences or guides but does not absolutely determine or structure thought.<sup>368</sup> The basic architecture of

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Features of Human Language," *Current Anthropology* 46, no. 4 (August 2005): 621–46, <https://doi.org/10.1086/431525>; David Gil, "The Structure of Riau Indonesian," *Nordic Journal of Linguistics* 17, no. 2 (December 1994): 179–200, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0332586500003000>; David Gil, "Riau Indonesian: A Language without Nouns and Verbs - Oxford Scholarship," in *Flexible Word Classes: Typological Studies of Underspecified Parts of Speech*, ed. Jan Rijkhoff and Eva van Lier (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2013), 89–130. See also debate between Everett and interlocutors: Andrew Nevins, David Pesetsky, and Cilene Rodrigues, "Pirahã Exceptionality: A Reassessment," *Language* 85, no. 2 (July 31, 2009): 355–404, <https://doi.org/10.1353/lan.0.0107>; Daniel L. Everett, "Pirahã Culture and Grammar: A Response to Some Criticisms," *Language* 85, no. 2 (July 31, 2009): 405–42, <https://doi.org/10.1353/lan.0.0104>; Andrew Nevins, David Pesetsky, and Cilene Rodrigues, "Evidence and Argumentation: A Reply to Everett (2009)," *Language* 85, no. 3 (October 17, 2009): 671–81, <https://doi.org/10.1353/lan.0.0140>; Daniel L. Everett, "The Shrinking Chomskyan Corner: A Final Reply to Nevins, Pesetsky, Rodrigues," *LingBuzz*, no. 000994 (November 2013), <http://ling.auf.net/lingbuzz/000994>. See also Everett, *Don't Sleep, There Are Snakes*; Daniel L. Everett, "You Drink. You Drive. You Go to Jail. Where's Recursion?," *LingBuzz*, no. 001141 (November 2010), <http://ling.auf.net/lingbuzz/001141>; Michael C Frank et al., "Number as a Cognitive Technology: Evidence from Pirahã Language and Cognition," *Cognition* 108 (2008): 819–24, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cognition.2008.04.007>; Richard Futrell et al., "A Corpus Investigation of Syntactic Embedding in Pirahã," ed. Mark Aronoff, *PLOS ONE* 11, no. 3 (March 2, 2016): e0145289, <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0145289>; Stephen R. Anderson and David W. Lightfoot, "Biology and Language: A Response to Everett (2005)," *Journal of Linguistics* 42, no. 2 (2006): 377–83, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S002222670600394X>.

<sup>368</sup> Casasanto Daniel, "Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Whorf? Crosslinguistic Differences in Temporal Language and Thought," *Language Learning* 58, no. s1 (November 25, 2008): 63–79, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9922.2008.00462.x>; Nicholas Evans and Stephen C. Levinson, "The Myth of Language Universals: Language Diversity and Its Importance for Cognitive Science," *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 32, no. 05 (October 2009): 429–92, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0140525X0999094X>; Joshua A. Fishman, "Whorfianism of the Third Kind: Ethnolinguistic Diversity as a Worldwide Societal Asset (The Whorfian Hypothesis: Varieties of Validation, Confirmation, and Disconfirmation II)," *Language in Society* 11, no. 1 (1982): 1–14, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4167289>; Stephen C. Levinson, "Language and Space," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 25, no. 1 (October 21, 1996): 353–82, <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.anthro.25.1.353>; Phillip Wolff and Kevin J. Holmes, "Linguistic Relativity," *Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Cognitive Science* 2, no. 3 (May 2011): 253–65, <https://doi.org/10.1002/wcs.104>; John J. Gumperz and Stephen C. Levinson, *Rethinking Linguistic*

this program identifies language as part and parcel of general human cognitive capacities, and so while cultural (contextual) constraints on language do limit the cognitive capacities language users actually employ, they do not limit the availability of the full range of capacities in mind potentially.<sup>369</sup>

Two such forms of weak linguistic relativism are of particular interest for the present project, taking language to be a socially constructed cultural artifact or tool that human minds are uniquely equipped to employ. Daniel Everett emphasizes the cultural molding of language, and the whole of human experience, around the particularities of reality as a given society encounters it, which is then appropriated by the almost infinitely malleable and adaptable cognitive apparatus.<sup>370</sup> Terrence Deacon starts on the other side of the equation, richly elaborating the neurological developments that make symbolic thinking

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*Relativity* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Martin Pütz and Marjolyn Verspoor, *Explorations in Linguistic Relativity* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2000).

<sup>369</sup> Everett, *Language*; Deacon, *The Symbolic Species*; Daniel L. Everett, *Dark Matter of the Mind: The Culturally Articulated Unconscious* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2016); Caleb Everett, *Linguistic Relativity: Evidence Across Languages and Cognitive Domains* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2013); Caleb Everett, *Numbers and the Making of Us: Counting and the Course of Human Cultures* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017); Guy Deutscher, *Through the Language Glass: Why the World Looks Different in Other Languages* (New York, NY: Henry Holt, 2010); Dedre Gentner and Susan Goldin-Meadow, *Language in Mind: Advances in the Study of Language and Thought* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003); Stephen C. Levinson, *Space in Language and Cognition: Explorations in Cognitive Diversity* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

<sup>370</sup> Everett, *Language*; Everett, *Dark Matter of the Mind*.



possible, which cognitive capacity then coevolves with the cultural artifact of language into an almost infinite dexterity of conception to guide action.<sup>371</sup> Everett lacks a robust account of mentality and cognition, and so risks being read as a linguistic determinist. Deacon neglects to link language and thought back up with reality as the measure of conception; he also runs the risk of symbolic thinking being read as the language faculty of universal grammar. Notably, both give accounts of the evolutionary origins of language, each of which helps to address their respective deficiencies.<sup>372</sup> One goal in chapter five will be to explain how the concept of ritual helps to clarify and amplify this account of the relationships among language, mind, culture, and reality.

### Philosophy of Language and Logic

As already mentioned, philosophy of language in the modern period has developed to theorize the meaning of language along the divergent tracks of focusing on the formal structure of language and focusing on how language is used in context. This section elaborates the various philosophical positions that

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<sup>371</sup> Deacon, *The Symbolic Species*; Deacon, *Incomplete Nature*.

<sup>372</sup> Terrence W. Deacon, "Multilevel Selection in a Complex Adaptive System: The Problem of Language Origins," in *Evolution and Learning: The Baldwin Effect Reconsidered*, ed. Bruce H. Weber and David J. Depew (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003), 81–106; Daniel L. Everett, *How Language Began: The Story of Humanity's Greatest Invention* (London: Profile, 2017).

have developed on each track with respect to language meaning as reference or otherwise. It also addresses the metaphysical problem of universals as it impinges on linguistic meaning. Before all of that, however, the formal structure track relies heavily on logic for its articulation and analysis, and so it is profitable to consider briefly the nature of logic, problems of logic that pertain to language, and some of the varieties of logic that have emerged in the Western philosophical tradition. This project would benefit from bringing Western philosophy of language and logic into conversation with especially South Asian philosophical approaches to these topics,<sup>373</sup> but such a comparison exceeds the scope of the endeavor at present.

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<sup>373</sup> Deshpande, “Language and Testimony in Classical Indian Philosophy”; Harold Coward, *Language in Indian Philosophy and Religion* (Waterloo, ON: Canadian Corporation for Studies in Religion, 1978); Harold G. Coward, *The Sphota Theory of Language: A Philosophical Analysis* (Delhi, India: Motilal Banarsidass, 1980); Francis X. D’Sa, *Śabdaprāmānyam in Śabara and Kumārila: Towards a Study of the Mīmāṃsā Experience of Language* (Vienna, Austria: Indologisches Institut der Universität Wien, 1980); Othmar Gächter, *Hermeneutics and Language in Purva Mimamsa: A Study in Sabara Bhasya* (Delhi, India: Motilal Banarsidass, 1990); Bimal Krishna Matilal, *Logic, Language and Reality: Indian Philosophy and Contemporary Issues* (Delhi, India: Motilal Banarsidass, 1990); Bimal Krishna Matilal, *The Word and the World: India’s Contribution to the Study of Language* (Delhi, India: Oxford University Press, 2001); Bimal Krishna Matilal, Jonardon Ganeri, and Heeraman Tiwari, *The Character of Logic in India* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1998); Bimal Krishna Matilal, Gaṅgeśa, and Raghunātha Śiromaṇi, *The Navya-Nyāya Doctrine of Negation: The Semantics and Ontology of Negative Statements in Navya-Nyāya Philosophy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968); Roy Perrett, *Logic and Language: Indian Philosophy* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2013); Mark Siderits, *Indian Philosophy of Language: Studies in Selected Issues* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 2012); Frits Staal, *Universals: Studies in Indian Logic and Linguistics* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1988); F. Th. Stcherbatsky, *Buddhist Logic*, vol. 1 (New York, NY: Dover, 1962); F. Th. Stcherbatsky, *Buddhist Logic*, vol. 2 (New York, NY: Dover, 1962).

## *Logic*

The track in philosophy of language that focuses on the structure of language readily turns to the formalizations of logic in order to articulate and analyze that structure. “One aims, in formalizing, to generalise, to simplify, and to increase precision and rigour.”<sup>374</sup> Immanuel Kant (1724 – 1804) famously claimed that the study of logic was complete with Aristotle,<sup>375</sup> but the late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries would see a flourishing of logical development and debate,<sup>376</sup> beginning with the work of Gottlob Frege, instead along the lines of predicate logic developed from the propositional logic of the Stoics.<sup>377</sup> Logic aspires to develop a minimally extensive vocabulary so as to articulate the form of arguments such that their validity may be ascertained. Validity is achieved syntactically by deriving the conclusion from the premises according to the axioms and rules of the system, or semantically by verifying the truth of the premises, and ideally both, in which case the argument is both valid and

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<sup>374</sup> Haack, *Philosophy of Logics*, 33.

<sup>375</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Kant’s Introduction to Logic and His Essay on the Mistaken Subtlety of the Four Figures*, trans. Thomas Kingsmill Abbott (London: Longmans, Green & Company, 1885), 10–11.

<sup>376</sup> Jose Ferreiros, “The Road to Modern Logic-An Interpretation,” *The Bulletin of Symbolic Logic* 7, no. 4 (2001): 441–84, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2687794>.

<sup>377</sup> Susanne Bobzien, “Ancient Logic,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Winter, 2016, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2016/entries/logic-ancient/>.

sound.<sup>378</sup> The relationship between logic and language becomes clear when natural language is understood to make informal arguments:

Formal logical systems aim to formalise informal arguments, to represent them in precise, rigorous and generalisable terms; and an acceptable formal logical system ought to be such that, if a given informal argument is represented in it by a certain formal argument, then that formal argument should be valid in the system just in case the informal argument is valid in the extra-systematic sense.<sup>379</sup>

Logical formalisms may vary with regard to their systems of notation, the constants they take to be primitive, whether they rely on axioms or deduce based solely on rules of inference, and which axioms or rules they include.<sup>380</sup> Thus, it is more appropriate to refer to “logics” than to “logic,” and the elaboration of several logical systems and families, emphasizing what is at stake when choosing among them, is the goal of the remainder of this subsection.

Classical logics, (e.g. 2-value sentence calculus, predicate calculus), evaluate premises in the form of either sentences of natural languages, statements of the content of sentences, propositions expressing the common meaning of synonymous sentences, or compounds thereof. Premises may be evaluated as either true or false such that conclusions drawn of the same form

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<sup>378</sup> Haack, *Philosophy of Logics*, 1–14, 24.

<sup>379</sup> Haack, 15.

<sup>380</sup> Haack, 17–22.

may be either true or false assuming their argument is valid.<sup>381</sup> Logical arguments are expressed in terms of variables conjoined by connectives such as “¬” (negation, “not”), “∨” (disjunction, “or”), “∧” (conjunction, “and”), “→” (material implication, “if...then...”), or “≡” (material equivalence, “if and only if”), and modified by quantifiers such as “∃” (existential, “at least one”) or “∀” (universal, “for all”).<sup>382</sup> Connectives<sup>383</sup> are usually thought to be logical theorems,<sup>384</sup> meaning that they are derived solely from the rules of inference and/or axioms of a given logic.<sup>385</sup> That said, the relationship between the logical connectives and their meanings in natural language,<sup>386</sup> and the adequacy of logical connectives to express the full range of meanings of natural languages,

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<sup>381</sup> Haack, 4, 74–85, 152–53.

<sup>382</sup> Notational conventions vary among logical formalisms; the notation employed here has the main virtue of being readily accessible in Unicode fonts. On connectives and quantification generally, see Haack, 28–30, 29–43; Willard Van Orman Quine, *Methods of Logic* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982), 9–15, 136–41.

<sup>383</sup> Lloyd Humberstone, “Sentence Connectives in Formal Logic,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Winter, 2016, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2016/entries/connectives-logic/>.

<sup>384</sup> Haack, *Philosophy of Logics*, 30–32. For the rejection of connectives as theorems, see Arthur N. Prior, “The Runabout Inference-Ticket,” *Analysis* 21, no. 2 (1960): 38–39, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3326699>; Arthur N. Prior, “Conjunction and Contonktion Revisited,” *Analysis* 24, no. 6 (1964): 191–95, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3326464>.

<sup>385</sup> Haack, *Philosophy of Logics*, 14.

<sup>386</sup> Haack, 35–37; P. F. Strawson, *Introduction to Logical Theory* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2011), 78–93.

especially conditionals,<sup>387</sup> are unsettled matters. Quantifiers<sup>388</sup> are generally considered concepts applied to concepts,<sup>389</sup> but some logicians take them to be names.<sup>390</sup> The objectual interpretation takes quantifiers to apply to the objects, (i.e. variables), in an argument as their values either in a delimited domain, i.e. the “model-theoretic” approach, or universally, i.e. the “absolute” approach. By contrast, the substitutional interpretation takes the quantifiers, notated “ $\Pi$ ” for universal and “ $\Sigma$ ” for existential, to apply not to objects but to “expressions of an appropriate syntactic category in the initial language” that make up a substitution class.<sup>391</sup>

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<sup>387</sup> Haack, *Philosophy of Logics*, 37–38; David K. Lewis, *Counterfactuals* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973); Alan Ross Anderson, Nuel D. Belnap Jr, and J. Michael Dunn, *Entailment: The Logic of Relevance and Necessity*, vol. I (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2017); Alan Ross Anderson, Nuel D. Belnap Jr, and J. Michael Dunn, *Entailment: The Logic of Relevance and Necessity*, vol. II (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2017).

<sup>388</sup> Gabriel Uzquiano, “Quantifiers and Quantification,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Spring, 2017, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2017/entries/quantification/>.

<sup>389</sup> Haack, *Philosophy of Logics*, 39–40; Gottlob Frege, *Translations from the Philosophical Writings of Gottlob Frege*, trans. Peter Geach and Max Black (Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 1952), 130–48, 181–93.

<sup>390</sup> Haack, *Philosophy of Logics*, 40; Richard Montague, “The Proper Treatment of Quantification in Ordinary English,” in *Approaches to Natural Language*, ed. Jaakko Hintikka, Julius Moravcsik, and Patrick Suppes (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1973), 221–242; Jaakko Hintikka, “Quantifiers in Logic and Quantifiers in Natural Languages with Comments and Reply,” in *Philosophy of Logic*, ed. Stephan Körner (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1976), 208–70.

<sup>391</sup> Michael Hand, “Objectual and Substitutional Interpretations of the Quantifiers,” in *Philosophy of Logic*, ed. Dale Jacquette, *Handbook of the Philosophy of Science* (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2006); Haack, *Philosophy of Logics*, 42–55; Quine, *Methods of Logic*, 167–255.

Alternative logics emerge from concern regarding the application and interpretation of the formalism of classical logic, and questions as to the adequacy of classical logic to represent certain natural language constructions.<sup>392</sup> In response to the objection that classical logic inadequately accounts for temporality, i.e. tense,<sup>393</sup> Willard Van Orman Quine (1908-2000) seeks to maintain the formalism of classical logic by adding temporal qualifiers to untensed verbs such that variables range over “epochs” of space-time.<sup>394</sup> Arthur Norman Prior (1914 – 1969) instead extends classical logic by adding tense operators “F” (future) and “P” (past) with attendant axioms;<sup>395</sup> the former reflects an intent for logic to be adequate to science, whereas the latter views logic as prior to

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<sup>392</sup> Haack, *Philosophy of Logics*, 153.

<sup>393</sup> Valentin Goranko and Antony Galton, “Temporal Logic,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Winter, 2015, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2015/entries/logic-temporal/>.

<sup>394</sup> Haack, *Philosophy of Logics*, 156–58; Hugh M. Lacey, “Quine on the Logic and Ontology of Time,” *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 49, no. 1 (May 1, 1971): 47–67, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00048407112341031>; Willard Van Orman Quine, *Word and Object* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2013).

<sup>395</sup> Haack, *Philosophy of Logics*, 158–60; Arthur N. Prior, *Time and Modality* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1957); Arthur N. Prior, *Past, Present and Future* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1967); Arthur N. Prior and Per F. V. Hasle, *Papers on Time and Tense* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2003).

science.<sup>396</sup> In response to the reality that natural language admits varying degrees of vagueness, Rudolf Carnap (1891 – 1970) advocates any vagueness be regimented by a process of “precisification.”<sup>397</sup> The emergence of fuzzy logic represents “a radical challenge to the traditional conception of the scope and aims of formal logic”<sup>398</sup> by abandoning precision and admitting a range of degrees of value reflecting vagueness instead of insisting on the binary of truth and falsity.<sup>399</sup> Whereas classical logic holds to the principle of deductive explosion that from contradictory premises absolutely any conclusion at all may be inferred, paraconsistent logics deny that explosion is a necessary outcome of

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<sup>396</sup> Haack, *Philosophy of Logics*, 162; P. T. Geach, “Some Problems about Time,” in *Studies in the Philosophy of Thought and Action*, ed. P. F. Strawson, British Academy Lectures (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1968).

<sup>397</sup> Haack, *Philosophy of Logics*, 163–64; Rudolf Carnap, *The Logical Foundations of Probability* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1950), 1–18.

<sup>398</sup> Haack, *Philosophy of Logics*, 167.

<sup>399</sup> Haack, 165–69, 204–20; Petr Cintula, Christian G. Fermüller, and Carles Noguera, “Fuzzy Logic,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Fall, 2017, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2017/entries/logic-fuzzy/>; B.R. Gaines, “Foundations of Fuzzy Reasoning,” *International Journal of Man-Machine Studies* 8, no. 6 (November 1976): 623–68, [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0020-7373\(76\)80027-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0020-7373(76)80027-2); L.A. Zadeh, “Fuzzy Logic and Approximate Reasoning (In Memory of Grigore Moisil),” *Synthese* 30, no. 3/4 (1975): 407–28, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20115038>; L.A. Zadeh, “Fuzzy Languages and Their Relation to Human and Machine Intelligence,” in *Man and Computer* (The First International Conference on Man and Computer, Basel, Switzerland: S. Karger, 1970), 130–65.



contradiction.<sup>400</sup> Relevance logics emerge from concern that in classical logic conclusions need not necessarily have anything to do with their premises, and with the paradoxes of material and strict implication, and so make adjustments in the forms of extensions and restrictions on the classical apparatus to compensate.<sup>401</sup> By contrast, free logics extend their application beyond the scope of their stated domain to address singular and general terms that either denote something external to the domain or do not denote at all in order to expand the scope of logic beyond the ontological assumption of the existence of terms.<sup>402</sup>

Modal logic is a family of logics, including some already addressed, developed to express modality in language such as the linguistic constructions that express tense, aspect, mood, conditionality, probability, and evidentiality,<sup>403</sup> although it was initially developed to express the epistemic alethic modality of

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<sup>400</sup> Graham Priest, Koji Tanaka, and Zach Weber, "Paraconsistent Logic," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Fall, 2017, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2017/entries/logic-paraconsistent/>.

<sup>401</sup> Haack, *Philosophy of Logics*, 198–203; Edwin Mares, "Relevance Logic," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Spring, 2014, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2014/entries/logic-relevance/>.

<sup>402</sup> John Nolt, "Free Logic," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Winter, 2014, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2014/entries/logic-free/>.

<sup>403</sup> James W. Garson, "Modal Logic," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Spring, 2016, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2016/entries/logic-modal/>.

truth.<sup>404</sup> Different modal logics include, emphasize, or exclude different modalities as they “aspire to represent what is vital to reasoning about possibility and necessity while ignoring inessential features of modal discourse in ordinary language.”<sup>405</sup> Generally speaking, modal logics expand on classical logic with the addition of modal operators to express the modality in play in a given argument:

Logic	Symbol	Expression
Modal	$\Box$	It is necessary that...
	$\Diamond$	It is possible that...
Deontic	$O$	It is obligatory that...
	$P$	It is permitted that...
	$F$	It is forbidden that...
Temporal	$G$	It will always be the case that...
	$F$	It will be the case that...
	$H$	It has always been the case that...
	$P$	It was the case that...
Doxastic	$Bx$	$x$ believes that... <sup>406</sup>

Moreover, the concept of necessity enabled C.I. Lewis, the founder of modal logic, to add the connector “ $\rightarrow$ ” (strict implication, “strictly implies”) in an

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<sup>404</sup> Haack, *Philosophy of Logics*, 175–78; Garson, “Modal Logic,” sec. 2; Kripke, *Naming and Necessity*.

<sup>405</sup> Haack, *Philosophy of Logics*, 195.

<sup>406</sup> Garson, “Modal Logic,” sec. 1.

attempt generally evaluated unsuccessful to overcome the paradoxes of material implication.<sup>407</sup>

Given the fundamental goal of logic as developing complete and sound systems for establishing the validity of arguments, modal logic immediately runs into trouble giving an account of its truth conditions. Addressing this problem necessitates the deployment of possible world semantics such that the truth-value  $v$  of a modal proposition  $p$  is relative to a possible world  $w$ , notated  $v(p,w)$ , and so may differ from that in an alternate world  $w'$ ; a proposition may be possibly true in at least one world or necessarily true in every world.<sup>408</sup>

Predictably, solving the semantic problem provokes a metaphysical problem as to the nature of possible worlds.<sup>409</sup> One answer to the problem is to posit concrete physical realism, in which the actual world is the physical universe we inhabit

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<sup>407</sup> Garson, sec. 5; Clarence Irving Lewis, "Implication and the Algebra of Logic," *Mind* 21, no. 84 (1912): 522–31, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2249157>; Clarence Irving Lewis, *A Survey of Symbolic Logic* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1918).

<sup>408</sup> Garson, "Modal Logic," sec. 6; Christopher Menzel, "Possible Worlds," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Winter, 2017, sec. 1, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2017/entries/possible-worlds/>; Haack, *Philosophy of Logics*, 187–94.

<sup>409</sup> Menzel, "Possible Worlds," sec. 2. These positions will be discussed further in chapter six.

and possible worlds vary from this one to varying degrees and actually exist.<sup>410</sup>

Another is conceptualist abstractionism, in which possible worlds are all of the other ways, down to exquisite levels of detail, the actual world could be imagined to be other than it is.<sup>411</sup> For combinatorialism, possible worlds are rearrangements of metaphysical simples, universals and particulars, so as to achieve maximal consistency with the actual world.<sup>412</sup>

As this discussion makes clear, logicians shape their formalisms in relation to metaphysical and epistemological orientations and to their theory of truth, among other considerations. An important metaphysical issue at the level of philosophy of logic has to do with the relationships among all of the different types of logic.<sup>413</sup> Logical monists see the diversity of logics “as making rival

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<sup>410</sup> Menzel, sec. 2.1; Haack, *Philosophy of Logics*, 191; David K. Lewis, *On the Plurality of Worlds* (Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 1986); Robert Stalnaker, *Mere Possibilities: Metaphysical Foundations of Modal Semantics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012).

<sup>411</sup> Menzel, “Possible Worlds,” sec. 2.2; Haack, *Philosophy of Logics*, 191; Kripke, *Naming and Necessity*; Alvin Plantinga, *The Nature of Necessity* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1978).

<sup>412</sup> Menzel, “Possible Worlds,” sec. 2.3; Haack, *Philosophy of Logics*, 191; David Malet Armstrong, *A Theory of Universals*, vol. 2, *Universals and Scientific Realism* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1978); David Malet Armstrong, *Nominalism and Realism*, vol. 1, *Universals and Scientific Realism* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1978); David Malet Armstrong, *A Combinatorial Theory of Possibility* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1989); David Malet Armstrong, *A World of States of Affairs* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1997); David Malet Armstrong, *Truth and Truthmakers* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Jaakko Hintikka, *Models for Modalities: Selected Essays* (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1969).

<sup>413</sup> Haack, *Philosophy of Logics*, fig. 7.

claims about what formalism correctly represents extra-systematically valid arguments/logical truths.”<sup>414</sup> Logical pluralists allow that multiple logics could be correct, with global pluralists taking the view that different logics represent the truth of the same arguments in different senses, and local pluralists taking different logics to apply in different situations and areas of discourse.<sup>415</sup> Logical instrumentalists deny that correctness is an appropriate category for logic, arguing instead that logics can be more or less useful than one another, mapping neither to language nor reality such that truth and validity are system restricted.<sup>416</sup>

So too epistemologically at the level of philosophy of logic, logicians must decide if they understand themselves to be fallible with respect to their own beliefs and their logics to be at least potentially methodologically fallible,

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<sup>414</sup> Haack, 222–23.

<sup>415</sup> Haack, 223–24; J. C. Beall and Greg Restall, *Logical Pluralism* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon, 2006).

<sup>416</sup> Haack, *Philosophy of Logics*, 224–25; P. Kyle Stanford, “Instrumentalism,” in *The Philosophy of Science: A-M*, ed. Sahotra Sarkar and Jessica Pfeifer (New York, NY: Taylor & Francis, 2006); John Dewey, “The Development of American Pragmatism,” in *1925-1927 Essays, Reviews, Miscellany, and the Public and Its Problems*, ed. Jo Ann Boydston, vol. 2, *The Later Works of John Dewey* (Southern Illinois University Press, 1984), 3–21; Dewey, *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry*; Karl Raimund Popper, *The Logic of Scientific Discovery* (New York, NY: Basic, 1959); Karl Raimund Popper, *Conjectures and Refutations: The Growth of Scientific Knowledge* (New York, NY: Basic, 1962).

possibly as a result of their own fallibility.<sup>417</sup> Most contemporary logicians embrace some form of fallibilism, but arguments against fallibilistic interpretations of logic include positing the necessity of logical laws, the idea that logical propositions are self-evident, and the case that since logical truths are analytic they are therefore manifest.<sup>418</sup> Also, just as the relationship between language and thought may be construed in several configurations, the relationship between logic and thought has been construed in three ways: strong psychologism (Kant), where logic describes how we do or must think; weak psychologism (Peirce), where logic prescribes how we should think; and anti-psychologism (Frege), where logic has nothing to do with thought.<sup>419</sup>

Theories of truth may be distinguished between those that provide a definition of truth, that is, they give a “meaning of the word ‘true,’” and those that provide a criterion of truth, that is, they give a “test by means of which to

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<sup>417</sup> Haack, *Philosophy of Logics*, 233; Stephen Hetherington, “Fallibilism,” *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, accessed May 15, 2018, <http://www.iep.utm.edu/fallibil/>.

<sup>418</sup> Haack, *Philosophy of Logics*, 233–36.

<sup>419</sup> Haack, 238–42; Kant, *Kant’s Introduction to Logic and His Essay on the Mistaken Subtlety of the Four Figures*; Charles Sanders Peirce, *Exact Logic*, ed. Charles Hartshorne and Paul Weiss, vol. 3 & 4, *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1931), para. 161ff; John Dewey, *Experience and Nature* (New York, NY: Dover, 2012); Gottlob Frege, “The Thought: A Logical Inquiry,” *Mind* 65, no. 259 (1956): 289–311, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2251513>.

tell whether a sentence (or whatever) is true or false.”<sup>420</sup> Correspondence theories define truth by relation to the world, whereas coherence theories define truth by relations among sets of beliefs. Pragmatist theories tend toward the correspondence theory but hold coherence as a means of testing and confirmation.<sup>421</sup> Alfred Tarski (1901 – 1983) instead offers a semantic, conventional criterion for truth such that a sentence “ $\varphi$ ” in a logic L is true if and only if  $\varphi$ , (the state of affairs described by “ $\varphi$ ”), and a recursive definition of truth that satisfies the conventional criterion.<sup>422</sup> Whereas Tarski demurred from the application of his procedure beyond formal logic to natural language, Donald Davidson (1917 – 2003) set out to do just that, largely on the basis of the generative grammar of Noam Chomsky, by developing a non-representational semantic holism in the vein of pragmatism.<sup>423</sup> Finally, deflationist theories reject

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<sup>420</sup> Haack, *Philosophy of Logics*, 88–91.

<sup>421</sup> Haack, 91–99; Michael Glanzberg, “Truth,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, 2016th ed., 2016, secs. 1 & 3, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2016/entries/truth/>.

<sup>422</sup> Haack, *Philosophy of Logics*, 99–127; Glanzberg, “Truth,” sec. 2; Wilfrid Hodges, “Tarski’s Truth Definitions,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Fall, 2014, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2014/entriesarski-truth/>.

<sup>423</sup> Haack, *Philosophy of Logics*, 118–27; Glanzberg, “Truth,” sec. 6.5; Jeff Malpas, “Donald Davidson,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Fall, 2015, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2015/entries/davidson/>; Donald Davidson, *Subjective, Intersubjective, Objective* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon, 2001); Donald Davidson, *Inquiries Into Truth and*

truth as a metaphysical principle and so understand talk of truth and truth conditions to be redundant because the proposition that “‘ $\varphi$ ’ is true” is just an assertion that, and so means,  $\varphi$ .<sup>424</sup>

### Reference

Philosophy of language may best be understood to be generally concerned with the meaning of language and an intuitive notion of meaning has to do with the reference of words and phrases to things and states of affairs in the world. However, many words do not refer to actual objects, more than one word or phrase may refer to the same object, and language is rather obviously more than just a list of names anyway.<sup>425</sup> On the other hand, clearly quite a few words,

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*Interpretation: Philosophical Essays* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2001); Donald Davidson, *Truth and Predication* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005).

<sup>424</sup> Haack, *Philosophy of Logics*, 127–34; Glanzberg, “Truth,” sec. 5; Daniel Stoljar and Nic Damnjanovic, “The Deflationary Theory of Truth,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Fall, 2014, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2014/entries/ruth-deflationary/>; Frank P. Ramsey, “Facts and Propositions,” ed. Guy Longworth, *Truth: Virtual Issue*, Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, no. 1 (2013): 1–14, <https://www.aristoteliansociety.org.uk/the-virtual-issue/the-virtual-issue-no-1-truth/>; P. F. Strawson, “Truth,” *Analysis* 9, no. 6 (1949): 83–97, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3327019>; P. F. Strawson, *Logico-Linguistic Papers* (London: Methuen, 1971); Hartry Field, “The Deflationary Conception of Truth,” in *Fact, Science and Morality*, ed. G. MacDonald and C. Wright (Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 1986), 55–117; Hartry Field, “Deflationist Views of Meaning and Content,” *Mind* 103, no. 411 (1994): 249–85, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2253740>; J. C. Beall and Bradley P. Armour-Garb, *Deflationism and Paradox* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon, 2005).

<sup>425</sup> William G. Lycan, *Philosophy of Language: A Contemporary Introduction*, 2nd ed. (New York, NY: Routledge, 2012), 1–8.



which logicians refer to as “singular terms,”<sup>426</sup> do at least seem to refer directly to, or name, objects, and so the problem of reference persists in philosophy of language. Bertrand Russell (1872 – 1970) argues to the contrary that at least the class of singular terms called definite descriptions, such as “The author of this dissertation,” do not denote a particular person because the article “the” is functioning as a quantifier. Instead, the phrase is properly understood generally as “at least one person authored this dissertation” and “at most one person authored this dissertation.”<sup>427</sup> P.F. Strawson (1919 – 2006) rejects this analysis from the perspective that language itself does not refer, rather humans refer using language. In this conception, a contradictory definite description such as “the many authors of this dissertation,” attempts but fails to refer for this dissertation having only one author even before it has the opportunity to be true or false. Strawson also points out the context dependence of many definite descriptions, such as “the dissertation,” which according to the second conjunct

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<sup>426</sup> Lycan, 13–16; E. Jennifer Ashworth, “Medieval Theories of Singular Terms,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Winter, 2015, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2015/entries/singular-terms-medieval/>.

<sup>427</sup> Lycan, *Philosophy of Language*, 16–21; Morris, *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Language*, chap. 3; Bertrand Russell, “The Philosophy of Logical Atomism,” *The Monist* 29, no. 2 (1919): 190–222, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27900737>; Bertrand Russell, “On Denoting,” *Mind* 114, no. 456 (2005): 873–87, <https://doi.org/10.1093/mind/fzi873>; Bertrand Russell, *Introduction to Mathematical Philosophy* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1920).

of Russell's analysis entails that there is only one dissertation in the entire universe.<sup>428</sup> Keith Donnellan (1931 – 2015) chastises both Russell and Strawson for failing to distinguish attributive from referential uses of definite descriptions. Consider the statement, "her dissertation is well written," i.e. "the  $\emptyset$  is Y." The claim may fail in attribution if the dissertation in question is written by someone other than her, ("if nothing is the  $\emptyset$  then nothing has been said to be Y"). Yet it may succeed in referring to the dissertation at hand, ("the fact that nothing is the  $\emptyset$  does not have this consequence").<sup>429</sup> Saul Kripke disputes Donnellan with a distinction between speaker reference, or the object a speaker intends to identify, and semantic reference, or the object linguistically encoded in a given expression. Kripke insists that truth only applies to semantic reference no matter whether the speaker reference manages to successfully communicate anyway.<sup>430</sup> Alfred F.

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<sup>428</sup> Lycan, *Philosophy of Language*, 21–25; P. F. Strawson, "On Referring," *Mind* 59, no. 235 (1950): 320–44, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2251176>. The context claim may be adequately addressed by restricting the domain of quantification. See William G. Lycan, *Logical Form in Natural Language* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1984); Stephen Neale, *Descriptions* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990). Or not. See Marga Reimer, "Incomplete Descriptions," *Erkenntnis* (1975-) 37, no. 3 (1992): 347–63, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20012444>.

<sup>429</sup> Lycan, *Philosophy of Language*, 26–30; Keith Donnellan, *Essays on Reference, Language, and Mind*, ed. Joseph Almog and Paolo Leonardi (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2012), chap. 1; Leonard Linsky, "Reference and Referents," in *Philosophy and Ordinary Language*, ed. Charles Edwin Caton (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1963).

<sup>430</sup> Lycan, *Philosophy of Language*, 28–29; Saul A. Kripke, *Philosophical Troubles: Collected Papers* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2011), chap. 5.

MacKay adds a third term, the “actual” referent, to indicate the object ultimately taken to have been referred to, which may turn out to be either the speaker referent, or the semantic referent, or in extreme cases, something else entirely.<sup>431</sup>

Gareth Evans (1946 – 1980) notes that Russellian treatment of anaphoric direct descriptions, which inherit their meaning from another, usually antecedent, expression, “fails when the antecedent is a quantifier phrase or an indefinite description.”<sup>432</sup>

Russell extends his description theory from definite descriptions to proper names by arguing that proper names are merely abbreviated definite descriptions. This view contradicts the direct reference theory classically elaborated by John Stuart Mill (1806 – 1873) that names introduce particular things they designate into discourse.<sup>433</sup> John R. Searle expands the description

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<sup>431</sup> Lycan, *Philosophy of Language*, 29–30; Alfred F. MacKay, “Mr. Donnellan and Humpty Dumpty on Referring,” *The Philosophical Review* 77, no. 2 (1968): 197–202, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2183320>.

<sup>432</sup> Lycan, *Philosophy of Language*, 31–32; Gareth Evans, “Pronouns, Quantifiers, and Relative Clauses (I),” *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 7, no. 3 (September 1977): 467–536, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40230703>.

<sup>433</sup> Lycan, *Philosophy of Language*, 37–40; Russell, “The Philosophy of Logical Atomism”; Mill, *A System of Logic, Ratiocinative and Inductive*, 1843; Mill, *A System of Logic, Ratiocinative and Inductive*, 1843; Ruth Barcan Marcus, “Extensionality,” *Mind* 69, no. 273 (1960): 55–62, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2251588>; Ruth Barcan Marcus, *Modalities : Philosophical Essays* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1993); David Kaplan, “How to Russell a Frege-Church,” *The Journal of Philosophy* 72, no. 19 (1975): 716–29, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2024635>; Nathan U. Salmon, *Reference and Essence*, 2nd ed. (Amherst, NY: Prometheus, 2005).

theory to encapsulate a “sufficient but vague and unspecified number” of “standard identifying statements” that form a cluster to which a given name refers. Notably, the theory emerges in response to concerns regarding the one-to-one correspondence of name and description and the variety of descriptions different speakers could legitimately associate with a given name in the Russellian account.<sup>434</sup> Saul Kripke overturns the description theory of reference in part by recourse to arguments within the classical logic of Russell and Searle<sup>435</sup> but also significantly by shifting the frame to modal logic and possible world semantics. This shift allows him to argue that the same name may refer to the same individual in different possible worlds and yet that individual will need to be described differently according to the alternate actualizations at play in their world.<sup>436</sup> Kripke replaces the description theory with a semantic theory of names as rigid designators of the same object across all possible worlds<sup>437</sup> and a causal-

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<sup>434</sup> Lycan, *Philosophy of Language*, 40–43; John R. Searle, “Proper Names,” *Mind* 67, no. 266 (1958): 166–73, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2251108>.

<sup>435</sup> Lycan, *Philosophy of Language*, 45–47; Kripke, *Naming and Necessity*.

<sup>436</sup> Lycan, *Philosophy of Language*, 51–53; Kripke, *Naming and Necessity*.

<sup>437</sup> Morris, *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Language*, chap. 4; Joseph LaPorte, “Rigid Designators,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Spring, 2018, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2018/entries/rigid-designators/>; Lycan, *Philosophy of Language*, 53–55; Kripke, *Naming and Necessity*; Saul A. Kripke, *Reference and Existence: The John Locke Lectures* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2013).

historical theory of reference such that a given use of a name to designate an individual relies upon a repetitive sequence over time in a community of the name being used to refer to the same individual.<sup>438</sup> Kripke and Hilary Putnam (1926 – 2016) independently extended the project to natural kind terms, and Putnam demonstrated by recourse to a thought experiment involving a “Twin Earth” that linguistic meaning arises at the intersection of thoughts and ideas, the conventions of communal use, and the reality of the world.<sup>439</sup>

### *Meaning*

If reference is inadequate as a theory of meaning, at least on its own, as it seems to be, then an adequate theory of meaning will have to navigate the intersection Putnam maps among individual minds in communities and societies interacting with the real world via a complex, nested, and multivalent medium.

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<sup>438</sup> Lycan, *Philosophy of Language*, 60–62; Kripke, *Naming and Necessity*; Kripke, *Reference and Existence*; Michael Devitt, *Designation* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1981); Michael Devitt and Kim Sterelny, *Language and Reality: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Language* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999), 79–81; Donnellan, *Essays on Reference, Language, and Mind*.

<sup>439</sup> Lycan, *Philosophy of Language*, 66–68; Morris, *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Language*, chap. 5; Ian Hacking, “Putnam’s Theory of Natural Kinds and Their Names Is Not the Same as Kripke’s,” *Principia* 11, no. 1 (2007): 1–24, <https://doaj.org/article/9f920664705243489e053ded79b7a857>; Marga Reimer and Eliot Michaelson, “Reference,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Spring, 2017, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2017/entries/reference/>; Kripke, *Naming and Necessity*; Kripke, *Reference and Existence*; Putnam, “The Meaning of ‘Meaning’”; Andrew Pessin and Sanford Goldberg, *The Twin Earth Chronicles: Twenty Years of Reflection on Hilary Putnam’s “The Meaning of ‘Meaning’”* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1996).

One set of meaning theories takes meanings to themselves be individual actual entities. John Locke (1632 – 1704) posits that meanings are content bearing ideas, thoughts, beliefs, images, or mental states, and so language may be understood as meaningful when it expresses one of these.<sup>440</sup> Aside from the typical objections raised to the ideational theory among philosophers of language largely on logical grounds,<sup>441</sup> it also has the disadvantage of so privileging the contents of individual minds that their existing in society, responding to a common reality, and expressing in a complex medium all but fail to register. Gottlob Frege turned from idea entities to proposition entities,<sup>442</sup> but neither he nor Russell<sup>443</sup> nor G.E. Moore (1873 – 1958),<sup>444</sup> the principal proponents of proposition theory, manage to define propositions beyond their role in the theory except to say that they are the general contents of expressions rather than of ideas. Nevertheless, as abstract

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<sup>440</sup> John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Alexander Campbell Fraser, vol. 1 (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1894), bk. II; Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, 1894, vol. 2, bk. III; Lycan, *Philosophy of Language*, 78; Morris, *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Language*, chap. 1.

<sup>441</sup> Lycan, *Philosophy of Language*, 78–80.

<sup>442</sup> Frege, "The Thought."

<sup>443</sup> Bertrand Russell, "On Propositions: What They Are and How They Mean," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, Supplementary Volumes* 2 (1919): 1–43, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4106441>.

<sup>444</sup> George Edward Moore, *Some Main Problems of Philosophy* (New York, NY: Collier, 1962), chap. 3.

entities, propositions do have the advantage of shifting away from the contents of mind without losing track of the role of the individual so as to be situated intersubjectively, (i.e. socially), and also of better coping with the complexities and ambiguities of the linguistic medium.<sup>445</sup> However, since proposition theories do not claim that propositions necessarily address states of affairs in reality, it is unclear why propositions themselves are not merely formalizations of natural language into a more restricted domain, and so function as a metalanguage. Neither is it clear how propositions abstracted from reality could influence either social or individual action.<sup>446</sup>

An alternative to entity theories of meaning is to theorize meaning as arising from language use. Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889 – 1951) and J.L. Austin (1911 – 1960) independently inaugurated use theories of meaning as arising from individual moves made in the social context of rule-governed conventional

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<sup>445</sup> Lycan, *Philosophy of Language*, 80–85.

<sup>446</sup> Lycan, 85–86; Gilbert Harman, “Quine on Meaning and Existence, I. The Death of Meaning,” *The Review of Metaphysics* 21, no. 1 (1967): 124–51, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20124498>; Gilbert Harman, “Quine on Meaning and Existence, II. Existential Commitment,” *The Review of Metaphysics* 21, no. 2 (1967): 343–67, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20124568>; Quine, *Word and Object*; Matthew McGrath and Devin Frank, “Propositions,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Spring, 2018, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2018/entries/propositions/>.

behaviors and practices.<sup>447</sup> Wittgenstein analogizes language, at least in part, to the playing of games such that the meaning of a word or a sentence is relative to the rules of the language game being played, i.e. the classroom game, the family game, the church service game, the dissertation defense game, etc., and is constituted by the function of what it accomplishes in being played.<sup>448</sup> Wilfrid Sellars (1912 – 1989) develops the notion of language games to account for the social dimensions of inferring such that validity arises from following the rule-governed activity of inference rather than universal truth conditions.<sup>449</sup> Robert Brandom presses this inferentialism into a systematic account of meaning. He argues that in many language games, assertions are made and rendered explicit in logical vocabulary that the language user is then committed to defending against objections and challenges by recourse to reasons drawn by inference

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<sup>447</sup> Lycan, *Philosophy of Language*, 90–91; Morris, *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Language*, chaps. 12 & 15; Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*; Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*.

<sup>448</sup> Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, paras. 2, 7, 23; Morris, *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Language*, chap. 15; Anat Biletzki and Anat Matar, “Ludwig Wittgenstein,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Summer, 2018, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2018/entries/wittgenstein/>; Friedrich Waismann, *The Principles of Linguistic Philosophy*, ed. Rom Harré, 2nd ed. (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1997).

<sup>449</sup> Lycan, *Philosophy of Language*, 92–93; deVries, “Wilfrid Sellars”; Wilfrid Sellars, “Some Reflections on Language Games,” *Philosophy of Science* 21, no. 3 (1954): 204–28, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/185277>; Wilfrid Sellars, “Meaning as Functional Classification (A Perspective on the Relation of Syntax to Semantics),” *Synthese* 27, no. 3/4 (1974): 417–37, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20114935>.



from other assertions according to rules, and that entitle the user to derive further inferences, which together constitute a form of scorekeeping.<sup>450</sup>

Austin develops a use theory of meaning in the idiom of performance rather than games such that language performs different sorts of speech acts governed by rules. Linguistic performances not only assert descriptions or propositions as locutions but also almost always accomplish outcomes by illocutionary force and sometimes even change the minds of their hearers by perlocutionary force.<sup>451</sup> The ideational theory identified meaning primarily with ideas in the mind to the exclusion of the social, linguistic, and real-world dimensions. Likewise, use theories swing the pendulum to the role of the social

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<sup>450</sup> Lycan, *Philosophy of Language*, 97; Robert Brandom, *Articulating Reasons: An Introduction to Inferentialism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000); Robert Brandom, *Making It Explicit: Reasoning, Representing, and Discursive Commitment* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994); Robert Brandom, "Précis of Making It Explicit," ed. Robert B. Brandom, *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 57, no. 1 (1997): 153–56, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2953784>; John McDowell, "Brandom on Representation and Inference," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 57, no. 1 (1997): 157–62, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2953785>; Richard Rorty, "What Do You Do When They Call You a 'Relativist'?", *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 57, no. 1 (1997): 173–77, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2953787>; Gideon Rosen, "Who Makes the Rules Around Here?," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 57, no. 1 (1997): 163–71, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2953786>; Jay F. Rosenberg, "Brandom's Making It Explicit: A First Encounter," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 57, no. 1 (1997): 179–87, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2953788>; Robert Brandom, "Replies," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 57, no. 1 (1997): 189–204, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2953789>.

<sup>451</sup> Lycan, *Philosophy of Language*, 173–86; Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*; Searle, *Speech Acts*; Searle, *Expression and Meaning*; Mitchell Green, "Speech Acts," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Winter, 2017, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2017/entries/speech-acts/>.

in constructing and maintaining meaning to the exclusion of any role for individual intentions while struggling to address linguistic complexity and leaving off any discussion of the real world.

H. Paul Grice (1913 – 1988) attempts to strike a balance between personal and social meaning by distinguishing speaker-meaning from expression-meaning, which may nevertheless be derived from the former, in context of a set of rules that govern cooperative conversation that he called “conversational implicature.” First, he articulates a psychological theory of speaker-meaning rooted in the communicative intention of language users to convey beliefs and other psychological states, which contrasts with the stable (timeless) meaning that resides within an expression itself. Thus, expression meaning (E), which is timeless, may be formalized as “*E* means that *p*,” whereas speaker meaning (S), which is contextual, may be formalized by “*S* means that *p* by *E*,” and they may be expressed together (SE) as “*E* means that *p* if and only if ‘people’ (vague) mean that *p* by *E*.” While a number of objections, both sympathetic and otherwise, have arisen to this derivation of meaning from language user intention, there is general agreement that accounting for intent is critical for a theory of meaning, perhaps by bringing Grice into the orbit of Davidsonian

semantics.<sup>452</sup> Second, Grice recognizes that the intentions of language users must be expressed in conformity with the cooperative social norms that determine the success of communication in a conversational setting. He articulated these norms as a single cooperative principle and four categories of conversational maxim:

Cooperative principle: Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged.

Four Maxims:

Quantity: Make your contribution as informative as is required but no more so.

Quality: Do not say what you believe to be false or that for which you lack adequate evidence.

Relation: Be relevant.

Manner: Avoid obscurity of expression and ambiguity; be brief and orderly.<sup>453</sup>

These norms function to implicate meanings that derive from the conversational context and so transcend and even contradict expression meanings,<sup>454</sup> conventional implicatures rely not on context but on words that press the meaning of the statement beyond its truth value.<sup>455</sup> This approach has the

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<sup>452</sup> Lycan, *Philosophy of Language*, 100–114; Morris, *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Language*, chap. 13; Grice, *Studies in the Way of Words*, chap. 14; Strawson, *Logico-Linguistic Papers*, chap. 9.

<sup>453</sup> Grice, *Studies in the Way of Words*, 26–27.

<sup>454</sup> Lycan, *Philosophy of Language*, 188–95; Grice, *Studies in the Way of Words*, chaps. 2, 3, 7; Robert Stalnaker, *Context and Content: Essays on Intentionality in Speech and Thought* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1999); Wayne A. Davis, “Implicature,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Fall, 2014, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2014/entries/implicature/>. An important counterargument is presented in Davis, *Implicature*, 2007.

<sup>455</sup> Lycan, *Philosophy of Language*, 198; Grice, *Studies in the Way of Words*, chap. 3; Davis, “Implicature,” 2014.

advantage of navigating more of the landmarks Putnam demarcated: taking seriously the complex medium of language in expression meaning, highlighting the role of individual intent in speaker meaning, and codifying the social context in conversational implicature. The possibility of connecting this theory up with Davidsonian semantics, as will be seen, is promising for connecting up with the real world as well.

Among the perspectives presented thus far, the connection between language and the real world is the landmark of linguistic meaning Putnam identifies that is most consistently neglected, attention to which was the one thing going for the reference theories. Truth conditional theories directly address that connection, in part by turning back to something like a reference theory, addressing linguistic complexity through a form of semantic atomism and syntactic compositionality, although they struggle with language user intention and social context. Truth condition theories are historically preceded by the verification condition theories at the heart of logical positivism, like that of A.J. Ayer (1910 – 1989). Verificationist theories locate meaning in the impact of sentences on future experiences, and so are epistemic accounts seeking to

establish an evidence base in empirical sense data.<sup>456</sup> Willard Van Orman Quine, following Pierre Duhem (1861 – 1916), challenges the verification program on the basis that the immediate verification conditions assume certain empirical conditions and so themselves must be established empirically, resulting in an infinite regress. Combined with his attack on the analyticity of sentences, this infinite regress argument results in Quine denying that there is any such thing as meaning vis-à-vis individual sentences in his thesis of the “indeterminacy of translation.” Quine concludes that absolute knowledge of the totality of empirical reality would not be sufficient to adjudicate whether one translation of a claim about reality is more or less correct than another.<sup>457</sup> This skepticism about sentence meaning derives from Quine adopting semantic holism, as does Donald

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<sup>456</sup> Lycan, *Philosophy of Language*, 115–24; Cheryl J. Misak, *Verificationism: Its History and Prospects* (London: Routledge, 1995); Alfred Jules Ayer, *Language, Truth, and Logic*, 2nd ed. (New York, NY: Dover, 1952); Alfred Jules Ayer, *Logical Positivism* (New York, NY: The Free Press, 1966); Carl G. Hempel, “Problems and Changes in the Empiricist Criterion of Meaning,” *Revue Internationale de Philosophie* 4, no. 11 (1950): 41–63, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23932368>; Rudolf Carnap, *Philosophy and Logical Syntax* (London: K. Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1935); Scheffler, *The Anatomy of Inquiry (Routledge Revivals)*; Michael Friedman, *Reconsidering Logical Positivism* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

<sup>457</sup> Lycan, *Philosophy of Language*, 124–27; Morris, *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Language*, chap. 11; Peter Hylton, “Willard van Orman Quine,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Summer, 2018, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2018/entries/quine/>; Willard Van Orman Quine, *From a Logical Point of View: 9 Logico-Philosophical Essays* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980); Quine, *Word and Object*; Willard Van Orman Quine, *Ontological Relativity and Other Essays* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1969); Pierre Maurice Marie Duhem, *The Aim and Structure of Physical Theory* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991).

Davidson, such that the meaning of all words are interdependent to the extent that changing the meaning of one word changes the meanings of all of the others.<sup>458</sup> This in turn leaves Davidson in the position of having to harmonize holism with compositionality, or the idea that the meaning of a sentence is made up of the meanings of the words that make it up.<sup>459</sup> Whereas the verification program seeks to establish an epistemic basis for knowing when a statement is true, the truth conditional theory Davidson develops rejects epistemology and simply identifies meaning with the set of conditions under which a sentence would be true. These truth conditions are also compositional and so describable in terms of symbolic logic of a Tarskian variety when disentangled from the

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<sup>458</sup> Morris, *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Language*, chap. 10; Henry Jackman, "Meaning Holism," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Spring, 2017, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2017/entries/meaning-holism/>; Hylton, "Willard van Orman Quine," sec. 3.1; Quine, *From a Logical Point of View*, chap. 2; Davidson, *Inquiries Into Truth and Interpretation*, 2001; Sellars, "Meaning as Functional Classification (A Perspective on the Relation of Syntax to Semantics)"; Jerry A. Fodor and Ernest LePore, *Holism: A Shopper's Guide* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1992); Jerry A. Fodor and Ernest LePore, *Holism: A Consumer Update* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1993).

<sup>459</sup> Peter Pagin, "Is Compositionality Compatible with Holism?," *Mind & Language* 12, no. 1 (March 1, 1997): 11–33, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0017.1997.tb00060.x>; Lycan, *Philosophy of Language*, 131–33; Davidson, *Inquiries Into Truth and Interpretation*, 2001, chap. 4; Paul Ziff, *Semantic Analysis* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1960); Jackman, "Meaning Holism," sec. 3.1; Zoltán Gendler Szabó, "Compositionality," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Summer, 2017, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2017/entries/compositionality/>; Jerry A. Fodor and Ernest LePore, *The Compositionality Papers* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon, 2002); Robert Brandom, *Between Saying and Doing: Towards an Analytic Pragmatism* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2008).

surface grammar.<sup>460</sup> Two variations on truth conditional theories include game theoretic semantics<sup>461</sup> and perspectival semantics,<sup>462</sup> whereas recourse to intensional logics and Kripkean possible worlds semantics enables extension of truth conditional theories to include not only actual but also hypothetical referents and the Fregean sense of a term.<sup>463</sup>

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<sup>460</sup> Lycan, *Philosophy of Language*, 133–36; Morris, *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Language*, chap. 9; Davidson, *Inquiries Into Truth and Interpretation*, 2001, chaps. 1–5; Donald Davidson and Gilbert Harman, *Semantics of Natural Language* (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1972); Donald Davidson and Gilbert Harman, *The Logic of Grammar* (Encino, CA: Dickenson, 1975); Alfred Tarski, “The Semantic Conception of Truth: And the Foundations of Semantics,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 4, no. 3 (1944): 341–76, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2102968>; Alfred Tarski, *Logic, Semantics, Metamathematics: Papers from 1923 to 1938*, ed. John Corcoran, trans. J.H. Woodger (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1983), chap. 8; Lycan, *Logical Form in Natural Language*.

<sup>461</sup> Jaakko Hintikka, *The Game of Language: Studies in Game-Theoretical Semantics and Its Applications* (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1983); Hintikka, “Quantifiers in Logic and Quantifiers in Natural Languages with Comments and Reply”; Esa Saarinen, *Game-Theoretical Semantics: Essays on Semantics by Hintikka, Carlson, Peacocke, Rantala and Saarinen* (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1978).

<sup>462</sup> Walter Edelberg, “A Perspectivalist Semantics for the Attitudes,” *Noûs* 29, no. 3 (1995): 316–42, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2215602>; Peter Lasersohn, *Subjectivity and Perspective in Truth-Theoretic Semantics* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2016); Sarah E. Murray, *The Semantics of Evidentials* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2017).

<sup>463</sup> Lycan, *Philosophy of Language*, 149–59; David K. Lewis, “General Semantics,” *Synthese* 22, no. 1/2 (1970): 18–67, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20114749>; M. J. Cresswell, *Logics and Languages* (London: Routledge, 2016); Richard Montague, *Formal Philosophy: Selected Papers of Richard Montague*, ed. Richmond H. Thomason (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1974); Theo M. V. Janssen, “Montague Semantics,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Spring, 2017, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2017/entries/montague-semantics/>; Rudolf Carnap, *Meaning and Necessity: A Study in Semantics and Modal Logic* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1988); Jaakko Hintikka, “Modality and Quantification,” *Theoria* 27, no. 3 (1961): 119–128, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1755-2567.1961.tb00020.x>; Frege, *Translations from the Philosophical Writings of Gottlob Frege*, 36–56.

Clearly, the truth conditional theories go the farthest in terms of linking language up with the world as the measure of linguistic truth, and of adequately addressing the complexity of language by harmonizing compositionality with holism. Thus, there is good reason to hope that a Davidsonian truth conditional program, extended to incorporate modality, might be integrated with a Gricean program that centers language user intention and conversational implicature in order to adequately address all four of the landmarks Putnam demarcated for a theory of meaning. One goal in chapter five is to show how conceiving language as ritual achieves just that.

### *Universals*

The philosophical problem of universals, arising with Plato (~428 – 348 BCE) and Aristotle (384 – 322 BCE) and then reaching a pinnacle of contestation in the Medieval period in the West, ranges across the philosophical fields of metaphysics, epistemology, logic, philosophy of language, and philosophy of mind.<sup>464</sup> A basic construal of the problem is whether or not individual things and

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<sup>464</sup> Gyula Klima, “The Medieval Problem of Universals,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Winter, 2017, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2017/entries/universals-medieval/>. See also Monima Chadha, “Perceptual Experience and Concepts in Classical Indian Philosophy,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Spring, 2016, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2016/entries/perception-india/>.



the general properties that inhere across a variety of instantiations in individual things have independent metaphysical status.<sup>465</sup> Realists argue that both things and properties do have such status independent of the mental or linguistic representations of them such that ideas, words, and sentences at least have the possibility of evaluation as true or false; reality is anything, both things and properties, that we could be wrong about.<sup>466</sup> Nominalists deny independent metaphysical status to properties (universals or abstract entities), instead understanding them as part and parcel of the linguistic apparatus functioning as means of comparison and contrast among objects (particulars or concrete entities), and so shift universals from metaphysics into philosophy of language.<sup>467</sup> Idealists or conceptualists are similarly anti-realist, but instead of understanding universals as inhering in language, they take universals to be fundamental

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<sup>465</sup> J. P. Moreland, *Universals* (Montreal, QC: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001), chap. 1; David Malet Armstrong, *Universals: An Opinionated Introduction* (Boulder, CO: Avalon, 1989).

<sup>466</sup> Robert C. Neville, *Defining Religion: Essays in Philosophy of Religion* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2018), chap. 18; Alexander Miller, "Realism," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Winter, 2016, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2016/entries/realism/>.

<sup>467</sup> Gonzalo Rodriguez-Pereyra, "Nominalism in Metaphysics," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Winter, 2016, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2016/entries/nominalism-metaphysics/>; Mary C. MacLeod and Eric M. Rubenstein, "Universals," *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, sec. 3a-c, accessed May 22, 2018, <https://www.iep.utm.edu/universa/>; Moreland, *Universals*, chaps. 2 & 3.

mental categories that organize objects in experience, and so shift universals from metaphysics into epistemology and philosophy of mind.<sup>468</sup> Notably, these three positions identify universals with three of the four landmarks Putnam identified: realism with reality, nominalism with language, and idealism with individual minds (intentions). Social scientists, but not philosophers, have discussed cultural or social universals, such as language, cognition, myth, ritual, aesthetics, technology, and society itself, as communally held concepts, norms, patterns, or institutions that organize relationships. This approach, in a philosophical mode, would presumably similarly reject metaphysical status to properties and instead shift them into ethics and political philosophy. In fact, this is effectively what has happened in postmodern and other forms of post-structuralist philosophy, seemingly without ever actually discussing universals. Of course, this possibility circles back around to the debates about linguistic

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<sup>468</sup> Drew Khlentzos, "Challenges to Metaphysical Realism," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Winter, 2016, sec. 3.4, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2016/entries/realism-sem-challenge/>; MacLeod and Rubenstein, "Universals," sec. 3d; Lee Braver, *A Thing of This World: A History of Continental Anti-Realism* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2007); Lisa Downing, "George Berkeley," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Spring, 2013, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2013/entries/berkeley/>; Michael A. E. Dummett, *Truth and Other Enigmas* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978).

relativity at the end of the previous section.<sup>469</sup> An argument to be made in chapter five is that the social scientific concept of ritual, rendered philosophical in conversation with Confucian ritual theory, has the capacity to address universals holistically amongst the four landmarks of mind, society, language, and reality by rendering a more robust account of critical realism.<sup>470</sup>

### Hermeneutics

In interrogating linguistic meaning, philosophy of language generally privileges the perspective of the language user at the point of generating meaning in language. By contrast, hermeneutics as developed in continental philosophy generally comes at meaning from the perspective of the language interpreter who must make sense of the linguistic material received. Whereas philosophy of language, like linguistics, privileges speech, hermeneutics privileges texts. Nevertheless, there are numerous loci of common interest and overlap between them, and this distinction should not at all be taken as

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<sup>469</sup> Donald Brown, *Human Universals* (New York, NY: McGraw-Hill, 1991); Steven Pinker, *The Blank Slate: The Modern Denial of Human Nature* (New York, NY: Penguin, 2003); Rik Pinxten, *Universalism versus Relativism in Language and Thought: Proceedings of a Colloquium on the Sapir-Whorf Hypotheses* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2011); Greenberg, *Language Universals*.

<sup>470</sup> Roy Bhaskar, *Enlightened Common Sense: The Philosophy of Critical Realism* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2016); Andrew Collier, *Critical Realism: An Introduction to Roy Bhaskar's Philosophy* (London: Verso, 1994); Margaret Archer et al., *Critical Realism: Essential Readings* (London: Routledge, 2013).

determinative.<sup>471</sup> Moreover, hermeneutics may be taken to connote a set of domains in continental philosophy concerned with language, in a sense analogous to philosophy of language within analytic philosophy, in addition to its narrower use with respect to interpreting language, especially texts. This section begins by directly addressing the latter and then ranges over the domain of the former, all the while largely abiding in philosophical as opposed to biblical or scriptural hermeneutics.

### *Hermeneutics*

The very word “hermeneutics” derives from the name of the Greek god Hermes and appears in the title of Aristotle’s treatment of interpretation in Περὶ Ἑρμηνείας (*Peri Hermeneias, On Interpretation*) but remained largely a set of normative guidelines within various interpretive disciplines until much more

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<sup>471</sup> Mueller-Vollmer, *Hermeneutics Reader: Texts of the German Tradition from the Enlightenment to the Present*, 43–45, 320; Karl-Otto Apel, *Analytic Philosophy of Language and the Geisteswissenschaften*, trans. Harald Holstelilie (Dordrecht: Springer, 2013); Karl-Otto Apel, *Understanding and Explanation: A Transcendental-Pragmatic Perspective*, trans. Georgia Warnke (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1984); Karl-Otto Apel, *Charles S. Peirce: From Pragmatism to Pragmaticism*, trans. John Michael Krois (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1995); Karl-Otto Apel, *From a Transcendental-Semiotic Point of View*, ed. Marianna Papastephanou (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1998); C. G. Prado, *A House Divided: Comparing Analytic and Continental Philosophy* (Amherst, NY: Humanity Books, 2003); Evan Simpson, ed., *Anti-Foundationalism and Practical Reasoning: Conversations between Hermeneutics and Analysis* (Edmonton, AB: Academic Printing & Publishing, 1987).

recently.<sup>472</sup> Developed largely in Germany, the advent of philosophical hermeneutics may be construed as a gradual drawing together of universalizing threads from disciplinarily defined hermeneutic guidelines into a unified theory of the role of interpretation as grounding the human condition. The domain of hermeneutics is variously oriented around three key terms: *Verstehen* (understanding), *Auslegung* (interpretation), and *Erkennen* (knowledge).<sup>473</sup> Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher (1768 – 1834) may be said to have inaugurated philosophical hermeneutics by adopting the Kantian notion of understanding as the very capacity of reason and experience such that understanding is no longer the result of interpretation but is rather its source and that to which interpretation returns, and is fundamentally linguistic at that.<sup>474</sup>

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<sup>472</sup> Jean Grondin, *Introduction to Philosophical Hermeneutics* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997), 1, 16–62; Mueller-Vollmer, *Hermeneutics Reader: Texts of the German Tradition from the Enlightenment to the Present*, 1–5; Aristotle, *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, 25–38; Hans Arens, *Aristotle's Theory of Language and Its Tradition: Texts from 500 to 1750* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1984); Deborah K. W. Modrak, *Aristotle's Theory of Language and Meaning* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

<sup>473</sup> Grondin, *Introduction to Philosophical Hermeneutics*, 1–15; Mueller-Vollmer, *Hermeneutics Reader: Texts of the German Tradition from the Enlightenment to the Present*, 1–53.

<sup>474</sup> Mueller-Vollmer, *Hermeneutics Reader: Texts of the German Tradition from the Enlightenment to the Present*, 9–10, 74–75; Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Schleiermacher: Hermeneutics and Criticism and Other Writings*, ed. Andrew Bowie (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Jacqueline Mariña, *The Cambridge Companion to Friedrich Schleiermacher* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2005), chap. 4; Richard B. Brandt, *The Philosophy of Schleiermacher: The Development of His Theory of Scientific and Religious Knowledge* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1968); Richard

Wilhelm von Humboldt develops the idea of the linguistic nature of understanding by identifying Sprachkraft (linguistic competence) as the intersection between the reference and structure of language and the individual mental processes of language users. This connection with the mental as the locus of meaning results in a conception of linguistic relativity very much like that of Benjamin Lee Whorf (1897 – 1941).<sup>475</sup> Johann Gustav Droysen (1808 – 1884) continued this turn back toward viewing understanding, which he identified with historical knowledge, as resulting from interpretation, and to the linguistic nature of understanding he added expressive intent, i.e. psychological, emotional, and spiritual meaning.<sup>476</sup> August Boeckh (1785 – 1867) situated interpretation as arising from understanding in four modes: grammatical (i.e.

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Crouter, *Friedrich Schleiermacher: Between Enlightenment and Romanticism* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

<sup>475</sup> Mueller-Vollmer, *Hermeneutics Reader: Texts of the German Tradition from the Enlightenment to the Present*, 12–15, 98–105; Wilhelm von Humboldt, “On Language”: *On the Diversity of Human Language Construction and Its Influence on the Mental Development of the Human Species*, ed. Michael Losonsky (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Kurt Mueller-Vollmer, “From Poetics to Linguistics: Wilhelm von Humboldt and the Romantic Idea of Language,” in *Le Groupe de Coppet: Acts et Documents Du Deuxieme Colloque de Coppet, 1974* (Paris, France: Champion and Slatkine, 1977), 195–215; Ernst Cassirer, *Language, The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms 1* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1953).

<sup>476</sup> Mueller-Vollmer, *Hermeneutics Reader: Texts of the German Tradition from the Enlightenment to the Present*, 17–20; Johann Gustav Droysen, *Outline of the Principles of History*, trans. E. Benjamin Andrews (Boston, MA: Ginn, 1893); Arthur Alfaix Assis, *What Is History For?: Johann Gustav Droysen and the Functions of Historiography* (New York, NY: Berghahn Books, 2014).

linguistic), historical, generic, and individual (i.e. expression), and so generating understanding as “knowledge of what is known” or “knowledge of what has been produced by the human spirit.”<sup>477</sup> Wilhelm Dilthey (1833 – 1911) makes a significant shift away from taking understanding to be linguistic, instead identifying the basis of understanding in the *Erlebnis* (lived experience) of social, cultural, relational, and physical ecologies, which interpretation makes manifest in the form of *Lebensäußerung* (life expression).<sup>478</sup> Edmund Husserl (1859 – 1938) likewise develops a rigorous program for identifying the common ground for understanding in human intentional activity, linguistic and otherwise, that enables intersubjective meaning such that hermeneutics is possible as the elaboration of the *Lebenswelt* (lifeworld).<sup>479</sup>

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<sup>477</sup> Mueller-Vollmer, *Hermeneutics Reader: Texts of the German Tradition from the Enlightenment to the Present*, 20–23; August Boeckh, *On Interpretation and Criticism*, trans. John Paul Pritchard (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1968); Niall Keane and Chris Lawn, *The Blackwell Companion to Hermeneutics* (Malden, MA: John Wiley & Sons, 2015), chap. 40.

<sup>478</sup> Mueller-Vollmer, *Hermeneutics Reader: Texts of the German Tradition from the Enlightenment to the Present*, 25–28; Wilhelm Dilthey, *Understanding the Human World*, vol. 2, Wilhelm Dilthey: Selected Works (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010); Wilhelm Dilthey, *The Formation of the Historical World in the Human Sciences*, vol. 3, Wilhelm Dilthey: Selected Works (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010); Wilhelm Dilthey, *Hermeneutics and the Study of History*, vol. 4, Wilhelm Dilthey: Selected Works (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010); H. A. Hodges, *Philosophy of Wilhelm Dilthey* (London: Routledge, 2013); Jos de Mul, *The Tragedy of Finitude: Dilthey's Hermeneutics of Life* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004).

<sup>479</sup> Mueller-Vollmer, *Hermeneutics Reader: Texts of the German Tradition from the Enlightenment to the Present*, 28–30, 165–66; Edmund Husserl, *Logical Investigations*, ed. Dermot Moran, trans. J.N. Findlay, vol. 1 (London: Routledge, 2012); Edmund Husserl, *Logical Investigations*, ed. Dermot Moran, trans. J.N. Findlay, vol. 2 (London: Routledge, 2013); Edmund Husserl, *Cartesian*

Hermeneutics fully flowers as fundamental philosophy in the twentieth century by both advancing inherited ideas and making important breaks therewith so as to achieve universality via a type of semantic holism. This approach is best articulated in terms of the hermeneutic circle identified by Friedrich Ast (1778 – 1841) and summarized by Schleiermacher as the principle that “the understanding of the whole is not only conditioned by that of the particular, but also, vice versa, that of the particular by that of the whole.”<sup>480</sup> Martin Heidegger (1889 – 1976) translates the hermeneutical circle into the domain of ontology, thereby collapsing phenomenology into hermeneutics, in

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*Meditations: An Introduction to Phenomenology*, trans. Dorion Cairns (Dordrecht: Springer, 2012); Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology: An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1970); Edmund Husserl, *General Introduction to a Pure Phenomenology*, trans. F. Kersten, vol. 1, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1983); Edmund Husserl, *Studies in the Phenomenology of Constitution*, trans. Richard Rojcewicz and Andre Schuwer, vol. 2, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1991); Edmund Husserl, *Phenomenology and the Foundations of the Sciences*, trans. Ted E. Klein and William E. Pohl, vol. 3, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 2001); Robert Sokolowski, *Husserlian Meditations: How Words Present Things* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1974); Barry Smith, *The Cambridge Companion to Husserl* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

<sup>480</sup> Schleiermacher, *Schleiermacher*, 231; Friedrich Ast, *Grundlinien der Grammatik, Hermeneutik und Kritik* (Landshut, Germany: Jos. Thomann, 1808); Jean Grondin, “What Is the Hermeneutical Circle?” (Academia.edu, n.d.), [https://www.academia.edu/13944229/What\\_is\\_the\\_hermeneutical\\_circle](https://www.academia.edu/13944229/What_is_the_hermeneutical_circle); C. Mantzavinos, “Hermeneutics,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Winter, 2016, sec. 2, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2016/entries/hermeneutics/>.



order to explicate the interpretation of Sein (being) by Dasein (being-there).

Dasein, for Heidegger, means authentic human existence as intentionally involved in the world as a contingent and changing self: “The ‘circle’ in understanding belongs to the structure of meaning, and the latter phenomenon is rooted in the existential constitution of *Dasein* — that is, in the understanding which interprets. An entity for which, as Being-in-the-world, its Being is itself an issue, has, ontologically, a circular structure.”<sup>481</sup> Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900 – 2002) alternatively explicates the hermeneutical circle in terms of the Vorurteil (prejudice) arising from the Wirkungsgeschichte (effective history) in which interpreter and object relate, which is revised when language enacts Horizontverschmelzung (fusion of horizons) of interpreter and object to achieve a renewed understanding.<sup>482</sup> Ray L. Hart insists that the notion of a hermeneutic spiral, in which interpretation of what is given enriches cognition so as to attain a

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<sup>481</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York, NY: Harper Collins, 2008), H 153; Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time: A Translation of Sein Und Zeit*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1996); Mueller-Vollmer, *Hermeneutics Reader: Texts of the German Tradition from the Enlightenment to the Present*, 32–35; Hubert L. Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-World: A Commentary on Heidegger’s Being and Time, Division I* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991).

<sup>482</sup> Mueller-Vollmer, *Hermeneutics Reader: Texts of the German Tradition from the Enlightenment to the Present*, 37–41; Jeff Malpas, “Hans-Georg Gadamer,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Winter, 2016, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2016/entries/gadamer/>; Grondin, *Introduction to Philosophical Hermeneutics*, 106–23; Gadamer, *Truth and Method*.

point above where it started, is more appropriate to hermeneutics so transposed onto the domain of ontology than a circle. This is because semantic holism is inappropriate for interpreting the simultaneously hidden and revealed phenomena that appear in being.<sup>483</sup> Agreeing with Gadamer that hermeneutics prevents language from becoming hermetically sealed by constantly renewing and refining it, Jürgen Habermas is nevertheless initially concerned about the oppressive potential enabled in granting primary authority to tradition, and that the universality of hermeneutics belies a creeping Kantian idealism. That said, Habermas later abandons his own predilection toward Marxist idealism for an ethic grounded in the ongoing social process toward achieving linguistic agreement, and thus re-universalizes hermeneutics.<sup>484</sup> These concerns will return,

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<sup>483</sup> Hart, *Unfinished Man and the Imagination*, 60–63.

<sup>484</sup> Grondin, *Introduction to Philosophical Hermeneutics*, 129–35; Mueller-Vollmer, *Hermeneutics Reader: Texts of the German Tradition from the Enlightenment to the Present*, 41–43, 293–319; Purushottama Bilimoria, “Towards a Creative Hermeneutic of Suspicion: Recovering Ricoeur’s Intervention in the Gadamer-Habermas Debate” (Twentieth World Congress of Philosophy, Boston, MA, 1998), <https://www.bu.edu/wcp/Papers/Cont/ContBili.htm>; Kenneth Colburn, “Critical Theory and the Hermeneutical Circle,” *Sociological Inquiry* 56, no. 3 (January 9, 2007): 367–80, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-682X.1986.tb00093.x>; Jack Mendelson, “The Habermas-Gadamer Debate,” *New German Critique*, no. 18 (1979): 44–73, <https://doi.org/10.2307/487850>; Jürgen Habermas, *On the Logic of the Social Sciences* (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 1988); Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action: Lifeworld and Systems, a Critique of Functionalist Reason*, vol. 2 (Oxford, UK: Wiley, 2015); Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action: Reason and the Rationalization of Society*, vol. 1 (Oxford, UK: Wiley, 2015); Jürgen Habermas, *Truth and Justification* (New York, NY: John Wiley & Sons, 2014).

however, in the subsection below on theory and criticism, following consideration of the flip side of the hermeneutic coin, namely, rhetoric.

### *Rhetoric*

Despite its tarnished reputation,<sup>485</sup> the redemption of rhetoric becomes obvious when it is understood as the inverse and reflex of hermeneutics, with which it shares in linguistic universality.<sup>486</sup> Rhetoric organizes and structures language, signs, and discourse on the basis of how the result may be expected to be interpreted such that meaning will be communicated so as to have influence:<sup>487</sup> “We can define the art of rhetoric as follows: The systematic study and intentional practice of effective symbolic expression. *Effective* here will mean achieving the purposes of the symbol-user, whether that purpose is persuasion, clarity, beauty, or mutual understanding.”<sup>488</sup> Marcus Tullius Cicero (106 – 43

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<sup>485</sup> Plato, “Gorgias,” in *Complete Works*, ed. Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989); Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, 1894, 2:146, 397.

<sup>486</sup> Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, *Friedrich Nietzsche on Rhetoric and Language*, ed. Sander L. Gilman, Carole Blair, and David J. Parent (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1989), 21; Richard Peter McKeon, *Rhetoric: Essays in Invention and Discovery* (Woodbridge, CT: Ox Bow, 1987), 108.

<sup>487</sup> James A. Herrick, *The History and Theory of Rhetoric: An Introduction*, 6th ed. (New York, NY: Routledge, 2017), 22–23, 26; Aristotle, *On Rhetoric: A Theory of Civic Discourse*, trans. George A. Kennedy, 2nd ed. (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2007).

<sup>488</sup> Herrick, *The History and Theory of Rhetoric*, 29.

BCE) distinguishes five rhetorical stages leading up to and delivering such an expression: inventio (invention) – developing arguments and collecting evidence; dispositio (arrangement) – organizing arguments an evidence logically and by importance; elocutio (make eloquent) – ornamenting with stylistic devices; memoria (memory) – retain the preceding; actio/pronunciatio (pronouncement) – style of delivery including modulation of voice and coordination of gesture and expression.<sup>489</sup> Aristotle elaborates three modes of effective expressions: ἦθος (ethos, character) – appealing to the authority of the rhetor, either inherently or by adopting the mantle of another; πάθος (pathos, suffering) – appealing to the emotions of the audience, including by aesthetic effect; and λόγος (logos, logic) – appeal to the reason of what the expression presents.<sup>490</sup> Indeed, Hugo Mercier and Dan Sperber argue that human reason evolved precisely “to devise and evaluate arguments intended to persuade.”<sup>491</sup> Instead of construing the resulting relationship between rhetor and audience as necessarily agonistic, Kenneth

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<sup>489</sup> Marcus Tullius Cicero, *On the Ideal Orator (De Oratore)*, trans. James M. May and Jakob Wisse (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2001); Elaine Fantham, *The Roman World of Cicero's De Oratore* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2004).

<sup>490</sup> Aristotle, *On Rhetoric*, bk. II; Ian Worthington, *A Companion to Greek Rhetoric* (Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), chap. 9.

<sup>491</sup> Hugo Mercier and Dan Sperber, “Why Do Humans Reason? Arguments for an Argumentative Theory,” *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 34, no. 02 (April 2011): 57–74, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0140525X10000968>.

Burke (1897 – 1993) insists that successful persuasion requires identification so as to achieve “consubstantiality” of interests, property, or motivation, although he is at pains to acknowledge that such identifications need not necessarily be true.<sup>492</sup>

Classically, rhetoric is anti-positivist in that it specifically and directly addresses contingent matters that do not admit of a straightforward delineation of truth or falsity.<sup>493</sup> Rhetorical theorist Lloyd Bitzer (1931 – 2016) puts it this way: “rhetoric applies to contingent and probable matters which are subjects of actual or possible disagreement by serious people, and which permit alternative beliefs, values, and positions.”<sup>494</sup> As a result, rhetoric is constitutive for a number of social functions such as testing ideas, drawing attention to issues, making facts commonly available, giving shape to knowledge, and establishing and maintaining community.<sup>495</sup> This last will become especially important for bringing language into conversation with ritual theory, so it is worth noting here

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<sup>492</sup> Kenneth Burke, *A Rhetoric of Motives* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1969), 19–29, 35–37, 55–59.

<sup>493</sup> Aristotle, *On Rhetoric*, bk. I.2, 1357a4-8.

<sup>494</sup> Thomas B. Farrell, ed., *Landmark Essays on Contemporary Rhetoric* (Mahwah, NJ: Hermagoras Press, 1998), 7.

<sup>495</sup> Herrick, *The History and Theory of Rhetoric*, 39–47.

that “communities are largely defined, and rendered healthy or dysfunctional, by the language they use to characterize themselves and others,” and thus are “living creatures, nurtured and nourished by rhetorical discourse.”<sup>496</sup> Moreover, “rhetoric is the primary – indeed, the *only* – humane manner for an argumentative culture to sustain public institutions that reflect on themselves, that learn, so to speak, from their own history.”<sup>497</sup> Thus, hermeneutics is grounded in individual human understanding, whereas rhetoric moves outward to cultivate the common ground of sociality.

### *Theory and Criticism*

Hermeneutics, especially with the likes of Gadamer at the tiller, eschews the particularity of method for the universality of truth, whereas theory, which forms the basis for criticism, (hence, “critical theory”), revels in the derivation of method from theory as a critique of universality. This contrariness to hermeneutics is driven home by the figurehead of critical theory, Karl Marx (1818 – 1883), notably well before the advent of twentieth century philosophical

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<sup>496</sup> J. Michael Hogan, ed., *Rhetoric and Community: Studies in Unity and Fragmentation* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1998), xv, 292.

<sup>497</sup> Thomas B. Farrell, *Norms of Rhetorical Culture* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995), 213; Erik Doxtader, *Inventing the Potential of Rhetorical Culture: The Work and Legacy of Thomas B. Farrell* (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 2009).

hermeneutics: “the philosophers have only *interpreted* the world in various ways; the point, however, is to *change* it.”<sup>498</sup> This goal of the program is confirmed by one of its progenitors in the Frankfurt School of social theory, Max Horkheimer (1895 – 1973): “to liberate human beings from the circumstances that enslave them.”<sup>499</sup> Theory and its application in criticism emerge distinctly but relatedly in the arenas of the social sciences and literature from a range of stances at play in the humanities, especially philosophy. They seek to be reflexively aware of their conditioning by the particularities of their historical, cultural, social, political, and economic context, and take liberation, emancipation, and transformation as their telos.<sup>500</sup> If this program seems to make more sense with respect to social science than to literature, consider

that literature does not exist in the sense that insects do, and that the value-judgements by which it is constituted are historically variable, but that these value-judgements themselves have a close relation to social ideologies. They refer in the end not simply to private taste, but to the assumptions by which certain social groups exercise and maintain power over others.<sup>501</sup>

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<sup>498</sup> Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Marx & Engels Collected Works*, vol. 5 (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 2010), 8.

<sup>499</sup> Max Horkheimer, *Critical Theory: Selected Essays* (New York, NY: Continuum, 1972), 244.

<sup>500</sup> Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction, Anniversary* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2011), xi; Craig Browne, *Critical Social Theory* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2016), 3–4.

<sup>501</sup> Eagleton, *Literary Theory*, 14.

The remainder of this subsection presents first modern and then postmodern theories frequently employed in social and literary critique, and then considers the particular project of critical discourse analysis, but there are a few perspectives that cut across all of them, albeit in various ways and to differing degrees: “Politics is pervasive, Language is constitutive, Truth is provisional, Meaning is contingent, Human nature is a myth.”<sup>502</sup> Chapter five will show how ritual copes with each in turn.

In a narrow sense, critical theory refers to socio-cultural critiques based on the theory of economic determinism advanced by Marx and his colleague Friedrich Engels (1820 – 1895). They argued that the economic infrastructure of production, distribution, and exchange is determinative of the socio-cultural or ideological superstructure, including language, resulting in class-based struggles to attain and maintain power, from which oppression of inequality they seek to provide emancipation and liberation.<sup>503</sup> This program was taken up, pursued,

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<sup>502</sup> Peter Barry, *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory* (London: Oxford University Press, 2017), 38–39; Brian Russell Graham, “Resistance to Recurrent Ideas in Critical Theory,” *Anglo-Files*, no. 180 (May 2016): 88–97, <https://vbn.aau.dk/en/publications/resistance-to-recurrent-ideas-in-critical-theory>.

<sup>503</sup> Barry, *Beginning Theory*, chap. 8; James Bohman, “Critical Theory,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Fall, 2016, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2016/entries/critical-theory/>; Marx and Engels, *Marx & Engels Collected Works*, 2010, 5:19ff; Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Marx & Engels Collected Works*, vol. 6 (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 2010), 477–519; Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels,



and developed by the theorists of the Frankfurt School,<sup>504</sup> but eventually ran afoul of historicist skepticism and philosophical relativism in the wake of critiques of Enlightenment reasoning such as those advanced by Friedrich Nietzsche (1844 – 1900) and Sigmund Freud (1856 – 1939).<sup>505</sup> This resulted in a reformulation of critical theory by Jürgen Habermas in a pragmatist, fallibilist, naturalist, and empirical mode in greater sympathy with Gadamerian hermeneutics.<sup>506</sup> Grappling with internal inconsistencies also opened the door to

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*Marx & Engels Collected Works*, vol. 24 (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 2010), 281–325; Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Marx & Engels Collected Works*, vol. 35 (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 2010); Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Marx & Engels Collected Works*, vol. 36 (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 2010); Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Marx & Engels Collected Works*, vol. 37 (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 2010).

<sup>504</sup> Rolf Wiggershaus, *The Frankfurt School: Its History, Theories, and Political Significance* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995); Stuart Jeffries, *Grand Hotel Abyss: The Lives of the Frankfurt School* (London: Verso, 2016).

<sup>505</sup> Joel Whitebook, “The Marriage of Marx and Freud: Critical Theory and Psychoanalysis,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Critical Theory*, ed. Fred Leland Rush (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 74–102; Eagleton, *Literary Theory*, chap. 5; Martin Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination: A History of the Frankfurt School and the Institute of Social Research, 1923–1950* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1996), chaps. 1–3; Joel Whitebook, *Perversion and Utopia: A Study in Psychoanalysis and Critical Theory* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995); Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, ed. James Strachey, The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud (New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company, 1989); Sigmund Freud, *The Ego and the Id*, ed. James Strachey, trans. Joan Riviere, The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud (New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company, 1962); Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo*, ed. Walter Kaufmann, trans. Walter Kaufmann and R.J. Hollingdale (New York, NY: Vintage, 1989).

<sup>506</sup> Bohman, “Critical Theory,” sec. 1; Browne, *Critical Social Theory*; Jürgen Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests* (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 1991); Habermas, *Truth and Justification*; Jürgen Habermas, *Theory and Practice* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1973); Jürgen Habermas, *Postmetaphysical Thinking: Between Metaphysics and the Critique of Reason* (New York, NY: John Wiley & Sons, 2015); Jürgen Habermas, *Postmetaphysical Thinking II* (Cambridge, UK: Polity,

a wider sense of critical theory that includes perspectives from hermeneutics. Some more recent theorists address the phenomenology of Husserl between pure intentional consciousness and the essences of objects in the world as they appear before it irrespective of language. They also explore the existentialism of Heidegger cheering the striving of human existence via language to surpass the concrete situation of the social and natural world that can never be fully objectified as a singular reality. Some embrace the hermeneutics of Gadamer at the fusion of past and present horizons mediated by their common tradition toward an unfolding future of possibility.<sup>507</sup> Whereas Marxist theory seeks to expose the implicit ideology behind the social and psychological frameworks of language and society, phenomenology attempts to address them as they are given head on, and hermeneutics interprets them against the backdrop of received tradition and present interests. All of these theories are implicated, positively and negatively, in structuralism, extrapolated from the study of linguistic structure by Ferdinand de Saussure. Structuralism takes the meaning of an element of a system, such as a word in a language, to be defined by its

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2017); Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action*, 2015; Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action*, 2015.

<sup>507</sup> Eagleton, *Literary Theory*, 47–64.

relations to all of the other elements as determined by the structure of the system, which structures constitute the meaningful world in which humans live and interact.<sup>508</sup> It is somewhat unsurprising that the subsequent backlash in the form of post-structuralism reflexed the structuralist insight into the arbitrariness of signs with respect to their objects onto the structures themselves. As a result, for poststructuralists, meaning becomes capricious to the whims of contingent power as instantiated in metaphysical systems that ground transcendental meaning because they necessarily could be otherwise. Power systems therefore require ideological deconstruction in order to overcome the oppression of difference rooted in contradictions necessarily internal to any structure so as to liberate their surplus of meaning.<sup>509</sup>

Thus, post-structuralism elides over into postmodernism characterized by “incredulity toward metanarratives” according to Jean-François Lyotard (1924 – 1998). Signs that had been taken to stand for something real are instead

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<sup>508</sup> Barry, *Beginning Theory*, chap. 2; Eagleton, *Literary Theory*, chap. 3; de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*; Roland Barthes, *Elements of Semiology* (New York, NY: Hill and Wang, 1977); Roland Barthes, *Mythologies: The Complete Edition, in a New Translation* (New York, NY: Hill and Wang, 2013); Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology* (New York, NY: Basic, 2008); Lane, *Structuralism*.

<sup>509</sup> Barry, *Beginning Theory*, chap. 3; Eagleton, *Literary Theory*, chap. 4; Derrida, *Of Grammatology*; Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1978); Jacques Derrida, *Dissemination* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016); Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge & The Discourse on Language* (New York, NY: Vintage, 1972).

recognized as merely referring to other signs in the system, which becomes a hyperreal “simulacrum,” i.e. metanarrative, in which surface and depth, reality and illusion become indistinguishable.<sup>510</sup> The liberative framework of earlier paradigms survives the shift to postmodernism but the post-structuralist challenge to normativity means that there is nothing that those liberated from oppression are emancipated to: the eschatology of liberation falls out. The typology of the so-called “waves” of feminism,<sup>511</sup> itself a critique of all of the above theory with the goal of liberating women,<sup>512</sup> demonstrates this shift at play, with the caveat that the typology is both historically and theoretically overdrawn.<sup>513</sup> The first wave, up through the 1950s, was focused on women’s

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<sup>510</sup> Barry, *Beginning Theory*, chap. 4; Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1984); Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1994); Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations* (New York, NY: Semiotext(e), 1983).

<sup>511</sup> Charlotte Kroløkke and Anne Scott Sørensen, “Three Waves of Feminism: From Suffragettes to Grrls,” in *Gender Communication Theories & Analyses: From Silence to Performance* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2006), 1–24, <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781452233086>; Kira Cochrane, *All the Rebel Women: The Rise of the Fourth Wave of Feminism* (London: Guardian Books, 2013); Nicola Rivers, *Postfeminism(s) and the Arrival of the Fourth Wave: Turning Tides* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017); Prudence Chamberlain, *The Feminist Fourth Wave: Affective Temporality* (Cham, Switzerland: Springer, 2017).

<sup>512</sup> Chris Beasley, *What Is Feminism?: An Introduction to Feminist Theory* (London: SAGE, 1999), 3–22.

<sup>513</sup> Astrid Henry, *Not My Mother’s Sister: Generational Conflict and Third-Wave Feminism* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2004).

suffrage, and though ideologically diverse over its century-and-a-half course, in part drew on Marxist theory toward “equity and equal opportunities for women and men.”<sup>514</sup> The radical part of the second wave “was theoretically based on a combination of neo-Marxism and psychoanalysis”<sup>515</sup> in ways that opened up powerful critiques of patriarchy at the intersection of gender, race, and class.<sup>516</sup> Another trajectory in the second wave begins with a liberal feminism that takes the social value and experience of white, middle-class, Western women as equal to that of men and normative for all women.<sup>517</sup> That trajectory provokes a shift toward structuralism to form difference feminism on the basis of standpoint theory to account for gender differences,<sup>518</sup> and then transitions to identity

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<sup>514</sup> Kroløkke and Scott Sørensen, “Three Waves of Feminism,” 2–7.

<sup>515</sup> Kroløkke and Scott Sørensen, 7–15; Robin Morgan, *Sisterhood Is Powerful: An Anthology of Writings from the Women’s Liberation Movement* (New York, NY: Feminist Press at The City University of New York, 2000); Juliet Mitchell, *Psychoanalysis and Feminism: A Radical Reassessment of Freudian Psychoanalysis* (New York, NY: Basic, 2000); Shulamith Firestone, *The Dialectic of Sex: The Case for Feminist Revolution* (New York, NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003).

<sup>516</sup> Adrienne Rich, *On Lies, Secrets, and Silence: Selected Prose 1966-1978* (New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company, 1995); Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (Berkeley, CA: Crossing, 2007); Sheila Rowbotham, *Women, Resistance and Revolution: A History Of Women And Revolution In The Modern World* (London: Verso, 2014); Angela Y. Davis, *Women, Race, & Class* (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 2011).

<sup>517</sup> Kroløkke and Scott Sørensen, “Three Waves of Feminism,” 11; Zillah R. Eisenstein, *The Radical Future of Liberal Feminism* (Boston, MA: Northeastern University Press, 1993); Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique*, 50th Anniversary (New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company, 2013).

<sup>518</sup> Kroløkke and Scott Sørensen, “Three Waves of Feminism,” 12; Sandra G. Harding, *The Feminist Standpoint Theory Reader: Intellectual and Political Controversies* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2004); Nancy J. Chodorow, *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender*,

feminism to account for differences among women on the basis of race, class, sexuality, nationality, etc.<sup>519</sup> European feminists including Hélène Cixous, Luce Irigaray, and Julia Kristeva are explicit in their shift to post-structuralism as they employ structuralist analysis to diagnose the “phallogocentrism” of Western culture. They diagnose this social malady as arising from dualisms that not only distinguish difference but also assign value to one side over the other, and then demand its deconstruction in order to subvert the unintentional support of hegemonic conceptualities by the difference discourses.<sup>520</sup> This post-structuralist or postmodern shift also marks the advent of the third wave who take up the vocation of deconstruction: “It criticizes earlier feminist waves for presenting universal answers or definitions of womanhood and for developing their

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*Updated Edition* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999); Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009).

<sup>519</sup> Kroløkke and Scott Sørensen, “Three Waves of Feminism,” 12–13; bell hooks, *Ain’t I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2014); Trinh T. Minh-Ha, *Woman, Native, Other: Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2009); Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2002); Valerie Smith, *Not Just Race, Not Just Gender: Black Feminist Readings* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2013); Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2014).

<sup>520</sup> Kroløkke and Scott Sørensen, “Three Waves of Feminism,” 13–15; Luce Irigaray, *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*, trans. Carolyn Burke and Gillian C. Gill (London: Continuum, 2005); Luce Irigaray, *Luce Irigaray: Key Writings* (London: Continuum, 2004); Hélène Cixous, *The Hélène Cixous Reader*, ed. Susan Sellers (London: Routledge, 1994); Julia Kristeva, *The Kristeva Reader*, trans. Toril Moi (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1986).

particular interests into somewhat static identity politics.”<sup>521</sup> Third wave theorists like Judith Butler advocate an “understanding of gender as a discursive practice that is both a hegemonic, social matrix and a ‘performative gesture’ with the power to disturb the chain of social repetition and open up new realities.”<sup>522</sup> As Nancy Fraser points out, however, these postmodern demands for recognition of individual performances fall far short of providing a positive vision for ethics or politics, that is, of a theory of justice, to guide the socio-cultural flows of power and resources,<sup>523</sup> although Butler has more recently taken a step in this direction.<sup>524</sup> Similar narratives of theoretical development could be offered for

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<sup>521</sup> Kroløkke and Scott Sørensen, “Three Waves of Feminism,” 17; Rebecca Walker, *To Be Real: Telling the Truth and Changing the Face of Feminism* (New York, NY: Anchor, 1995).

<sup>522</sup> Kroløkke and Scott Sørensen, “Three Waves of Feminism,” 18; Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 10th Anniversary (New York, NY: Routledge, 2002); Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2011).

<sup>523</sup> Kroløkke and Scott Sørensen, “Three Waves of Feminism,” 19–20; Nancy Fraser, *Justice Interruptus: Critical Reflections on the “Postsocialist” Condition* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1997); Nancy Fraser and Axel Honneth, *Redistribution Or Recognition?: A Political-Philosophical Exchange* (London: Verso, 2003).

<sup>524</sup> Judith Butler, *Giving an Account of Oneself* (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2009).

other critical theories, such as critical race theory,<sup>525</sup> queer theory,<sup>526</sup> postcolonial theory,<sup>527</sup> etc., all of which intersect with feminist theory, but the extent to which feminism has itself been theorized as an historical phenomenon makes it most amenable for present purposes. A fourth wave of feminism, perhaps underway,

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<sup>525</sup> Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction*, 3rd ed. (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2017); Kimberlé Crenshaw, Neil Gotanda, and Garry Peller, *Critical Race Theory: The Key Writings That Formed the Movement* (New York, NY: The New Press, 1995); Derrick A. Bell, *The Derrick Bell Reader* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2005); Mari J. Matsuda, *Words That Wound: Critical Race Theory, Assaultive Speech, And The First Amendment* (London: Routledge, 2018); Francisco Valdes, Angela Harris, and Jerome McCrystal Culp, *Crossroads, Directions and A New Critical Race Theory* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2011).

<sup>526</sup> Nikki Sullivan, *A Critical Introduction to Queer Theory* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2003); Donald E. Hall, *Queer Theories* (London: Palgrave, 2002); Jonathan Alexander and Serena Anderlini-D'Onofrio, *Bisexuality and Queer Theory: Intersections, Connections and Challenges* (London: Routledge, 2014); Mikko Tuhkanen, *Leo Bersani: Queer Theory and Beyond* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2014); Shane Phelan, *Playing with Fire: Queer Politics, Queer Theories* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1997); Max H. Kirsch, *Queer Theory and Social Change* (London: Routledge, 2013).

<sup>527</sup> Leela Gandhi, *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1998); Bibhash Choudhury, *Reading Postcolonial Theory: Key Texts in Context* (London: Routledge, 2016); Vivek Chibber, *Postcolonial Theory and the Specter of Capital* (London: Verso, 2013); Rosie Warren, *The Debate on Postcolonial Theory and the Specter of Capital* (London: Verso, 2016); Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman, *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2015); Mrinalini Greedharry, *Postcolonial Theory and Psychoanalysis: From Uneasy Engagements to Effective Critique* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008); Anna Bernard, Ziad Elmarsafy, and Stuart Murray, *What Postcolonial Theory Doesn't Say* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2015).



seems to be employing frameworks of affect<sup>528</sup> and intersectionality<sup>529</sup> in the context of social media in order to identify, challenge, and rally support against persistent, global, oppressive violence against women.<sup>530</sup>

While language is intimately bound up both in these theoretical paradigms themselves and in what they are often directed to critique, critical discourse analysis (CDA) is explicit in connecting theory with language understood as a form of social practice, i.e. discourse,<sup>531</sup> and draws a number of

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<sup>528</sup> Patricia Ticineto Clough and Jean O'Malley Halley, *The Affective Turn: Theorizing the Social* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007); Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth, *The Affect Theory Reader* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010); Paul Hoggett and Simon Thompson, *Politics and the Emotions: The Affective Turn in Contemporary Political Studies* (New York, NY: Continuum, 2012); Nigel Thrift, *Non-Representational Theory: Space, Politics, Affect* (London: Routledge, 2007).

<sup>529</sup> Brittney Cooper, "Intersectionality," *The Oxford Handbook of Feminist Theory*, February 1, 2016, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199328581.013.20>; Patricia Hill Collins, "Intersectionality's Definitional Dilemmas," *Annual Review of Sociology* 41, no. 1 (August 14, 2015): 1–20, <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-soc-073014-112142>; Ange-Marie Hancock, *Intersectionality: An Intellectual History* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2016); Sumi Cho, Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, and Leslie McCall, "Toward a Field of Intersectionality Studies: Theory, Applications, and Praxis," *Signs* 38, no. 4 (2013): 785–810, <https://doi.org/10.1086/669608>; Ange-Marie Hancock, "Intersectionality as a Normative and Empirical Paradigm," *Politics & Gender* 3, no. 2 (June 2007): 248–54, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1743923X07000062>; Leslie McCall, "The Complexity of Intersectionality," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 30, no. 3 (March 2005): 1771–1800, <https://doi.org/10.1086/426800>.

<sup>530</sup> Chamberlain, *The Feminist Fourth Wave*; Cochrane, *All the Rebel Women*; Rivers, *Postfeminism(s) and the Arrival of the Fourth Wave*.

<sup>531</sup> Norman Fairclough, *Analysing Discourse: Textual Analysis for Social Research* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2003), 214–15.

theories together.<sup>532</sup> CDA brings linguistic analysis to bear on texts in order to elucidate how those “texts as elements of social events have causal effects – i.e. they bring about changes” by constructing, reconstructing, or deconstructing social realities, especially those pertaining to power relationships and dynamics in the form of ideologies.<sup>533</sup> Norman Fairclough advocates using the Systemic Functional Linguistics developed by Michael Halliday (1925 – 2018) and others to map the choices available in a language system in order to uncover the ideologies that motivate making a given linguistic choice rather than another.<sup>534</sup> Analysis of a given text understood as a social event begins by taking account of the speech acts performed therein, other textual events it may be related to and

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<sup>532</sup> Terry Threadgold, “Cultural Studies, Critical Theory and Critical Discourse Analysis: Histories, Remembering and Futures.,” *Linguistik Online* 14, no. 2 (2003): 5–37, <http://dx.doi.org/10.13092/lo.14.821>.

<sup>533</sup> Fairclough, *Analysing Discourse*, 7–10.

<sup>534</sup> Fairclough, 5–6; Halliday, Matthiessen, and Matthiessen, *An Introduction to Functional Grammar*; Michael Alexander Kirkwood Halliday and Ruqaiya Hasan, *Language, Context, and Text: Aspects of Language in a Social-Semiotic Perspective* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1991); Ruqaiya Hasan, *Ways of Saying: Ways of Meaning: Selected Papers of Ruqaiya Hasan* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015); Lynne Young and Claire Harrison, *Systemic Functional Linguistics and Critical Discourse Analysis: Studies in Social Change* (London: Continuum, 2004); Robert Ian Vere Hodge and Gunther R. Kress, *Language as Ideology*, 2nd ed. (New York, NY: Routledge, 1993); Robert Hodge and Gunther Kress, *Social Semiotics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988); Gunther R. Kress and Theo Van Leeuwen, *Multimodal Discourse: The Modes and Media of Contemporary Communication* (London: Arnold, 2001); Lilie Chouliaraki and Norman Fairclough, *Discourse in Late Modernity: Rethinking Critical Discourse Analysis* (Edinburgh, UK: Edinburgh University Press, 1999).

how, ways in which it addresses and copes with difference, genres to which it conforms, and existential, propositional, axiological, and ideological assumptions it makes.<sup>535</sup> Semantic analysis helps to unpack the rhetorical strategy of the text in terms of the ordering of the argument, the ornamenting devices employed to enhance persuasiveness, and the ways in which, and degree to which, the world and things in it are discursively represented.<sup>536</sup> Stylistic analysis, to be elaborated in greater detail in the next subsection, helps tease out the attitudes and intents of text producers, and commitments to truth and expressions of value encoded in the text.<sup>537</sup> In a very real sense, CDA brings the discussion of hermeneutics full circle, having begun with concern about proper methods for interpretation, and now arriving back as a full blown methodology for social science research.<sup>538</sup> In

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<sup>535</sup> Fairclough, *Analysing Discourse*, chaps. 2–4.

<sup>536</sup> Fairclough, chaps. 5–8.

<sup>537</sup> Fairclough, chaps. 9–10.

<sup>538</sup> Fairclough, 2, 202–11; Norman Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language* (London: Routledge, 2013); Fairclough, *Language and Power*; Carmen Rosa Caldas-Coulthard and Malcolm Coulthard, *Texts and Practices: Readings in Critical Discourse Analysis* (London: Routledge, 2013); Teun A. van Dijk, *Ideology: A Multidisciplinary Approach* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 1998); Teun A. van Dijk, *Discourse and Power* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008); Teun A. van Dijk, *Discourse and Knowledge: A Sociocognitive Approach* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Teun A. van Dijk, *Racism and Discourse in Spain and Latin America* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2005); M. Lazar, *Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis: Gender, Power and Ideology in Discourse* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005); Theo Van Leeuwen, *Discourse and Practice: New Tools for Critical Discourse Analysis* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2008); G. Weiss and R. Wodak, *Critical Discourse Analysis: Theory and Interdisciplinarity* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); Ruth Wodak and Paul Chilton, A

so doing, and especially by so intertwining language and ideology, though, it raises the specter of linguistic relativity that had been lurking in hermeneutics since von Humboldt.<sup>539</sup>

### *Stylistics*

Just as critical discourse analysis properly belongs to social science, stylistics properly belongs to linguistics but might be understood as the linguistic method of interpretation and so fits just as well in this section on hermeneutics:

Stylistics has been defined as a sub-discipline of linguistics that is concerned with the systematic analysis of style in language and how this can vary according to such factors as, for example, genre, context, historical period and author... Analysing style means looking systematically at the formal features of a text and determining their functional significance for the interpretation of the text in question.<sup>540</sup>

Stylistics ultimately traces its lineage back to classical rhetoric, surveyed above, and poetics,<sup>541</sup> but emerges from the Russian formalist approach to literary

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*New Agenda in (Critical) Discourse Analysis: Theory, Methodology and Interdisciplinarity* (Philadelphia, PA: John Benjamins, 2005).

<sup>539</sup> Michael Stubbs, "Whorf's Children: Critical Comments on Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)," in *Evolving Models of Language*, ed. Ann Ryan and Alison Wray, *British Studies in Applied Linguistics* 12 (Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 1997), 100–116.

<sup>540</sup> Lesley Jeffries and Daniel McIntyre, *Stylistics* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 1.

<sup>541</sup> Aristotle, *The Poetics of Aristotle: Translation and Commentary*, trans. Stephen Halliwell (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1987).

criticism adopting structuralism.<sup>542</sup> Russian formalism sought to understand the techniques employed in literature to “defamiliarize” the familiar, in part via strategies of foregrounding and backgrounding, as a means of distinguishing literary from non-literary texts.<sup>543</sup> More recently, stylistics has made the interdisciplinary turn to apply a wide range of theories and methods to a body of texts that include both linguistic and non-linguistic elements, but as a subfield of the science of linguistics, it still adheres to principles of rigor, objectivity, and empiricism.<sup>544</sup>

Whereas the linguistic subfields explored above tend to privilege form over function and leave off their analyses at the level of the sentence, stylistics is interested in how syntactic and semantic forms or concepts accomplish various functions. Such functions include representing the world (transitivity), mediating between people (modality), establishing continuity across a text (cohesion), presentation, opposition, and negation, above the level of the sentence.<sup>545</sup> Also,

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<sup>542</sup> Jeffries and McIntyre, *Stylistics*, 10.

<sup>543</sup> Jeffries and McIntyre, 1–2, chap. 2; Peter Steiner, *Russian Formalism: A Metapoetics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2016).

<sup>544</sup> Jeffries and McIntyre, *Stylistics*, 9–26.

<sup>545</sup> Jeffries and McIntyre, chap. 3; Michael Alexander Kirkwood Halliday, *Introduction to Functional Grammar*, ed. Christian Matthiessen, 3rd ed. (London: Holder Arnold, 2004), 29–31.

theories and modes of analysis from pragmatics such as conversational analysis and implicature, and speech act theory, enable stylistics “to reveal the source of interpretive effects deriving from discourse” and interaction, such as notions of politeness.<sup>546</sup> Moreover, whereas the rest of linguistics tends to privilege the perspective of the language user, stylistics is also interested in the ways in which language receivers comprehend texts according to schemas that synthesize their knowledge of the world. This allows them to make value judgments about the relative importance of various elements and relate them according to axiologically prioritized and blended similarities.<sup>547</sup> Stylistics is also interested in how receivers process texts by forming and transitioning among text worlds to navigate the narrative, keeping track of the narrative elements by organizing them in contextual frames. Last, stylistics explores how language receivers become personally involved in the narrative by mentally shifting themselves to the center of the deictic fields the text establishes.<sup>548</sup> Notably, this focus on texts

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<sup>546</sup> Jeffries and McIntyre, *Stylistics*, chap. 4; Penelope Brown and Stephen C. Levinson, *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

<sup>547</sup> Jeffries and McIntyre, *Stylistics*, chap. 5; Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 2008; Fauconnier and Turner, *The Way We Think*.

<sup>548</sup> Jeffries and McIntyre, *Stylistics*, chap. 6; Paul Werth, *Text Worlds: Representing Conceptual Space in Discourse* (London: Longman, 1999); Joanna Gavins, *Text World Theory: An Introduction* (Edinburgh, UK: Edinburgh University Press, 2007); Catherine Emmott, *Narrative Comprehension: A Discourse Perspective* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon, 1997); Judith F. Duchan, Gail A. Bruder, and

as opposed to language per se, and the increasing willingness in the field to address nonlinguistic texts, dislocates stylistics somewhat from linguistics. Coupled with its concomitant allergy to being associated too closely with literary criticism while leaning into the social scientific realm of critical discourse analysis, stylistics ends up being increasingly disciplinarily untethered.

### *Translation*

As should be expected by this point, many of the positions outlined thus far in this chapter come to bear in different conceptions of the work of translation, the movement between at least two languages privileging, in some sense, the preservation of meaning among them. Natural equivalence theories assume a realist account of meaning existing independently of any linguistic instantiation such that, in principle, any two languages must be able to express the same meaning. This view is incompatible with strong linguistic relativity and structuralism at the level of whole languages and so accommodates these predilections by shifting either to a reference theory of truth (to ideas or to the world), to componential analysis, to a common logical formalism, or to equating

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Lynne E. Hewitt, eds., *Deixis in Narrative: A Cognitive Science Perspective* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1995).

meaning with markedness.<sup>549</sup> Directional equivalence, by contrast, is nominalistic because meaning is tied to particular language systems resulting in an asymmetric relation between the start text and target text. As a result, the translator must make choices, in part based on differing contextual assumptions between the two, that result in varying degrees of conformity to the form of the source language.<sup>550</sup> Purpose theories tip the scale from privileging the form of the source language to privileging the goals the translation seeks to fulfill in the target text, thus positing a variety of possible translations correlated to particular goals and requiring the translator to anticipate the needs of the reader.<sup>551</sup> Descriptive theories likewise privilege the target text, but rather than prescribing how the translation process should proceed, they empirically analyze actual translations and the impact of translations on the target culture through structuralist method. This allows them to identify translation shifts, or “patterned differences” between start and target texts, so as to derive norms of translation practice, identify universals that distinguish translations from non-translations, and articulate laws connecting universals to the society, culture, and

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<sup>549</sup> Anthony Pym, *Exploring Translation Theories*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2009), chap. 2.

<sup>550</sup> Pym, chap. 3.

<sup>551</sup> Pym, chap. 4.



cognition of the translator.<sup>552</sup> Post-structuralism and postmodernism enter the ring in the form of uncertainty theories wherein at least the stability of meaning in the start text is questioned, if not the very possibility of all meaning being deconstructed, and so the viability of translation is called into question.<sup>553</sup> Yet, the existence of actual translations demands recourse to conceptions of translations in several ways: provoking recollection of common experience (Augustine), stabilizing via dialogue (Locke), arising from the interpretations of the translator (Ricoeur), being just as constructed by the translator as the start text (constructivism), deriving from a series of determining decisions (game theory), resulting from application of non-linear logics, or contributing to an ongoing process of perpetual interpretation (Eco).<sup>554</sup> Localization as a theory introduces a third locus of meaning, “internationalization,” to the process in order to facilitate translation from a single start text to multiple target texts in different languages, resulting in the imposition of a strict paradigm that constrains both source and target meanings so as to effect standardization across the board.<sup>555</sup> Finally,

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<sup>552</sup> Pym, chap. 5.

<sup>553</sup> Pym, chap. 6.

<sup>554</sup> Pym, chap. 6.4.

<sup>555</sup> Pym, chap. 7.

translation may be abstracted from texts in much the same way that critical discourse analysis abstracts social dynamics from language use such that translation describes processes of socio-cultural interaction, i.e. cultural translation, and the role of translator is to mediate such engagements.<sup>556</sup>

Radical translation is a thought experiment elaborated by Willard Van Orman Quine in *Word and Object* to illustrate his claim as to the indeterminacy of translation by reducing translation to its purest form.<sup>557</sup> The thought experiment situates a linguist in a jungle attempting to derive a translation manual for an isolated and previously unknown language based solely on empirical data of language use.<sup>558</sup> Upon associating the word “gavagai” in the jungle language with the presence of rabbits, the linguist might make a lexical entry of “gavagai → rabbit,” but there is in principle no way to distinguish that translation from “there is the incarnation of rabbithood” or “there is a collocation of rabbit parts” based solely on the empirical evidence, and translating “gavagai” thus would have no practical import. The result is the indeterminacy or inscrutability of

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<sup>556</sup> Pym, chap. 8.

<sup>557</sup> Quine, *Word and Object*, chap. 2.

<sup>558</sup> Roger F. Gibson, “Radical Translation and Radical Interpretation,” in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward Craig (New York, NY: Routledge, 1998), sec. 1, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780415249126-U046-1>.

reference, (also called “ontological relativity”): “some sentences can be translated in more than one way, and the various versions differ in the reference that they attribute to parts of the sentence, but not in the overall net import that they attribute to the sentence as a whole.”<sup>559</sup> A second aspect of the indeterminacy of translation, which Quine called holophrastic indeterminacy, picks up these empirical concerns regarding reference and adds semantic concerns about the fixation of meaning in whole language systems. In this case, the underdetermination of meaning on the basis of evidence combined with the multiplicity of meanings construable in language systems results in multiple translations with different meanings all being correct, at least in some sense: “There is more than one correct method of translating sentences where the two translations of a given sentence differ not merely in the meanings attributed to the sub-sentential parts of speech but also in the net import of the whole sentence.”<sup>560</sup> Moreover, multiple meaningful, accurate and yet incommensurate statements may be rendered regarding an event even within a single language,

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<sup>559</sup> Hylton, “Willard van Orman Quine,” sec. 6.2; Quine, *Ontological Relativity and Other Essays*, chap. 2.

<sup>560</sup> Hylton, “Willard van Orman Quine,” sec. 6.2; Quine, *Ontological Relativity and Other Essays*, chap. 3; Willard Van Orman Quine, *Confessions of a Confirmed Extensionalist: And Other Essays* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), chap. 31.

hence Quine's denial of the analytic/synthetic distinction on the basis of its circularity.<sup>561</sup> Yet, since the world underdetermines meaning, this explains how two people who think they are communicating may in reality be talking past one another.

Donald Davidson, in his related project of radical interpretation, shifts fully into the semantic realm with the goal of "interpreting the linguistic behaviour of a speaker 'from scratch' and so without reliance on any prior knowledge either of the speaker's beliefs or the meanings of the speaker's utterances."<sup>562</sup> He accomplishes this by recourse to a notion of contextual holism precipitating the principle of charity<sup>563</sup> such that interpreters should assume the subject of their interpretation is at least attempting to be coherent in their beliefs and takes their beliefs to correspond with reality.<sup>564</sup> We should do so because "disagreement and agreement alike are intelligible only against a background of massive agreement,"<sup>565</sup> echoing Duns Scotus' (c. 1266 – 1308) dictum that "every

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<sup>561</sup> Quine, *From a Logical Point of View*, chap. 2.

<sup>562</sup> Malpas, "Donald Davidson," sec. 3.3; Gibson, "Radical Translation and Radical Interpretation," sec. 7.

<sup>563</sup> Davidson, *Inquiries Into Truth and Interpretation*, 2001, 140n16.

<sup>564</sup> Malpas, "Donald Davidson," sec. 3.3; Gibson, "Radical Translation and Radical Interpretation," sec. 9.

<sup>565</sup> Davidson, *Inquiries Into Truth and Interpretation*, 2001, 137.

denial is intelligible only in terms of some affirmation.”<sup>566</sup> This then grounds the Tarskian interpretive procedure of taking the subject speaking language L and saying sentence “s” in L in proximity to s happening at time t as evidence that “s” is true in L when spoken by the subject at t if and only if s happens in proximity to the subject at t and so the subject speaking L believes (holds true) “s” at t if and only if the subject is in proximity to s at t. Davidson takes this to be a valid inference solving for meaning by holding belief constant.<sup>567</sup> At least in this case, by contrast to Quine, the ongoing dialectic between belief and meaning holds out the hope that agreement might be achieved in the infinite long run, although indeterminacy is neither entirely eliminable for Davidson either.<sup>568</sup>

### Semiotics

That language is semiotic is verging on tautologous. Language is made up of signs: words, standing for objects: things. Semiotics is the study of signs, signification, and sign processes, i.e. semiosis, in general, of which language is

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<sup>566</sup> Scotus, *Philosophical Writings*, 15.

<sup>567</sup> Gibson, “Radical Translation and Radical Interpretation,” sec. 9; Davidson, *Inquiries Into Truth and Interpretation*, 2001, chap. 9.

<sup>568</sup> Malpas, “Donald Davidson,” sec. 3.4.

one specification, and a particularly human one at that.<sup>569</sup> As was noted in the above subsection on the linguistic turn, the two principal modern semiotic theorists, Ferdinand de Saussure and Charles Sanders Peirce, articulate inverse perspectives on the relationship between semiotics and language: Saussure views the structure of language as a model for the structure of all sign systems, while Peirce views language as a particular species of the semiotic genus.<sup>570</sup> That said, while semiotics has been the primary paradigm for discussing language, at least implicitly, in the West for quite some time,<sup>571</sup> the development of nonlinguistic semiotics remained largely neglected until the work of Thomas Albert Sebeok (1920 – 2001) and John N. Deely (1942 – 2017).<sup>572</sup> This section charts the historical trajectory of semiotics vis-à-vis language, elaborates contemporary semiotic accounts of language in greater detail, and then articulates the logic of semiotics

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<sup>569</sup> Thomas Albert Sebeok, *Signs: An Introduction to Semiotics* (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 3; John Deely, *Basics of Semiotics*, 4th ed., Tartu Semiotics Library (Tartu, Estonia: Tartu University Press, 2005), 136.

<sup>570</sup> John N. Deely, Brooke Williams, and Felicia Kruse, *Frontiers in Semiotics* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1986); Umberto Eco, *A Theory of Semiotics* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1979); Thomas Albert Sebeok, *A Sign Is Just a Sign* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1991).

<sup>571</sup> Umberto Eco, *Semiotics and the Philosophy of Language* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1986).

<sup>572</sup> Sebeok, *Signs*; Thomas Albert Sebeok, *Global Semiotics* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2001); Deely, *Basics of Semiotics*, 2005.

beyond the linguistic frame in preparation for the extensive use of semiotics in chapter five to not only describe but explain language.

*Antique and Medieval Western Approaches*

Consideration of signs first arose in Western philosophy among the pre-Socratic philosophers of ancient Greece and was developed in both Platonic and Aristotelian lineages,<sup>573</sup> along with the Stoics, the skeptics, and in Greek medicine,<sup>574</sup> before being codified in late antiquity by Augustine of Hippo (354 – 430 CE)<sup>575</sup> and Anicius Manlius Severinus Boethius (ca. 475 – 526 CE).<sup>576</sup>

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<sup>573</sup> Tzvetan Todorov, *Theories of the Symbol* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1984), chap. 1; David S. Clarke, *Sources of Semiotic: Readings with Commentary from Antiquity to the Present* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1990), chaps. 1, 2.1; W. M. A. Grimaldi, "Semeion, Tekmerion, Eikos in Aristotle's Rhetoric," *The American Journal of Philology* 101, no. 4 (1980): 383–98, <https://doi.org/10.2307/293663>; Ludovic De Cuypere and Klaas Willems, "Meaning and Reference in Aristotle's Concept of the Linguistic Sign," *Foundations of Science* 13, no. 3–4 (November 1, 2008): 307–24, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10699-008-9134-y>.

<sup>574</sup> Deely, *Basics of Semiotics*, 2005, 140–41; Umberto Eco and Costantino Marmo, *On the Medieval Theory of Signs* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1989), chap. 1; David Glidden, "Skeptic Semiotics," *Phronesis* 28, no. 3 (1983): 213–55, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4182178>.

<sup>575</sup> Stephan Meier-Oeser, "Medieval Semiotics," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Summer, 2011, sec. 2.1, <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2011/entries/semiotics-medieval/>; Augustine, *De Dialectica*, ed. B. Darell Jackson, trans. Jan Pinborg (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1975); Augustine, *De Doctrina Christiana*, trans. R.P.H. Green (Oxford, UK: Clarendon, 1995); Augustine, *On the Trinity*, ed. Gareth B. Matthews (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

<sup>576</sup> Meier-Oeser, "Medieval Semiotics," sec. 2.2; Boethius, *Boethius: On Aristotle On Interpretation 1-3*, trans. Andrew Smith (New York, NY: Bloomsbury, 2014); Boethius, *Boethius: On Aristotle On Interpretation 4-6*, trans. Andrew Smith (New York, NY: Bloomsbury, 2014).

Elaborating the development of the Augustinian theory of signs in some detail is worthwhile as it “is based on a definition of the sign that, for the first time, intends to embrace both the natural indexical sign and the conventional linguistic sign as species of an all-embracing generic notion of sign, thus marking a turning point in the history of semiotics.”<sup>577</sup> While authorship is unsettled, *De Dialectica* would have been an early work of March and April in 387 CE<sup>578</sup> in the Platonic lineage drawing heavily on Stoicism qualified by skepticism.<sup>579</sup> At this stage Augustine says that “A sign is something which is itself sensed and which indicates to the mind something beyond the sign itself.” What the sign indicates is a thing: “A thing is whatever is sensed or is understood or is hidden.”<sup>580</sup> Thus, Augustine articulates signification for the first time as a triadic relation: “a sign is always a sign *of* something *to* some mind.”<sup>581</sup> Thus, the sign merely serves to remind or suggest to the interpreter the thing signified<sup>582</sup> such that “some things

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<sup>577</sup> Meier-Oeser, “Medieval Semiotics,” sec. 2.1; Deely, *Basics of Semiotics*, 2005, 140–42.

<sup>578</sup> Augustine, *De Dialectica*, 1–3.

<sup>579</sup> Meier-Oeser, “Medieval Semiotics,” sec. 2.1.

<sup>580</sup> Augustine, *De Dialectica*, 87.

<sup>581</sup> Meier-Oeser, “Medieval Semiotics,” sec. 2.1.

<sup>582</sup> Augustine, *The Teacher, The Free Choice of the Will, Grace and Free Will.*, trans. Robert P Russell (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1968), 49, XI 36.



can be taught without the use of signs, and that we were wrong in thinking a little while ago that nothing at all can be taught without signs.”<sup>583</sup> By ten years later, in *De Doctrina Christiana*, having abandoned skepticism, Augustine changes his tune: “All teaching is teaching of either things or signs, but things are learnt through signs,”<sup>584</sup> which is reflected in his redefinition of sign as “a thing which of itself makes some other thing come to mind, besides the impression that it presents to the senses.”<sup>585</sup> He goes on to make the classic distinction between natural signs as “those which without a wish or any urge to signify cause something else besides themselves to be known from them,” and given or conventional signs as “those which living things give to each other, in order to show, to the best of their ability, the emotions of their minds, or anything that they have felt or learnt.”<sup>586</sup> In composing *De Trinitate* in the first quarter of the fifth century,<sup>587</sup> Augustine builds on this understanding of conventional signs by identifying natural language as a system of such signs referring to an inner

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<sup>583</sup> Augustine, 46, X 32.

<sup>584</sup> Augustine, *De Doctrina Christiana*, 13, I.4.

<sup>585</sup> Augustine, 57, II.1.

<sup>586</sup> Augustine, 57–58, II.2-3.

<sup>587</sup> Augustine, *On the Trinity*, xxx.

language of thought: “the word which sounds without is a sign of the word that shines within, to which the name ‘word’ more properly belongs. For that which is produced by the mouth of the flesh is the sound of the word, and is itself also called ‘word,’ because that inner word assumed it in order that it might appear outwardly.”<sup>588</sup> Augustine also derived from Greek philosophy this notion of mental language expressed not only in natural language but in all human behavior and bequeathed it all the way down to contemporary philosophy of language, philosophy of mind, and psychology.<sup>589</sup> Notably, in his influential translation into Latin as *De Interpretatione* and commentaries on Aristotle’s *Περὶ Ἑρμηνείας* in the early sixth century, Boethius follows this Augustinian conception of signification as bearing the object signified into mind rather than the Aristotelian conception of signification as applying thoughts expressed in signs to things such that ideas and not signs refer to things.<sup>590</sup>

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<sup>588</sup> Augustine, 187, 15.11.20.

<sup>589</sup> Augustine, xvi–xvii; Claude Panaccio, *Mental Language: From Plato to William of Ockham* (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2017).

<sup>590</sup> Umberto Eco, “Signification and Denotation from Boethius to Ockham,” *Franciscan Studies* 44, no. 1 (1984): 4–6, <https://doi.org/10.1353/frc.1984.0018>; John Magee, *Boethius on Signification and Mind* (Leiden: Brill, 1989); Taki Suto, *Boethius on Mind, Grammar and Logic: A Study of Boethius’ Commentaries on Peri Hermeneias* (Leiden: Brill, 2011); Boethius and Karl Meiser, *Commentarii in librum Aristotelis Peri Hermeneias* (Leipzig, Germany: Teubner, 1880); Boethius, *Boethius: On Aristotle On Interpretation 1-3*; Boethius, *Boethius: On Aristotle On Interpretation 4-6*.

Further developments in semiotic theorizing would have to wait until the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries with Anselm of Canterbury (1033 – 1109) and Peter Abelard (1079 – 1142). Anselm makes two primary contributions to semiotic theory. First, in *De Grammatico* he distinguishes signification as having to do with bearing meaning from appellation as having to do with reference to an object. Thus, calling someone a “grammarians” or “expert-in-grammar” refers to a particular person upon whom the title has been designated by appellation but means that said person has the quality of expertise in grammar.<sup>591</sup> Second, in the *Monologion* he more clearly distinguishes two aspects of mental language implicit in Augustine: mental words “are natural and are the same for all races,” i.e. are innate in the human mind, and “No expression of anything whatsoever approximates an object as closely as does that expression which consists of words of this kind; and in no one's reason can there be anything else which is so similar to an object, whether already existing or going

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<sup>591</sup> Eco, “Signification and Denotation from Boethius to Ockham,” 6–7; Anselm and Desmond Paul Henry, *The De Grammatico of St. Anselm: The Theory of Paronymy* (South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1964), chaps. 4.30-4.415; Anselm, “De Grammatico,” in *Complete Philosophical and Theological Treatises of Anselm of Canterbury*, trans. Jasper Hopkins and Herbert Richardson (Minneapolis, MN: Arthur J. Banning, 2000), chaps. 14, 151.

to exist," i.e. mental images are likenesses of their objects.<sup>592</sup> Abelard maintains the Augustinian semiotic principles that language is a species of the genus of signs and that signs bear their objects into mind. He does so by identifying meaning with intension as distinct from extension and elaborating a quadratic process of signification "using 'significare' to refer to the *intellectus* generated in the mind of the hearer, 'nominare' for the referential function, and... 'designare' and 'denotare' for the relationship between the word and his definition or *sententia*," only the last of which constitutes meaning per se, and the latter two depending on the first.<sup>593</sup> He also develops a fourfold classification of signs as an image of the object, as imposed by convention on the object, as associated by repeated conjunction with the object, or as causally or qualitatively related to the object.<sup>594</sup> These Augustinian tendencies in medieval semiotics are reified by the author of *The Commentary on "Priscianus Maior"* ascribed to Robert Kilwardby in the

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<sup>592</sup> Meier-Oeser, "Medieval Semiotics," sec. 3; Anselm, "Monologion," in *Complete Philosophical and Theological Treatises of Anselm of Canterbury*, trans. Jasper Hopkins and Herbert Richardson (Minneapolis, MN: Arthur J. Banning, 2000), chaps. X, 21.

<sup>593</sup> Eco, "Signification and Denotation from Boethius to Ockham," 7–9; Meier-Oeser, "Medieval Semiotics," sec. 3; Peter Abelard, *Dialectica: First complete edition of the Parisian manuscript*, ed. Lambertus Marie de Rijk (Assen, Netherlands: Van Gorcum, 1970); Peter Abelard, *Peter Abaelards Philosophische Schriften*, ed. Bernhard Geyer (Münster, Germany: Aschendorff, 1919), <http://archive.org/details/peterabaelardsph00abel>.

<sup>594</sup> Meier-Oeser, "Medieval Semiotics," sec. 3; Jean Jolivet, *Arts du langage et théologie chez Abélard* (Paris, France: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1982), chap. 2.

later thirteenth century who first advances the notion of a science of signs by claiming that “every science is about signs or things signified.” Further, linguistic signs, by virtue of their signification of mental language, are the particular topic of the rational science of signs.<sup>595</sup>

Contemporaneous with Pseudo-Kilwardby, an extensional semantics emerged alongside intensional semiotics as the notion of supposition, dating at least from Priscian in the early sixth century, merged with the Anselmian notion of appellation to render the medieval theory of supposition.<sup>596</sup> Supposition, from *supponere* meaning “acting as subject,” “became the major property of an occurrence of a term in a proposition..., distinguishing what in particular was being spoken of on some occasion of utterance by some particular use of a word, from that word's general property (signification) of meaning.”<sup>597</sup> The theory was hardly stable, however, as William of Sherwood (ca. 1200 – 1272) distinguishes

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<sup>595</sup> Meier-Oeser, “Medieval Semiotics,” sec. 4.1; Ps-Robert Kilwardby, “The Commentary on ‘Priscianus Maior’ Ascribed to Robert Kilwardby,” ed. Karen Margareta Fredborg et al., *Cahiers de l’Institut Du Moyen-Age Grec et Latin* 15 (1975): sec. 1.1, <https://cimagl.saxo.ku.dk/access/>.

<sup>596</sup> Stephen Read, “Medieval Theories: Properties of Terms,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Spring, 2015, sec. 1, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2015/entries/medieval-terms/>; Eco, “Signification and Denotation from Boethius to Ockham,” 11–12.

<sup>597</sup> Read, “Medieval Theories: Properties of Terms,” sec. 1.

among signification, supposition, copulation, and appellation,<sup>598</sup> whereas Lambert of Auxerre and Peter of Spain (both mid-thirteenth century) subordinate the properties of terms to signification because, as Lambert explains, “signification is, as it were, the fulfillment of a term.”<sup>599</sup> Alas, Roger Bacon (ca. 1214 – 1292), the medieval thinker who discussed signs most extensively, follows Bonaventure (1221 – 1274) in breaking with both the Aristotelian and Augustinian lineages. Bacon extends the trajectory of Sherwood by collapsing signification into the extensional semantics of supposition as denotation such that signs refer to objects without mental mediation.<sup>600</sup> Umberto Eco (1932 – 2016)

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<sup>598</sup> William of Sherwood and Norman Kretzmann, *William of Sherwood's Introduction to Logic* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1966), chap. 5.1; Sara L. Uckelman, “William of Sherwood,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Summer, 2016, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2016/entries/william-sherwood/>.

<sup>599</sup> Norman Kretzmann and Eleonore Stump, *The Cambridge Translations of Medieval Philosophical Texts: Volume 1, Logic and the Philosophy of Language* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 104; Read, “Medieval Theories: Properties of Terms,” sec. 1; Lambert of Auxerre, *Logica, Or Summa Lamberti*, trans. Thomas S. Maloney (South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2015); Peter of Spain, *Summaries of Logic: Text, Translation, Introduction, and Notes*, ed. Brian P. Copenhaver (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2013); Joke Spruyt, “Peter of Spain,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Fall, 2015, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2015/entries/peter-spain/>; Eco, “Signification and Denotation from Boethius to Ockham,” 11–14.

<sup>600</sup> Eco, “Signification and Denotation from Boethius to Ockham,” 14–17; Meier-Oeser, “Medieval Semiotics,” sec. 4.2; Roger Bacon, *On Signs (Opus Maius, Part 3, Chapter 2)*, trans. Thomas S. Maloney (Toronto, ON: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2013), 36–37 (I.2), 112–13 (V.166); Bonaventure, *Commentary on the Sentences: Sacraments*, ed. J. A. Wayne Hellmann, Timothy LeCroy, and Luke Townsend (Saint Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute, 2014), d.1, part 1, art. unicus, q. 2, conc. ad. 3.

contradicts most of the literature on Bacon that focuses on his emphasizing the importance of the interpreter contra Bonaventure and the theologians. Eco instead highlights the extensional character of the sign-object relation for Bacon, thus critiquing him as at least a proto-nominalist for failing to recognize the independent reality of the sign as a relation. Eco thereby rightly renders the role of the interpreter in Bacon as secondary to the object in the process of signification, perhaps thus necessitating such insistence.<sup>601</sup> The realist alternative to this creeping nominalism was the speculative grammar of the Modists, epitomized by Thomas of Erfurt (early fourteenth century). Erfurt sought to fold metaphysics, logic, and grammar together by positing structural parallels among the mode of being of the object, the mode of understanding of the interpreter, and the mode of signifying of the sign that are common to all of reality, all human interpreters, and all natural languages, respectively.<sup>602</sup> Nominalism

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<sup>601</sup> Eco, "Signification and Denotation from Boethius to Ockham," 14–17. Standard accounts of Bacon, and references to wider literature, are available in Jeremiah Hackett, "Roger Bacon," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Spring, 2015, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2015/entries/roger-bacon/>; Meier-Oeser, "Medieval Semiotics," sec. 4.2. Alas, even Eco's close collaborator Constantino Marmo seems to have neglected this treatment of Bacon in Sara G. Beardsworth and Randall E. Auxier, *The Philosophy of Umberto Eco* (Chicago, IL: Open Court, 2017).

<sup>602</sup> Meier-Oeser, "Medieval Semiotics," sec. 5; Eco, "Signification and Denotation from Boethius to Ockham," 18; Louis G. Kelly, *The Mirror of Grammar: Theology, Philosophy, and the Modistae* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2002); Thomas von Erfurt, *Grammatica Speculativa*, ed. G. L. Bursill-Hall, *The Classics of Linguistics 1* (London: Longman, 1972); Jack Zupko, "Thomas of Erfurt," in

would ultimately win the day, though, in the form of the entirely extensional theory of signification elaborated by William of Ockham (ca. 1287 – 1347). In Ockham, supposition and signification are collapsed together as mental signs, i.e. concepts, and linguistic signs each signify things in the world but are not otherwise connected to one another, resulting in the dissipation of one side of the Augustinian semiotic triad.<sup>603</sup>

Although the nominalist strain of thinking about signs would remain dominant into the modern period,<sup>604</sup> a minority report focused around John Mair (ca. 1467 – 1550) in Scotland and Paris maintained the fullness of the Augustinian semiotic triad in which signification was understood as “to represent something,

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*The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Spring, 2015, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2015/entries/erfurt/>.

<sup>603</sup> Eco, “Signification and Denotation from Boethius to Ockham,” 19–23; Meier-Oeser, “Medieval Semiotics,” secs. 5–7; Read, “Medieval Theories: Properties of Terms”; Paul Vincent Spade and Claude Panaccio, “William of Ockham,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Winter, 2016, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2016/entries/ockham/>; William of Ockham, *Ockham’s Theory of Terms: Part I of the Summa Logicae*, trans. Michael J. Loux (South Bend, IN: St. Augustine’s, 1998); William of Ockham, *Ockham’s Theory of Propositions: Part II of the Summa Logicae*, trans. Alfred J. Freddoso and Henry Schuurman (South Bend, IN: St. Augustine’s, 1998); William of Ockham, *Demonstration and Scientific Knowledge in William of Ockham: A Translation of Summa Logicae III-II*, trans. John Longeway (South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007).

<sup>604</sup> Eco, “Signification and Denotation from Boethius to Ockham,” 23–27.



or some things, or somehow to a cognitive power by vitally changing it.”<sup>605</sup> An emphasis on mental signs, though, contra Augustine, arose from concern about an infinite regress of signification when signs are both universal, i.e. “anything in the world is a sign,” and external, whereas grounding signification in the mental would prevent such an “abyss in signifying.”<sup>606</sup> It is this lineage that is transmitted into the Iberian peninsula, codified especially by Domingo de Soto (1494 – 1560), and inherited by the Conimbricenses, i.e. the Jesuits at the University of Coimbra in Portugal, especially John Poinset (1589 – 1644; also John of St. Thomas).<sup>607</sup> Poinset made the signal contribution, to be independently

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<sup>605</sup> Peter of Ailly, *Concepts and Insolubles: An Annotated Translation*, trans. Paul Vincent Spade (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1980), 16; Meier-Oeser, “Medieval Semiotics,” sec. 8; Alexander Broadie, *The Circle of John Mair: Logic and Logicians in Pre-Reformation Scotland* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon, 1985).

<sup>606</sup> Meier-Oeser, “Medieval Semiotics,” sec. 8; Johannes Major, *Introductorium Perutile in Aristotelicum Dialecticam* (Paris, France, 1526), fol. 14(r)a, <https://books.google.com/books?id=AfZB5dcybGIC&dq=editions:sLOAPBo2gEUC>; Pedro Margahlo, *Logices utriusque scholia in divi Thomae subtilisque Duns doctrina. Escólios em ambas as lógicas à doutrina de S. Tomás, do subtil Duns Escoto e dos nominalistas. Reprodução facsimilada da edição de Salamanca, 1520.*, trans. Miguel Pinto de Mineses (Lisbon, 1965), 146ff.

<sup>607</sup> Meier-Oeser, “Medieval Semiotics,” sec. 8; E. Jennifer Ashworth, “Domingo de Soto (1494–1560) and the Doctrine of Signs,” in *De Ortu Grammaticae: Studies in Medieval Grammar and Linguistic Theory in Memory of Jan Pinborg*, ed. G. L. Bursill-Hall, Sten Ebbesen, and Konrad Koerner (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1990), 35–48; Mauricio Beuchot, “La Doctrina Tomista Clásica Sobre El Signo: Domingo de Soto, Francisco de Araújo y Juan de Santo Tomás,” *Crítica: Revista Hispanoamericana de Filosofía* 12, no. 36 (1980): 39–60, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40104191>; John P. Doyle, ed., *The Conimbricenses: Some Questions on Signs*, Medieval Philosophical Texts in Translation 38 (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 2001).

developed anew by Peirce two-and-a-half centuries later,<sup>608</sup> of overcoming the dichotomies of subject and object and of nature and culture by identifying the being of signs as relations, i.e. ontological relations, and irreducibly triadic relations at that.<sup>609</sup>

For the sign, Poinot has shown, considered in its proper being as sign, is neither an object nor a thing, but a relation irreducibly triadic, inasmuch as it is by *one single relation*, not two or any combination of twos, that the sign through its vehicle attains both *directly* its signified and *indirectly* its interpretant. All three – sign vehicle, object signified, interpretant – are thereby together unified under or through the one single triadic relation “constituting the mode of being of a sign,” as Peirce put it, and this triadic relation “is the proper and formal rationale of the sign,” as Poinot put it. (Or as Ketner, not glossing over the interpreter/interpretant distinction, summarized: “A sign is the entire triadic relation whereby Something is represented by Something to Something.”)<sup>610</sup>

There are two primary aspects of this doctrine of signs. First, Poinot distinguishes transcendental relations as the things related together with their conditions from ontological relations as the relation itself as such and identifies

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<sup>608</sup> Mauricio Beuchot and John Deely, “Common Sources for the Semiotic of Charles Peirce and John Poinot,” *The Review of Metaphysics* 48, no. 3 (1995): 539–66, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20129719>.

<sup>609</sup> Paul Copley, *The Routledge Companion to Semiotics* (London: Routledge, 2009), 289–90; Paul Bains, *The Primacy of Semiosis: An Ontology of Relations* (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 2006).

<sup>610</sup> Peter Pericles Trifonas, *International Handbook of Semiotics* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2015), 92; Charles Sanders Peirce, *The Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*, ed. Charles Hartshorne, Paul Weiss, and Arthur W. Burks (n.p.: John Deely, 1994), vol. 8.332, <https://colorysemiotica.files.wordpress.com/2014/08/peirce-collectedpapers.pdf>; John Poinot, *Tractatus de Signis: The Semiotic of John Poinot*, trans. John N. Deely (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1985), 154/28-29, Bk. 1, Q. 3; Kenneth Laine Ketner and Walker Percy, *A Thief of Peirce*, ed. Patrick H. Samway, S.J. (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 1995), 32.

the latter with the nature of signs.<sup>611</sup> Second, the relation itself is irreducibly triadic among the sign vehicle, the signified, and the interpretant, the relations among which are the sign itself. Thus, a triangle is inappropriate as a model for a sign as it represents dyadic relations among the three elements; a tripod of all three elements intersecting in the center is more adequate.<sup>612</sup> It is only less than sixty years later that John Locke, in the final chapter of his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, would dub the doctrine of signs “σημειωτική”<sup>613</sup> and thereby launch the modern consideration of semiotics epitomized in the theorizing of Peirce.

#### *Peircian Metaphysical Semiotics*

As has already been noted, for the account of semiotics rendered by Peirce, language is one particular instance of a specific type of sign system, as

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<sup>611</sup> Deely, *Basics of Semiotics*, 2005, 71; John Deely, *Augustine & Poincaré: The Protosemiotic Development* (Scranton, PA: University of Scranton Press, 2009).

<sup>612</sup> Trifonas, *International Handbook of Semiotics*, chap. 2.4.10 Triad in Contrast to Triangle; Floyd Merrell, “Chewing Gum, Ambulating, and Signing, All at the Same Time: Or, The Magical Number Three,” *The American Journal of Semiotics*; Kent 22, no. 1–4 (2006): 3–26, 212, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/213749098/abstract/A7190806ED4949B1PQ/1>; Floyd Merrell, “Peirce’s Basic Classes of Signs in a Somewhat Different Vein,” in *The Commens Encyclopedia: The Digital Encyclopedia of Peirce Studies*, ed. Mats Bergman and João Queiroz, 150216–2050a, accessed June 21, 2018, <http://www.commens.org/encyclopedia/article/merrel-floyd-peirces-basic-classes-signs-somewhat-different-vein>.

<sup>613</sup> Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, 1894, vol. 2, bk. IV, chap. 21, para. 3; Deely, *Basics of Semiotics*, 2005, 145–46.

opposed to the prime structural example of any possible sign system as in the school of Saussure; indeed, the relationship between Saussure and Peirce may best be read as that of part to whole.<sup>614</sup> The challenge then becomes the notoriously difficult task of rendering a responsible interpretation of Peirce given that his thought was in a constant state of development and change, he frequently found himself despondent of giving a systematic accounting of his grand aspirations and left all of his large scale projects unfinished, and his writing style “is so bizarre that the reader tends to cling for dear life to those few doctrines which, like pragmatism, have an aura of reasonableness about them.”<sup>615</sup> Among philosophers who have engaged him range a variety of interpretations, a majority of which, especially of the most recent, take his semiotics to be primarily if not exclusively phenomenological or rooted in philosophy of mind, that is, describing the appearance of reality before the mind in experience. This is the understanding carried over into the extensive appropriation of his semiotics well

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<sup>614</sup> Deely, Williams, and Kruse, *Frontiers in Semiotics*.

<sup>615</sup> Murray G. Murphey, “On Peirce’s Metaphysics,” *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 1, no. 1 (1965): 12–13, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40319503>; Deely, *Basics of Semiotics*, 2005, 116–17; Robert Burch, “Charles Sanders Peirce,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Fall, 2017, sec. 2, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2017/entries/peirce/>.

beyond philosophy.<sup>616</sup> To be sure, the vagaries of his corpus and his thought make such readings at least justifiable, but the interpretation to be offered here adheres to an older and minority view of Peirce as fundamentally and irreducibly a systematic metaphysician, at least in aspiration.<sup>617</sup> This perspective is at least as defensible, if not more so, than the phenomenological one, although proving this to be the case lies beyond the scope of the present endeavor, as does teasing out every twist and turn of development across his vast corpus. Instead, the account provided here is best read as Peircian, that is, as itself an interpretant, and so itself a sign to its readers, of the effect in the author of taking semiotics as articulated by Peirce in his writings to be a sign of reality.

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<sup>616</sup> Albert Atkin, *Peirce* (London: Routledge, 2015); Atkin, "Peirce's Theory of Signs"; Albert Atkin, *C.S. Peirce: Oxford Bibliographies Online Research Guide* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2010); James Jak6b Liszka, *A General Introduction to the Semeiotic of Charles Sanders Peirce* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1996); David Savan, *An Introduction to C.S. Peirce's Full System of Semeiotic* (Toronto, ON: Toronto Semiotic Circle, 1988); T. L. Short, *Peirce's Theory of Signs* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Marc Champagne, *Consciousness and the Philosophy of Signs: How Peircean Semiotics Combines Phenomenal Qualia and Practical Effects* (Cham, Switzerland: Springer, 2018).

<sup>617</sup> Murphey, "On Peirce's Metaphysics"; Murray G. Murphey, *The Development of Peirce's Philosophy* (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1993); Paul Weiss, "The Essence of Peirce's System," *The Journal of Philosophy* 37, no. 10 (1940): 253–64, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2017279>; Peter T Turley, *Peirce's Cosmology* (New York, NY: Philosophical Library, 1977); Joseph L. Esposito, *Evolutionary Metaphysics: The Development of Peirce's Theory of Categories* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1980); Carl R. Hausman, *Charles S. Peirce's Evolutionary Philosophy* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1993); John K. Sheriff, *Charles Peirce's Guess at the Riddle: Grounds for Human Significance* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994); Andrew Reynolds, *Peirce's Scientific Metaphysics: The Philosophy of Chance, Law, and Evolution* (Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press, 2002).

It is the case that the metaphysical status of semiotics was more of an aspiration than an achievement for Peirce, who boldly claimed “that all this universe is perfused with signs, if it is not composed exclusively of signs.”<sup>618</sup> Alas, he then tossed a “sop to Cerberus,” abandoning the universality of signification, by adjusting his definition of sign as determining the effect of its object “upon a person.”<sup>619</sup> The metaphysics he lays out in an address to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 1867 entitled “On a New List of Categories” proceeds in a Kantian manner on the grounds that his three categories are necessary not only to unify experience within a given individual but to unify anything that could possibly count as experience. Already his nascent semiotics is derived therefrom as the logic of such experience.<sup>620</sup> Twenty years later Peirce is ready to make *A Guess at the Riddle*, having softened in his

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<sup>618</sup> Charles Sanders Peirce, *The Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*, ed. Charles Hartshorne, Paul Weiss, and Arthur W. Burks (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1932), 5.488n1.5/6.

<sup>619</sup> Charles Sanders Peirce and Lady Victoria Welby, *Semiotic and Significs: The Correspondence between Charles S. Peirce and Lady Victoria Welby*, ed. Charles S. Hardwick (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1977), 88–89.

<sup>620</sup> Charles Sanders Peirce, *The Essential Peirce: Selected Philosophical Writings (1867–1893)*, vol. 1 (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1992), chap. 1; Peirce, *The Collected Papers*, 1.545-59; Donald E. Buzzelli, “The Argument of Peirce’s ‘New List of Categories,’” *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 8, no. 2 (1972): 63–89, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40320362>; Immanuel Kant, *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics (Second Edition) and the Letter to Marcus Herz, February 1772*, ed. James Wesley Ellington (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 2001); Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. N. Kemp Smith, Revised Second Edition (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

Kantianism, in the form of a metaphysical hypothesis of three categories

“intended to go down to the very essence of things:”

The First is that whose being is simply in itself, not referring to anything nor lying behind anything. The Second is that which is what it is by force of something to which it is second. The Third is that which is what it is owing to things between which it mediates and which it brings into relation to each other.<sup>621</sup>

The categories are perhaps better rendered as qualities since any given thing participates, at least potentially, in all three: firstness is the indeterminate being of things, secondness is the qualified existence of things, and thirdness is the relational aspect of things as matrices unifying constituent elements. These categories are intended as the fundament of logic, but whereas much of the literature on Peirce takes the resulting logic to be the logic of knowledge, i.e. the logic underlying epistemology, Peirce clearly intended them to function rather as the logic of absolutely everything. Thus, they are best understood as architectonic categories, equally applicable if not most of all to metaphysics, as demonstrated by his intent to demonstrate in the outlined third chapter of the *Guess*.<sup>622</sup>

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<sup>621</sup> Peirce, *The Essential Peirce 1*, vol. 1, chap. 19.

<sup>622</sup> Peirce, 1:246, 256–57.

Being architectonic, the categories are equally applicable to signs. In his first attempt at application, just after drafting the *Guess*, Peirce claims that “a sign is a third mediating between the mind addressed and the object represented.”<sup>623</sup> It is his inability to escape the gravitational pull of mental representation, which must inevitably draw him into the black hole of epistemology, that induces him to throw the sop to Cerberus, or at least to Lady Welby. Later he would more precisely apply the categories in order to distinguish three types of sign vehicles:

Firstly, there are *likenesses*, or icons; which serve to convey ideas of the things they represent simply by imitating them. Secondly, there are *indications*, or indices; which show something about things, on account of their being physically connected with them... Thirdly, there are *symbols*, or general signs, which have become associated with their meanings by usage.<sup>624</sup>

Eventually he would standardize his usage of icon, index, and symbol as the terms for these three types. Like Peirce, Peirce understands the action of signs, which he terms semiosis, to be irreducibly triadic<sup>625</sup> such that a sign is “anything which determines something else (its *interpretant*) to refer to an object to which itself refers (its *object*) in the same way, the interpretant becoming in turn a sign,

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<sup>623</sup> Peirce, 1:281.

<sup>624</sup> Peirce, *The Essential Peirce* 2, 2:5.

<sup>625</sup> Peirce, *The Collected Papers*, 5.484.



and so on *ad infinitum*.”<sup>626</sup> This triad too is built on the three categories where the being (firstness) of the object is rendered existent (secondness) for the interpretant by the mediation (thirdness) of a sign. Peirce only distinguishes the object according to two of the three categories: as it is in the sign relation, i.e. the “immediate object” or secondness, and as it is in itself, i.e. the “dynamical object” or firstness;<sup>627</sup> but the interpretant may be understood as the effect of the object, i.e. the final object or thirdness.<sup>628</sup> Moreover, whereas the late scholastics grounded their semiotics in the mental in order to prevent the “abyss of signification” they otherwise feared, Peirce revels in infinite semiosis and so in principle need not ground his concept of signification in the mental. Indeed, his

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<sup>626</sup> Peirce, *Peirce on Signs*, 239.

<sup>627</sup> Peirce and Welby, *Semiotic and Significs*, 83.

<sup>628</sup> In his correspondence with Paul Carus at Open Court Publishing, Peirce does divide the object into a triad: “Then there are 3 divisions that relate to the Object. One according to the form under which the Sign presents its Object. This is of course the object as the sign represents it, i.e. the Immediate Object. There are two divisions that concern the Real Object. One according to the Mode of Being of it, according to which the Sign will be Abstract, Concrete, or the Sign of a Habit, or would be. The other according to the relation, or connexion between the Sign and the Real Object, making the sign either an Icon, an Index, or a Symbol.” Stetson Jon Robinson, “Straws in the Wind: The Correspondence of Charles S. Peirce and the Open Court Publishing Company, 1890-1913” (PhD diss, Boston University, 2017), 269–70, <https://open.bu.edu/handle/2144/21724>; Charles Sanders Peirce, “Charles S. Peirce Papers, 1787-1951 (MS Am 1632 L77)” (Houghton Library, Harvard University, August 26, 1910), Seq. 266, <http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:FHCL.HOUGH:17115662>. This seems to confuse a number of things, including by introducing a dyadic relation, if not a pair of dyadic relations, within the triadic relation of the sign as a whole, and so is not taken to be Peirce representing himself *ex cathedra* so to speak.

definition of the interpretant as the “proper significate effects”<sup>629</sup> of signs, or “all that is explicit in the sign itself apart from its context and circumstances of utterance,”<sup>630</sup> makes no mention of mentality. This notion of the interpretant as effect is what makes semiosis, or the action of signs, the proper subject matter of semiotics, and not merely the ontology of signs.<sup>631</sup> Of course, the interpretant too can be analyzed according to the categories: the “immediate interpretant” is the abstract possible or anticipated effect of the sign, i.e. firstness, the “dynamical interpretant” is the actual effect, i.e. secondness, and the “final interpretant” is the effect that would pertain if the dynamical object were to be fully realized in any possible interpretation, i.e. thirdness.<sup>632</sup> Notably, the final interpretant orienting back toward the dynamic object converts the dynamical interpretant to

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<sup>629</sup> Peirce, *The Collected Papers*, 5.475.

<sup>630</sup> Peirce, 5.473.

<sup>631</sup> Deely, *Basics of Semiotics*, 2005, chap. 3.

<sup>632</sup> M. Bergman and S. Paavola, eds., “Immediate Interpretant,” in *The Commens Dictionary: Peirce’s Terms in His Own Words*, accessed June 20, 2018, <http://www.commens.org/dictionary/term/immediate-interpretant>; M. Bergman and S. Paavola, eds., “Dynamical Interpretant,” in *The Commens Dictionary: Peirce’s Terms in His Own Words*, accessed June 22, 2018, <http://www.commens.org/dictionary/term/dynamical-interpretant>; M. Bergman and S. Paavola, eds., “Final Interpretant,” in *The Commens Dictionary: Peirce’s Terms in His Own Words*, accessed June 22, 2018, <http://www.commens.org/dictionary/term/final-interpretant>; Peirce and Welby, *Semiotic and Significs*, 110–11; Peirce, *The Collected Papers*, 8.314-15; Charles Sanders Peirce, *Writings of Charles S. Peirce: A Chronological Edition - 1867-1871*, ed. Edward C. Moore et al., vol. 2 (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1982), 496–97.

yet another sign of the object constitutes an internal drive and the interpretant also being the final object constitutes an internal drive that together power semiosis.

His inability to escape the mental vortex in articulating his semiotics was clearly frustrating to Peirce. The cause of the entrapment has to do with his commitment to semiotics as a conception of final causation in the Aristotelian sense of a teleological motivation on the part of the object for undertaking the action at all, and may be expressed as the reason for the action at issue for explanation.<sup>633</sup> The problem is that while teleology, or purposiveness, can be stretched from human animals (anthroposemiotics) to other living things (biosemiotics), final causality is seemingly impossible to attribute to the wider physical world, thus resulting in an internal contradiction to the aspiration of conceiving the universe as “composed exclusively of signs.”<sup>634</sup> John Deely solves the problem by widening the lens from final causation:

There is a more general causality at work in the sign than the final causality typical of the vital powers. This more general causality specifies vital activity but specifies also the

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<sup>633</sup> Peirce, *The Collected Papers*, 1.269; Joseph Ransdell, “Some Leading Ideas of Peirce’s Semiotic,” *Semiotica* 19, no. 3–4 (1977): sec. II, <https://doi.org/10.1515/semi.1977.19.3-4.157>; Deely, *Basics of Semiotics*, 2005, 112; Aristotle, *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, bk. Physics II.3; Metaphysics V.2; Andrea Falcon, “Aristotle on Causality,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Spring, 2015, sec. 2, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2015/entries/aristotle-causality/>.

<sup>634</sup> Deely, *Basics of Semiotics*, 2005, 113–14.

causality at work in chance interactions of brute secondness. It is this causality, not final causality, that is the causality proper to the sign in its distinctive function of making present what it itself is not.<sup>635</sup>

He does not name this general causation, but he does say that it “need not be goal-oriented in any intrinsic sense. On the contrary, it needs to be a causality equally able to ground sign-behavior in chance occurrences and planned happenings.”<sup>636</sup> What sort of causation might this be? Whereas Peirce fell afoul of attributing final causation to the object in generating the interpretant, the sort of causation Deely describes is formal causation in the parlance of Aristotle,<sup>637</sup> not of the object but of the sign itself in its entirety. The form of the sign causes the effect to arise from the object as mediated by the sign-vehicle: “beings and events so determined by other beings and events that, in their own activity as so determined, they determine yet further series of beings and events in such a way that the last terms in the series represent the first terms by the mediation of the middle terms.”<sup>638</sup> The form may also be stated logically: “a sign will be any A so *determined by* a B that in *determining* C that C is mediately determined by B. Thus,

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<sup>635</sup> Deely, 115.

<sup>636</sup> Deely, 115.

<sup>637</sup> Falcon, “Aristotle on Causality,” sec. 2.

<sup>638</sup> Deely, *Basics of Semiotics*, 2005, 116.

B determines A, and, precisely in the respect in which B has determined it, A determines C. Therefore C, in being immediately determined by A, is at the same time mediately determined by B.”<sup>639</sup> It is important to remember, from Peirce, that signs themselves are relations among the object, the sign vehicle, and the interpretant, and the ontology of the sign cannot be reduced to the haecceity of the sign vehicle. Peirce was committed to scholastic realism, i.e. to the doctrine of the reality of generals (universals),<sup>640</sup> for precisely this reason: the ontology of the sign is its form, and it is the form of a process generating the interpretant from the object via the sign vehicle. Consider, for example, the sign of a tree canopy relating the object of the tree, the sign vehicle of its leaves, and the interpretant that raindrops are diverted from their gravitational trajectory such that things under the canopy stay (relatively) dry. The leaves of the tree are “so determined by” the tree that “in determining” the trajectory of the raindrops, said trajectory “is mediately determined” by the tree. The canopy, which is the sign itself, is the

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<sup>639</sup> Deely, 117.

<sup>640</sup> Peirce, *The Collected Papers*, 5.100-101, 312, 453; M. Bergman and S. Paavola, eds., “Scholastic Realism,” in *The Commens Dictionary: Peirce’s Terms in His Own Words*, accessed June 21, 2018, <http://www.commens.org/dictionary/term/scholastic-realism>; M. Bergman and S. Paavola, eds., “Realism,” in *The Commens Dictionary: Peirce’s Terms in His Own Words*, accessed June 21, 2018, <http://www.commens.org/dictionary/term/realism>; M. Bergman and S. Paavola, eds., “Real,” in *The Commens Dictionary: Peirce’s Terms in His Own Words*, accessed June 19, 2018, <http://www.commens.org/dictionary/term/real>.

form of the leaves as determined by the tree such that raindrops are diverted, that is, the canopy is the form of the process of diverting raindrops that would otherwise fall at the foot of the tree.

An important corollary of the relational ontology of signs is that it is neither necessary that the sign itself nor any of its elements – object, sign vehicle, or interpretant – be a physical thing; any or all of them may be ideas. This is the inversion of the claim that the object and interpretant “need not be persons”<sup>641</sup> that results in both his scholastic realism such that generals, e.g. relations, are real on the pragmatic basis that they have effects,<sup>642</sup> and his objective idealism such that physical laws are arbitrary albeit adventitious regularities.<sup>643</sup> Together these form conditional idealism, “that truth’s independence of individual opinions is due (so far as there is any ‘truth’) to its being the predestined result to

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<sup>641</sup> Quoted in Deely, *Basics of Semiotics*, 2005, 111. from Peirce, Charles Sanders, “Pragmatism,” referenced in Richard S. Robin, *Annotated Catalogue of the Papers of Charles S. Peirce* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1967), MS 318. See also Charles Sanders Peirce, *Prolegomena to a Science of Reasoning: Phaneroscopy, Semeiotic, Logic* (New York, NY: Peter Lang, 2015), 95–96.

<sup>642</sup> Peirce, *The Collected Papers*, 5.100-101, 312, 453; Bergman and Paavola, “Scholastic Realism”; Bergman and Paavola, “Realism”; Bergman and Paavola, “Real”; John Deely, “Objective Reality and the Physical World: Relation as Key to Understanding Semiosis,” ed. Stephen Sparks, *Green Letters* 19, no. 3 (September 2, 2015): 267–79, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14688417.2015.1063239>.

<sup>643</sup> Peirce, *The Collected Papers*, 6.24-25; M. Bergman and S. Paavola, eds., “Objective Idealism,” in *The Commens Dictionary: Peirce’s Terms in His Own Words*, accessed June 21, 2018, <http://www.commens.org/dictionary/term/objective-idealism>.

which sufficient inquiry *would* ultimately lead.”<sup>644</sup> Indeed, while logic for Peirce “concerns itself as directly with the outward, as with the inward representations,” that is, with relations among things in the world as much as with relations among things as represented in mind by signs, “reasoning is essentially of the nature of a representation or sign” and “can only be performed by a mind more or less like that of man.”<sup>645</sup> Reasoning is a particular form of thought:

‘Thinking’ is a fabled ‘operation of mind’ by which an imaginary object is brought before one’s gaze. If that object is a sign upon which an argument may turn, we call it a Thought... The ‘operation of the mind’ is an *ens rationis*... All necessary reasoning is diagrammatic; and the assurance furnished by all reasoning must be based upon necessary reasoning. In this sense, all reasoning depends directly or indirectly on diagrams.<sup>646</sup>

A diagram is a mental icon of a metaphysical sign of pure relation, “a representamen which is predominantly an icon of relations and is aided to be so by conventions:”<sup>647</sup> “The pure diagram is designed to represent and render

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<sup>644</sup> Peirce, *The Collected Papers*, 5.494; M. Bergman and S. Paavola, eds., “Conditional Idealism,” in *The Commens Dictionary: Peirce’s Terms in His Own Words*, accessed June 23, 2018, <http://www.commens.org/dictionary/term/conditional-idealism>.

<sup>645</sup> Peirce, *Prolegomena to a Science of Reasoning*, 41.

<sup>646</sup> Peirce, 96.

<sup>647</sup> Peirce, *The Collected Papers*, 4.418; M. Bergman and S. Paavola, eds., “Diagram,” in *The Commens Dictionary: Peirce’s Terms in His Own Words*, accessed June 26, 2018, <http://www.commens.org/dictionary/term/diagram>.

intelligible the form of relation merely. Consequently, diagrams are restricted to the representation of a certain class of relations; namely, those that are intelligible."<sup>648</sup> Being so general, diagrams are applicable across a wide range of instances to evaluate whether the relations pertaining among the matters under consideration are intelligible. One of the diagrams in which intelligible forms have been encoded is language. The subsection on semiotics in chapter three will make the case that while Peirce was at the forefront of a diagrammatic movement in logic,<sup>649</sup> ritual is a more robust theoretical framework for explaining and encoding the processes involved in reasoning with signs, including not only representation but also reflexivity and recursion. It will then be left to chapter five to show how the particularly linguistic semiotic system participates in reasoning so as to connect up the human organism with the reality of the world in which it lives.

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<sup>648</sup> Peirce, *Prolegomena to a Science of Reasoning*, 111.

<sup>649</sup> Sun-Joo Shin, Oliver Lemon, and John Mumma, "Diagrams," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Summer, 2018, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2018/entries/diagrams/>.



*Semiotics and Language in Deacon*

The most influential interpretation of language in terms of Peircian semiotics at present is that rendered by Terrence W. Deacon in *The Symbolic Species: The Co-evolution of Language and the Brain*.<sup>650</sup> Deacon is attempting to solve the problem in evolutionary anthropology of why no animals other than humans have language and why there is such a large gap between the cognitive and linguistic abilities of humans and the next highest capable animals.<sup>651</sup> He hypothesizes that the mental capacity for symbolic reference<sup>652</sup> necessary for language use initially appeared in humans as an advantageous trait and then evolved rapidly through a dialectical process with the complexification of language, which he calls “co-evolution.”<sup>653</sup> In adopting the Peircian nomenclature of icon, index, and symbol, Deacon takes himself to be hewing to a set of semiotic insights as Peirce elaborated them, and does so in terms of construing semiosis as a process rather than a state, but misconstrues Peirce by

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<sup>650</sup> Deacon, *The Symbolic Species*.

<sup>651</sup> Deacon, 11–46.

<sup>652</sup> Deacon, 59–101.

<sup>653</sup> Deacon, pt. 3.

representing the three modes of reference as downwards reducible.<sup>654</sup> The closest Peirce comes to articulating a hierarchy of signs is in his ten classes of signs,<sup>655</sup> but he is clear that while indices “involve a sort of icon,” “it is not the mere resemblance to its Object, even in these respects, which makes it a sign, but it is the actual modification of it by the Object.” Likewise, while symbols indirectly involve indices, it is not “by any means true that the slight effect upon the symbol of those instances accounts for the significant character of the symbol.”<sup>656</sup> Hence, symbols are not reducible to indices and indices are not reducible to icons;<sup>657</sup> each type of sign is a distinct category for Peirce, which Deacon misinterprets. As a result of this misinterpretation, there is a great deal of linguistic complexity and mental capacity packed into symbolic reference for Deacon that does not necessarily map onto what Peirce means by symbolic

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<sup>654</sup> Deacon, 467n2, 69–79.

<sup>655</sup> Peirce, *The Essential Peirce 2*, vol. 2, chap. 21; Peirce, *The Collected Papers*, 2.233–272.

<sup>656</sup> Peirce, *The Essential Peirce 2*, 2:291–92.

<sup>657</sup> Robert Burch, *A Peircean Reduction Thesis: The Foundations of Topological Logic* (Lubbock, TX: Texas Tech University Press, 1991); Irving H. Anellis, “Tarski’s Development of Peirce’s Logic of Relations,” in *Studies in the Logic of Charles Sanders Peirce*, ed. Nathan Houser, Don D. Roberts, and James Van Evra (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1997), 271–303; Joachim Hereth Correia and Reinhard Pöschel, “The Teridentity and Peircean Algebraic Logic,” in *Conceptual Structures: Inspiration and Application*, Lecture Notes in Computer Science (International Conference on Conceptual Structures, Berlin, Heidelberg: Springer, 2006), 229–46, [https://doi.org/10.1007/11787181\\_17](https://doi.org/10.1007/11787181_17).

signification. Admittedly, Peirce offers a number of definitions of symbol, but a particularly relevant one is as follows:

A symbol is a representamen [sign vehicle] which refers only to such objects and in such respects as it might determine an interpretant to refer to those objects in those respects, and is hereby alone essentially a representamen, not in virtue of a physical relation or of an agreement of characters, but by a relation subsisting only by virtue of a representation. There must, therefore, be some general rule which connects the symbol with its objects; and it represents whatever that general rule determines it to represent.<sup>658</sup>

Thus, if signs in general are considered as irreducibly triadic relations and symbolic signs are merely distinguished by the arbitrariness of the sign vehicle with respect to the object, correlated by an external rule, then there is a lot more at play in the dynamism of language than can be accounted for by symbolic reference alone.

One way to account for the linguistic remainder unaccounted for by symbolic reference is to distinguish the reference of individual symbols from the symbol system in which a set of symbols and their relations are encoded. With such a distinction in hand, it is possible to deny the claim that “symbolic reference derives from *combinatorial* possibilities and impossibilities”<sup>659</sup> without denying

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<sup>658</sup> M. Bergman and S. Paavola, eds., “Symbol,” in *The Commens Dictionary: Peirce’s Terms in His Own Words*, sec. Definitions for Baldwin’s Dictionary [R], accessed March 7, 2018, <http://www.commens.org/dictionary/term/symbol>.

<sup>659</sup> Deacon, *The Symbolic Species*, 83.

that such combinatorics play an important role in language as determined by the symbol system in which the rules that govern symbolic reference are encoded. This is to say that symbolic reference determines the intension (reference) of language while the symbol system constitutes its extension (sense) such that the meaning of a given symbol remains stable and available apart from the presence of its object.<sup>660</sup> Moreover, it is not necessarily the case that all symbols participate in systems. A dog learning the rule that if the owner says “come” they are to move from where they are toward the owner is in fact an example of symbolic reference, because there is no intrinsic connection between the phonetic enunciation of “come” and that particular movement, although there would not be any extension for the word “come” in a symbol system for the dog. Language, alternatively, clearly does depend on the rules of reference being encoded in its symbol system. Thus, conflating the symbol system with symbolic reference ends up committing the fallacy of Saussurean structuralism, in which the structure of language is taken as normative for all semiotic systems, all over again. While Deacon is quite plausibly correct about the co-evolution of language and the brain, what is interesting about language and that requires explanation as

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<sup>660</sup> Deacon, 82–83.

distinct from other animals is not symbolic reference but the incredibly intricate, multi-level, and nested network of signs and relations among signs in the system. He describes these as “a kind of tangled hierarchic network of nodes and connections that defines a vast and constantly changing semantic space.”

Furthermore, Deacon is certainly right that “though semanticists and semiotic theorists have proposed various analogies to explain these underlying topological principles of semantic organization (such as +/- feature lists, dictionary analogies, encyclopedia analogies), we are far from a satisfactory account.”<sup>661</sup> The present project makes the case that the best account of the linguistic symbol system is as a species of ritual, which are symbol systems *an sich*, a possibility Deacon himself suggests in identifying the ritual beginnings of symbolic thought.<sup>662</sup>

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<sup>661</sup> Deacon, 100.

<sup>662</sup> Deacon, 401–10.

## WESTERN RITUAL THEORY

A comprehensive review of the Western ritual theory literature was published in two volumes in 2006 under the title *Theorizing Rituals*,<sup>663</sup> and magisterial summaries of the evolution of ritual theory are available in two works of Catherine Bell (1953 – 2008): *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice*, and *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions*.<sup>664</sup> Rather than attempting to summarize these works, let alone replicate them, this chapter instead elaborates numerous aspects of an original theory of ritual arising from that of Roy A. Rappaport and in conversation and comparison with the ways these aspects are presented in a variety of alternative ritual theories in the literature. This theory will receive further development in conversation with the Confucian ritual theory of Xunzi in the next chapter, but this chapter concludes with consideration of the relationship between ritual and language in the Western ritual theory literature. The construction of a novel theory of language as ritual is delayed for chapter five.

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<sup>663</sup> Jens Kreinath, Jan Snoek, and Michael Stausberg, *Theorizing Rituals: Vol. 1 - Issues, Topics, Approaches, Concepts; Vol. 2 - Annotated Bibliography of Ritual Theory 1966-2005*, 1st ed., Numen Books: Studies in the History of Religions (Leiden: Brill, 2006).

<sup>664</sup> Catherine Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1992); Catherine Bell, *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1997).

Given that the goal of this chapter is the development of an original ritual theory, something must be said about the nature of theory; the nature of ritual is left for what the theory says it is. Ronald Grimes, in *The Craft of Ritual Studies*, interrogates theory particularly as applied to ritual. One definition of theory he advances is that “theory is writing that helps you see. Theory consists of researchers’ basic, orienting statements about how they plan to see what they propose to study.”<sup>665</sup> Later he offers an alternative, corresponding definition of theory as “any set of generalizations, key concepts, root metaphors, and determinative vocabulary that animate the characteristic moves of one’s method.”<sup>666</sup> For the purposes of this chapter, all of these animating forces are understood as “aspects” of a theory of ritual. Furthermore, for Grimes ritual theory is a constructive endeavor emerging primarily from the imagination: “Imaginative labor is undergirded with data and inferences from data, but in the final analysis, a theory is a piece of intellectual handiwork, with no more (or less) status than pottery-making.”<sup>667</sup> The present endeavor embraces the constructive

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<sup>665</sup> Ronald L. Grimes, *The Craft of Ritual Studies* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2013), 167.

<sup>666</sup> Grimes, 170.

<sup>667</sup> Grimes, 177.

character of ritual theory, analogous to the constructive character of theology in some ways.

Grimes further notes several criteria for evaluating theory, particularly in the humanities and social sciences: “public intelligibility, imaginative stimulation, moral accountability, practical utility, internal coherence, and comprehensiveness become criteria for adjudicating what is better and worse theorizing.”<sup>668</sup> Notably, these criteria correspond almost verbatim to the criteria outlined by Alfred North Whitehead for speculative philosophy: coherence, consistency, adequacy, and applicability.<sup>669</sup> This is perhaps less surprising as philosophy operates almost exclusively at the theoretical level, and since the present project is in fact an exercise in religious philosophy, the original theory of ritual to be advanced here seeks to adhere to all of them. Grimes goes on to distinguish hypothesis and theory on the basis of comprehensiveness: “Whereas a hypothesis concerns the relation between two parts, a theory attempts to lay out a whole.”<sup>670</sup> As explained in the first chapter, this dissertation operates under the method of religious philosophy as multidisciplinary comparative inquiry,

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<sup>668</sup> Grimes, 174.

<sup>669</sup> Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 3.

<sup>670</sup> Grimes, *The Craft of Ritual Studies*, 174.



and so advances inquiry by developing hypothetical theories. This is to say that the various aspects of the theory of ritual advanced here are hypotheses regarding the nature, function, and operation of ritual generally, which is precisely what makes them accountable to the criteria of good theory Grimes outlines.

Grimes summarizes his argument regarding ritual theory in a way that is particularly useful for evaluating the success of the original ritual theory to be developed in the course of this chapter and the next:

Western theories of ritual are constructed largely out of words. Sometimes these theories are grounded on actual rites, but just as likely they are based on the words of other theories. Beneath theoretical verbalizations are images, analogies, and metaphors. Because theorizing is imagination-driven, it is as artistic as it is scientific... Out of critically examined and appropriated images, analogies, and metaphors, models can be built. For a model of ritual to be adequate, it should enable us to either explain or construct a ritual by taking into account its static elements (using, e.g., mechanical metaphors), internal dynamics (using, e.g., narrative or dramatic metaphors), interactions with their contexts (using, e.g. complex systems, cybernetic, ecological, or cognitive metaphors). Any theory that fails to account for all three, regardless of the metaphors it uses, is inadequate for ritual studies research.<sup>671</sup>

The aspects of a ritual theory to be elaborated below aspire to function as a model of ritual. Evaluation of whether the theory is adequate for explaining a ritual will take place primarily in chapter five, where the theory is applied to

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<sup>671</sup> Grimes, 200–201.

language, but also below vis-à-vis the Great Vigil of Easter, as explained forthwith, and in chapter four vis-à-vis the Autumnal Sacrifice to Confucius.

### Aspects of a Theory of Ritual

The ritual theory developed by cultural anthropologist Roy A. Rappaport in *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity*<sup>672</sup> benefits from comparative engagement with a range of other contributions to the ritual theory literature to develop a novel ritual theory. As Grimes noted above, evaluation as to the adequacy of the theory must be based on its capacity to “explain or construct a ritual.” Chapter five will explain language using the theory of ritual developed here, but language is hardly uncontested as appropriately explained by ritual theory, as will be explored in the final section of this chapter. Therefore, the discussion of each aspect of the theory of ritual here will include its employment for explaining a ritual commonly accepted as such: The Great Vigil of Easter at Washington National Cathedral on April 4, 2015 beginning at 8:00 p.m. The Great Vigil of Easter is selected because it includes a wide variety of Christian ritual practices within it, thereby offering a plethora of opportunities for

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<sup>672</sup> Roy A. Rappaport, *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

explanation. The service as celebrated at Washington National Cathedral is selected because the cathedral archives its service leaflets and video of their services and makes them publicly available on their website,<sup>673</sup> thereby preserving the material for other researchers who may wish to contest the interpretations offered here. In the footnotes referring to the service in the remainder of the chapter, the timings in the video recording will generally appear first, and then the pages in the service bulletin or other liturgical texts where the words being said in the service appear. It could be argued that applying the theory to yet another Western, Christian ritual enactment fails to demonstrate that the theory in fact delivers the promised breadth and robustness. This is a fair critique, but the theory must at least be able to explain such a commonly accepted ritual, so the Great Vigil is addressed interpolated into the development of the theory and then the theory, modified in conversation with Xunzi, is applied to The Autumnal Sacrifice to Confucius in the next chapter. The Autumnal Sacrifice is also generally acknowledged as a ritual, but arises from an East Asian context, thereby providing a contrast with the

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<sup>673</sup> "Worship Archive," Washington National Cathedral, accessed July 9, 2015, <https://www.cathedral.org/worship/worshipArchive.shtml>. Service leaflet for the Vigil: "The Great Vigil of Easter - Service Bulletin" (Washington National Cathedral, April 4, 2015), <https://www.cathedral.org/pdfs/GV20150404.pdf>. Service video: *The Great Vigil of Easter - Video Recording*, mp4 (Washington, DC, 2015), <http://video3.cathedral.org:1755/mp4/HE20150404.mp4>.

application of the theory to the Christian Great Vigil of Easter. Like the particular instantiation of the Great Vigil of Easter selected for analysis, the Autumnal Sacrifice to Confucius from 1997 in Tainan, Taiwan is selected for the public availability of video recordings and extensive documentation thereof.<sup>674</sup> While it would be good to apply the theory to other less-commonly accepted ritual expressions, the application to language will have to suffice in that regard for present purposes.

Given the centrality of Rappaport's theory of ritual for this project, it is important to be clear about the situation and aims of his work and the ways that work contrasts with the present project. As an anthropologist, Rappaport is interested in the process of human meaning making, and within the discipline of anthropology he takes an evolutionary view, inquiring into both "the evolution of humanity and humanity's place in the evolution of the world,"<sup>675</sup> that is, into what makes humans distinctive from other organisms. He further takes religion, ubiquitous across human societies, to be central to the meaning making process for humans, and the central elements of religion, (i.e. "the sacred," "the

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<sup>674</sup> Stephanie Wong and Thomas A. Wilson, "Introduction," *Autumnal Sacrifice to Confucius: A Study of Confucianism's Sacrificial Tradition*, accessed March 15, 2017, [http://academics.hamilton.edu/asian\\_studies/home/autumnalsacrifice/index.html](http://academics.hamilton.edu/asian_studies/home/autumnalsacrifice/index.html).

<sup>675</sup> Rappaport, *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity*, 1.

numinous," "the occult," "the divine," etc.), are in turn generated by the enactment of the form or structure of ritual. It is important to Rappaport to distinguish ritual from the purely symbolic, e.g. language, which is made up of "signs related only 'by law,' i.e. convention, to that which they signify."<sup>676</sup> This is because he wants to insist that ritual ameliorates two vices inherent in symbolic language: the lie, and the implicit acknowledgment of alternative orders. Ritual does so, he argues, by necessarily generating religion as the logical entailment of the ritual form, in turn establishing the "*True Word*,"<sup>677</sup> or "*Ultimate Sacred Postulates*,"<sup>678</sup> against which lies and alternatives may be measured as true or false, real or unreal, respectively.

While adopting much of Rappaport's theory of ritual, the theory of ritual developed here rejects this argument both in terms of the necessity of ritual generating religion in all cases and in terms of ritual ameliorating lies and potential alternatives. Instead, the argument here is that all rituals generate a certain *taken-for-grantedness*, *a la* the social theory of Peter Berger and his approach to the sociology of knowledge. Furthermore and nevertheless, all

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<sup>676</sup> Rappaport, 4.

<sup>677</sup> Rappaport, 21.

<sup>678</sup> Rappaport, 263.

rituals, including religious rituals, are themselves also lies and imply the possibility of alternative constructions of reality, and so are simultaneously the grounds and justification for the cognitive dissonance that upends the taken-for-grantedness they entail, generate, and establish. In this, the present theory follows Rappaport in arguing for the universality of ritual across cultures, geographies, and time periods, but must draw on other resources to make the case for its pervasiveness in human life. Finally, the Peircian semiotic analysis Rappaport undertakes to distinguish language from ritual requires correction and renovation in order to demonstrate that language is properly understood as a species of the ritual genus in the final section of the chapter.

### *Definition*

Before turning to definitions of ritual given by theorists, it is profitable to consider a more mundane source of definitions, namely a dictionary. The *Oxford*

*English Dictionary* provides the following definitions of ritual as a noun:

- 1.a. Freq. with capital initial. A book containing details of the form or order of religious or ceremonial rites. Now chiefly *hist.*
- b. The prescribed form or order of religious or ceremonial rites.
- 2.a. A ritual act or ceremonial observance. Also in later use: an action or series of actions regularly or habitually repeated.
- b. *Psychol.* A compulsive act or routine, the non-performance of which results in tension and anxiety.

3. The performance of ritual acts. Also in later use: repeated actions or patterns of behaviour having significance within a particular social group.<sup>679</sup>

Several features of these definitions are noteworthy. First, both parts of definition one correlate ritual with religion, while the latter definitions demure from any association of ritual with religion. Second, definitions two and three emphasize the activity of ritual, as opposed to the textual emphasis of the first set of definitions. Moreover, these definitions emphasize that ritual actions are repeated, and occur habitually, regularly, and by routine. Finally, the third definition attests the social aspect of ritual and its significance.

Jan Snoek recognizes the profound lack of consensus among ritual theorists with regard to a definition of ritual, and suggests that finding a way forward with this aspect of a theory of ritual requires understanding the concept of ritual as a “polythetic class:”

A class is polythetic if and only if (A) each member of the class has a large but unspecified number of a set of characteristics occurring in the class as a whole, (B) each of those characteristics is possessed by a large number of those members, and (if fully polythetic) (C) no one of those characteristics is possessed by every member of the class.<sup>680</sup>

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<sup>679</sup> “Ritual, Adj. and n.,” in *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, accessed July 10, 2015, <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/166369>.

<sup>680</sup> Kreinath, Snoek, and Stausberg, *Theorizing Rituals*, I: 4.

This notion of a polythetic class is equivalent to the concept of “vagueness” advanced by Charles Peirce: “anything ... is *vague* in so far as the principle of contradiction does not apply to it.”<sup>681</sup> This is to say that some elements of a vague category may have mutually contradictory characteristics. The advantage of polythetic classes and vague categories is that they do not miss the forest for the trees by sacrificing scope for specificity.<sup>682</sup> The disadvantage is that members “do not in all cases possess any specific features that could justify the formulation of general propositions about them.”<sup>683</sup> Thus, rather than pointing to a resolution of contention regarding definitions of ritual, conceiving them as vague or polythetic merely calls into question the sufficiency of any definition. It is for this very reason that a model of ritual incorporating a variety of aspects is necessary, including a definition but not limited thereto.

The definition Roy Rappaport offers of ritual is “the performance of more or less invariant sequences of formal acts and utterances not entirely encoded by the performers.”<sup>684</sup> Notably, Rappaport aspires in his definition to fulfill the

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<sup>681</sup> Peirce, *The Essential Peirce 2*, 2:351.

<sup>682</sup> See Whitney, “Experience and the Ultimacy of God,” esp. 44-45.

<sup>683</sup> Kreinath, Snoek, and Stausberg, *Theorizing Rituals*, I: 6.

<sup>684</sup> Rappaport, *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity*, 24.



requisites for a definition of ritual set by Bruce Kapferer, which are quite properly vague in their own right, while demurring from the definition Kapferer then gives.<sup>685</sup> Furthermore, Rappaport goes to great pains to insist that his definition of ritual is a formal or structural definition as opposed to a functional or substantive definition, on which point he feels he has frequently been misinterpreted.<sup>686</sup> The import of this distinction is that he intends his definition to articulate ritual as a form in which a variety of different elements relate to each other according to the form, as opposed to defining rituals based on what they do. This is not to say that he does not understand the ritual form to have particular effects or consequences, which he does and calls “logical entailments,”<sup>687</sup> and which will be explored under the subsection on function below.

Two other definitions of ritual are noteworthy for purposes of comparison.<sup>688</sup> First, Victor Turner (1920 – 1983): “By ‘ritual’ I mean prescribed

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<sup>685</sup> Rappaport, 469-70n3; Bruce Kapferer, *A Celebration of Demons: Exorcism and the Aesthetics of Healing in Sri Lanka*, 2nd ed. (Leamington Spa, UK: Berg, 1991).

<sup>686</sup> Rappaport, *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity*, 26–28.

<sup>687</sup> Rappaport, 26–27.

<sup>688</sup> A convenient compendium of definitions of ritual is available in Jan G. Platvoet and Karel Van Der Toorn, *Pluralism and Identity: Studies in Ritual Behaviour* (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 42–45.

formal behavior for occasions not given over to technological routine, having reference to belief in mystical beings or powers.”<sup>689</sup> The element of prescription in this definition correlates to the activity of ritual not being entirely encoded by the performers in Rappaport. Furthermore, Rappaport and Turner are in full agreement regarding the formality of ritual. However, Turner seeks to exclude technological routine from the domain of ritual, while Rappaport insists that ritual has outcomes that arise necessarily from its form; for Turner ritual is commentarial and ornamental, whereas for Rappaport it is socially constructive.<sup>690</sup> Moreover, Turner indicates that religion, and more specifically religious belief, is the primary referent of ritual, which Rappaport rejects. This is unsurprising since the central thesis Rappaport advances is that religion is what ritual generates, not one of its elements or contents.

Stanley Jeyaraja Tambiah (1929 – 2014) further considers the relationship between religion and ritual in his definition:

Ritual is a culturally constructed system of symbolic communication. It is constituted of patterned and ordered sequences of words and acts, often expressed in multiple media,

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<sup>689</sup> Victor Witter Turner, *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1967), 19.

<sup>690</sup> Turner is following the distinction of Edmund Leach: “Technique has economic material consequences which are measurable and predictable; ritual on the other hand is a symbolic statement which ‘says’ something about the individuals involved in the action.” Edmund Leach, *Political Systems of Highland Burma: A Study of Kachin Social Structures* (London: Bell & Sons, 1964).

whose content and arrangement are characterized in varying degree by formality (conventionality), stereotypy (rigidity), condensation (fusion), and redundancy (repetition).<sup>691</sup>

For Tambiah to say that ritual is culturally constructed is roughly equivalent to Rappaport claiming that ritual is not entirely encoded by the performers; that is, that the encoding of ritual takes place at the cultural, as opposed to the personal, level. Even though Tambiah and Rappaport disagree with regard to the symbolic character of ritual, they agree on ritual as a form of communication, and in the end are closely aligned in seeking to stake out a middle ground between the neo-Tylorian school of ritual and the semiotic school:

The neo-Tylorians (e.g. Horton) conceive the critical feature of religion, and therefore of (religious) ritual, as being belief in, and communication with, the “supernatural” world or a “transtemporal” other world. In contrast, the semiotic school views the category ritual as spanning sacred–secular, natural–supernatural domains, and as having as its distinctive feature a tendency toward certain forms and structures of “communication.”<sup>692</sup>

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<sup>691</sup> Stanley Jeyaraja Tambiah, *A Performative Approach to Ritual*, Proceedings of the British Academy, London, LXV (1979) (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1981), 119.

<sup>692</sup> Tambiah, 120. Broadly, the myth and ritual theory takes myth and ritual to be inextricably related. Edward Burnett Tylor, more specifically, believed that the function of ritual is to control what myth explains, namely the supernatural, as technology seeks to control what science explains. See Robert Alan Segal, *The Myth and Ritual Theory: An Anthology* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1998), 63. The semiotic approach to ritual finds nascent expression in Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 1973), 112–13. The emphasis on communication in the semiotic approach to ritual becomes clear in James W. Carey, *Communication As Culture: Essays on Media and Society*, revised edition (New York, NY: Routledge, 2009), 11–28.

Notably, Victor Turner develops a definition of ritual approaching the orientation of the semiotic school as well: ritual is “symbolic behavior” that “‘creates’ society for pragmatic purposes;”<sup>693</sup> presumably communication would be among or involved with these pragmatic purposes. The ritual theory under development here seeks to press back upon too close an association between ritual and religion, and thus will seek to problematize the neo-Tylorian project.

The definition of ritual Rappaport offers is adopted wholesale for present purposes: ritual is “the performance of more or less invariant sequences of formal acts and utterances not entirely encoded by the performers.”<sup>694</sup> What it means that ritual is fundamentally a performance will be discussed below in the subsection under that title, but for the moment performance may be understood as enactment. The constituents of ritual performances include both acts and utterances, which means that rituals deploy both language and motions, suggesting at least the possibility of artifacts such as texts to be read and objects to be moved.

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<sup>693</sup> Victor Witter Turner, *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1975), 56. An account of the development and shifts in Turner’s ritual theory over the course of his career is available in Mathieu Deflem, “Ritual, Anti-Structure, and Religion: A Discussion of Victor Turner’s Processual Symbolic Analysis,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 30, no. 1 (March 1, 1991): 1–25, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1387146>.

<sup>694</sup> Rappaport, *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity*, 24.

In The Great Vigil of Easter, the ritual begins with the lighting of new fire and the bishop prays a prayer from a book with her hand extended over the fire, and then she makes the sign of the cross.<sup>695</sup> This performance of language and motion is ordered and patterned, as Tambiah describes them, which is what Rappaport means by their being formal.<sup>696</sup> The sign of the cross is a pattern that recurs frequently throughout the Great Vigil of Easter and connects this particular ritual with the enactment of this motion in other rituals. The formality of such acts and utterances, which is what Rappaport is referring to in calling them formal, should not be confused with the ritual form overall and its entailments, which is what the definition *in totum* is intended to articulate. In order to be ritual, formal acts and utterances must be performed in more or less invariant sequence. When the bishop makes the sign of the cross, she first raises her hand to about the level of her forehead, brings it down to the level of her chest, brings it up and to her left roughly aligned with her shoulder, then crosses at the same vertical level to the right shoulder, moving her hand back to the center of the cross she just outlined before moving her hand back to the starting

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<sup>695</sup> *The Great Vigil of Easter - Video Recording*, 0:01:08-0:01:36; "The Great Vigil of Easter - Service Bulletin," 3.

<sup>696</sup> Rappaport, *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity*, 29.

point. She follows the same pattern in the same sequence in subsequent enactments of this ritual form, although with somewhat different reference points depending on what she is making the sign of the cross over. For example, when making the sign of the cross over the Eucharistic elements, the motion is transposed from the vertical to the horizontal plane.<sup>697</sup> Finally, for the acts and utterances that constitute ritual to be ritual they cannot be entirely encoded by their performers, which means that the participants in rituals do not simply make them up as they go along. In the case of The Great Vigil of Easter, the bishop did not invent the sign of the cross but rather performed it as it has been performed by many Christian clergy over the centuries. She also did not make up the words of the prayer but rather said words from the Book of Common Prayer, which are said by many other Episcopal clergy at The Great Vigil of Easter in many different places each year. That said, she was involved somewhat in encoding her performance of the ritual in that her voice sounds different than other clergy, along with many other particularities having to do with the context of the space, her own physiology, and more.

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<sup>697</sup> *The Great Vigil of Easter - Video Recording*, 2:00:30-2:00:45; "The Great Vigil of Easter - Service Bulletin," 14.

A definition is merely a starting point for developing a theory of ritual. It is important for providing an initial orientation, but alone a definition could never fulfill the criteria for evaluation of a good theory outlined above, let alone provide sufficient inspiration to animate a method for fully analyzing any given ritual. Other aspects of a theory of ritual help to clarify and elaborate the definition even as they move beyond the definition to articulate the features, range, scope, context, means of operation, capacity, and power of ritual. On its own, the definition of ritual as “the performance of more or less invariant sequences of formal acts and utterances not entirely encoded by the performers” (Rappaport, 24) does not indicate that very much is at stake in attending to or neglecting ritual. As the other aspects of the theory of ritual under development here come into view, the case will be made that a great deal is at stake indeed.

### *Origins*

The question of the origins of ritual was a central concern of the earliest ritual theorists. As Catherine Bell puts it:

The study of ritual began with a prolonged and influential debate on the origins of religion that gave rise to several important styles of interpretation—evolutionary, sociological, and psychological—from which new fields of scholarship emerged. The

simple question at the heart of this productive controversy was whether religion and culture were originally rooted in myth or in ritual.<sup>698</sup>

Exhaustive arguments were made on both sides of the debate, on the one hand arguing that belief (myth) emerges from practice (ritual), which argument was characteristic of the myth and ritual school, and on the other hand that practice is inspired and generated out of the groundwork of belief, which argument characterizes the phenomenologists of religion. For the myth and ritual school, the origins of ritual lie in the cycle of seasons dramatized in narratives of death and rebirth.<sup>699</sup> For the phenomenologists, ritual is the particular ordering of universal experiences of the sacred contained in myths and symbols, which are the irreducible source of the rituals that seek to order them.<sup>700</sup> Ultimately, the arguments of both sides are caught in the chicken or egg trap even as they fall afoul of the sin of essentialism. Arguing that ritual is primary makes the dramatization of the seasonal cycle the essence of all of culture, while arguing that myth is primary requires a common religious reality as the essence of diverse religious expressions. Both theories thereby effectively become myths in their own right: “A myth – like a ritual – simultaneously imposes an order,

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<sup>698</sup> Bell, *Ritual*, 3.

<sup>699</sup> Bell, 6.

<sup>700</sup> Bell, 10.



accounts for the origin and nature of that order, and shapes people's dispositions to experience that order in the world around them."<sup>701</sup> Such perennial philosophies as the myth that ritual is the fountainhead of culture or the myth that a common sacred reality is the fountainhead of religion remain popular, likely because they point to an underlying unity behind the diversity of human ways of being and experiencing the world.

As questions regarding the structure and function of religion became more prominent, the issue of origins receded among the next generation of ritual theorists. The origins issue reemerges as central with the work of Kimberley Patton in *Religion of the Gods: Ritual, Paradox, and Reflexivity*.<sup>702</sup> Patton does not set out to address the question of ritual origins, but rather the question of why many different religious traditions depict and represent various deities participating in ritual, particularly sacrifice, since the deities themselves are the ones to whom sacrifice is offered. After extensive, detailed, careful, comparative presentation of the phenomenon of divine participation in ritual across a number of traditions, Patton concludes that, "religious action ought to be understood as an *attribute*

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<sup>701</sup> Bell, 21.

<sup>702</sup> Kimberley Christine Patton, *Religion of the Gods: Ritual, Paradox, and Reflexivity* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2008).

*and reflex of the divine*, not simply as the projection of human ritual obligation, or as paradigmatic showcase for right action."<sup>703</sup> Patton primarily identifies reflexivity with self-reference, and she cites Barry Sandywell to explain that something is reflexive "to the degree that it possesses the capacity to turn back upon its own organization and operations in order to perform work on itself as a routine practical feature of its functioning."<sup>704</sup> This reflexivity explains the origins of religious ritual:

We take for granted that humans originate worship; but from traditionalist perspectives, the gods, the recipients of religious activity, are its logical originators. This is "ideal worship," but it is more. It is the source of worship and the reason for worship. God or the gods are plainly portrayed as participating in ritual activity, in cult. This is because they are its source; practiced religion belongs to them.<sup>705</sup>

Patton takes this divine reflexivity, which grounds ritual practice, as a phenomenological category appropriate to the field of history of religions and an alternative to the prevalent "projection" hypotheses that impute "specific forms of human behavior to the constructed 'divine.'"<sup>706</sup> In this sense, Patton sides with the phenomenologists of religion over the myth and ritual school, but she does so

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<sup>703</sup> Patton, 309.

<sup>704</sup> Patton, 174; Barry Sandywell, *Reflexivity and the Crisis of Western Reason* (London: Routledge, 1996), 143.

<sup>705</sup> Patton, *Religion of the Gods*, 311.

<sup>706</sup> Patton, 315.

without succumbing to the temptation to essentialize belief or religion. She accomplishes this feat in large part by adhering closely to the ritual instantiations of her category and thereby attending to both historical explanation (etic) and theological interpretation (emic).<sup>707</sup>

This divine reflexivity hypothesis addresses the question of the origins of particularly religious ritual, but not of ritual more generally. Situating the hypothesis in a broader semiotic theory of ritual, however, as will be detailed in subsequent sections, allows the question of origins to collapse into the rationale of a given ritual such that its reflexivity plays an important role in generating its entailments, particularly sincerity. Moreover, as Patton further notes, citing Rappaport, ritual as a phenomenon is “intensely reflexive” throughout,<sup>708</sup> and not merely with respect to its origins. Notably, Patton is giving what might be called a metaphysical account of the origin of ritual, that is an account of the ontology of ritual, as opposed to a historical account, even though she offers this explanation as an important contribution to the history of religions discipline.

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<sup>707</sup> Patton, 308.

<sup>708</sup> Patton, 173; Roy A. Rappaport, “Concluding Comments on Ritual and Reflexivity,” *Semiotica* 30, no. 1/2 (1980): 181–93, <https://doi.org/10.1515/semi.1980.30.1-2.181>.

A recent ritual theory tending more toward the myth and ritual school, although also avoiding essentialisms, is Rappaport himself, who finds ritual at the very origins of humanity, since ritual generates religion and, he claims, “religion emerged with language. As such, religion is as old as language, which is to say as old as humanity.”<sup>709</sup> This historical, temporal identification of the origin of all ritual comes in the context of his explanation of ritual and religion as an adaptive solution to the problem of the lie, although it is the particularly religious entailments of ritual that yield this solution, so this is still not an account of the origins of ritual generally. Also addressing particularly religious ritual, but with greater potential for explaining the origins of ritual generally in an evolutionary frame, is costly signaling theory, which, like for Rappaport, views religious ritual as adaptive. For costly signaling theory, ritual is adaptively advantageous because it enables cooperation by fostering trust among those willing to pay the cost of participating in rituals requiring behavior contrary to self-interest, thereby signaling social commitment.<sup>710</sup> For example, religious groups requiring ritual

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<sup>709</sup> Rappaport, *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity*, 16.

<sup>710</sup> William Irons, “Morality, Religion and Human Evolution,” in *Religion and Science: History, Method and Dialogue*, ed. W. Mark Richardson and Wesley Wildman (New York, NY: Routledge, 1996), 375–399, <http://www.williamirons.net/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/Morality-Religion-and-Human-Evolution.pdf>; Richard Sosis, “Religion and Intragroup Cooperation: Preliminary Results of a Comparative Analysis of Utopian Communities,” *Cross-Cultural Research* 34, no. 1 (February 1, 2000): 70–87, <https://doi.org/10.1177/106939710003400105>; Richard Sosis and Eric R. Bressler,

circumcision for membership can be relatively confident in the commitment to the religious group of those willing to undergo the ritual because the pain of the ritual would deter those who are not truly committed. Of course, not all rituals are so costly, and those that are not generate lower levels of trust because they demonstrate lower levels of commitment. For example, while symbolizing death and rebirth, the risk of actual death in a modern infant baptism is quite low, and indeed the level of commitment among baptized children, or even of the parents and godparents who sponsor their infant children for baptism, is quite low. The costly signaling theory of the origins of religious ritual opens the door to an explanation of the origins of ritual generally because presumably nonreligious rituals also signal solidarity with those sponsoring or performing the ritual in proportion to the cost of participation therein. Costly signaling theory will be addressed again in the section below on communication.

The theory of ritual under development here resists the essentializing tendencies of the myth and religion school and the phenomenologists of religion

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“Cooperation and Commune Longevity: A Test of the Costly Signaling Theory of Religion,” *Cross-Cultural Research* 37, no. 2 (May 1, 2003): 211–39, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1069397103037002003>; Richard Sosis and Candace Alcorta, “Signaling, Solidarity, and the Sacred: The Evolution of Religious Behavior,” *Evolutionary Anthropology: Issues, News, and Reviews* 12, no. 6 (November 24, 2003): 264–74, <https://doi.org/10.1002/evan.10120>.

by insisting that religion is one form among others that provide organizing principles for the content of culture, although perhaps not the justification for culture, which may in fact be a particularly religious function. For example, The Great Vigil of Easter includes the ritual of baptism,<sup>711</sup> which organizes the content of Christian culture with respect to membership. It is not the only form that pertains to membership in the Christian community, however, as members go through a process of educational formation prior to baptism called the catechumenate, and members are expected to serve in various organizational roles and contribute financially to the institution of the church, perhaps prior to but certainly following baptism. Thus, education, religion, politics, and economics are all forms for organizing the content of culture. All of these forms engage with the ritual form in various ways, and although the full elaboration of these engagements is beyond the scope of the present project, gestures will be made in their direction when considering the pervasiveness of ritual.

The emerging theory of ritual here takes the internal explanation of the reflexive origins of ritual developed by Patton to be connected to the external explanation of the adaptive advantage ritual generates by engendering trust in

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<sup>711</sup> *The Great Vigil of Easter - Video Recording*, 1:01:28-1:13:15; "The Great Vigil of Easter - Service Bulletin," 8-9.

costly signaling theory. One result of the account of ritual origins as reflexive is that rituals are ultimately self-contained, internalizing even the rationale justifying their structure and content. This reflexive self-containment is reflected in the sacrament of baptism during the prayer over the water that will be used to baptize the candidates, connecting water and divine activity, including divine participation in the rite itself:

We thank you, Almighty God, for the gift of water. Over it the Holy Spirit moved in the beginning of creation. Through it you led the children of Israel out of their bondage in Egypt into the land of promise. In it your Son Jesus received the baptism of John and was anointed by the Holy Spirit as the Messiah, the Christ, to lead us, through his death and resurrection, from the bondage of sin into everlasting life.<sup>712</sup>

Reflexively grounded self-containment means that a given ritual wholly determines the signals identifying a ritual performer within the locus of solidarity circumscribed by that ritual. In the ritual of baptism, the water does not bring about any effects beyond the outcomes entailed by the ritual. The very fact of this determining power over the signaling process at the ritual level amplifies the trust generated from the singular act of paying the cost precisely by introducing that trust into the intensely reflexive environment of the full scope of

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<sup>712</sup> *The Great Vigil of Easter - Video Recording*, 1:08:35-1:09:08. The text of the prayer is not included in the service leaflet. See *The Book of Common Prayer and Administration of the Sacraments and Other Rites and Ceremonies of the Church: Together with the Psalter Or Psalms of David According to the Use of the Episcopal Church* (New York, NY: Church Publishing, 1979), 306.

the ritual such that cooperation may not only be established but maintained. This is why the ritual of baptism brings about membership in the Christian church, not only for the time of the ritual in which the baptism takes place, but, at least according to the theology governing the practice of the instance of the ritual under consideration here, permanently. A full account of ritual origins thus includes both ontology and history and is intimately connected with the ritual process and the ritual feature of objectification, both covered in greater detail below.

### *Structure*

The aspect of structure arises in multifarious ways in the ritual theory literature, and so it is important to locate the present project among them. One approach to ritual with respect to structure is that of the functionalists, who were primarily concerned with the effects of ritual on the social structure and the location and role of the ritual participants therein. Émile Durkheim (1858 – 1917) investigates the ways in which ritual generates the moral and cognitive structures of society by having members participate in a common action, in turn generating a passionate commitment to the social group as something larger than



and beyond themselves to which they belong.<sup>713</sup> This trajectory of inquiry is developed into a robust functionalism by Alfred Reginald Radcliffe-Brown (1881 – 1955), in terms of ritual generating social structures, and by Bronisław Malinowski (1884 – 1942) in the direction of generating individual psychological structures.<sup>714</sup> Still considering the function of ritual vis-à-vis social structure, Arnold van Gennep (1873 – 1957), and later Victor Turner, investigated the ways in which the ritual process facilitates transition from one part of a social structure to another.<sup>715</sup>

Shifting from functionalism, the structuralism of Claude Lévi-Strauss (1908 – 2009) interprets social manifestations such as ritual as communicative impositions of symbol systems, which mirror the symbolic structures of the mind, rooted in the brain, in order to impose order and control. In the particular case of ritual, such imposition has the effect of resynthesizing the analytic elements of myth into a coherent, consistent whole.<sup>716</sup> While structuralism is

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<sup>713</sup> Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms Of The Religious Life*, trans. Karen Elise Fields (New York, NY: Free Press, 1995).

<sup>714</sup> Bell, *Ritual*, 27–29.

<sup>715</sup> Arnold van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage* (London: Routledge, 1960); Victor Witter Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1969).

<sup>716</sup> Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Raw and the Cooked*, Mythologiques 1 (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1969); Claude Lévi-Strauss, *From Honey to Ashes*, Mythologiques 2 (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1973); Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Origin of Table Manners*, trans. John

distinguishable from functionalism, several theorists who employ the structuralist approach do so to functionalist ends. Mary Douglas (1921 – 2007) develops a structuralist theory of societies as exhibiting degrees of “grid” and “group” characteristics: “[Grid] is order, classification, the symbolic system. [Group] is pressure, the experience of having no option but to consent to the overwhelming demands of other people.”<sup>717</sup> Ritual is to be found in societies with strong grid and/or strong group as the communicative mechanism for restraining social behavior to conform with the norms of the society. Edmund Leach (1910 – 1989), by contrast, investigates the role of the ritual process, *a la* van Gennep and Turner, in transforming elements belonging to one part of the symbolic structure of a society into a second, distinct part of the structure while maintaining the distinctiveness of the categories that make up the structure such that it successfully organizes reality.<sup>718</sup>

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Weightman and Doreen Weightman, *Mythologiques* 3 (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1978); Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Naked Man*, *Mythologiques* 4 (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1981). See also, Bell, *Ritual*, 42–43.

<sup>717</sup> Bell, *Ritual*, 43; Mary Douglas, *Natural Symbols: Explorations in Cosmology* (London: Routledge, 1996). See chart: Bell, *Ritual*, 45.

<sup>718</sup> Edmund Leach, *Culture and Communication: The Logic by Which Symbols Are Connected. An Introduction to the Use of Structuralist Analysis in Social Anthropology* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1976).

Other theorists demurred from the biological foundations Lévi-Strauss attributed to symbol systems, instead locating syntactic systems of symbols such as language and ritual in the semantic field of culture. Clifford Geertz (1926 – 2006) defines religion as

(1) a system of symbols which acts to (2) establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by (3) formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and (4) clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that (5) the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic.<sup>719</sup>

Ritual, then, both establishes and maintains the indicative “conceptions of a general order of existence” as a “model of” the social structure in cultural terms, and facilitates transformation of social structures toward the subjunctive “moods and motivations” that are a “model for” the cultural ideal of how society should be.<sup>720</sup> Nancy D. Munn more precisely identifies ritual as a message system communicating between culture and society that “consists of all the forms and rules governing these forms that pertain to the ritual process as a mode of expressive communication.”<sup>721</sup> It is only with this cultural symbolist orientation, and not among the functionalist or structuralist approaches, that the structure or

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<sup>719</sup> Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, 90.

<sup>720</sup> Geertz, 93, 142–46.

<sup>721</sup> Nancy D. Munn, “Symbolism in a Ritual Context: Aspects of Symbolic Action,” in *Handbook of Social and Cultural Anthropology*, ed. John J. Jonigmann (Chicago, IL: Rand McNally, 1973), 579–612.

form of ritual itself, and not principally of society, comes to the fore.

Nevertheless, these theorists are less interested in considering a general form or structure of ritual than, on one hand, interpreting the meaning of particular ritual instantiations, e.g. Turner and Geertz, or on the other investigating particular ritual forms for their respective communicative effects, e.g. Leach and Munn.<sup>722</sup>

A group of theorists that have been interested in investigating and articulating a general form or structure of ritual are those who may be associated with the symbolic interactionist perspective in sociology. Harold Blumer (1900 – 1987) expounds three premises of symbolic interactionism:

that human beings act toward things on the basis of the meanings that the things have for them..., that the meaning of such things is derived from, or arises out of, the social interaction that one has with one's fellows..., and that these meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretative process used by the person in dealing with the things he encounters.<sup>723</sup>

Erving Goffman (1922-1982) identifies the social interactions that give rise to meanings, ranging from formal or ceremonial interactions all the way down to day-to-day interactions, as ritual.<sup>724</sup> He distinguishes the form or structure of such interaction rituals as exhibiting (1) situational co-presence, (2) focused

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<sup>722</sup> Bell, *Ritual*, 68.

<sup>723</sup> Herbert Blumer, *Symbolic Interactionism: Perspective and Method* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1986).

<sup>724</sup> Goffman, *Interaction Ritual*.

interaction, (3) entrainment, conformity, and social solidarity, (4) honoring of what is socially valued, and (5) moral uneasiness in the face of ritual impropriety.<sup>725</sup> Randall Collins identifies a similar ritual form and adds dynamism via a reflexive feedback loop between a “mutual focus of attention” on a “common action or event (including stereotyped formalities)” and a “shared mood” or “shared emotional/cognitive experience” intensified by “rhythmic entrainment.”<sup>726</sup> A Durkheimian “collective effervescence” is the outcome of participating in the ritual form and is characterized by experiences of “group solidarity,” “emotional energy,” intense association with symbols or “sacred objects,” and the feeling of moral righteousness of the in-group constituted by the ritual.<sup>727</sup> Collins goes on to describe the totality of social encounters as “a market for interaction rituals of varying degrees of intensity” with the goal of maximizing the emotional energy generated by participating therein.<sup>728</sup> In this case, the structure of ritual does not govern the social structure directly, but

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<sup>725</sup> Goffman’s formal analysis of interaction rituals is summarized and cited in Randall Collins, *Interaction Ritual Chains*, Princeton Studies in Cultural Sociology (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), 23–25.

<sup>726</sup> Collins, 48.

<sup>727</sup> Collins, 49.

<sup>728</sup> Collins, 49.

rather participates in the social structure by generating the currency of the social market.

Terence S. Turner (1935 – 2015) applies something like symbolic interactionism in an anthropological understanding of ritual structure, which is the “form and dynamic of the ritual process,”<sup>729</sup> analyzable according to three rubrics: structure, frame, and trope. Drawing on the work of Gregory Bateson (1904 – 1980) and Goffman, Turner considers ritual as activity in a frame, which is its “schema of activity that also serves as a schema for the interpretation of that activity in a certain way.”<sup>730</sup> While all framing objectifies what it frames, ritual framing does so “in a way intended to produce an effect beyond the limited frame of the action as such,”<sup>731</sup> and “thus intrinsically involves a transformative relation between frames.” It does so by “framing the process of objectification so that it becomes foregrounded as itself the object of control in the ritual performance.”<sup>732</sup> Thus framed as objective, the ritual then extends its frame to

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<sup>729</sup> Terence S. Turner, “Structure, Process, Form,” in *Theorizing Rituals: Issues, Topics, Approaches, Concepts*, ed. Jens Kreinath, Jan Snoek, and Michael Stausberg, vol. 1 (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 238.

<sup>730</sup> Turner, 235.

<sup>731</sup> Turner, 235.

<sup>732</sup> Turner, 236.

encompass everything it projects to effect beyond the immediate context of the ritual via a pivoting construct embodied in a symbolic act or element.<sup>733</sup> Tropes, (e.g. metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, etc.), mediate and connect elements and levels of the ritual structure, and are “modes of identity and contrast between entities.” They also “can be understood as patterns of activity (in other words, schemas), that bring into association or transform relations among the elements of ritual action.”<sup>734</sup> Nevertheless, even though ritual is transformational via the application of tropes and the shifting of frames to its symbolic elements, it is itself a unified structure of that transformation that constrains the constituent tropic relations to abide by an invariant form regardless of the scope of the frame. Turner’s approach to ritual may thus be categorized as a structural holism in which “the structure *is* the form of the process and the process directly consists of the structure.”<sup>735</sup> Hence, the meaning of either symbolic elements or rituals as a whole cannot be interpreted without reference to the structure of the ritual process in question.

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<sup>733</sup> Turner, 236–38.

<sup>734</sup> Turner, 238–40.

<sup>735</sup> Turner, 246.

Roy Rappaport theorizes five features of ritual that together constitute the ritual form or structure. First, ritual performers do not encode the ritual orders they perform themselves but relatively punctiliously follow orders established, at least ostensibly, by others, except in the rare and fraught cases of ritual innovators. Second, ritual behavior tends to adhere to a high degree of formality, i.e. “adherence to form,”<sup>736</sup> which operates much like the feature of “framing” does for Terence Turner and Goffman. Just as Rappaport recognizes that rituals may in fact fall almost anywhere on a spectrum of formality from punctilious to spontaneous, he also recognizes that the invariance entailed by formality, which is the third feature of ritual form, must be tempered. At baseline, this recognition necessitates the caveats that “imprecision is unavoidable,”<sup>737</sup> rituals do change over time, and no ritual could possibly be specified absolutely. Moreover, invariance is substantively relativized by the fact that rituals often involve participants making intentional choices and decisions with regard to their performance, including whether or not to perform them at all. Fourth, ritual orders only become ritual when they are enacted, which is to say performed: “The act of performance is itself a part of the order performed, or, to put it a little

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<sup>736</sup> Rappaport, *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity*, 33.

<sup>737</sup> Rappaport, 36.



differently, the manner of 'saying' and 'doing' is intrinsic to what is being said and done."<sup>738</sup> Ritual performances can be distinguished from related performances such as theater and sport. In a ritual, everyone present participates in the ritual in one or another performing role, whereas theatrical performances distinguish performers from audience and athletic performances distinguish athletes from supporters. Also, rituals establish orders, (cosmic, social, etc.), whereas dramas reflect on orders, and so rituals affect the world by construing it in one way or another, whereas theater affects the world by inspiring the audience to inhabit or undermine the already established order. Athletic performances are further from ritual than theater because their rules but not their performance of the rules are invariant, and because sport distinguishes winners from losers whereas ritual conjoins its participants into a social unity. Finally, the fifth feature of ritual is that it is not instrumental or physically efficacious: "If ritual (in contrast to technique) does anything at all it doesn't do it by operating with matter and energy on matter and energy in accordance with physical laws of cause and effect, but by focusing agencies or forces of another sort upon whatever is to be affected."<sup>739</sup> Indeed, it is the emotional power of ritual and the

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<sup>738</sup> Rappaport, 38.

<sup>739</sup> Rappaport, 48.

ordering capacity of language in ritual that effect the emotional and cognitive states of ritual participants.

The present project moves primarily in the direction of the symbolic interactionists and their ilk, including Collins, Goffman, Rappaport, and Terence Turner. Rituals have an analytically distinguishable structure or form that orders their elements, including ritual participants themselves, and as the form of a process transforms these elements to accord with the structure. The functions, i.e. the outcomes or entailments, of the ritual structure is the topic of the next subsection, and the process that generates these functions is that of the subsequent subsection, but the form of the process that generates those functions requires detailing here. Notably, the form of ritual is semiotic on the order of the semiotics of Charles Sanders Peirce, not that of Ferdinand de Saussure, upon whom most of the symbolic interactionists engaged above, with the exception of Rappaport, rely. As a result of these caveats, what will be said here about the ritual form or structure will become clearer upon engaging further aspects of the ritual theory under development and so may bear returning to after cycling through the rest of the aspects.

First, rituals are made up of elements; elements are the stuff of ritual. Notably, this stuff is usually taken for granted in ritual theories except insofar as

it appears as the background for the ritual form, structure, process, etc. It is a significant contribution of the present project to put the stuff of ritual on equal footing in the aspect of ritual structure with other features thereof. Ritual elements include not only objects, such as vestments, candles, water, bread, wine, etc., but also the words spoken, the actions taken, and most notably, the participants in the ritual themselves. Significantly, each ritual element is a sign in a semiotic sense, and it is at least potentially so in multiple ways: (1) it is a sign of itself to itself; (2) it is a sign of its role in the ritual to itself; (3) it is a sign of itself to other elements in the ritual; (4) it is a sign of its role in the ritual to other elements in the ritual. Rappaport refers to the first and third ways of ritual elements being signs as “self-referential,” because they “transmit information concerning their own current physical, psychic or social states to themselves and to other participants.” The second and fourth he calls “canonical,” because their role is encoded not by themselves but by the ritual order and their given modes of reference therein.<sup>740</sup> The elements of a ritual, as signs, accomplish each of the ways in which they are a sign by referring to each other in one or more of three modes of reference identified by Peirce: iconic, indexical, and symbolic,<sup>741</sup> and it

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<sup>740</sup> Rappaport, 52–54.

<sup>741</sup> Peirce, *The Essential Peirce 2*, 2:4–10.

is this mutual reference that constitutes the elements together as a system.

Notably, Terence Turner interprets the modes of reference as “tropes,” which

“function as connectors between elements and between levels of structure by virtue of their construction as modes of identity and contrast between entities, rather than as individual units like symbols. Tropes can be understood as patterns of activity (in other words, schemas), that bring into association or transform relations among the elements of ritual action.”<sup>742</sup>

Tropes for Turner are roughly analogous with diagrams for Peirce as discussed in chapter two. Thus, reference not only articulates a static relationship among ritual elements but is also the very process of their transformation.

The analysis of the structural features of the Great Vigil of Easter in this section restricts itself to the Eucharistic liturgy within the wider vigil<sup>743</sup> for the sake of keeping the analysis to manageable proportions while also demonstrating the explanatory capacity of the theorized features. The elements of the Eucharistic ritual are myriad, beginning with a number of objects: chalices, patens, cruets, ciborium, bread (wafers), wine, water, candles, candlesticks, corporal, palls, purificators, etc. Also, some participants wear special clothing, such as albs, cassocks, surplices, stoles, chasubles, etc. Texts, meaning particular

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<sup>742</sup> Turner, “Structure, Process, Form,” 238–39.

<sup>743</sup> *The Great Vigil of Easter - Video Recording*, 1:56:50-2:11:45; “The Great Vigil of Easter - Service Bulletin,” 13–15.

words read and spoken, and not merely the books in which they are printed, and variations therefrom, although those as well, are also elements of the ritual. In this instance, the printed elements include the service bulletin,<sup>744</sup> the *Book of Common Prayer*,<sup>745</sup> and *Enriching Our Worship 1*.<sup>746</sup> Music, including texts, their settings, and purely instrumental music, are elements of the ritual. Numerous gestures and other movements are elements as well, such as the lifting of hands to the orans position,<sup>747</sup> lifting of objects like bread and paten or wine and chalice, turning to various segments of the congregation, and making the sign of the cross, among many others. Finally, the participants in the ritual are also elements of the ritual, including not only the bishop, dean, clergy, vergers, lay Eucharistic ministers, ushers, musicians, and other leaders, but also every lay person who attends and participates, which participation cannot be limited to ingesting the Eucharistic elements of bread and wine. In fact, those who watch the service later, or even just read over the service bulletin, are participants as well, although in varying manners and senses, and with different effects than those physically

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<sup>744</sup> "The Great Vigil of Easter - Service Bulletin."

<sup>745</sup> *Book of Common Prayer*.

<sup>746</sup> *Enriching Our Worship: Morning and Evening Prayer, The Great Litany, and The Holy Eucharist*, vol. 1 (New York, NY: Church Publishing, 1998), 60–62.

<sup>747</sup> John N. Wall, *A Dictionary for Episcopalians* (Providence, RI: Cowley, 2000), 89.

and temporally present. The issue of participation will be addressed in the section below on performance.

It is instructive to consider several different elements, from different classes, with respect to the various ways in which each is a sign. First, the bishop, who in the context of the Eucharistic liturgy is serving in the role of the celebrant, is a participant element in the ritual. She is a sign of herself, as a person and a participant in this ritual, to herself. She is also a sign of herself as a bishop and the celebrant of the Eucharistic liturgy to herself. She is a sign of herself as a person and a participant in this ritual to other elements of the ritual. And finally, she is a sign of herself as a bishop and the celebrant of the Eucharistic liturgy to other elements of the ritual. By contrast, the bread used in the Eucharistic liturgy is an object element of the ritual. The bread is a sign to itself of itself as bread, but an object being a sign to itself is rather trivially significant for the purposes of analysis in most cases. More significant is that the bread is a sign to other elements of the ritual of itself as bread. This is significant for the paten object element, for example, because it means that the bread can easily rest and remain on the paten relatively securely, unlike wine. The bread signifying itself as bread is even more meaningfully significant to participant elements in the ritual who may ingest it, and who may, for example, have varying physiological responses

to its ingredients, e.g. gluten. That the bread signifies itself as the body of Jesus Christ to itself is relatively trivial unless operating in a theological framework in which the salvific activity of Jesus is with respect to the whole created order. However, it is perhaps centrally significant to the Eucharistic liturgy that the bread signifies itself as the body of Jesus Christ to participant elements of the ritual, although not necessarily so to other classes of elements. Textual elements are distinctive from object elements and participant elements in this ritual. For example, the celebrant says, while making the sign of the cross over the bread and wine, "Pour out your spirit upon these gifts that they may be the Body and Blood of Christ."<sup>748</sup> This textual element is utterly trivial as a sign of itself as the vocalization by the celebrant of words printed on a page, even insofar as those vocalizations are interpretable to have propositional meaning, to itself, and only perhaps marginally less trivially as a sign of itself so to other elements of the ritual. It is, however, highly significant as a sign of its role as epiclesis, or invocation of divinity in mundane elements, not to itself but to both the object elements it purports to transform, i.e. bread and wine, and to the participant elements who anticipate feasting on divine flesh and blood, not mere bread and

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<sup>748</sup> *The Great Vigil of Easter - Video Recording*, 2:00:39-2:00:45; "The Great Vigil of Easter - Service Bulletin," 14.

wine. Notably, even though this project addresses the topic of ritual and religious language, such textual elements in unmistakably religious ritual are not central analytic concerns of the project, although it does aim to include them within its explanatory framework.

Second, ritual elements are arranged according to an order specific to that ritual; there is no ritual order in general, which is why identifying and defining ritual as a genre is so difficult. The order of a given ritual is constituted by the network of references among the elements in each of the ways that each element is a sign. Nevertheless, as Rappaport rightly insists,<sup>749</sup> the elements do not encode the order by referring to themselves and each other in each of the ways they do, but rather they refer to themselves and each other in the ways they do so as to accord themselves with the encoded order of the ritual. This is what is meant by a sign referring to itself or other elements according to its “role;” the role is enacted by the element according itself with the order, or diagram in the idiom of Peirce. The acts of the elements referring to themselves and each other according to the encoded order of the ritual is the performance of the ritual, which is also the realization of the elements in accord with the order as ritual. This is to say

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<sup>749</sup> Rappaport, *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity*, 32.



that Terence Turner is right about the ritual order being the “form of a process,” so that the order of the ritual does not lock the ritual elements into a static scaffold but guides the speech and other actions of the elements and their resulting motions and effects on each other.

In the Great Vigil of Easter, the order of the ritual initially has the bread, wine, and sacred vessels uncovered on the corporal, in turn on the altar. The celebrant stands with her hands in the orans position while the co-celebrants stand with their hands clasped before them. As the liturgy unfolds, the order of the ritual guides the order of the words spoken, and the call and response between celebrant and congregation of certain parts of the text. The order also guides motions, such as the celebrant and co-celebrants bowing over the altar during the singing of the Sanctus<sup>750</sup> and making the sign of the cross during the Benedictus.<sup>751</sup> Some ritual variants are guided by the order, such as replacing “day” with “night” such that the preface concludes “And so this night we join with Saints and Angels...”<sup>752</sup> Other ritual variants are delineable as encoded by

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<sup>750</sup> *The Great Vigil of Easter - Video Recording*, 1:58:00.

<sup>751</sup> *The Great Vigil of Easter - Video Recording*, 1:58:32.

<sup>752</sup> *Enriching Our Worship 1*, 1:60. Similarly, the saints included in the blank left in the written text, *Enriching Our Worship 1*, 1:62., are those who appear in the gospel reading for the day and the patron saints of the church. See “The Great Vigil of Easter - Service Bulletin,” 12.

the performers by their variation from the given order. For example, the given Eucharistic prayer in *Enriching Our Worship 1* has the celebrant say all of the epiclesis,<sup>753</sup> but in the service bulletin for the Great Vigil of Easter and in the recorded practice, the whole congregation says the second part of the epiclesis beginning with “Breathe your Spirit over the whole earth.”<sup>754</sup> This choice reflects a theology that the invocation of the Holy Spirit is a function of the priesthood of all believers and not of the clerical priesthood alone, which may not be shared by everyone who enacts this ritual, i.e. all Episcopalians. Notably, it is the ongoing mutual reference among the elements of the ritual according to the order that allow the ritual to flow seamlessly, with all of the elements able to participate without confusion as to what is going on or debating how to do things. Participant encodings of the ritual order that do not interfere with this flow are generally more tolerable to all elements involved in the ritual than participant encodings that do interrupt the flow as they allow the taken-for-grantedness of the ritual as a whole to be maintained. In fact, the maintenance of taken-for-grantedness is what is meant here by flow.

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<sup>753</sup> *Enriching Our Worship 1*, 1:62.

<sup>754</sup> “The Great Vigil of Easter - Service Bulletin,” 14; *The Great Vigil of Easter - Video Recording*, 2:00:49.

The third feature of the ritual structure is the frame: the “terms of the organization of experience”<sup>755</sup> or “schemata of interpretation” that allow each element to “locate, perceive, identify, and label”<sup>756</sup> one another and elements of the world beyond the ritual itself. It is the frame that makes a ritual that ritual, (and not some other or something other than ritual entirely), and that constrains the orientation and reference of the ritual elements such that they achieve coherence according to the ritual order. The elements of the frame are also elements of the ritual but they have the particular role of articulating and holding the elements accountable to the code of the ritual that, as Rappaport so strongly insists, is not entirely encoded by the elements themselves. The ritual frame is dynamic, first in that it requires the cooperation of all of the elements of the ritual to establish and maintain,<sup>757</sup> and then also in that it is the frame of the ritual process and so in a sense articulates the coherence of change. It is important to emphasize that the ritual frame is the frame of the ritual elements as a group, which may be contrasted with the interpretive, experiential frames brought to

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<sup>755</sup> Goffman, *Frame Analysis*, 10–11.

<sup>756</sup> Goffman, 21.

<sup>757</sup> Francesca Polletta and M. Kai Ho, “Frames and Their Consequences,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Contextual Political Analysis*, ed. Robert E. Goodin and Charles Tilly (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2006), 190.

the ritual by any given individual element thereof in the form of “norms, habits, and expectancies.”<sup>758</sup> The ritual frame, then, exerts downward causation<sup>759</sup> on the ritual elements’ individual frames, which are brought into resonance<sup>760</sup> with the ritual frame via frame alignment processes.<sup>761</sup>

The frame of the Eucharistic liturgy in the Great Vigil of Easter is what makes this an enactment of the Eucharist instead of some other ritual such as baptism, which occurred earlier. The initial element that signals the arrival of the Eucharistic liturgy is the call and response between the celebrant and the congregation known as the Great Thanksgiving.<sup>762</sup> This is followed, in order, by

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<sup>758</sup> Amos Tversky and Daniel Kahneman, “Rational Choice and the Framing of Decisions,” *The Journal of Business* 59, no. 4 (1986): 257, <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.bu.edu/stable/2352759>.

<sup>759</sup> This notion of downward causation derives from emergence theories in philosophy of science. See Clayton and Davies, *The Re-Emergence of Emergence*, 35–52.

<sup>760</sup> David A. Snow and Robert D. Benford, “Ideology Frame Resonance and Participant Mobilization,” *International Social Movement Research* 1 (1988): 197–217.

<sup>761</sup> David A. Snow et al., “Frame Alignment Processes, Micromobilization, and Movement Participation,” *American Sociological Review* 51, no. 4 (1986): 464–81, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2095581>.

<sup>762</sup> *The Great Vigil of Easter - Video Recording*, 1:56:50-57:03; “The Great Vigil of Easter - Service Bulletin,” 13.

the preface,<sup>763</sup> the Sanctus and Benedictus,<sup>764</sup> a recitation of salvation history,<sup>765</sup> the words of institution,<sup>766</sup> an offertory acclamation,<sup>767</sup> the epiclesis,<sup>768</sup> intercessions,<sup>769</sup> a doxology,<sup>770</sup> the Lord's Prayer,<sup>771</sup> the fraction,<sup>772</sup> invitation and communion,<sup>773</sup> and a post-communion prayer.<sup>774</sup> These framing elements, in this

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<sup>763</sup> *The Great Vigil of Easter - Video Recording*, 1:57:03-57:54; *Enriching Our Worship 1*, 1:60.

<sup>764</sup> *The Great Vigil of Easter - Video Recording*, 1:57:55-58:50; "The Great Vigil of Easter - Service Bulletin," 14.

<sup>765</sup> *The Great Vigil of Easter - Video Recording*, 1:58:52-59:37; *Enriching Our Worship 1*, 1:61.

<sup>766</sup> *The Great Vigil of Easter - Video Recording*, 1:59:37-2:00:21; *Enriching Our Worship 1*, 1:61.

<sup>767</sup> *The Great Vigil of Easter - Video Recording*, 2:00:22-2:00:39; *Enriching Our Worship 1*, 1:62.

<sup>768</sup> *The Great Vigil of Easter - Video Recording*, 2:00:39-2:00:55; "The Great Vigil of Easter - Service Bulletin," 14.

<sup>769</sup> *The Great Vigil of Easter - Video Recording*, 2:00:55-01:12; "The Great Vigil of Easter - Service Bulletin," 14.

<sup>770</sup> *The Great Vigil of Easter - Video Recording*, 2:01:12-01:27; "The Great Vigil of Easter - Service Bulletin," 14.

<sup>771</sup> *The Great Vigil of Easter - Video Recording*, 2:01:30-02:11; "The Great Vigil of Easter - Service Bulletin," 14; *Book of Common Prayer*, 336.

<sup>772</sup> *The Great Vigil of Easter - Video Recording*, 2:02:11-02:59; "The Great Vigil of Easter - Service Bulletin," 14.

<sup>773</sup> *The Great Vigil of Easter - Video Recording*, 2:03:00-11:10; "The Great Vigil of Easter - Service Bulletin," 14.

<sup>774</sup> *The Great Vigil of Easter - Video Recording*, 2:11:10-11:45; "The Great Vigil of Easter - Service Bulletin," 15.

order, closely follow both historical precedent<sup>775</sup> and ecumenical consensus<sup>776</sup> for Eucharistic liturgy, which is constitutive for their effectiveness in the framing function. It is easy to imagine, watching the easy flow of the liturgical enactment in the video recording, that had one of these framing elements been enacted out of order, dropped out, substantively changed, or some other element added, that flow would be disrupted, potentially to the point of ritual failure.<sup>777</sup> Thus, disruption of framing elements puts the entire ritual process and thereby its entailments at risk, whereas relatively minor infelicities such as occurred and was corrected in the doxology<sup>778</sup> may be glossed over by the overarching flow of the framing elements. The dynamism of the ritual frame is responsible for transforming bread into flesh and wine into blood both by the invocation of Jesus' words at the Last Supper as recounted in the words of institution and by the invocation of the Holy Spirit in the epiclesis with the words "that they may be the Body and Blood of Christ." Participation in these framing elements thus

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<sup>775</sup> Cheslyn Jones, *The Study of Liturgy* (Oxford University Press, 1992), sec. III.

<sup>776</sup> World Council of Churches, *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, Lima Text, Faith and Order Paper No. 111 (Geneva, Switzerland: World Council of Churches, 1982), 13–14.

<sup>777</sup> Ronald L. Grimes, *Ritual Criticism: Case Studies in Its Practice, Essays on Its Theory* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1990); Ute Hüsken, *When Rituals Go Wrong: Mistakes, Failure and the Dynamics of Ritual* (Leiden: Brill, 2007).

<sup>778</sup> *The Great Vigil of Easter - Video Recording*, 2:01:12-01:24.

has the effect of transforming the frame of participant elements from expecting bread to be bread and wine to be wine to understanding bread to be flesh and wine to be blood in order to align with the frame of the ritual.

Fourth, the ordered elements of ritual in their frame effect a transformation of at least some of the elements. This feature begins to get at the function and process of ritual to be detailed in subsections below, but in a discussion of the aspect of structure it is important to articulate the relationship between transformation within the ritual structure and physical efficacy or material change. Rappaport quotes George C. Homans (1910 – 1989), that, “ritual actions do not produce a practical result on the external world – that is one of the reasons we call them ritual.”<sup>779</sup> This conclusion relies upon a distinction made by Edmund Leach between technique and communication: “Technique has economic material consequences which are measurable and predictable; ritual on the other hand is a symbolic statement which ‘says’ something about the individuals involved in the action.”<sup>780</sup> The problem is that this distinction relies upon the premise that ritual relies upon purely symbolic reference, but

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<sup>779</sup> Rappaport, *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity*, 46; George C. Homans, “Anxiety and Ritual: The Theories of Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown,” *American Anthropologist*, New Series, 43, no. 2 (April 1, 1941): 164–72, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/662949>.

<sup>780</sup> Leach, *Political Systems of Highland Burma*, 13.

Rappaport makes a strong case for indexical and even iconic reference in ritual, thereby opening the door to technique, even though he wants to limit the availability of indexical reference to the self-referential ways of being signs.<sup>781</sup> While the emotional energy generated by Goffman and Collins' interaction rituals would still fall under the category of the "occult efficacy" of ritual in Rappaport,<sup>782</sup> not all ritual primarily guides human social interaction but rather guides human interaction with the material environment. Some rituals exist to encode those acts that lead to consequences that are measured and/or predicted to be most beneficial, which is the important conclusion of Rappaport's earlier work published in *Pigs for the Ancestors*.<sup>783</sup> Thus, it is better to understand the feature of transformation broadly, and the particular form of social transformation via speech act as a narrower specification that needs to be accounted for but should not dominate the understanding of the feature.

The Eucharistic liturgy of the Great Vigil of Easter is oriented around effecting two transformations. First, as has already been discussed, the words of

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<sup>781</sup> Rappaport, *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity*, 54–68.

<sup>782</sup> Rappaport, 47–50.

<sup>783</sup> Roy A. Rappaport, *Pigs for the Ancestors: Ritual in the Ecology of a New Guinea People* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1967).



institution, epiclesis, and surrounding gestures and acts, serve to transform bread and wine into the body and blood of Jesus, respectively. According to the Thomistic doctrine of transubstantiation, this transformation is material, but such a theological position is not adopted by the Episcopal Church, preferring instead a vaguer doctrine of Real Presence.<sup>784</sup> As a result, the extent to which the transformation should be understood to be material in the context of the present analysis remains indeterminate. The second transformation is that of the participant elements who ingest the bread/body and wine/blood. The epiclesis, which was part of effecting the transformation of the bread and wine, also indicates the intended transformation of those who consume the transformed elements of body and blood into a “new creation, the Body of Christ given for the world you have made” (the second person pronoun referring here to God).<sup>785</sup> Notably, this transformation is intended to last beyond the span of the ritual enactment. Consumption of the flesh and blood of Jesus, in the forms of bread and wine, are understood to have a healing, restorative, renewing effect on the spirit as signaled by the language of new creation. Sacrament, theologically, is a

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<sup>784</sup> Don S. Armentrout and Robert Boak Slocum, eds., *An Episcopal Dictionary of the Church: A User-Friendly Reference for Episcopalians* (New York, NY: Church Publishing, 2000).

<sup>785</sup> *The Great Vigil of Easter - Video Recording*, 2:00:39-2:00:55; “The Great Vigil of Easter - Service Bulletin,” 14.

technology of the soul with measurable and predictable consequences on the participant elements of the ritual. This is not quite the “practical results on the external world” that Rappaport and Homans distinguished from ritual action, which must wait for the comparative engagement of the next chapter. Yet, it does press beyond the tendency of much of the ritual theory literature to limit ritual transformation to socially constructed realities. Also, it takes seriously the emic understanding of the Episcopal Church of its Eucharistic liturgy, which is otherwise precluded by a staunch methodological secularism, naturalism, and materialism in the social sciences.

Fifth and finally, the elements of ritual being ordered in their frame so as to effect the transformation of at least some of the elements achieves objectification. This is to say that rituals, their constituent features, and their entailments become “available”<sup>786</sup> to themselves and to the broader society for further ritual engagement as more or less real, true, good, legitimate, reliable, or beautiful. This availability results from a given ritual, its features, and its entailments drawing constitutively from and contributing constructively to ongoing processes of ordering, of framing, and of transforming elements to

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<sup>786</sup> Berger and Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality*, 49.

accord with framed orders. Terence Turner describes two sides of ritual objectification: “the act becomes its own object,” and “the objectified action becomes separated from its performers and takes on the character of a self-existing schema.”<sup>787</sup> This is to say that rituals organize themselves and then contribute to wider processes of organizing otherwise chaotic experience, thereby constituting reality as such.<sup>788</sup> It is important for two reasons, however, to remember that the self-organization of ritual is not arbitrary. First, as has just been said, a ritual must both draw from and give back to ongoing ordering processes in order to register in the first place, and to be relevant so as to be worthy of establishment and maintenance in the end, respectively. Second, harking back to the aspect of ritual origins, ritual order derives itself from an ideal external to the order itself, reflexes upon itself in the ritual frame, order, and process, and aims itself toward generating trust and thereby social cohesion and differentiation. This is all to once again affirm, with Rappaport, that ritual orders are “not entirely encoded by their performers.” Moreover, these externalities that encode rituals are what make the ritual orders, frames, and

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<sup>787</sup> Turner, “Structure, Process, Form,” 236.

<sup>788</sup> Berger and Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality*, 65–70. The present project advances upon that of Berger and Luckmann by detailing the generation, establishment, and maintenance of socially constructed reality by ritual forms and processes.

transformations convincing as real on the order of natural or brute reality when objectified.

The objectification of three particular elements of the Eucharistic liturgy in the context of the Great Vigil of Easter demonstrate the objectification process and highlight challenges to it. First, the celebrant of the Eucharistic liturgy, in this case the bishop, is standing in the place of Christ in the ritual enactment. (In the case of a priest serving as celebrant, the priest is standing in the place of the bishop who stands in the place of Christ).<sup>789</sup> This is significant because the result is that Christ sacrifices Christ-self on behalf of the participant elements in the ritual performance, a highly reflexive act on the part of the divine. This reflexive divine self-sacrifice<sup>790</sup> is the encoding of the ritual order of the Eucharistic liturgy. It also makes the celebrant a participant in divinity as a vessel thereof, and so a transmitter of divine authority in the community that is real, good, true, legitimate, reliable, and beautiful, and therefore trustworthy. The bishop who stands in the place of Christ as celebrant in the Eucharistic liturgy is also the representative of the authority of Christ in the community beyond the scope of

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<sup>789</sup> Armentrout and Slocum, *An Episcopal Dictionary of the Church*, 416.

<sup>790</sup> Patton, *Religion of the Gods*, 241–47.

the ritual performance.<sup>791</sup> This extra-liturgical authority ultimately derives from the objectification of divine authority in the celebrant in the ritual frame. Similarly, the bread and wine are objectified as Christ's body and blood, vessels of Christ's presence and healing, saving power in the community, beyond the scope of the ritual performance such that it is important that any remaining bread or wine either be consumed or given back to the earth after the ritual is over. So too, the participant elements in the ritual, having consumed the bread/body and wine/blood, are transformed into a "new creation, the Body of Christ given for the world." This transformation is objectified in the participants themselves, represented by the "Blessing of Easter" after the Eucharistic liturgy itself that enjoins the congregation to "Go forth this night in peace and joy."<sup>792</sup> Thus, the engagement of the congregation with the wider world is guided and ordered by that sense of peace and rejoicing at an experience of resurrection. In this way the Eucharistic seeks to give back to wider and ongoing ordering processes in the societies from which its participants come.

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<sup>791</sup> Armentrout and Slocum, *An Episcopal Dictionary of the Church*, 47.

<sup>792</sup> *The Great Vigil of Easter - Video Recording*, 2:11:45-2:12:03. Note that the blessing continues to refer beyond the ritual frame, effecting a frame extension: "and may the blessing of God almighty, Creator, Christ and Holy Spirit, go with you and remain with you this night and always." See Snow et al., "Frame Alignment Processes, Micromobilization, and Movement Participation."

At least two challenges arise in terms of the capacity for the transformed ritual elements being appropriated. First, the celebrant, who is transformed into a vessel of divine authority in the ritual, is unlikely to have that authority appropriated either by a wider society that does not recognize divine authority, and particularly the authority of Christ, or by participant elements in the ritual who are ambivalent about the enactment of divine authority in the wider society. Second, in order for objectification to be successful there must be a certain degree of frame alignment between the ritual, the participant elements, and the wider society. While the ritual frame exerts some downward causation on the frames of participant elements, it exerts no direct influence on the framing elements of the wider society except through the participant elements, and participant elements may bracket their personal frame so as to limit the extent to which they accept the ritual frame beyond the ritual context. Given the disparity between the framing elements of the Eucharistic liturgy, derived mainly in medieval Europe, and the late modern frames of participant elements and the wider society in which the Eucharistic liturgy is being enacted, the likelihood of robust frame resonance<sup>793</sup> among them is limited. Thus, while the transformed ritual elements

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<sup>793</sup> Snow and Benford, "Ideology Frame Resonance and Participant Mobilization."

are available to the elements and the wider society beyond the ritual enactment itself in principle, they are in actuality unlikely to be appropriated as they only draw from and give back to the ongoing ordering processes in society to a limited extent.

### *Process*

The ritual theory literature on ritual process has largely focused on rites of passage, that is, rituals that mark the transition from one stage of life to another, from one natural season to another, or from one social arrangement to another, following Arnold van Gennep's cross cultural study thereof.<sup>794</sup> Van Gennep identified a three stage process for such rituals: a separation stage, a "marginal," liminal, or transitional stage, and an "aggregation," or reincorporation stage.<sup>795</sup> Victor Turner developed Van Gennep's model to distinguish the liminal stage as a distinct domain of "anti-structure" in which the hierarchy and differentiation of structured society is suspended in order to enable an experience of *comunitas* marked by radical equality.<sup>796</sup> Terence S. Turner corrects Victor Turner's

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<sup>794</sup> van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*.

<sup>795</sup> van Gennep; Turner, "Structure, Process, Form," 212.

<sup>796</sup> Turner, *The Ritual Process*, 94–97.

identification of anti-structure with the term meta-structure, indicating that the liminal stage of the ritual process operates at a higher logical level that facilitates transformations from one state to another, which would be mutually exclusive at the level of social binaries.<sup>797</sup> A main difference between the two Turners' views is that for Victor Turner the experience of the liminal stage verges on euphoria as structural barriers between people fall, whereas Terence Turner acknowledges that liminal experience is more one of disorientation and ambiguity; Victor describes wonder, Terence recognizes awe.<sup>798</sup> Ronald Grimes seems to lean more toward Terence Turner when he says that "ritual knowledge is rendered unforgettable only if it makes serious demands on individuals and communities, only if it is etched deeply into the marrow of soul and society."<sup>799</sup> In each of these cases, the limitation of discussion of ritual process to the narrower class of rites of passage is problematic because it ignores the transformative work of ritual beyond that particular class. The present theory takes the aspect of process to

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<sup>797</sup> Terence S. Turner, "Transformation, Hierarchy, and Transcendence: A Reformulation of Van Gennep's Model of the Structure of Rites de Passage," in *Secular Ritual*, ed. Sally Falk Moore and Barbara G. Myerhoff (Assen, Netherlands: Van Gorcum, 1977), 53–70; Turner, "Structure, Process, Form," 211–15.

<sup>798</sup> Dacher Keltner and Jonathan Haidt, "Approaching Awe, a Moral, Spiritual, and Aesthetic Emotion," *Cognition & Emotion* 17, no. 2 (2003): 297–314, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02699930302297>.

<sup>799</sup> Ronald L. Grimes, *Deeply Into the Bone: Re-Inventing Rites of Passage* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2002), 6.



apply to all ritual, as indicated by transformation being included as a feature of ritual structure in the above subsection on ritual structure and by the emphasis on ritual transformation in the comparative engagement with Xunzi in the next chapter.

The ritual process is the means by which the ritual form transforms at least one of the ritual elements from one location, status, state, or condition to another. Ritual being a semiotic system, the process of ritual transformation is one of semiosis, or the process by which a sign referring to an object generates an interpretant. In a ritual, the ritual process detaches a sign from its object and either assigns the sign to a new object or attaches a different sign to the object, in either case generating a new interpretant; ritual is a semiotic process of reassignment. As Van Gennep noted, there is a period of liminality as the ritual process takes place that is devoid of any signification at all. The awful interpretation of the ritual process offered by Terence S. Turner is to be preferred over the wonderful interpretation of Victor Turner because the process of being denuded of sign vehicles or objects generates anomie in which the element being transformed is utterly alone, not in utterly equal fellowship with all the other elements.

It is prevalent in the semiotics literature, and not without recourse to Peirce, to understand semiosis as fundamentally phenomenological such that it only occurs in “the presence of an interpreting mind.”<sup>800</sup> This interpretation is to be resisted in the present project, as was addressed in chapter two, instead drawing from Peirce to sustain a metaphysical account of semiotics and semiosis reflecting the ongoing rejection of nominalism for realism herein. The importance of this for understanding the ritual process in terms of semiosis is that neither the interpretant an element generates at the start of the ritual nor the interpretant generated as a result of the ritual process depends on the transformation having a particularly cognitive effect on any given element. Instead, the interpretant is any effect, whether cognitive, social, physical, or otherwise, of the whole ritual system taking the new sign to stand for the object or the sign to stand for a new object and not the old.

Since the aspect of ritual process has been almost exclusively addressed in the ritual studies literature with respect to rites of passage, the theory of ritual process just elaborated is applied here both to a rite of passage and to an ordinary rite. Ordinary rites are rituals that are performed regularly as opposed

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<sup>800</sup> Winfried Nöth, *Origins of Semiosis: Sign Evolution in Nature and Culture* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1994), 2.

to marking a particular transition. The rite of passage that takes place in the Great Vigil of Easter is the rite of baptism:<sup>801</sup>

This is full initiation by water and the Holy Spirit into Christ's Body, the church. God establishes an indissoluble bond with each person in baptism. God adopts us, making us members of the church and inheritors of the Kingdom of God. In baptism we are made sharers in the new life of the Holy Spirit and the forgiveness of sins. Baptism is the foundation for all future church participation and ministry.<sup>802</sup>

In the baptism ritual, there is a process of removing the signs of life outside the church and adding the signs of life inside the church to the participant elements being baptized. It begins in the examination of the candidates for baptism who make three renunciations: 1) of "Satan and all the spiritual forces of wickedness that rebel against God;" 2) of "the evil powers of this world which corrupt and destroy the creatures of God;" and 3) of "all sinful desires that draw you from the love of God."<sup>803</sup> Once these signs of life outside the church have been renounced, the candidates then take up new Christological signs, which generate the interpretant of being inside the church as they: 1) "turn to Jesus Christ and accept him as your savior;" 2) "put your whole trust in [Jesus'] grace and love;"

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<sup>801</sup> *The Great Vigil of Easter - Video Recording*, 2:11:45-2:12:03; "The Great Vigil of Easter - Service Bulletin," 8-9; *Book of Common Prayer*, 301-3, 306-8.

<sup>802</sup> Armentrout and Slocum, *An Episcopal Dictionary of the Church*, 36.

<sup>803</sup> *The Great Vigil of Easter - Video Recording*, 1:02:40-1:02:55. Note, the bishop omits the third renunciation. *Book of Common Prayer*, 302.

and 3) “promise to follow and obey [Jesus] as your Lord.”<sup>804</sup> A congregational renunciation of evil and re-appropriation of the signs of being in the church follows in the form of the responsive recitation of the Baptismal Covenant.<sup>805</sup> After intercessory prayers for the candidates, the prayer of thanksgiving sanctifies the water “that those who here are cleansed from sin and born again may continue for ever in the risen life of Jesus Christ our Savior.”<sup>806</sup> The liminal stage of the ritual proceeds with the bishop pouring water three times over each candidate, symbolizing their “cleansing,” which is the removal of the signs of being outside the church, while at the same time saying, “I baptize you in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit,” the three persons of the trinity being signs of life inside the church.<sup>807</sup> A further sign of life inside the church is given in chrismation, as the bishop makes the sign of the cross on the baptizand’s forehead with holy oil while saying, “You are sealed by the Holy

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<sup>804</sup> *The Great Vigil of Easter - Video Recording*, 1:02:55-1:03:14; *Book of Common Prayer*, 302–3.

<sup>805</sup> *The Great Vigil of Easter - Video Recording*, 1:03:15-1:06:13; “The Great Vigil of Easter - Service Bulletin”; Armentrout and Slocum, *An Episcopal Dictionary of the Church*, 37.

<sup>806</sup> *The Great Vigil of Easter - Video Recording*, 1:09:38-1:10:01; *Book of Common Prayer*, 307.

<sup>807</sup> *The Great Vigil of Easter - Video Recording*, 1:10:10-10:19; “The Great Vigil of Easter - Service Bulletin,” 9.

Spirit in Baptism and marked as Christ's own for ever."<sup>808</sup> Finally, each candidate is given a sign of their status in the church to carry with them into the world in the form of a lit candle, accompanied by the words, "Receive the light of Christ and carry it into the world."<sup>809</sup> This liminal stage is followed by a reincorporation stage as the bishop invites and the congregation receives the newly baptized, saying all together: "We receive you into the household of God. Confess the faith of Christ crucified, proclaim his resurrection, and share with us in his eternal priesthood."<sup>810</sup> The realist account of semiosis is extremely important for properly understanding what has happened here. It is not expected that each baptizand will carry the new signs of divine names, holy oil, and a lit candle with them everywhere they go for the rest of their lives so that everyone will be able to interpret them correctly as being members of the church. Instead, the interpretant of the baptism ritual is their new status in the church, allowing the baptizands to assume various offices, and their new orientation to how they live their lives day by day. While it is the work of the ritual to change the signs by

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<sup>808</sup> *The Great Vigil of Easter - Video Recording*, 1:10:20-10:29; "The Great Vigil of Easter - Service Bulletin," 9.

<sup>809</sup> *The Great Vigil of Easter - Video Recording*, 1:10:31-10:50; "The Great Vigil of Easter - Service Bulletin," 9.

<sup>810</sup> *The Great Vigil of Easter - Video Recording*, 1:12:55-13:14; "The Great Vigil of Easter - Service Bulletin," 9.

which the participant elements are signified, the interpretant is the fullness of being of the participant element having been so changed.

The principal ordinal rite in the Great Vigil of Easter is that of the Eucharist, and this ritual too exhibits transformative processes, both of the elements of bread and wine and of the participant elements who consume the bread and wine. These transformative processes have already been described in detail above in the discussion of the structural feature of transformation in the subsection on ritual structure, but it remains for the present to articulate them in terms of semiosis. The separation stage of the Eucharist with respect to the bread and wine actually takes place before the Eucharistic liturgy proper in the presentation of the gifts, including also monetary gifts for the support of the mission of the church.<sup>811</sup> After the bread and wine have been processed to the altar, the bishop then censes the altar, that is, swings a thurible (censer) with incense burning inside over the altar and the bread and wine. "Censing may express honor, respect, blessing, and celebration in a liturgy."<sup>812</sup> Both the procession of the bread and wine and their censing serve to separate these

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<sup>811</sup> *The Great Vigil of Easter - Video Recording*, 1:54:33-56:50; "The Great Vigil of Easter - Service Bulletin," 13.

<sup>812</sup> Armentrout and Slocum, *An Episcopal Dictionary of the Church*, 79.

elements from their normal status as food and drink. The liminal stage of the ritual begins in the words of institution later in the Eucharistic prayer where the bread and wine are associated with the bread and wine Jesus ate with the disciples at the Last Supper, and which Jesus identified as his body and blood, respectively.<sup>813</sup> The liminality continues as the bread and wine, along with the participant elements, are sacrificed on the altar: “Now gathered at your table, O God of all creation, and remembering Christ, crucified and risen, who was and is and is to come, we offer to you our gifts of bread and wine, and ourselves, a living sacrifice.”<sup>814</sup> This sacrifice negates the reference of the bread and wine by the signs of food and drink even as they are offered to God and so divinized. The epiclesis that follows invokes the Holy Spirit to transform the sacrificed bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ, investing the work of transformation in the phrase “that they may be.”<sup>815</sup> The bread and wine are then quite literally reincorporated into the participant elements by ingestion.<sup>816</sup>

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<sup>813</sup> *The Great Vigil of Easter - Video Recording*, 1:59:38-2:00:21; *Enriching Our Worship 1*, 1:61.

<sup>814</sup> *The Great Vigil of Easter - Video Recording*, 2:00:21-2:00:39; *Enriching Our Worship 1*, 1:62.

<sup>815</sup> *The Great Vigil of Easter - Video Recording*, 2:00:39-2:00:45; “The Great Vigil of Easter - Service Bulletin,” 14.

<sup>816</sup> *The Great Vigil of Easter - Video Recording*, 2:02:59-2:11:13.

The transformative process with respect to the participant elements in the ritual both overlaps and intersects with the transformative process with respect to the bread and wine. In the case of the participant elements, the separation stage of the process begins with the exchange between the bishop and the congregation in the Great Thanksgiving. The exchange invokes God on the congregation and the bishop, symbolically lifts the spirits (hearts) of the participant elements to be separated from the mundane realm and commune with the divine spirit, and then declares righteous this communion in gratitude and praise.<sup>817</sup> The liminal stage occurs earlier for the participant elements, beginning in the proper preface with the establishment of connection between God and humanity in the activity of the former making the latter in the image of the former, but then humanity rebels, only to be gathered back “time and again.”<sup>818</sup> The liminality continues in the recounting of salvation history with its ongoing oscillation between the ongoing fall of humanity and the everlasting grace of God, and intensified in the recounting of God’s paradoxical self-sacrifice

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<sup>817</sup> *The Great Vigil of Easter - Video Recording*, 1:56:50-57:03; “The Great Vigil of Easter - Service Bulletin,” 13.

<sup>818</sup> *The Great Vigil of Easter - Video Recording*, 1:57:23-57:42; *Enriching Our Worship 1*, 1:60.



and glorification.<sup>819</sup> Following the words of institution, the transformation processes of the bread and wine and the participant elements intersect as both are sacrificed together on the altar, in juxtaposition with God's self-sacrifice.<sup>820</sup> The epiclesis that transformed bread and wine into body and blood also invokes the Holy Spirit to transform the participant elements, and all of creation, into the body of Christ, a sort of resurrection of the sacrificed body of Christ.<sup>821</sup> Here the signs of Jesus are now made to refer to the participant element objects such that the interpretant of divinization is generated. The reincorporation brings this divinization process to fulfillment as the participant elements ingest God, which the bread and wine have been transformed into in the same ritual process. Notably, both the signs and the interpretant of the bread and wine and of the participant elements that results from the ritual process is God. Mundane signs are stripped away from mundane realities of bread, wine, and human beings, and divine signs are then made to refer to those realities in order to generate God

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<sup>819</sup> *The Great Vigil of Easter - Video Recording*, 1:58:51-59:38; *Enriching Our Worship 1*, 1:61.

<sup>820</sup> *The Great Vigil of Easter - Video Recording*, 2:00:22-2:00:39; *Enriching Our Worship 1*, 1:62.

<sup>821</sup> *The Great Vigil of Easter - Video Recording*, 2:00:39-2:00:55; "The Great Vigil of Easter - Service Bulletin," 14.

in even greater fullness. The Eucharist, then, is the ultimate ritual process, transforming material elements and participant elements into God.

### *Function*

The function of ritual, as an aspect of a theory of ritual, addresses the products, outcomes, or entailments generated by the ritual structure and process being enacted. The enactment of the ritual structure and process is itself the topic of the next subsection on performance. Something has already been said in the above subsection on ritual structure about the functionalist trajectory in ritual studies that seeks to understand the effect of ritual on social structures, that is, on the organization and operation of society as a whole. By contrast, also noted above, structuralist interpretations of ritual demure from claims about causal effect on society, instead considering the meaning of rituals for their participant elements. That ritual should generate as products either social organization or personal meaning, however, is not necessarily a strict dichotomy. For example, Edmund Leach asserts that ritual, “serves to express the individual’s status as a social person in the structural system in which he finds himself for the time being.”<sup>822</sup> In this case, then, ritual generates the personal meaning of being in a

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<sup>822</sup> Leach, *Political Systems of Highland Burma*, 10–11.

particular location or role in the social organization detailed by the ritual. Furthermore, the strong causal link between ritual and social structure in the functionalist trajectory are nuanced in what Catherine Bell calls “neofunctional systems analyses.” In these approaches, ritual interacts with a number of other cultural systems, including ecological, economic, genetic, and physiological conditions, among others, to produce its effects. Ritual, then, serves to regulate how humans interact with their environment, including their personal ecology (genetics).<sup>823</sup>

Among the neofunctional systems analysts, Bell includes Roy Rappaport, for whom it is important that ritual form or structure does something, which is likely why he has often been interpreted as a functionalist, much to his own chagrin.<sup>824</sup> In making the case that the entailments of ritual are a result of its form, Rappaport is clear that while form and substance are indistinguishable in the practice of ritual, they are analytically distinguishable.<sup>825</sup> With this distinction in hand, he makes a four step argument: 1) ritual form adds something to the

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<sup>823</sup> Bell, *Ritual*, 29, 33.

<sup>824</sup> Rappaport, *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity*, 27–28. Note that this particular statement of his chagrin is published two years after Bell’s *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions*, and so was not included in its consideration. Rappaport died just as Bell’s work was being published, and before his own went to press.

<sup>825</sup> Rappaport, 30.

substance of ritual; 2) if the ritual form is universal, then the entailments of that form, i.e. what it is that the ritual form adds to the substance, are plausibly universal; 3) if these entailments only emerge from the ritual form and nowhere else, then ritual is without equivalent or satisfactory alternative, which explains the ubiquity of ritual; and 4) if these entailments are nontrivial, but rather “requisite to the perpetuation of human social life,” then ritual is “*the social act basic to humanity*.”<sup>826</sup> The import of this argument for Rappaport is that participation in the ritual form is what makes human beings human; another way of saying this is that ritual makes humans humane. In doing so, ritual is evolutionarily advantageous because it overcomes the twin problems of the lie and the alternative. Finally, he relies upon the Aristotelian distinction between a formal and final cause, the latter of which he associates with functionalism, to distinguish himself therefrom.<sup>827</sup> While Rappaport may well be absolved from the strict functionalism he rejected, the fact that he argues for evolutionary advantage from ritual and its entailments, and that he makes the production of these entailments so central to his analysis, does seem to locate him in the neofunctional systems analysis camp Bell identifies. That said, what ritual entails

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<sup>826</sup> Rappaport, 31.

<sup>827</sup> Rappaport, 28.

for Rappaport is “the establishment of convention, the sealing of social contract, the construction of the integrated conventional orders we shall call Logoi..., the investment of whatever it encodes with morality, the construction of time and eternity; the representation of a paradigm of creation, the generation of the concept of the sacred and the sanctification of conventional order, the generation of theories of the occult, the evocation of numinous experience, the awareness of the divine, the grasp of the holy, and the construction orders of meaning transcending the semantic.”<sup>828</sup> Some of these entailments, like the establishment of convention and the sealing of social contract, clearly have to do with social organization, but others, such as encoding these orders with morality and constructing orders of meaning beyond the semantic, have more to do with meaning making. Ultimately, then, Rappaport may best be interpreted as a neofunctional neostructural systems analyst.

Rappaport conceives a number of ritual entailments, which may be divided into three classes: temporal, cosmological, and theological, all of which he understands to be religious in the sense of pertaining to “The Holy” and its four elements: “The Sacred,” “The Numinous,” “The Occult,” and “The

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<sup>828</sup> Rappaport, 27.

Divine.”<sup>829</sup> The temporal class of entailments may further be broken down into what he calls three “dimensions:” the sequential, the simultaneous, and the hierarchical.<sup>830</sup> Ritual generates the sequential dimension of temporality, that is, the distinctions among past, present, and future, due to the clarity of its occurrence, in turn resulting from its formality, which imposes “on natural processes discontinuities much sharper than those intrinsic to the natural processes themselves.”<sup>831</sup> By contrast with the digital logic of sequential time and its periods, simultaneous time within the ritual frame is intervallic and exhibits many of the characteristics of *comunitas* or anti-structure as articulated by Victor Turner, which is an experience of eternity, and which arises from the tempo changes encoded in a ritual performance.<sup>832</sup> Within the simultaneity of ritual, the ritual form establishes a hierarchy of successive orders capped by “Ultimate Sacred Postulates” expressed in terms of “cosmological axioms” enacted as rules of conduct applied to understandings of the world beyond the ritual frame.<sup>833</sup>

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<sup>829</sup> Rappaport, 1.

<sup>830</sup> Rappaport, 170.

<sup>831</sup> Rappaport, 177–78, 189–90.

<sup>832</sup> Rappaport, 216–19, 222–25, 230–33.

<sup>833</sup> Rappaport, 263–67.

Similarly, the cosmological class of entailments are made up of the sacred, the sanctified, and their orders of relations.<sup>834</sup> The sacred are unquestionable Ultimate Sacred Postulates, not what they postulate, established by the metaperformativeness of canonically invariant ritual forms, that is, by the performative establishment of the conventions that the postulates are and that set the terms for any and all conventional effects and states of affairs.<sup>835</sup> The sanctified, then, are conventional effects and states of affairs that derive from a given Ultimate Sacred Postulate and that derive their sanctity therefrom according to their degree of approximation thereto;<sup>836</sup> the degree of sanctity is thus the degree of unquestionableness, which in turn enables the stabilization of conventions in societies.<sup>837</sup> The order of relations among the sacred and the sanctified are thus established as a “True Order” in ritual, which is in turn “imposed upon the world by the performance of the liturgical order that is its representation.”<sup>838</sup> The certainty ritual imbues in, and the agreement ritual

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<sup>834</sup> Rappaport, 344–46, 371–73.

<sup>835</sup> Rappaport, 277–79.

<sup>836</sup> Rappaport, 313–14.

<sup>837</sup> Rappaport, 321.

<sup>838</sup> Rappaport, 344–46.

demands not to question, immaterial discursive Ultimate Sacred Postulates combine with their inverse, namely material, (physical and psychic), nondiscursive numinous experiences of *comunitas* to ground the unquestionableness of the True Order and the notion of the divine, which is the theological class of ritual entailment.<sup>839</sup> Rappaport concludes poetically:

The unfalsifiable supported by the undeniable yields the unquestionable, which transforms the dubious, the arbitrary, and the conventional into the correct, the necessary, and the natural.<sup>840</sup>

Two other issues need to be addressed with respect to the aspect of function. First, as was mentioned above with regard to the transformation feature of the ritual form, many ritual theorists reject the technical capacity of ritual to act on the material world. Rappaport argues that, while maintaining his emphasis on the formality of ritual as opposed to its functionality, or physical efficaciousness, a hard and fast distinction between the communication achieved by ritual formality and functional efficaciousness must ultimately break down.<sup>841</sup> This also puts him in good company with ethologists, who Bell also categorizes as neofunctionalist system analysts, and who identify ritual action as inherently

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<sup>839</sup> Rappaport, 372–73, 396–99, 404.

<sup>840</sup> Rappaport, 405.

<sup>841</sup> Rappaport, 46–50, 108–13.



communicative and promoting of efficiency such that intraspecies damage or killing is limited and sexual and social bonding are facilitated.<sup>842</sup> Furthermore, biogeneticists have emphasized how ritual “enables the individual, or the animal, to solve problems of adaptation that would otherwise be unyielding,”<sup>843</sup> which accords with Rappaport’s argument for the adaptive benefit of ritual overcoming the linguistic challenges of the alternative and the lie. Notably, these ritual techniques are not the cognitively intended techniques espoused by many ritual practitioners, who may, for instance, take the ritual of the Eucharist to produce the effect of turning bread and wine into body and blood. Nonetheless, as Rappaport pointed out in his earlier work, the slaughter of pigs may simultaneously serve as propitiatory sacrifice and means of regulating the quantity of pigs in the community such that ecological stability is maintained.<sup>844</sup> Again, the harmony of the functional and the structural is a distinctive contribution of Rappaport’s approach to ritual overall, and is why his systems approach is adopted for the purposes of the present project.

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<sup>842</sup> Bell, *Ritual*, 31.

<sup>843</sup> Bell, 32; Charles D. Laughlin, “Ritual and the Symbolic Function: A Summary of Biogenetic Structural Theory,” *Journal of Ritual Studies* 4, no. 1 (Winter 1990): 15–39, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44368448>.

<sup>844</sup> Rappaport, *Pigs for the Ancestors*.

Second, there is a significant strain of ritual theory that denies any meaning to ritual. The most notable proponent of this view is Frits Staal (1930 – 2012), who argues that ritual “is pure activity, without meaning or goal,” because it is “for its own sake,” “without function, aim, or goal, or also that it constitutes its own aim or goal,” by contrast with ordinary activity that does have an aim or goal.<sup>845</sup> Both ritual and ordinary activity, he claims, are rule governed activities, which means they both have syntax, but ordinary activity also has aims and goals, and thus meanings or semantic content, whereas ritual is only about following the rules.<sup>846</sup> More will be said below in the section on ritual and language regarding Staal’s understanding of the relationship between the two, but for now what is notable is that he envisions ritual as exhibiting perfect aseity, existing in an entirely enclosed state in and for itself. Caroline Humphrey and James Laidlaw are far less polemical than Staal, in part out of their consideration of ritual as a mode of activity rather than a class of action, but nevertheless concur that ritual is not inherently meaningful, and therefore is neither

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<sup>845</sup> Frits Staal, “The Meaninglessness of Ritual,” *Numen* 26, no. 1 (June 1, 1979): 9, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3269623>.

<sup>846</sup> Staal, “The Meaninglessness of Ritual”; Frits Staal, *Rules Without Meaning: Ritual, Mantras, and the Human Sciences* (New York, NY: Peter Lang, 1993).

communicative in itself nor informative regarding its performers.<sup>847</sup> Their interpretation is particularly nominalistic, relying exclusively on the meaning that participants bring to and/or receive from the ritual enactment to determine that the diversity thereof excludes meaning from ritualized action. A realist account would be better able to distinguish the meaning of the ritual from the meaning either ascribed to or derived from the ritual by the participants and other elements. Notably, both of these theories of ritual meaninglessness derive from analyses of South Asian ritual practices, the Vedic *Agnicayana* (fire ritual) for Staal and the Jain daily morning *puja* (veneration; worship; prayer) for Humphrey and Laidlaw. It is beyond the scope of the present project to adequately explore whether particularities of South Asian ritual development, theory, and practice contribute to this rejection of meaning in ritual, but there is reason from among Indologists to be skeptical of their claims.<sup>848</sup> Regardless, the approach taken in this project rejects a hard distinction between ritual and ordinary activity, preferring instead the interlocking continua of ritual and

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<sup>847</sup> Caroline Humphrey and James Laidlaw, *The Archetypal Actions of Ritual: A Theory of Ritual Illustrated by the Jain Rite of Worship* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon, 1994).

<sup>848</sup> Axel Michaels, "Ritual and Meaning," in *Theorizing Rituals: Issues, Topics, Approaches, Concepts*, ed. Jens Kreinath, Jan Snoek, and Michael Stausberg, vol. 1 (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 247–61; Francis Xavier Clooney, *Thinking Ritually: Rediscovering the Pūrva Mīmāṃsā of Jaimini* (Vienna: De Nobili Research Library, 1990).

spontaneity, and cognitive and taken-for-granted. Furthermore, this project rejects nominalism for realism, insisting that ritual is not only activity taken alone or in groups of individuals but is properly activity of human social units. For both of these reasons, the emerging ritual theory here must reject claims of ritual meaninglessness on the terms of Staal, Humphrey, and Laidlaw, and instead articulate ritual as both inherently and productively meaningful.

Like the neofunctional systems analysts, the present project understands ritual to be a cultural system, and thus a semiotic system, that enables ritual elements to interact meaningfully, efficiently, and effectively. Unlike the neofunctional systems analysts, however, the present project takes ritual to be more basic than any of the more particular cultural systems such as economic systems, political systems, religious systems, or language. This shift in the schematic location of ritual in the present project arises from the expansion of the understanding of ritual beyond the context of religion. Rather, ritual is the form that generates cultural systems, facilitates their interaction with natural systems, distinguishes foreground from background realities in given contexts, and transforms cultural elements and systems with its inherent processes. It is cultural systems, then, and their many elements, realities, and activities, that are the functions or products of ritual. This is very different than the classical

functionalist accounts of ritual, in which ritual produces certain social or psychological contents or experiences, instead generating full socio-cultural systems themselves, although also their particular contents and experiences. This is to say that ritual operates at many levels of life and experience, providing form to interactions and transforming its constituent elements in ways large and small. This is also to say that a theory of ritual must remain extremely general in order to account for the many and various instantiations of ritual from the cultural all the way down to the personal levels. This generality may be considered a weakness of the present project, abstracting to the point of meaninglessness. One counterargument is that earlier, narrower theories of ritual missed important interconnections among cultural domains and processes due to failure to pick up on the commonality among them of the ritual form. Another is that proclaiming weakness at this stage is premature anyway; this general theory is as strong as its ability to robustly describe and explain a wide variety of particular instantiations, and so its evaluation should await such application.

While the ritual process has to do with removing signs from objects and assigning those objects new signs so as to generate new interpretants, the function of ritual is the interpretants. This is another reason that the phenomenological interpretation of semiotics is to be resisted in favor of a

metaphysical interpretation. The phenomenological interpretation would register the function of ritual as only an affair of mental representation of the ritual interpretants. A metaphysical interpretation, on the other hand, registers the interpretants of rituals as cultural systems, elements, and activities themselves, that is, as realities independent of knowing minds as opposed to impositions of rational order on otherwise chaotic reality. The ritual process adjusts the relationships among signs and objects in order to generate these new interpretants, be they cultural systems, interpersonal interactions, or even the physical location of a ritual element. One of the reasons some reject meaning in ritual is the assumption that meaning is inevitably cognitive, which the present theory rejects for a metaphysical understanding of meaning as an independent reality that may or may not be known. Similarly, those who distinguish ritual outcomes from technique assume that ritual can have only either technical or nontechnical products, the latter including both social and psychological effects. The present theory rejects the reducibility of ritual to the binaries either between cognitive or noncognitive meaning and between technical and social-psychological effects. A ritual means what it means, which is to say it generates its outcomes, independent of whether its elements, including its participant elements, understand that meaning. Thus, the intentionality of ritual elements in

their ritual enactment is held in abeyance, yielding to the priority of the ritual form and process in generating the ritual functions. The aspect of function is properly metaphysical while the phenomenology of ritual, which is to say the interpreted meaning of a ritual in a mind, properly belongs to the aspect of communication.

Another function of ritual is facilitation of the transition of the interpretant from foreground to background, or from an intentional to a taken for granted production from the perspective of the ritual elements, by virtue of repetition of the ritual. Notably, rites of passage are not usually repeated, as are ordinary rituals, and so are not good examples of this ritual role in facilitating transition from the cognitive to the taken for granted. Ritual interpretants, and the ritual processes that generate them, are fundamentally solutions to a problem the ritual is designed to solve. Charles Sanders Peirce, in line with the American pragmatist tradition in philosophy more generally, understands problem solving as the basic motivation for all human behavior. Problems that generate surprise sufficient to overcome tenaciously held beliefs thereby irritate doubt that can only be resolved by a process of inquiry.<sup>849</sup> “Doubt is an uneasy and dissatisfied

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<sup>849</sup> Peirce, *The Essential Peirce 1*, 1:109–23; Whitney, “Experience and the Ultimacy of God,” 51.

state from which we struggle to free ourselves and pass into the state of belief; while the latter is a calm and satisfactory state which we do not wish to avoid, or to change to a belief in anything else.”<sup>850</sup> The ritual process and interpretant are the results of inquiry that resolve doubt, and as the process is repeated, the interpretant is repeatedly generated such that its presence may be taken to be reliable and belief is thus sustained. This reliability in turn relies on the repetition of the ritual, and so over time, as the ritual is repeated, both the problem and the ritual process and interpretant that together constitute its solution move from the foreground to the background of attention.<sup>851</sup> The greatest achievement for a ritual, then, is to become taken for granted<sup>852</sup> as reliable and merely part of the way of things are, rather than being either the subject or object of cognitive attention. In this way too, then, in addition to the metaphysical as opposed to phenomenological categorization of interpretants, the present theory rejects theories of ritual that in turn reject meaning in ritual. It does so on the basis that many of those theories are based on the testimonies of ritual practitioners who

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<sup>850</sup> Peirce, *The Essential Peirce 1*, 1:114.

<sup>851</sup> Paul J. Hopper, “Aspect and Foregrounding in Discourse,” in *Discourse and Syntax*, Syntax and Semantics 12 (New York, NY: Academic Press, 1979), 213.

<sup>852</sup> Peter L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1967), 24–25.



may very well be taking the meaning of the rituals they perform for granted. Indeed, taking rituals for granted is precisely the point. At the same time, reliability should not be taken to indicate necessary causation, which is to say that the ritual process does not necessarily generate the interpretant of a given ritual one hundred percent of the time as they are enacted in a probabilistic world. Rituals that have greater technical efficacy do have higher probabilities of generating their interpretants, but many social rituals, and perhaps especially religious rituals, generate their interpretants reliably but at a relatively low rate of replication.

The functions of the baptismal and Eucharistic rites within the Great Vigil of Easter have already been analyzed above with respect to their generation via the ritual process in the subsection above on process. Notably, these functions, namely ecclesial membership, transformation of bread and wine into body and blood, and transformation of participant elements into divinity, are all generations of metaphysical, as opposed to phenomenological, interpretants. There is nothing that other participant elements could sensorially perceive with respect to the baptizands that would indicate that they are now members of the church. Rather, the baptizands have been metaphysically transformed from the state of being outsiders to the state of membership. Similarly, the bread and wine

are not detectibly body and blood,<sup>853</sup> and those who ingest the body and blood are not detectibly divine.<sup>854</sup> On one hand, their transformation does have to do with their status among the rest of the ritual elements, but the change of status is brought about more fundamentally by the transformation of their state of being in and of themselves; the change of status is a further function of their change of state. Rappaport similarly relates the phenomenological effects to the metaphysical outcomes: “the indexical nature of acts signaling conventional states is a consequence of their accomplishment of whatever it is that they indicate.”<sup>855</sup> These states of being, then, are solutions to problems that the rituals that generate them are designed to solve. Baptism solves the problem of identifying and establishing a boundary between who and what are inside and outside the church. The Eucharist solves the problem of who and what is saved or redeemed by God. Membership in the church is therefore signaled to other participants in the baptism ritual by virtue of the fact that the ritual accomplishes membership. Similarly, divinization is signaled to other participants in the Eucharist by virtue of the fact that the Eucharist accomplishes divinization.

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<sup>853</sup> Armentrout and Slocum, *An Episcopal Dictionary of the Church*, “Real Presence,” 431.

<sup>854</sup> Armentrout and Slocum, “Theosis,” 518-19.

<sup>855</sup> Rappaport, *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity*, 108.

Nevertheless, in both cases, the fact that those who did not participate in the ritual will not necessarily have any indication of the transformed state of the baptizands or the Eucharistic participants, respectively, does not mean that the ritual did not accomplish the transformation or that the transformation has been reversed.

The ultimate claim of Rappaport's elaborate conception of ritual entailments is that ritual establishes and maintains the most basic conventions by which human beings perceive, interpret, and engage each other and everything in the world, including the world itself. This claim correlates to Immanuel Kant's categorical scheme of time, space, and causality,<sup>856</sup> but whereas Kant took these categories to be inherent to human rationality, Rappaport conceives them as socially constructed by the ritual form. The present project fundamentally affirms the insight that these basic conventions, and perhaps others, are ritually established and maintained, and makes the insight programmatic by characterizing ritual as pervasive in the comparative engagement undertaken in the next chapter. In so doing, Rappaport is found deficient for having limited his conception of ritual to religious ritual. It should be emphasized that ritual

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<sup>856</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*.

generates a wide range of interpretants, including these most basic conventions but also ranging far beyond to social, cultural, interpersonal, and even physical norms insofar as they are established by convention.

Nevertheless, the analysis Rappaport provides of how ritual generates the conventions of human knowing and doing benefits from some tweaking. First, the correction Terrence Turner offers to Victor Turner in the consideration of the aspect of process above provides entrée into a more systematic account of the periods and intervals of sequential and simultaneous time. Rather than extempore intervals interrupting and standing apart from the regular periodicity of time, as Rappaport conceives, it is better to invert the conception such that the intervals of ritual transformation demarcate periods of time by constituting the present at a different logical level than the past or the future. This is to say that the present as a mode of time is constructed by the ritual form transforming its elements through the ritual process. The past, then, is the imposition of periodicity on completed transformations, and the future is the anticipation of potential transformations yet to be realized; all three modes of time together constitute eternity,<sup>857</sup> as opposed to eternity being equated with the interval as

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<sup>857</sup> Neville, *Eternity and Time's Flow*.

Rappaport schematizes. This also explains why the present is so heavily characterized by consciousness, given that, on a pragmatist account, consciousness is a tool for solving a problem, which the disorientation of liminal experience surely must be.

Second, the repetition of ritual, which Rappaport assumes in his understanding of invariance, allows the interpretant of a given ritual, over the course of multiple, and in most cases many, repetitions, to shift from being a conscious to a taken for granted process. This is not the same as the unquestionable character of the ritual entailments that Rappaport concludes. For a ritual process and its resulting interpretants to become taken for granted is a further outworking of their being reliable to some extent, still allowing for a certain level of doubt and recognition of the conventionality of the ritual, as opposed to the more absolute terms Rappaport employs of “the correct, the necessary, and the natural.”<sup>858</sup> This ability to take the interpretants of the ritual for granted even under the conditions of doubt is an important element of the subjunctive aspect of ritual. Whereas Rappaport considers rituals to take place one at a time, the present project understands rituals to themselves be made up

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<sup>858</sup> Rappaport, *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity*, 405.

of rituals, acknowledges that rituals overlap, and recognizes that the Ultimate Sacred Postulates that cap different rituals may at times be mutually exclusive. This is to say that there is a radical pluralism among the many rituals any person is performing at any given point in time, and that pluralism is rarely, if ever, entirely homogenized by the sort of totalizing sacred canopy<sup>859</sup> Rappaport would have to hypothesize in order to attain the coherence he claims to achieve.

Consideration of the Eucharist in the context of the Great Vigil of Easter is less helpful here, given that it only recurs annually. Instead, Eucharistic practice in many Episcopal churches, such as Washington National Cathedral, takes place at least weekly, on Sundays, sometimes more regularly for feasts, festivals, and holy days, and in some cases daily. Each enactment of the ritual of the Eucharist, then, constitutes a present moment demarcating the past from the future on an at least weekly cycle. The week, in a very literal sense, would not exist except for the demarcation by Eucharistic worship on Sunday. Furthermore, each enactment of the Eucharist involves the enactment of many smaller rituals. One set of such smaller rituals, one level down from the ritual of the Eucharist in total, would include the various parts of the Eucharistic liturgy, such as the Great

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<sup>859</sup> Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion*, 3–51.

Thanksgiving, the Proper Preface, the Sanctus and Benedictus, the Words of Institution, etc. Each of these smaller rituals, in turn, is made up of smaller rituals down to rituals of language and of movement. Even at the level of the parts of the Eucharistic liturgy, however, there are discrepancies among the Ultimate Sacred Postulates of each part, which themselves may vary with the prayer texts selected for use in a particular instantiation. For example, the proper preface of the Eucharistic prayer used in the Great Vigil of Easter at Washington National Cathedral in 2015 takes its Ultimate Sacred Postulate to be something like, “God’s love for creation is ever faithful.”<sup>860</sup> The words of institution, in the same liturgy, however, has an Ultimate Sacred Postulate focused on Jesus’ self-sacrifice to atone for human sin.<sup>861</sup> In the very next paragraph, the anamnesis, or remembrance, God now requires not only Jesus’ self-sacrifice but also the sacrifice of gifts – bread and wine – and of the participant elements themselves.<sup>862</sup> None of these postulates is entirely coherent with the overall Ultimate Sacred Postulate of the Eucharistic liturgy as a whole, which is something like, “Those who consume God become God.” Notably, each and all of these postulates might

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<sup>860</sup> *Enriching Our Worship 1*, 1:60.

<sup>861</sup> *Enriching Our Worship 1*, 1:61.

<sup>862</sup> *Enriching Our Worship 1*, 1:62.

very well be questioned, doubted, or practiced for the sake of upholding convention by any given participant element, if they are not taking them for granted. Nevertheless, the interpretants of the Eucharistic ritual and its sub-rituals are reliably generated by the ritual performances, which reliability results, over time, in their becoming taken for granted even in the absence of certainty.

### *Performance*

While the theory of ritual emerging here conceives ritual as the form of a process generating a range of functions, ritual does not exist as a form, but only as it is performed. Indeed, the word “performance” was historically used to refer to ritual itself,<sup>863</sup> although more often it refers to the execution or interpretation of the ritual form and process.<sup>864</sup> More generally, performance has to do with action, execution, or operation, involving carrying out, discharging, accomplishing, or fulfilling a command, a promise, a duty, a purpose or a responsibility.<sup>865</sup> Similarly, the word “practice” and the related word “praxis” refer to the action, doing, undertaking, or proceeding of something, the “application or use of an

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<sup>863</sup> “Performance, n.,” in *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, Def. 4b, accessed May 18, 2017, <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/140783>.

<sup>864</sup> “Performance, n.,” Def. 4a.

<sup>865</sup> “Performance, n.,” Def. 1a-c, 3. Notably, not Def. 2.



idea, belief, or method, as opposed to the theory or principles of it," and both words may also mean performance.<sup>866</sup> By contrast, however, "practice" may also refer to "the habitual doing or carrying on of something; usual, customary, or constant action or performance; conduct."<sup>867</sup> All three terms have been given extensive theoretical treatment, especially since the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>868</sup> and those theoretical elaborations are instructive for understanding ritual enactment. In general, "the study of ritual as practice has meant a basic shift from looking at activity as the expression of cultural patterns to looking at it as that which makes and harbors such patterns."<sup>869</sup>

An initial consideration with regard to ritual performance has to do with the relationship between the practice or performance of a ritual and its form or

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<sup>866</sup> "Practice, n.," in *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, Def. 2a-c, accessed May 18, 2017, <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/149226>; "Praxis, n.," in *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, accessed May 18, 2017, <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/149425>.

<sup>867</sup> "Practice, n.," Def. 3a.

<sup>868</sup> Bell, *Ritual*, 72–73, 76. Notably, Bell herself sharply distinguishes performance from practice approaches to ritual, locating herself firmly in the practice camp, in *Ritual* and in Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice*. She softens this position somewhat in Catherine Bell, "Performance," in *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*, ed. Mark C. Taylor (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1998). For a critique of her position, see Ronald L. Grimes, "Performance Theory and the Study of Ritual," in *New Approaches to the Study of Religion: Textual, Comparative, Sociological, and Cognitive Approaches*, ed. Peter Antes, Armin W. Geertz, and Randi R. Warne, vol. 2 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2004), 109–38.

<sup>869</sup> Bell, *Ritual*, 82.

structure, which is symbolically encoded. Talal Asad demarcates a sharp distinction between understanding rituals as enactments of symbol systems and recognizing them as performed practices: "Symbols, as I said, call for interpretation, and even as interpretative criteria are extended, so interpretations can be multiplied. Disciplinary practices, on the other hand, cannot be varied so easily, because learning to develop moral capabilities is not the same thing as learning to invent representations."<sup>870</sup> This strict demarcation leads to rejection of ritual as a form of communication: "While I take it for granted that communicative discourse is involved in learning, performing, and commenting upon rites, I reject the idea that ritual itself encodes and communicates some special meaning."<sup>871</sup> Roy Rappaport also recognizes the primacy of the performance of a ritual over the abstractions of ritual rules, texts, or symbols that make up their form, but understands the relationship between form and performance as dialectical,<sup>872</sup> rather than oppositional, and so retains the conception of ritual as a mode of communication. "There are things 'said' by all

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<sup>870</sup> Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009), 79.

<sup>871</sup> Asad, 130.

<sup>872</sup> Rappaport, *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity*, 37, 115.

liturgical rituals that cannot be said in other ways. They are in part expressed by the special relationship between the liturgical order performed and the act of performing it."<sup>873</sup> Furthermore, "to *perform* a liturgical [ritual] order ... is *necessarily to conform to it*,"<sup>874</sup> that is to the form or structure of the ritual. Indeed, Rappaport would agree with the characterization of ritual as "disciplinary practice" by Asad, the performance of which results in the "*self*-restructuring of contradictory religious subjectivities" by reorganizing "the basis on which choices were to be made."<sup>875</sup> In the idiom of Rappaport, "Liturgy preserves the conventions it encodes inviolate in defiance of the vagaries of ordinary practice, thereby providing them with existence independent of, and insulated against, the statistical averages which characterize behavior."<sup>876</sup> Asad would rightly critique Rappaport for failing to adequately account for the power differential between those who discipline and those disciplined via ritual. Yet, the ability of Rappaport to derive the moral capacities<sup>877</sup> Asad identifies at the heart of ritual

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<sup>873</sup> Rappaport, 38.

<sup>874</sup> Rappaport, 118.

<sup>875</sup> Asad, *Genealogies of Religion*, 135.

<sup>876</sup> Rappaport, *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity*, 130.

<sup>877</sup> Rappaport, 132–34.

practice from the very symbolic interpretation of ritual that Asad claims is inadequate to the task, calls into question the adequacy of the analysis Asad provides on the grounds that the existence of a thing proves its possibility.

Another area of literature pertaining to ritual performance focuses around distinguishing ritual performances from other types of performance, such as dramatic performance, athletic performance (i.e. sport), musical performance, etc. For example, Richard Schechner distinguishes the goal of ritual performance as transformation from the goal of dramatic performance as transportation.<sup>878</sup> He calls “performances where performers are changed ‘transformations’ and those where performers are returned to their starting places ‘transportations’ — ‘transportation,’ because during the performance the performers are ‘taken somewhere’ but at the end, often assisted by others, they are ‘cooled down’ and reenter ordinary life just about where they went in.”<sup>879</sup> Schechner relies for his conception of ritual transformation on the ritual theory of Victor Turner, who views the outcome of a performance of the ritual process being a change in social status or role; theatrical performance does not change the social status or role of

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<sup>878</sup> Richard Schechner, *Between Theater and Anthropology* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983), 117–50.

<sup>879</sup> Schechner, 125–26.

the performer. Ritual for Schechner, then, generally falls at the efficacy end, and theater at the entertainment end, of an efficacy-entertainment continuum.<sup>880</sup> This is to say that what distinguishes a ritual performance from a dramatic performance is that ritual performances have functions, as in the subsection on ritual function above, whereas dramatic performances do not. Thus, ritual is decidedly instrumental for performance theorists, by contrast with the structuralist and cultural symbolist approaches, in which lack of instrumentality is fundamental to the ritual phenomenon. Despite this distinction between effective ritual performances and entertaining theatrical performances, Schechner nevertheless understands various types of performance to belong to one another in a “unifiable realm of performance,” while remaining theoretically distinguishable.<sup>881</sup> Indeed, this typology of performance, as developed by Schechner, is a detailed explication of what Roy Rappaport refers to as the “extended family of performance forms,” but assesses “the matter too complex”<sup>882</sup> to elaborate in his own project.

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<sup>880</sup> Richard Schechner, *Essays on Performance Theory, 1970-1976* (New York, NY: Drama Book Specialists, 1977), 75; Richard Schechner, *Performance Theory* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1988).

<sup>881</sup> Richard Schechner and Willa Appel, eds., *By Means of Performance: Intercultural Studies of Theatre and Ritual* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 25; Richard Schechner, *The Future of Ritual: Writings on Culture and Performance* (London: Routledge, 1993).

<sup>882</sup> Rappaport, *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity*, 38.

In another vein, James W. Fernández distinguishes performance from persuasion as the establishment and maintenance, respectively, of the human roles, relationships, and orientations that make for a meaningful life. He notes that humans “are required to invent ways of being – from rules and plans to world views and cosmologies – more or less appropriate to any of the diverse milieus in which we have installed ourselves. We endlessly argue over the appropriateness of those rules, plans, and world views.”<sup>883</sup> The role of persuasion, then, is “to preserve our place and our gratifying performances and hence the world in which these things are lodged and to persuade others to recognize that place, that performance, and that world.”<sup>884</sup> While persuasions may proceed via formal argument hewing to the demands of logic, more often both they and performances proceed by metaphoric predication of one domain upon another to surprising and creative effect. Indeed, Fernández defines metaphor as “a strategic predication upon an inchoate pronoun (an I, a you, a we, a they) which makes a movement and leads to performance.”<sup>885</sup> To

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<sup>883</sup> James W. Fernández, *Persuasions and Performances: The Play of Tropes in Culture* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1986), vii.

<sup>884</sup> Fernández, viii.

<sup>885</sup> Fernández, 8.

surprising effect, he then predicates persuasive and performative metaphor on ritual: “rituals are the acting out of metaphoric predications upon inchoate pronouns which are in need of movement.”<sup>886</sup> Thus, the performative character of ritual has to do with enacting a role within a worldview, while the persuasive character has to do with distinguishing that role and worldview from others.

Ritual theorists have also been concerned with the very notion of performativity as it applies to ritual. The issue of performativity, as derived from the philosophical work of J.L. Austin,<sup>887</sup> has to do with the mechanism by which words do things, the instrumentality of words, or the sense in which something is accomplished via language. Austin distinguishes locutions, or the words themselves, from illocutions, or the subjective intentions of a speaker to accomplish a goal, (e.g. an order, a command, a promise, etc.), and from perlocutions, or the objective effects of the speaker having spoken, (e.g. an insult, a persuasion, etc.).<sup>888</sup> An illocutionary act, then, brings about an alternative state of affairs by the performance of an illocution such that the speech itself effects the

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<sup>886</sup> Fernández, 23. Catherine Bell mistakenly locates ritual on the performative side of the distinction between persuasion and performance: Bell, *Ritual*, 73.

<sup>887</sup> Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*.

<sup>888</sup> Austin, Lecture IX, 109-120.

change for those who hear it and thereby establishes the change as a conventional norm; the change is not a consequence of the speech but concomitant and coterminous with it.<sup>889</sup> Whereas Austin recognizes the need for the audience to be able to recognize a given locution as a particular illocution, which he refers to as the need of a speaker to secure the “*uptake*” of the hearer(s),<sup>890</sup> Jacques Derrida (1930 – 2004) shifts the emphasis from the subjective intention of the speaker to the conventional context of the hearer in determining illocutionary effect. He asks, “Could a performative utterance succeed if its formulation did not repeat a ‘coded’ or iterable utterance, or in other words, if the formula I pronounce in order to open a meeting, launch a ship or a marriage were not identifiable as conforming with an iterable model, if it were not then identifiable in some way as a ‘citation’?”<sup>891</sup> Judith Butler presses this point by saying that the success of a performative utterance “is not because an intention successfully governs the action of speech, but only because that action echoes prior actions, and *accumulates the force of authority through the repetition or*

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<sup>889</sup> Austin, Lecture IX, 117.

<sup>890</sup> Austin, Lecture IX, 116-17.

<sup>891</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Limited Inc* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1977), 18.



*citation of a prior and authoritative set of practices.*"<sup>892</sup> It is, however, not clear that the shift in emphasis introduced by Derrida is actually a "critical reformulation of the performative," as Butler claims,<sup>893</sup> since Austin himself makes the conventional context constitutive of performative success: "(A.1) There must exist an accepted conventional procedure having a certain conventional effect, that procedure to include the uttering of certain words by certain persons in certain circumstances, and further, (A.2) the particular persons and circumstances in a given case must be appropriate for the invocation of the particular procedure invoked."<sup>894</sup> While Austin may emphasize the role of the performer, he is clearly deeply aware of the dependence of the success of the performance on the conventional context in which it takes place.

Roy Rappaport argues that it is the role of ritual to bring about these conventions and render them acceptable. It is worth quoting him at some length on this point as it will become crucial to the argument that language is a type of ritual:

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<sup>892</sup> Judith Butler, "Burning Acts Injurious Speech," in *Performativity and Performance*, ed. Andrew Parker and Eve Sedgwick (London: Routledge, 1995), 205.

<sup>893</sup> Butler, 205.

<sup>894</sup> Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, 14–15.

To establish a convention – a general public understanding, a regular procedure, an institution – is both to ascribe existence to it and to accept it. The two are hardly distinct, as Austin<sup>895</sup> understood, for the existence of a convention, given the meaning of the word, is a function of its acceptance.<sup>896</sup> To perform a liturgy is at one and the same time to conform to its order and to realize it or make it substantial. *Liturgical performance not only recognizes the authority of the conventions it represents, it gives them their very existence.*<sup>897</sup>

According to Rappaport, then, the performance of ritual establishes and maintains conventional orders against which all acts and utterances are measured as intelligible or not, which intelligibility is requisite for their being effective. Marshall Sahlins presses this point further, arguing that practices such as the performance of ritual are the sites of conjuncture between the conventions of culture and the contingent circumstances of life, which conjunctures constitute history as such.<sup>898</sup> Pierre Bourdieu (1930 – 2002) is also interested in the conjunction of cultural convention and contingent circumstance in practice, but is more skeptical of starting from the abstractions of history and structure as Sahlins does. Like Sahlins, Bourdieu emphasizes the role of ritual in negotiating

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<sup>895</sup> Austin, 26.

<sup>896</sup> Jurgen Ruesch and Gregory Bateson, *Communication: The Social Matrix of Psychiatry* (New York, NY: W. W. Norton, 1951), 212–27. With regard to the definition of “convention,” see Rappaport, *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity*, 480n11.

<sup>897</sup> Rappaport, *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity*, 125.

<sup>898</sup> Marshall Sahlins, *Culture and Practical Reason* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1976); Marshall Sahlins, *Historical Metaphors and Mythical Realities: Structure in the Early History of the Sandwich Islands Kingdom* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1981); Marshall Sahlins, *Islands of History* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1985).

these conjunctions, albeit in more systematic and sociological fashion. Habitus, according to Bourdieu, is the set of dispositions an individual agent has as result of appropriating the cultural conventions of the various fields in which they engage socially.<sup>899</sup> Doxa, in turn, is the situation in which the cultural conventions of a society become taken for granted or unquestioned as a result of the habitus of each social agent being in harmony with the conventions of the various fields that make up their society.<sup>900</sup> The task of ritual, then, is to incorporate contingent circumstance that contradicts convention into the habitus of each social agent without disrupting the doxa of a given society. “Rite must resolve by means of an operation socially approved and collectively assumed – that is, in accordance with the logic of the taxonomy that gives rise to it – the specific contradiction which the primal dichotomy makes inevitable in constituting as separate and antagonistic principles that must be reunited in order to ensure the reproduction of the group.”<sup>901</sup> The performance of ritual, then, establishes and maintains the conventional order as such, and is the

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<sup>899</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 72–95; Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1990), 159–71.

<sup>900</sup> Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, 159–71.

<sup>901</sup> Bourdieu, 136.

mechanism for managing the conjunction of cultural convention with contingent circumstance without generating cognitive dissonance.

Moreover, it is the success of ritual in avoiding cognitive dissonance when contingent circumstance strikes that makes ritual performance ripe as a locus of contestation. This is to say that the trade-off for maintaining the doxa of a community is that ritual must also become the vehicle for altering balances of power and resources in that community.<sup>902</sup> This is what Bourdieu means when he says that rituals and other communicative practices contain a “structural ambivalence which predisposes them to fulfil a political function of domination in and through performance of the communication function.”<sup>903</sup> He gives the example of overwhelming generosity in a ritual of gift exchange, which thereby dishonors the receiver who is unable to reciprocate. In turn, Maurice Bloch notes, ritual is also the means of legitimizing a successful domination, which is an achievement of power, as a part of the conventional order.

Ritualizing power means that the achieved power is transformed into ritual rank by rituals, but it also means that in the process rank becomes separated from its origin, i.e. the acts of power, and any direct feedback is ruled out by the very process of rituals. In this way rank will inevitably become disconnected from power. Power produces rank

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<sup>902</sup> Stanley Jeyaraja Tambiah, *Culture, Thought, and Social Action: An Anthropological Perspective* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985), 124–25.

<sup>903</sup> Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, 14.

through ritual but this gives rank independence, a 'realism' which results in greater time persistence. Then power will change but the rank it has produced will stay.<sup>904</sup>

None of these power games are part of the ritual structure or are entailments of the ritual form and process per se, but are instead entailments of ritual performance, or opportunities that arise in the actual practice of ritual, which are nonetheless unavoidable. Ritual, then, inevitably insofar as it hews to its process, schematizes the new power dynamic as part and parcel of the natural order such that it becomes taken for granted as not merely a new habitus but one in inexorable continuity with the old.

Bloch, Bourdieu, and Asad may all be rightly criticized for reducing ritual to a locus of legitimization of power plays and the exercise of domination, even as their recognition of the role ritual plays in these regards is an important corrective to ritual theories that treat ritual as almost benign and banal. Rather than reduction, a better strategy is to locate the negotiation of power dynamics as an entailment of ritual performance, a tack that has been taken in more recent literature in ritual studies. In their edited volume, *Negotiating Rites*, Ute Hüsken and Frank Neubert note that "two important discussions prepared the ground

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<sup>904</sup> Maurice Bloch, *Ritual, History and Power: Selected Papers in Anthropology* (Oxford, UK: Berg, 2004), 81.

for this book: a mature debate on the performativity of ritual, and reflections on culture as process and negotiation.”<sup>905</sup> The volume makes the case that “negotiations—understood here as processes of interaction during which differing positions are debated and/or acted out—are ubiquitous in ritual contexts, either in relation to the ritual itself or in relation to the realm beyond any given ritual performance.”<sup>906</sup> Of the three ways the volume construes the relationship between ritual and negotiation, the first two are most relevant to the present project:

(1) Sharing a World

- a In the eyes of many participants and insiders to a tradition, rituals negotiate their relationship with what is perceived to be the transcendent (gods, ghosts, ancestors, etc.).
- b In the eyes of observers and participants, rites negotiate the relationships of participants among each other and with outsiders.

(2) Getting It Straight

The performance, meaning, structure, and contents of rituals are matters of constant negotiation among participants, specialists, and outsiders.<sup>907</sup>

One of the risks in focusing on the negotiations undertaken among ritual participants as they perform a given ritual is that, while doing so highlights individual agency in the ritual frame, it also obscures the social context the ritual

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<sup>905</sup> Ute Hüsken and Frank Neubert, *Negotiating Rites* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2011), 2.

<sup>906</sup> Hüsken and Neubert, 1.

<sup>907</sup> Hüsken and Neubert, 8.

constructs and in which that agency is exercised. Thus, as Grant Potts notes in his contribution to *Negotiating Rites*, “The negotiation of ritual is not merely between social actors, but between different representations of the social experience for those actors and for their interpreters.”<sup>908</sup> Moreover, ritual does not necessarily favor the representations of the participants whose habitus coincides with the hegemonic doxa of the given social context. Jean Comaroff points out that “black religious innovation in southern Africa has likewise sought to wrest the Christian ‘message from the messenger;’ and its history has been peppered with battles over the control of master symbols, such as the ‘right’ to baptize or dispense communion.”<sup>909</sup> The point to keep at the forefront of consideration, however, is that it is specifically in the performance or practice of ritual, not ritual itself in all its aspects, that enables “a struggle for the possession of the sign which extends to the most mundane areas of everyday life.”<sup>910</sup> That is, the negotiation enabled by ritual performance generates entailments in the ritual context which are then

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<sup>908</sup> Hüsken and Neubert, 286.

<sup>909</sup> Jean Comaroff, *Body of Power, Spirit of Resistance: The Culture and History of a South African People* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 196–97; M. E. Combs-Schilling, *Sacred Performances: Islam, Sexuality, and Sacrifice* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1989).

<sup>910</sup> Comaroff, *Body of Power, Spirit of Resistance*, 196; Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style, New Accents* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1991), 17–18; Valentin Nikólaievich Voloshinov, *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986).

themselves given over as elements to the ritual process, as encoded by the ritual structure, and so themselves thereby contribute to the overall ritual function.

Taken together, these dynamics of ritual performance generate feedback loops on ritual participants individually and collectively, and on the ritual form itself; that is, the performance of ritual is a highly reflexive undertaking. To be sure, the concept of reflexivity is highly contested in ritual theory,<sup>911</sup> so it is important to be clear as to what it means and to the extent and manner of its application. At its most basic, reflexivity refers to a subject taking itself as an object; expressed logically, any relation  $R$  is reflexive “if, and only if, (For all  $x$ ) ( $xRx$ ).”<sup>912</sup> Thus, according to George Herbert Mead (1863 – 1931), an individual human being “becomes a self in so far as he can take the attitude of another and act toward himself as others act,”<sup>913</sup> that is, insofar as she can take herself as an object and thus relate to herself in thought. Ritual reflexivity, in this sense, refers to ritual as the relation of subjective attunement to objective self, which is a stark

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<sup>911</sup> Michael Stausberg, “Reflexivity,” in *Theorizing Rituals: Issues, Topics, Approaches, Concepts*, ed. Jens Kreinath, Jan Snoek, and Michael Stausberg, vol. 1 (Leiden: Brill, 2006).

<sup>912</sup> Robert A. Schultz, “What Could Self-Reflexiveness Be? Or Goedel’s Theorem God to Hollywood and Discovers That It’s All Done With Mirrors,” *Semiotica* 30, no. 1/2 (1980): 135, <https://doi.org/10.1515/semi.1980.30.1-2.135>.

<sup>913</sup> George Herbert Mead, *Mind, Self, and Society: The Definitive Edition* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2015), 171.



contrast to the conception of reflexivity as automatic, habitual, and unthinking that have in fact often been used to describe ritual.<sup>914</sup> Applied to an action, reflexivity “means that every sequence of the action constitutes a part of the framework for its continuance.”<sup>915</sup> Since the performance of a ritual is an action, any given ritual performance is reflexive insofar as it regulates future performances. Furthermore, reflexivity is a characteristic of semiotic systems including thought, language, and ritual, each of which has the capacity “to turn back upon itself, to become an object to itself, and to refer to itself.”<sup>916</sup> This common semiotic nature of thought, language, and ritual is central to the argument about language as ritual in chapter five, and the reflexivity of semiotic systems is important for the argument regarding subjunctivity in chapter six. For the moment, it is enough to recognize that the reflexivity of ritual performance is the mechanism by which ritual, by virtue of its repetition, feeds back into its own form and process.

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<sup>914</sup> Stausberg, “Reflexivity,” 629–30.

<sup>915</sup> Udo Gerald Simon, “Reflexivity and Discourse on Ritual - Introductory Reflexions,” in *Reflexivity, Media, and Visuality*, ed. Udo Gerald Simon and Axel Michaels, *Ritual Dynamics and the Science of Ritual, IV* (Wiesbaden, Germany: Harrassowitz, 2011), 3.

<sup>916</sup> Barbara A. Babcock, “Reflexivity: Definitions and Discriminations,” *Semiotica* 30, no. 1/2 (1980): 2, <https://doi.org/10.1515/semi.1980.30.1-2.1>.

Also, ritual performance constitutes a reflexive relation for personal and communal reflection on self and society, thereby enabling self-regulation at the individual and social levels. At the individual level, personal reflexivity in ritual is a component of the aspect of sincerity to be dealt with below. Roy Rappaport notes how the personal and communal aspects of ritual reflexivity are inextricable:

In contrast to journal writing, in performing a ritual one participates in it. To participate is, by definition, to become part of something larger than the self. When one performs a ritual, one not only constructs oneself but also participates in the construction of a larger public order.<sup>917</sup>

In fact, it is possible for the aspect of personal reflection to be minimized to the point of being undetectable, as in the case of Caroline Humphrey and James Laidlaw's study of Jain daily ritual,<sup>918</sup> and yet they may still have profound meaning at the communal level. Indeed, "precisely the fact that attributions of sense are not very individual, but rather of a collective nature, is the reason for their social relevance."<sup>919</sup> Notably, the reflexivity of ritual is a function of the performance of ritual and is not itself an entailment of the ritual form or process as elaborated above. Performance theorists of ritual such as Rappaport and

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<sup>917</sup> Rappaport, "Concluding Comments on Ritual and Reflexivity," 187.

<sup>918</sup> Humphrey and Laidlaw, *The Archetypal Actions of Ritual*.

<sup>919</sup> Simon, "Reflexivity and Discourse on Ritual - Introductory Reflexions," 13.

Richard Schechner thus emphasize that “reflexivity is part of the very logic of performance of each and every ritual that is based on some sort of script or prototype”<sup>920</sup> because it is the script or prototype, as compiled over repetitions of ritual performance, that a given ritual performance is reflecting upon.

For the present project, the performance or practice of ritual refers to the enactment of the ritual form so as to render the ritual process and thereby generate the ritual functions. As will be demonstrated in the comparative engagement at the end of chapter four, virtually all human activity is the performance of one or another ritual. Ritual performances are means of cultivating and exercising power, of negotiating roles, relationships, and ways of being in the world, and of personal and social reflection and feedback into persons, societies, and the rituals thereof. The performative aspects of cultivating, exercising, negotiating, and reflecting refer to the ways in which the participants play the ritual. These variations in manner of play are the reason that rituals are “more or less invariant” sequences. Indeed, ritual performances generate the entailments of the ritual process as conditioned by the particularities of the participants and their manner of play, and these entailments are what is

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<sup>920</sup> Stausberg, “Reflexivity,” 636.

fed back into the participants, society, and the ritual form and process themselves. The entailments are in turn available as ritual resources (elements) for the next iteration of the ritual or for other rituals via their uptake by individuals and societies. While ritual forms and processes are generally resistant to change, the accretion of entailments that vary due to the conditions of play may in fact cause changes in the form or process of the ritual over multiple, and likely a great many, iterations of performance. Thus, the ongoing performances of many interwoven rituals construct, maintain, and adjust the cultural conventions of a society, and are the means of their adoption into the individual lives of the people of that society. Doxa, or taken-for-grantedness, is the state of the manner of play of the participants corresponding more or less precisely with the form and process of the ritual in question. In this situation, adjustment is minimal because the feedback being passed through the feedback loops is limited. It is not the case that rituals communicate a meaning interpreted by abstraction from the ritual form. Rather, rituals construct the conventions of self, society, and themselves by communicating their entailments as generated through the ritual form and process in performance. It is only by virtue of the relative stability of ritual forms and processes, however, that the many conventions of culture may be understood substantively as culture. Under the

conditions of modernity, and especially late modernity, it is no longer obvious that such a substantive understanding is warranted.

With respect to the ritual of the Great Vigil of Easter at Washington National Cathedral on Saturday, April 4, 2015 at 8:00 p.m., the articulation of the ritual form of which this enactment is a performance is derived principally from *The Book of Common Prayer*<sup>921</sup> and the supplemental *Enriching Our Worship 1*<sup>922</sup> as elaborated in the bulletin<sup>923</sup> published for the service. The performance itself is what is made objectively available via the video recording of it,<sup>924</sup> although it should be emphasized that the video is not the performance itself; the performance was completed and is over as of April 5, 2015. It is notable that the *Enriching Our Worship* series of liturgical texts, deployed in this performance especially in the Eucharistic liturgy, is a collection of entailments generated as a result of variations in the play of liturgies from *The Book of Common Prayer*: “The liturgical texts reflect the influence of the prayer experience of women, and a desire to honor that experience while remaining faithful to the norms of liturgical

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<sup>921</sup> *Book of Common Prayer*.

<sup>922</sup> *Enriching Our Worship 1*.

<sup>923</sup> “The Great Vigil of Easter - Service Bulletin.”

<sup>924</sup> *The Great Vigil of Easter - Video Recording*.

prayer as received by the Episcopal Church.”<sup>925</sup> Those entailments from previous performances of the Eucharistic liturgy have been incorporated into this performance. For participants in this particular performance, there is likely little awareness of the incorporation of this material, other than by those responsible for organizing the ritual, and so for the majority the performance reflects the doxa of the community.

This performance of the Great Vigil of Easter also exemplifies the performative aspects of cultivating, exercising, negotiating, and reflecting. For example, the celebrant, who is the principle leader of the service, is the Right Reverend Mariann Edgar Budde, the Diocesan Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Washington.<sup>926</sup> While Washington National Cathedral, also known as the Cathedral Church of Saint Peter and Saint Paul, is the cathedral church of the Episcopal Diocese of Washington,<sup>927</sup> and thus the seat of the bishop of that Diocese, the day to day operation of the cathedral is largely left to the Cathedral

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<sup>925</sup> Armentrout and Slocum, *An Episcopal Dictionary of the Church*, 169.

<sup>926</sup> “Bishop Budde :: Episcopal Diocese of Washington,” accessed October 27, 2017, <https://www.edow.org/about/bishop-mariann/>.

<sup>927</sup> “Washington National Cathedral - Episcopal Diocese of Washington,” accessed October 27, 2017, <https://www.edow.org/about/washington-national-cathedral/>.

Dean, who at the time of this service was the Very Reverend Gary R. Hall.<sup>928</sup> The decision of the bishop to serve as celebrant at “the liturgy intended as the first (and arguably, the primary) celebration of Easter,”<sup>929</sup> which is itself the “principal festival of the church year,”<sup>930</sup> is a reminder to the Cathedral congregation and its leadership of the true power structure of the Cathedral regardless of the regular delegation of that power to the Dean. Notably, this cultivation, exercise, and negotiation of power is unlikely to register cognitively with the vast majority of members of the congregation gathered for the service, and perhaps even with its leadership, but is nonetheless a ritual instantiation of the hierarchy of the Cathedral and the Diocese in the frame of another ritual, the Great Vigil of Easter.

The most obviously reflexive part of the Great Vigil of Easter, where the congregation is explicitly invited to consider the meaning of the ritual for themselves, their lives, and their relationships, is the sermon. The preacher in the

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<sup>928</sup> Nicholas Fandos, “Leader at Washington National Cathedral Steps Down,” *The New York Times*, August 18, 2015, sec. U.S., <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/19/us/leader-at-washington-national-cathedral-steps-down.html>.

<sup>929</sup> Armentrout and Slocum, *An Episcopal Dictionary of the Church*, 158.

<sup>930</sup> Armentrout and Slocum, 157.

service under consideration was the Reverend Canon Gina Gilland Campbell,<sup>931</sup> the canon precentor for worship at the National Cathedral at the time. She reminds the congregation of the unsettling strangeness of resurrection, which the Great Vigil of Easter as a whole remembers and celebrates, but which often instead ignites a propensity to flee and to “rely upon our technology and our medicine to save us.”<sup>932</sup> Campbell is distinguishing between the transformative work of the ritual under way, which is rooted in the concept of resurrection, or rising again after death, from the sorts of transformation sought in technology or medicine, which has to do with avoiding death in the first place. Indeed, she notes later in the sermon that, despite popular sentiment to the contrary, “death is something; a period at the end of life; a sealing stone.”<sup>933</sup> Thus, it is only after technology and medicine have failed to stave off death that “quietly, behind the stone; in the dark, airless, stinking, sealed off places of death; God begins God’s mysterious work of resurrection.”<sup>934</sup> In this sermon, Campbell is poking at the doxa of the community, which is founded, in the Eucharist as it is performed at

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<sup>931</sup> The Rev. Canon Gina Gilland Campbell, “Sermon,” *Washington National Cathedral* (blog), April 4, 2015, <https://cathedral.org/sermons/sermon-317/>.

<sup>932</sup> *The Great Vigil of Easter - Video Recording*, 1:37:11-1:37:18.

<sup>933</sup> *The Great Vigil of Easter - Video Recording*, 1:41:06-1:41:17.

<sup>934</sup> *The Great Vigil of Easter - Video Recording*, 1:42:45-1:43:00.



least weekly, and perhaps especially in the Great Vigil of Easter, on the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. In so doing, she is reflexing what is taken for granted on the members of the community individually, to be able to better recognize moments of resurrection and possibilities for resurrection in their lives, and on the community as a whole. She invites the community to recognize and more deeply instantiate themselves as a community of resurrection not in spite of death but out of death.

*Sincerity, Subjunctivity, Efficacy, and Play*

The aspect of ritual sincerity pertains to the dispositions of ritual participants that may impact the manner in which they play the ritual in question. A sincere disposition involves the intent and desire to conform to the ritual form and process as established by previous performances. Concerns about sincerity in ritual involvement have a long history among religious practitioners understandably concerned about potential ritual disruption and maintaining the sanctity of their rituals, to say nothing of their efficacy. The aspect of the ritual subjunctive, by contrast, pertains to the quality of the environment ritual creates in and through its performance and to the mutual impact of that environment vis-à-vis the sincerity of the ritual participants. The ritual environment can be contrasted with the extra-ritual environment by virtue of its having elements or

relationships construed in ways discontinuous therewith and yet available for participants to encounter and engage. An important debate within the ritual theory literature regards whether it is necessary to become sincere in order to participate in ritual, or instead the subjunctive character of the ritual environment contrasts with the extra-ritual sincerity of the participants.

The first way that the relationship between ritual and sincerity may be construed is on the Augustinian theological stance that a ritual participant must become sincere in order to authentically participate in the ritual.<sup>935</sup> In this case, sincerity has largely to do with confession, contrition, repentance, compunction, humbling of self before at least God and often the wider community, and receiving forgiveness. A person becomes sincere when their self-perception aligns with the omniscient perception of the divine and the perception of the community on the terms set by the ritual. For example, either self-examination or confession and absolution prior to Eucharistic participation are required in many Christian communities.<sup>936</sup> In the case of a secular ritual, political debate

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<sup>935</sup> Suzanne Stern-Gillet, "Augustine And The Philosophical Foundations Of Sincerity," in *Reading Ancient Texts: Essays in Honour of Denis O'Brien*, ed. Suzanne Stern-Gillet and Kevin Corrigan, vol. 2: Aristotle and Neoplatonism (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 225–48, <https://doi.org/10.1163/ej.9789004165120.i-284.62>.

<sup>936</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2nd ed., 1995, para. 1385, [http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/\\_\\_\\_P42.HTM](http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/___P42.HTM); *Code of Canon Law*, 1983, para. 916, [http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG1104/\\_\\_\\_P39.HTM](http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG1104/___P39.HTM); "How to Prepare for Holy Communion,"

participants might refrain from shaking hands if they do not share an appropriate level of mutual trust and respect. The looming threat in the case of insincere participation is ritual failure or at least ineffectiveness. If a communicant receives the sacrament without first confessing and receiving absolution, the sacrament may not be valid for fulfilling spiritual obligations. If a politician demurs from a handshake, it may be a sign to the other debater and to debate observers that the usual topical and stylistic norms of political debate are not necessarily in play.<sup>937</sup> In the context of reformed theological interpretation, especially of a Calvinist bent, the ritual form becomes rather empty and hollow

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accessed October 30, 2017,

[http://www.saintgeorgekearney.com/how\\_to\\_prepare\\_for\\_holy\\_communion.html](http://www.saintgeorgekearney.com/how_to_prepare_for_holy_communion.html); "Prayers of Preparation Before Holy Communion | Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese," accessed October 30, 2017, <http://antiochian.org/orthodox-prayers/preparation-holy-communion>; "St. Barbara Greek Orthodox Church," accessed October 30, 2017, [http://www.saintbarbara.org/growing\\_in\\_christ/proper\\_preparation\\_for\\_holy\\_communion](http://www.saintbarbara.org/growing_in_christ/proper_preparation_for_holy_communion); *Book of Common Prayer*, 860; Martin Luther, *The Small Catechism, 1529: The Annotated Luther Study Edition*, ed. Timothy J. Wengert (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2017), 236; *Westminster Larger Catechism* (Edinburgh, UK: The Church of Scotland, 1648), paras. 171–172, [http://www.reformed.org/documents/wlc\\_w\\_proofs/](http://www.reformed.org/documents/wlc_w_proofs/).

<sup>937</sup> Daniel White, "Watch Clinton and Trump Not Shake Hands," *Time* (blog), October 10, 2016, <http://time.com/4524398/second-presidential-debate-clinton-trump-handshake/>; Jeremy W. Peters and Maggie Haberman, "At Previous Debates, Melania Trump and Bill Clinton Shook Hands. Not Anymore.," *The New York Times*, October 18, 2016, sec. Politics, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/10/19/us/politics/melania-trump-bill-clinton.html>; "Watch: Trump Refuses Handshake with Merkel during White House Photo Op," *Women in the World in Association with The New York Times - WITW* (blog), March 17, 2017, <http://nytlive.nytimes.com/womenintheworld/2017/03/17/watch-trump-refuses-handshake-with-merkel-during-white-house-photo-op/>.

by contrast with the spiritually important internal work of achieving sincerity.<sup>938</sup> Here again, the ritual is understood to be arbitrary whereas the human will and the soul are essential and necessary, and thus the objects of spiritual focus. This sincerity is the prerequisite for ritual participation, in order to keep the ritual pure and efficacious. Ritual does not contrast with sincerity, but rather depends upon it.

In their recent book *Ritual and Its Consequences*, Adam Seligman et al shift the relationship between sincerity and ritual so as to juxtapose them. “We thus analyze ritual and sincerity as two ‘ideal typical’ forms of framing experience, action, and understanding that exist in all societies, in tension with one another.”<sup>939</sup> While they hew closely to Rappaport’s definition of ritual, Seligman et al further introduce a Durkheimian conception of ritual generating social norms and relations *as if* they are objective realities.<sup>940</sup> As they say, “the subjunctive creates an order that is self-consciously distinct from other possible social worlds.”<sup>941</sup> The purpose of these ritually established subjunctive social

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<sup>938</sup> Bell, *Ritual*, 189.

<sup>939</sup> Adam B Seligman et al., *Ritual and Its Consequences: An Essay on the Limits of Sincerity* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2008), 7.

<sup>940</sup> Seligman et al., 7–8, 17–42.

<sup>941</sup> Seligman et al., 20.

realities is to enable humanity to cope with an otherwise ambiguous, ambivalent, and intractable world. By behaving as if the conventional world established by ritual is objective, ritual participants are constantly holding their sincere selves at bay for the sake of social harmony. Nevertheless, “the subjunctive world created by ritual is always doomed ultimately to fail—the ordered world of flawless repetition can never fully replace the broken world of experience.”<sup>942</sup> Sincerity, by contrast, seeks to instantiate “categories that grow out of individual soul-searching rather than the acceptance of social conventions.”<sup>943</sup> The sincere mode is identified with Protestantism, which derives from an Augustinian theological vision, and so it is unsurprising that this conception of sincerity is continuous with the view from the first construal of the relationship between sincerity and ritual: “The sincere mode of behavior seeks to replace the ‘mere convention’ of ritual with a genuine and thoughtful state of internal conviction.”<sup>944</sup> Thus, for Seligman and company, on one side of the dichotomy is the subjunctive ritual space, and on the other is both the sincere self of the ritual participant and the extra-ritual world. The subjunctive world is both whole and illusory, while the

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<sup>942</sup> Seligman et al., 30.

<sup>943</sup> Seligman et al., 103.

<sup>944</sup> Seligman et al., 103.

“real” world is broken and fragmented such that the sincere self is the self as it inhabits the “Hobbesian world of the war of all against all.”<sup>945</sup> Ritual, in this view, is a form of escapism from the harshness of reality. Like other forms of performance, ritual “simply and elegantly sidetracks the problem of understanding to allow for the existence of order without requiring understanding.”<sup>946</sup> While the sincere self “disappears when emptied of its social characteristics – age, gender, status, roles, and all the distinctions of social convention,”<sup>947</sup> it is by virtue of this very disappearance that the person is most real, that is, fragmented off from others. Alas, the refuge of ritual, and thus social life, is merely illusory, artificial, and thus, arbitrary.

The construal of sincerity vis-à-vis the subjunctive space created by ritual also pertains to issues of ritual efficacy, which include both the effects a given ritual purports to produce, and the empirical effects of a ritual on its participants, their community, the wider society, and the world.<sup>948</sup> Roy Rappaport has already

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<sup>945</sup> Seligman et al., 22.

<sup>946</sup> Seligman et al., 115.

<sup>947</sup> Seligman et al., 128. Notably, at this point the self ceases to be a self, at least in the sense of self as articulated in Mead, *Mind, Self, and Society*.

<sup>948</sup> Jørgen Podemann Sørensen, “Efficacy,” in *Theorizing Rituals: Issues, Topics, Approaches, Concepts*, ed. Jens Kreinath, Jan A.M. Snoek, and Michael Stausberg, vol. 1 (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 528; Sally Falk Moore and Barbara G. Myerhoff, eds., *Secular Ritual* (Assen, Netherlands: Van

been noted for his warning not to confuse the efficacy of ritual for instrumentality.<sup>949</sup> Instead, ritual efficacy has to do with establishing and maintaining social conventions, which he takes to be quite real, as opposed to the illusionary status of convention as described by Seligman et al. "Ritual's words do, after all, bring conventional states of affairs, or 'institutional facts' into being, and having been brought into being they are as real as 'brute facts.'"<sup>950</sup> The means by which rituals establish and maintain convention is by illocutionary force, which they have by virtue of their performances being illocutionary acts. It is not the case, however, that the purported effect of the ritual according to direct statements within the ritual is itself illocutionary with respect to the conventions established. Emily Martin Ahern has demonstrated that in most cases, rituals that linguistically purport to be strong illocutionary acts frequently fail on the terms of the verbal illocution.<sup>951</sup>

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Gorcum, 1977), 12–13. Note that this distinction is quite different from that between physical and meaningful efficacy made in Rappaport, *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity*, 108–13.

<sup>949</sup> Rappaport, *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity*, 46–50.

<sup>950</sup> Rappaport, 117; Searle, *The Construction of Social Reality*, chap. 2.

<sup>951</sup> Emily M. Ahern, "The Problem of Efficacy: Strong and Weak Illocutionary Acts," *Man* 14, no. 1 (1979): 1–17, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2801637>.

Instead of individual statements within a ritual, the proper level of analysis of the illocutionary force of a ritual act is the ritual in total. Jørgen Podemann Sørensen calls this analysis the rhetoric of ritual:

The thoughts and the religious ideas represented in ritual should be studied not as explanations of or reasons for the action, but as the means it employs to establish itself as ritual, that is, as rhetorical means towards that formal efficacy which, since Hubert and Mauss, has been the very criterion of ritual.<sup>952</sup>

With respect to the illocutionary force of rituals, the rhetoric of ritual notes that “some rituals obviously are illocutionary acts, a few straightforwardly pretend to be, and the vast majority employs a rich religious symbolism so as to establish themselves as such.”<sup>953</sup> Disregarding the characterization of the symbolism as “religious,” this means that the rhetoric of ritual studies the full range of semiotic activity taking place in a given ritual in order to determine what conventions the ritual is establishing. This study is of the transition from the subjunctive to the indicative mood, because ritual is “an activity formally situated at that point zero where every move and every word become efficacious because they deal with things in their ‘state of not yet being.’”<sup>954</sup>

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<sup>952</sup> Podemann Sørensen, “Efficacy,” 531; Jørgen Podemann Sørensen, “The Rhetoric of Ritual,” in *Ritualistics*, ed. Tore Ahlbäck, Scripta Instituti Donneriani Aboensis 18 (Åbo, Finland: Donner Institute for Research in Religious and Cultural History, 2003), 149–61.

<sup>953</sup> Podemann Sørensen, “Efficacy,” 531.

<sup>954</sup> Podemann Sørensen, “The Rhetoric of Ritual,” 159.



According to Rappaport, acceptance of the conventions established by ritual implies obligation to the norms so established and is the first instance of ritual efficacy.<sup>955</sup> He goes on to note that both “the formal characteristics of ritual” and the mystification of their conventionality “enhance the chances of success of the performatives they include.”<sup>956</sup> Again, the notion of the mystification of conventionality enhancing the efficacy of the ritual contrasts with the idea in Seligman et al that the subjunctive order enacted by ritual is self-consciously distinct from other possibilities. Instead, the mystification of conventionality demands the acceptance of obligation and presses it toward belief so as to improve the rate of conformity to the obligatory ritual form by giving it the air of authority. “Authority is closely related to efficacy, of course, and that the fundamental and ultimate is more authoritative than that which is contingent upon it seems too obvious to require comment.”<sup>957</sup> In this way, the mystification of conventionality leads to the ritual form becoming part of the doxa of the society that practices it, that is, the conventions the ritual enacts

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<sup>955</sup> Rappaport, *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity*, 119–24.

<sup>956</sup> Rappaport, 115–16; Bronislaw Malinowski, *Coral Gardens And Their Magic Vol II* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1935), 235.

<sup>957</sup> Rappaport, *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity*, 274.

become taken for granted such that the obligation to the conventional norms is no longer cognitive. At this stage, the habitus of a given ritual participant is sincerely in accord with the conventions established by the ritual. In this framework, then, sincerity is the outcome of ritual participation, neither its prerequisite nor its contrast.

The same cannot be said of play. The ritual theory literature includes a robust engagement with theories of play, perhaps foremost among them the strong claim made by Johan Huizinga (1872 – 1945) as to the roots of ritual, as well as language, in play,<sup>958</sup> which he defines as “an action accomplishing itself outside and above the necessities and seriousness of everyday life.”<sup>959</sup> Huizinga notes that ritual and play both establish subjunctive spaces, that is, they “are temporary worlds within the ordinary world, dedicated to the performance of an act apart. Inside the play-ground an absolute and peculiar order reigns.”<sup>960</sup>

Influenced by Huizinga and Romano Guardini (1885 – 1968), Hans Georg Gadamer sees ritual, or festival, as a type of play, and defines play as “a self-

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<sup>958</sup> Johan Huizinga, *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play-Element in Culture* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1955), 4–5, 25–26; Romano Guardini, *The Spirit of the Liturgy* (New York, NY: Crossroad, 1998).

<sup>959</sup> Huizinga, *Homo Ludens*, 26.

<sup>960</sup> Huizinga, 10.

movement that does not pursue any particular end or purpose,” which for humans is subjunctive because of “the self-discipline and order that we impose on our movements when playing, as if particular purposes were involved.”<sup>961</sup>

Roger Caillois (1913 – 1978) identifies six characteristics of play, the second and last of which together indicate its subjunctivity:

1. Free: in which playing is not obligatory; if it were, it would at once lose its attractive and joyous quality as diversion;
2. Separate: circumscribed within limits of space and time, defined and fixed in advance;
3. Uncertain: the course of which cannot be determined, nor the result attained beforehand, and some latitude for innovations being left to the player’s initiative;
4. Unproductive: creating neither goods, nor wealth, nor new elements of any kind; and, except for the exchange of property among the players, ending in a situation identical to that prevailing at the beginning of the game;
5. Governed by rules: under conventions that suspend ordinary laws, and for the moment establish new legislation, which alone counts;
6. Make-believe: accompanied by a special awareness of a second reality or of a free unreality, as against real life.<sup>962</sup>

Whereas Seligman et al employ Caillois’ classification of games as a model for their own classification of rituals,<sup>963</sup> it is in this definition of play that the contrast with ritual becomes most apparent. As has already been discussed, ritual establishes obligations, and under the social conditions of doxa, participation in

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<sup>961</sup> Hans-Georg Gadamer, “The Relevance of the Beautiful: Art as Play, Symbol, and Festival,” in *The Relevance of the Beautiful and Other Essays*, ed. Robert Bernasconi (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 23.

<sup>962</sup> Roger Caillois, *Man, Play, and Games* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1961), 9–10.

<sup>963</sup> Seligman et al., *Ritual and Its Consequences*, 76–84.

ritual may not be so much obligatory as taken for granted, which yet implies a type of compulsion. The course of ritual is far from uncertain, but is instead prescribed in detail by previous iterations thereof and sometimes in texts. Ritual is not unproductive, although it is not principally instrumental, but instead produces its entailments, which are the conventions that constitute society, as a result of performing its form and process. Indeed, how could ritual be unproductive given the intense emic and etic interest in its efficacy? Finally, the rules of play may be determined ad hoc and changed ad nauseam, whereas the rules of ritual are fixed in advance and only changed iteratively by great effort. It is precisely because Caillois is right about play, especially about its being free, uncertain, and unproductive, that play is incapable of generating sincerity, as ritual does. Hence, the conflation of ritual and play enables the contrast of ritual and sincerity.

Huizinga is regularly criticized for making too strong a claim as to the fundamentality of play as more basic than a range of other modes of life. The present project will likely be criticized for similarly overplaying the ritual card. While the claim being advanced here does locate language as a species of the genus ritual, the relationship between ritual and play is to be construed quite differently. Both ritual and play enact subjunctive spaces in which alternatives to

the initial reality are performed, but play does not generate social conventions that last beyond the period of play and so does not result in sincerity with respect to its form, with which it may also not necessarily be said to have begun. Furthermore, play can never become taken for granted because its lack of iterative reflexivity means that there is no possibility of mystification, and so the conventionality of the rules of play inevitably remain cognitive. Thus, it is in fact play, and not ritual, that is the escapist refuge of arbitrary illusion, albeit an important and necessary one. Indeed, as Donald Winnicott (1896 – 1971) notes, it is in playing that the truest self, the sincere self in the lexicon of Seligman et al, emerges.<sup>964</sup> Whereas play exists in a third space between a subjective interiority and the external, shared reality of society,<sup>965</sup> ritual constructs the conventions of that shared social reality. Whereas the subjunctive space of play allows the sincere self to enter and let itself go, the subjunctive space of ritual welcomes the sincere self and transforms it into a sincerity that accords with the ritual form. Play is one way of being in a subjunctive space, which may be put to very different ends when inhabited in another way, such as ritual. Neither is a

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<sup>964</sup> Donald Woods Winnicott, *Playing and Reality* (London: Routledge, 1971).

<sup>965</sup> Winnicott, 122–29.

subspecies of the other, but rather both are modalities of inhabiting subjunctivity, which is itself a feature of semiotic systems and capacities in general.

The present project takes sincerity, on one hand, to be a possible but not necessary precondition of ritual. On the other hand, sincerity with respect to the conventions established and maintained in ritual is the principal and necessary entailment of the ritual form and process as it pertains to the participants who perform it. Insincere participants become sincere through their acceptance of the conventional norms established by the ritual. Sincere participants have their sincerity either transformed or reinforced in accordance with the conventions that are generated from the performance of the given ritual form and process. The efficacy of a ritual is to be determined by analysis of the rhetoric of the ritual as a whole to determine the conventions it illocutes insofar as they become taken for granted within the society in which the ritual is enacted and with respect to which the participants become sincere. Rituals are efficacious when the subjunctive spaces they establish illocute into an indicative mode in life. While rituals may include elements of play within them, the frames of the playful elements are inevitably inscribed within the form and process of the ritual as a whole. These relationships among sincerity, subjunctivity, efficacy, and play will be further developed in conversation with the Confucian philosopher Xunzi in

the comparative engagement at the end of the next chapter. Also, a great deal more can, must, and will be said in chapter six regarding subjunctivity, ritual, and language, but an initial stab at this aspect of ritual must be taken here for the sake of the completeness of the theory of ritual being elaborated.

The clearest expression of the interplay among subjunctivity, sincerity, and efficacy in the Great Vigil of Easter is in the rite of baptism. After being presented to the bishop, the candidates for baptism are invited to declare their sincerity as to the ritual form of baptism by responding to a series of questions that seek to examine their conscience:

Do you renounce Satan and all the spiritual forces of wickedness that rebel against God?  
Do you renounce the evil powers of this world which corrupt and destroy the creatures of God?  
Do you turn to Jesus Christ and accept him as your Savior?  
Do you put your whole trust in his grace and love?  
Do you promise to follow and obey him as your Lord?<sup>966</sup>

Notably, one question prescribed in *The Book of Common Prayer* was omitted in this performance of the rite: “Do you renounce all sinful desires that draw you from the love of God?”<sup>967</sup> It is unclear whether this omission was intentional or whether it was an oversight on the part of the bishop. The examination of the

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<sup>966</sup> *The Great Vigil of Easter - Video Recording*, 1:02:40-1:03:14; *Book of Common Prayer*, 302.

<sup>967</sup> *Book of Common Prayer*, 302.

candidates, in the context of the Great Vigil of Easter, is followed by an opportunity for the congregation to reaffirm their sincerity to the terms of the baptismal ritual form as performed at their own baptisms.<sup>968</sup> In this instance, the bishop adds a commentarial note before asking the five final questions, saying, “these next questions are questions of intention.”<sup>969</sup> The comment is likely added to serve the pastoral function of assuaging any concern that congregants might have that their failure to live up to the answers they give might put the efficacy of their baptism, and thus their salvation, at risk. However, by distinguishing the answers to the questions as signaling intention rather than obligation, the bishop is actually weakening the illocutionary force of the renewal of baptismal vows within the wider frame of the rite of baptism.

The baptismal rite constructs a subjunctive space marked by dualism, wherein candidates are invited to choose one side and reject the other; no option is given to choose the other. On the side rejected are “Satan,” “spiritual forces of wickedness,” “evil powers,” and “sinful desires.” On the side chosen are “God,” “Jesus Christ,” “grace,” and “love.” Caught between the two are the “creatures of

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<sup>968</sup> *The Great Vigil of Easter - Video Recording*, 1:03:28-1:06:13; “The Great Vigil of Easter - Service Bulletin,” 8.

<sup>969</sup> *The Great Vigil of Easter - Video Recording*, 1:05:19-1:05:23.



God” who are in the position of decision. Having chosen God and grace, the candidates are prayed over by the congregation who have, in principle, already been baptized.<sup>970</sup> These prayers invite God to keep them on the side they have chosen, which is to say to mystify the conventionality of their choice. In the prayer of thanksgiving to sanctify the water for use in the baptism itself, the bishop prays “that those who here are cleansed from sin and born again may continue for ever in the risen life of Jesus Christ our Savior.”<sup>971</sup> This means that those baptized in the sanctified water are thereby obligated perpetually to side with what they have chosen in the examination: “God establishes an indissoluble bond with each person in baptism.”<sup>972</sup> The baptism itself, in which the candidate has water poured over their head by the bishop who says, “I baptize you in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit,”<sup>973</sup> is a ritual washing of the sin that would draw the candidate toward what had been rejected. The illocutionary force of this washing is that “God adopts us as his children and

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<sup>970</sup> *The Great Vigil of Easter - Video Recording*, 1:06:19-1:08:22; “The Great Vigil of Easter - Service Bulletin,” 8–9.

<sup>971</sup> *The Great Vigil of Easter - Video Recording*, 1:09:43-1:09:52; *Book of Common Prayer*, 307.

<sup>972</sup> Armentrout and Slocum, *An Episcopal Dictionary of the Church*, 36.

<sup>973</sup> *The Great Vigil of Easter - Video Recording*, 1:10:10-1:10:18; “The Great Vigil of Easter - Service Bulletin,” 9; *Book of Common Prayer*, 307.

makes us members of Christ's Body, the Church, and inheritors of the kingdom of God."<sup>974</sup> The washing of baptism is a spiritual death to all that was rejected and a spiritual resurrection into God's family by adoption: "The inward and spiritual grace in Baptism is union with Christ in his death and resurrection, birth into God's family the Church, forgiveness of sins, and new life in the Holy Spirit."<sup>975</sup> Juxtaposing this schematic of adoption onto the dualism of the overall rite, the implication is that the ongoing obligation of the baptized is to God, the head of the household in which they are now members. Notably, the subjunctive space of the rite has become crowded with a number of new elements, such as "Christ's body, the Church," "God's family the Church," "forgiveness," and "new life." These elements are the outcomes of the illocutionary force of the baptism rite and both make the indicative the subjunctive space realizes more real and viable and connect the baptismal rite up with other aspects of the Great Vigil of Easter, in which this rite of baptism is embedded, particularly, and with Christian life broadly. The shift from the subjunctive to the indicative is represented in the concluding prayer of the rite: "Sustain them, O Lord, in your Holy Spirit. Give them an inquiring and discerning heart, the courage to will and

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<sup>974</sup> *Book of Common Prayer*, 858.

<sup>975</sup> *Book of Common Prayer*, 858.

to persevere, a spirit to know and to love you, and the gift of joy and wonder in all your works."<sup>976</sup>

### *Communication*

That communication should be an aspect of any late modern theory of ritual is unsurprising because, as Günter Thomas notes, one of the hallmarks of late modernity is that "communication became the basic concept for describing the most elementary units of social life."<sup>977</sup> A number of approaches to ritual as a form of communication have already been addressed and incorporated into the present project, as appropriate, in the relevant preceding aspects, and the next section addresses the semiotics of ritual, which is closely related. Also, the relationship between ritual as a form of communication and language as a form of communication are dealt with in the last section of this chapter. The goal in this section, then, is to grapple with the ways in which ritual communicates and the dependence of communication on ritual.

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<sup>976</sup> *The Great Vigil of Easter - Video Recording*, 1:12:34-1:12:54; "The Great Vigil of Easter - Service Bulletin," 9; *Book of Common Prayer*, 308.

<sup>977</sup> Günter Thomas, "Communication," in *Theorizing Rituals: Issues, Topics, Approaches, Concepts*, ed. Jens Kreinath, Jan Snoek, and Michael Stausberg, vol. 1 (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 321.

Roy Rappaport notes that ritual is more than mere transmission of signals, or “saying,” but is also a type of “doing” that is effective by virtue of its informing, or bearing form to and imposing form on, its receivers.<sup>978</sup> He goes on to distinguish two types of messages transmitted in rituals that inform their recipients. Self-referential messages have to do with the status of individual performers, groups of performers, or the whole group performing the ritual, at the time and place of, and in the process of, the ritual as it unfolds. Canonical messages, by contrast, are pre-encoded in the form of the ritual and transmitted in its performance, and express universal orders that transcend the present performance.<sup>979</sup> Furthermore, “the canonical stream is carried by the invariant aspects or components of these orders, self-referential information is conveyed by whatever variation the liturgical order allows or demands.”<sup>980</sup> In parallel to this distinction, Rappaport distinguishes the canonical as relying exclusively on symbolic reference, whereas at least some self-referential messages are indexical, and thus substantial. He concludes that the two types depend on each other in

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<sup>978</sup> Rappaport, *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity*, 51.

<sup>979</sup> Rappaport, 52–53.

<sup>980</sup> Rappaport, 54.

complex ways in any given ritual in order to generate confidence in what each purport to represent among the ritual participants.<sup>981</sup>

Günter Thomas develops a “multidimensional and polycontextual” theory of ritual as a form of communication informed by Rappaport but in direct conversation with the social and communication theory of Niklas Luhmann (1927 – 1998) instead of Peircian semiotics.<sup>982</sup> Thomas describes Luhmann’s theory of communication as distinguishing between a first act of selecting a meaningful unit of information, a second act of uttering the information as construed in a medium, and a third act of a receiver understanding the information within their own horizon of meaning. Notably, the conception of these acts already prescind from an understanding of communication as transmission of information as the first two acts “trigger” the third rather than initiating a causal chain. Since the three acts are “not mutually transparent to one another,” “no single consciousness can capture or ‘see’ all three.”<sup>983</sup> Thomas theorizes that the ritual form ameliorates the risks to the success of the

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<sup>981</sup> Rappaport, 54–58.

<sup>982</sup> Thomas, “Communication,” 326–27.

<sup>983</sup> Thomas, 328–29.

communication process resulting from these inherent discontinuities.<sup>984</sup>

Communication between perceiving subjects cannot proceed with confidence apart from a form, such as ritual, that bridges the gaps among them. Alas, in adopting the scheme of communication Luhmann provides, Thomas gives the impression that ritual is merely an artificial and insubstantial tool for overcoming the isolation of individuals living in a Kantian subjective captivity, rather than constitutive of a reality that is liberative by virtue of establishing and maintaining the social structures of community. Proper attention to the semiotics of ritual is the appropriate treatment for this ailment and will be undertaken in the next subsection.

While Rappaport and Eric W. Rothenbuhler were blissfully unaware of one another in their projects due to the simultaneity of their production and publication, they are remarkably similar in emphasizing the communicative aspect of ritual in semiotic terms. Rothenbuhler specifically sets out to elaborate “the roles communication scholars have to play in debates about the most general issues of social theory and social life”<sup>985</sup> in both the direction of ritual as

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<sup>984</sup> Thomas, 331–38.

<sup>985</sup> Eric W. Rothenbuhler, *Ritual Communication: From Everyday Conversation to Mediated Ceremony* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 1998), x.

communication and the direction of communication as ritual. It is the second direction that is of greatest moment for present purposes. Rothenbuhler grounds the importance of understanding communication as ritual in the attempts by both Protestants and positivists to banish ritual in the name of rationalism only to construct the ritual of rationalism in the process, thereby demonstrating that “ritual is ubiquitous and inevitable.”<sup>986</sup> He then turns to an important distinction, first made by James Carey, between communication as “transmission of signals or messages over distance for the purpose of control”<sup>987</sup> and communication as ritual: “A ritual view of communication is directed not toward the extension of messages in space but toward the maintenance of society in time; not the act of imparting information but the representation of shared beliefs.”<sup>988</sup> Many of the arguments in the ritual theory literature against viewing ritual as communication are based on a theory of communication as transmission; even Rappaport seems to have this model in mind.<sup>989</sup> Notably, Carey’s definition of communication as “a symbolic process whereby reality is produced, maintained, repaired, and

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<sup>986</sup> Rothenbuhler, 117–22.

<sup>987</sup> James Carey, “A Cultural Approach to Communication,” in *Communication as Culture: Essays on Media and Society* (Boston, MA: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 15.

<sup>988</sup> Carey, 18.

<sup>989</sup> Rappaport, *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity*, 50–52.

transformed”<sup>990</sup> sounds a lot like the theory of ritual being elaborated here.

Rothenbuhler critiques the transmission view for distracting attention from the meaning and process of communication by focusing instead on effects.<sup>991</sup> He also takes issue with the neglect of the primary role of communication in expressing commonality, which is the basis for community, because the transmission of information relies on differentiating the information selected for transmission from what is left assumed and unsaid in the background.<sup>992</sup> Finally, he lifts up Carey’s definition of communication as reality producing and notes that “all communication stands in a double relation to the realities of its context: constituting and commenting;”<sup>993</sup> the transmission view privileges the second and neglects the first.

One robust research trajectory within the cognitive science of religion might best be construed as an attempt to articulate the role of ritual communication in communal constitution and maintenance from within the framework of the transmission view of communication. Costly signaling theory

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<sup>990</sup> Carey, “A Cultural Approach to Communication,” 23.

<sup>991</sup> Rothenbuhler, *Ritual Communication*, 123–25.

<sup>992</sup> Rothenbuhler, 125–26.

<sup>993</sup> Rothenbuhler, 126.



emerges from a hypothesis advanced by William Irons that “religious rituals and taboos serve as reliable signals of commitment to in-group members, and thus religion can overcome free-rider problems and promote intragroup cooperation.”<sup>994</sup> The basic problem costly signaling theory seeks to address has to do with how members of a community can determine who is authentically a member of the community as opposed to those who may be seeking the cooperative benefits of communal membership without committing to the community. How do community members know who to trust? Costly signaling theory holds that “costly displays of devotion to a religious tradition are commitment devices because people would never perform them were they not genuinely devoted.”<sup>995</sup> This is to say that costly ritual practices, such as having a lip pierced as part of a ritual marking transition to adulthood, then transmit a signal of trustworthiness and in-group status. The theory is excellent so far as it goes, and it has been repeatedly empirically tested, verified, and further

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<sup>994</sup> Sosis and Bressler, “Cooperation and Commune Longevity,” 213; William Irons, “Religion as a Hard-to-Fake Sign of Commitment,” in *Evolution and the Capacity for Commitment*, ed. Randolph M. Nesse (New York, NY: Russell Sage Foundation, 2001), 292–309.

<sup>995</sup> John Shaver and Joseph Bulbulia, “Signaling Theory and Religion,” in *Religion: Mental Religion*, ed. Jeffrey Kripal and Niki Kasumi Clements, Macmillan Interdisciplinary Handbooks (New York, NY: Macmillan Reference, 2016), 106.

refined.<sup>996</sup> The problem is that the theory analyzes the process of ritual communication entirely in terms of effect, as Rothenbuhler rightly critiqued the transmission view for doing. Richard Sosis, one of the leading developers of the

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<sup>996</sup> Candace S. Alcorta and Richard Sosis, "Ritual, Emotion, and Sacred Symbols," *Human Nature* 16, no. 4 (December 2005): 323–59, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12110-005-1014-3>; Joseph Bulbulia and Richard Sosis, "Signalling Theory and the Evolution of Religious Cooperation," *Religion* 41, no. 3 (September 2011): 363–88, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0048721X.2011.604508>; Laurence R. Iannaccone, "Sacrifice and Stigma: Reducing Free-Riding in Cults, Communes, and Other Collectives," *Journal of Political Economy* 100, no. 2 (April 1, 1992): 271–91, <https://doi.org/10.1086/261818>; Bradley J. Ruffle and Richard Sosis, "Cooperation and the In-Group-Out-Group Bias: A Field Test on Israeli Kibbutz Members and City Residents," *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization* 60, no. 2 (June 2006): 147–63, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jebo.2004.07.007>; Bradley J. Ruffle and Richard Sosis, "Does It Pay to Pray? Costly Ritual and Cooperation," *The BE Journal of Economic Analysis & Policy* 7, no. 1 (2007), <http://www.bepress.com/bejeap/vol7/iss1/art18>; Richard Sosis, "Costly Signaling and Torch Fishing on Ifaluk Atoll," *Evolution and Human Behavior* 21, no. 4 (2000): 223–244, [https://doi.org/10.1016/S1090-5138\(00\)00030-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/S1090-5138(00)00030-1); Richard Sosis, "Religion and Intragroup Cooperation: Preliminary Results of a Comparative Analysis of Utopian Communities," *Cross-Cultural Research* 34, no. 1 (2000): 70–87, <https://doi.org/10.1177/106939710003400105>; Sosis, "Religion and Intragroup Cooperation," February 1, 2000; Richard Sosis, "Why Aren't We All Hutterites?," *Human Nature* 14, no. 2 (June 1, 2003): 91–127, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12110-003-1000-6>; Richard Sosis, "The Adaptive Value of Religious Ritual," *American Scientist* 92 (2004): 166–72, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27858365>; Richard Sosis, "Does Religion Promote Trust?: The Role of Signaling, Reputation, and Punishment," *Interdisciplinary Journal of Research on Religion* 1 (2005), [http://www.religjournal.com/articles/article\\_view.php?id=7](http://www.religjournal.com/articles/article_view.php?id=7); Richard Sosis, "Religious Behaviors, Badges, and Bans: Signaling Theory and the Evolution of Religion," in *Where God and Science Meet: How Brain and Evolutionary Studies Alter Our Understanding of Religion*, ed. Patrick McNamara, vol. 1: Evolution, Genes, and the Religious Brain (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2006), 61–86; Sosis and Alcorta, "Signaling, Solidarity, and the Sacred"; Sosis and Bressler, "Cooperation and Commune Longevity"; Richard Sosis and Bradley J. Ruffle, "Ideology, Religion, and the Evolution of Cooperation: Field Experiments on Israeli Kibbutzim," *Research in Economic Anthropology, Socioeconomic Aspects of Human Behavioral Ecology*, 23 (2004): 89–117, [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0190-1281\(04\)23004-9](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0190-1281(04)23004-9); R Sosis, H Kress, and J Boster, "Scars for War: Evaluating Alternative Signaling Explanations for Cross-Cultural Variance in Ritual Costs," *Evolution and Human Behavior* 28, no. 4 (July 2007): 234–47, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.evolhumbehav.2007.02.007>; Wesley Wildman and Richard Sosis, "Stability of Groups with Costly Beliefs and Practices," *Journal of Artificial Societies and Social Simulation* 14, no. 3 (2010): 6, <https://doi.org/10.18564/jasss.1781>.

theory, acknowledges as much when he identifies the two questions regarding ritual and communication as what gets communicated and why ritual is effective at communicating it.<sup>997</sup> What gets missed, then, is that the primary function of the costly ritual is constituting the community as a collective of trustworthy members by communicating its membership and their communal status in the group. This is to say that the ritual is not merely a sign of the underlying trustworthiness of participants, but actually makes the participants trustworthy members of the community.

One thing that theorists who link ritual with communication agree on is that ritual is to be distinguished from technical activity, “which produces observable results in a strictly mechanical way.”<sup>998</sup> While insisting that ritual communication is more than saying but doing, Rappaport also distinguishes ritual efficacy as based in information and authority rather than power or technical capacity.<sup>999</sup> Just as Edmund Leach took the side of the ethologists to include communication in the realm of ritual in addition to the conventionally or

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<sup>997</sup> Sosis, “Religious Behaviors, Badges, and Bans,” 63.

<sup>998</sup> E. R. Leach, “Ritualization in Man in Relation to Conceptual and Social Development,” *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London. Series B, Biological Sciences* 251, no. 772 (1966): 403, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2416752>.

<sup>999</sup> Rappaport, *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity*, 51.

magically effective behaviors to which anthropologists generally restricted the class,<sup>1000</sup> the present project extends the site of the ritual tent yet further to also include at least certain aspects of technical behavior. The reason for this is that it is a mistake to assume that technical behavior is not guided by convention, even though it is true that the effects of the behavior are not necessarily due to adherence to the convention. Some conventions governing technical behavior arise as a means of encoding the most efficient, safe, or otherwise best means of accomplishing the task at hand. Others encode technical ways of doing things that are culturally normative even though there may be other equally practicable, or even in some sense better, ways of accomplishing the same thing. The encoding of the convention is conveyed in the canonical messages of the rituals that govern the behavior, which are themselves symbolic, as Rappaport recognized. In the cases of technical rituals, however, it is the technical accomplishment of the task at hand, which is iconic, that substantiates and grounds the ritual in reality rather than an indexical self-reference. It is in technical rituals that the social construction of reality that arises from ritual activity meets up with brute reality, which in turn restrains the social

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<sup>1000</sup> Leach, "Ritualization in Man," 403–4.

construction process.<sup>1001</sup> Such technical rituals would become most empirically recognizable were the present theory of ritual to be applied to activities of daily life, which remains beyond the scope of the project at present.

Even within the frame of ritual communication as community constitution rather than transmission of information, the questions of sending and receiving require some consideration. The senders of ritual communication include the participants in the ritual, not only individually but also collectively, and the encoded conventions, which performance generates canonical messages; the act of sending is coterminous with the performance of the ritual by the participants. What is perhaps surprising about ritual communication is that the primary receivers are also the individual and collective participants in the ritual and its encoded conventions; also, the act of receiving is coterminous with its performance. This is because, as Rappaport points out, ritual participants become part and parcel with the social order of the community that ritual enacts in its performance: “by performing a liturgical order the participants accept, and indicate to themselves and to others that they accept whatever is encoded in the

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<sup>1001</sup> Berger and Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality*; Searle, *The Construction of Social Reality*.

canon of that order.”<sup>1002</sup> This acceptance is not belief, “a private state, but a public act,”<sup>1003</sup> and so may be at odds with belief, but this “insincerity does not nullify acceptance”<sup>1004</sup> because acceptance is performance of the canonical code.

Acceptance is what was meant above in the subsection on ritual structure by the objectification of the transformed ritual elements and participants such that they are available as elements of future ritual performances. What becomes available is the participant having become obligated to the canonical conventions of the performed ritual regardless of whether or not they in fact abide by those conventions beyond the ritual frame: “It is not ritual’s office to ensure compliance but to establish obligation.”<sup>1005</sup> Nevertheless, as discussed above, as the conventions established and maintained ritually become mystified and increasingly taken for granted, they meld into the doxa of society such that the gap between acceptance and belief, obligation and compliance, closes, or at least becomes irrelevant, as the habitus of a given participant becomes sincere. It is only for rituals that continue to operate at a cognitive level that a gap between

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<sup>1002</sup> Rappaport, *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity*, 119.

<sup>1003</sup> Rappaport, 120.

<sup>1004</sup> Rappaport, 121.

<sup>1005</sup> Rappaport, 124.

acceptance/obligation and belief/compliance persists. Thus, in ritual communication, participants send messages to themselves and one another that they are obligated to the ritually established order, and then become sincere in their belief in and compliance with that order as it is incorporated into the doxa of their society and their own habitus.

Returning to the baptismal rite in the Great Vigil of Easter, the gathered congregation renew the promises made at their own baptisms, either made themselves or on their behalf, prior to the baptisms of the fresh candidates.<sup>1006</sup> From the perspective of a transmission theory of communication, this call and response between the bishop and the congregation is a demand on the part of the bishop that the congregation assent to the beliefs of the church as expressed in the Apostle's Creed and behave as the church instructs and teaches. From the perspective of ritual communication, by contrast, the bishop and congregation together are reinforcing and deepening the reality of a socially meaningful symbol system that orients the ritual participants such that they might behave in accordance with right action as delineated by the ritual order so constituted. Furthermore, the exchange is illustrative of the distinction between acceptance

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<sup>1006</sup> *The Great Vigil of Easter - Video Recording*, 1:03:28-1:06:15; "The Great Vigil of Easter - Service Bulletin," 8.

and belief. In the first part of the exchange, participants confirm their belief in God and God's activity on their behalf in the words of the Apostle's Creed. Their declaration of, "I believe," is in fact an acceptance of the socially meaningful symbol system in which God is and God acts on their behalf regardless of any doubts they may harbor. The obligations entailed by this acceptance are then outlined in the second part of the exchange in terms of commitment to ongoing participation in religious practice, regular confession, evangelism, service of God and neighbor, and pursuit of justice. As was noted in the previous subsection, the bishop clarifies that these later questions are "questions of intention,"<sup>1007</sup> thereby reducing their obligatory force to aspiration.

The thanksgiving over the water in the baptismal rite provides another perspective on the aspect of ritual communication. After the opening exchange, the majority of this part of the rite is recited by the celebrant, in this case, the bishop.<sup>1008</sup> This monologue begins with a rehearsal of the ways in which God has acted through water in the biblical narrative and then declares the work that God will do through the water as it is used in baptism now: candidates for baptism will be buried with Christ in death, share in resurrection, be reborn by the Spirit,

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<sup>1007</sup> *The Great Vigil of Easter - Video Recording*, 1:05:18-1:05:23.

<sup>1008</sup> *The Great Vigil of Easter - Video Recording*, 1:08:23-1:10:02; *Book of Common Prayer*, 306–7.



and be brought together into fellowship. Next, the celebrant touches the water and invokes the Holy Spirit to sanctify it such that candidates are cleansed from sin, born again, and continue perpetually in Christ's resurrection after they are baptized in it. This part of the rite communicates, in the sense of community constitution, several things of note as a performance of almost exclusively canonical messages. First, the connection with the biblical narrative constitutes the community as including not only those gathered for the rite being performed in the present moment and in the given space but also with all who have ever experienced or will ever experience divine grace through water. The second part of the monologue explicates the process of what happens in baptism for those who undergo it as a transformation from the old life, through death, to resurrection. While the sprinkling of water that the actual baptism involves<sup>1009</sup> is, in fact, an entirely safe undertaking from a medical standpoint, existentially it involves what might be construed as the costliest signal imaginable: death. This discrepancy between the physical and the existential calls into question the extent to which they in fact effectively signal devotion and belief, but the rite is nevertheless an example of acceptance of communal commitment with

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<sup>1009</sup> *The Great Vigil of Easter - Video Recording*, 1:10:08-1:10:19.

existential significance for those who undergo the process. Finally, at the end of the monologue the celebrant asks that those baptized in the water “may continue for ever in the risen life of Jesus Christ our Savior,”<sup>1010</sup> which serves to indicate the ongoing obligation that the baptized have accepted to live out what they have chosen in the rite, independent of any guarantee that they will do so.

### *Semiotics*

Articulating most of the above aspects of the theory of ritual under development has already required a great deal of semiotic terminology and analysis, but it deserves a systematic summary in conversation with other literature addressing the semiotics of ritual.

Jens Kreinath rightly decries the fact that “the various concepts of signs that are developed in modern linguistics have often been uncritically applied to the analysis of rituals” because of the influence of Saussurean semiology taking “language as the primary semiotic system, and linguistics as a paradigmatic discipline in terms of which all cultural phenomena could be analyzed.”<sup>1011</sup>

Unfortunately, Kreinath then misconstrues Edmund Leach as the principal

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<sup>1010</sup> *The Great Vigil of Easter - Video Recording*, 1:09:47-1:09:52.

<sup>1011</sup> Jens Kreinath, “Semiotics,” in *Theorizing Rituals: Issues, Topics, Approaches, Concepts*, ed. Jens Kreinath, Jan Snoek, and Michael Stausberg, vol. 1 (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 429, 432.

Saussurean villain, largely on the basis of quoting Leach conceiving ritual as “a language in a quite literal sense,” but misrepresenting the quotation as it comes from an encyclopedia article in the context of Leach describing the ritual theory of Claude Levi-Strauss, not his own position.<sup>1012</sup> Kreinath goes on to quote what he calls “Leach’s famous semiotic premise,” that “The elements of the ritual (‘the letters of the alphabet’) do not mean anything in themselves; they come to have meaning by virtue of contrast with other elements,” as evidence of Leach’s linguistic structuralism.<sup>1013</sup> Alas, he neglects the warning Leach provides immediately after his statement of the premise:

But having made this point I would urge you to treat the analogy between ritual and language, or at any rate between ritual and written language, with some caution. The heart of my argument is that non-verbal communication is ordinarily achieved in the way that the conductor of an orchestra conveys musical information to his listeners, and *not* in the way that the writer of a book conveys verbal information to his readers... we must know a lot about the cultural context, the setting of the stage, before we can even begin to decode the message.<sup>1014</sup>

One of the things that language does is to reduce the need for mutual understanding of contextual factors, but here Leach is arguing that decoding the semiotics of ritual requires vast understanding of the cultural context. Kreinath

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<sup>1012</sup> Kreinath, 432–36; Edmund Leach, “Ritual,” in *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, ed. David L. Sills (New York, NY: Macmillan, 1968), 524.

<sup>1013</sup> Kreinath, “Semiotics,” 433; Leach, *Culture and Communication*, 95.

<sup>1014</sup> Leach, *Culture and Communication*, 95–96.

would have been better off interrogating Levi-Strauss as his representative of structuralism since Leach is actually far closer to the goal Kreinath sets for a semiotics of ritual: "It is necessary to specify what kind of sign processes rituals are and how they can be distinguished from other forms of action by their particular use of signs."<sup>1015</sup> A more adequate presentation of the logic of relations between ritual and language for Leach is given in the section on ritual and language below.

Kreinath does a better job of representing the symbolics of Clifford Geertz and Victor Turner as failing to live up to their aspiration to theorize the pragmatics of ritual for hewing too closely to the syntactic pole of semantic analysis.<sup>1016</sup> After dispatching Maurice Bloch and Fritz Staal for simultaneously taking language too seriously and preemptively decamping from discussions of meaning entirely,<sup>1017</sup> Kreinath turns to Peircian semiotics as appropriated by Roy Rappaport and Stanley Tambiah as a more adequate starting point for theorizing the pragmatics of ritual: "Because Peirce's semiotics grasps every act of interpretation as a sign process and a starting point for theorization, this allows

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<sup>1015</sup> Kreinath, "Semiotics," 429.

<sup>1016</sup> Kreinath, 436–46.

<sup>1017</sup> Kreinath, 446–56.

one to take the specificity of the pragmatic dimension of ritual performances more seriously.”<sup>1018</sup> Kreinath notes that both Rappaport and Tambiah locate the semiotic distinctiveness of ritual in its appropriation of indexicality, as distinguished from the symbolic reference of language for Rappaport and as ground for ritual efficacy for Tambiah.<sup>1019</sup> Unfortunately, in failing to appreciate semiotics as developed in Peirce as radically distinct from Saussure, and as appropriated by Rappaport and Tambiah, Kreinath is unable to adequately interpret the ways that their articulation of ritual communication transcends both language and mentality in order to be fully constructive and transformative precisely by setting the formal measure by which given performances are evaluated as repetitions or variations. Moreover, by reducing symbolic reference in Peirce to the nature of language, Kreinath ends up conflating symbolic reference with extensionality and indexical reference with intensionality such that he concludes that “It is only through (the analytic use of) the concept of the index that it becomes possible to carve out the uniqueness of a specific

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<sup>1018</sup> Kreinath, 457.

<sup>1019</sup> Kreinath, 457. Notably, Kreinath seems not to have had access to, or at least does not address Rappaport’s seminal work, Rappaport, *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity*.

reference.”<sup>1020</sup> The result is that the theoretical categories he only briefly elaborates are characteristics of form that would have to be symbolically encoded in order to generate the entailments he describes.<sup>1021</sup>

Rather than approaching semiotics from the perspective of ritual, Robert Cummings Neville approaches ritual from the perspective of Perician semiotics. In *The Truth of Broken Symbols*, Neville is principally concerned with religious rituals when he hypothesizes that

the intentional context of a religious community generally requires doubled interpretants. On the one hand, the religious symbol is interpreted in a representational way so that the meaning is thrown back on the religious object. On the other hand, the symbol is interpreted in a practical way so that the implication of the religious object so symbolized is drawn out for the practice or activities of the community.<sup>1022</sup>

He acknowledges that one interpretant or the other may be more dominant:

“One may be closer to consciousness, and one may be more powerful without being more conscious,” and defines the integrity of meaning as “the proper relation between the representational and the practical interpretants.”<sup>1023</sup> The function of ritual is to “shape imagination,” which for Neville is both a result of

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<sup>1020</sup> Kreinath, “Semiotics,” 468–69.

<sup>1021</sup> Kreinath, 469.

<sup>1022</sup> Robert C. Neville, *The Truth of Broken Symbols* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1996), 135.

<sup>1023</sup> Neville, 136.

its repetition<sup>1024</sup> and its performance as ritual “performs the reference to the divine as doubly interpreted:”<sup>1025</sup> “My hypothesis is that the practical intentional contexts such as cultic life make many if not all intentional references with religious symbols to be performative as well as representational.”<sup>1026</sup> More broadly, though also including in ritual, “the transformative point of religious symbols is to adjust the interpreters so that they themselves, personally and in community, come into better and deeper accord with the religious objects.”<sup>1027</sup> The truth of a religious element of a ritual, then, “consists in its shaping a relevant aspect of cultic life so as to be a faithful response to the symbol’s referent.”<sup>1028</sup>

In more recent work, Neville has articulated Confucian ritual theory in semiotic terms: “any habit with a vague meaningful character as defined within a semiotic code is a learned ritual.”<sup>1029</sup> Ritual in this sense is decidedly not confined

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<sup>1024</sup> Neville, 140.

<sup>1025</sup> Neville, 141–42.

<sup>1026</sup> Neville, 143.

<sup>1027</sup> Neville, 151–52.

<sup>1028</sup> Neville, 245–49.

<sup>1029</sup> Robert C. Neville, *The Good Is One, Its Manifestations Many: Confucian Essays on Metaphysics, Morals, Rituals, Institutions, and Genders* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2016), 56.

to the domain of religion but rather serves as a fundament of social theory:

“Confucians have known the importance of ritual for defining character and better than most other traditions of philosophy have understood the political roles of individuals and groups.”<sup>1030</sup> Contrary to the reduction of ritual to indexical reference by Kreinath, with respect to this pervasive notion of ritual,<sup>1031</sup> “much more is to be learned by understanding the ritual contexts within which actions take place, because those ritual contexts supply the semiotic meanings and values that lie behind actions.”<sup>1032</sup> Deeply engaging the Warring States (453 – 221 BCE) Confucian thinker Xunzi, as does the present project in the next chapter, Neville makes two important points regarding the semiotics of ritual in the lineage of Xunzi in consonance with Peirce. First, “Rituals across the spectrum are conventions. Conventions are not innate but are signs that need to be learned.”<sup>1033</sup> This is not to negate the indexicality of particular ritual elements, which he also acknowledges,<sup>1034</sup> but to say that ritual systems as wholes are

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<sup>1030</sup> Robert C. Neville, *Ritual and Deference: Extending Chinese Philosophy in a Comparative Context* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2008), 10.

<sup>1031</sup> Neville, 27–30.

<sup>1032</sup> Neville, *The Good Is One, Its Manifestations Many*, 57–58.

<sup>1033</sup> Neville, *Ritual and Deference*, 30.

<sup>1034</sup> Neville, 31.



symbolic and so governed by conventions, i.e. the form of the ritual, that they themselves need to be learned, hence the paired emphasis on ritual and education in Xunzi. Second, “rituals as sign-shaped behaviors are vague and require individuation or specification in their performance.”<sup>1035</sup> While some of this specification is tied to particularities specific to a given ritual performance, which is what Kreinath is trying to highlight in his emphasis on performance and pragmatics, but much of it is also due to overlap with other rituals and the lower order rituals that make up higher order rituals constraining one another. This theorizing by Neville is the most extensive Peircian semiotic treatment of ritual to date and initiates a project to which the present endeavor seeks to make a systematic and substantive contribution.

Acknowledging that ritual makes use of all three modes of reference identified by Peirce – iconic, indexical, and symbolic – the present project seeks to articulate the contours of the symbol system that governs the relations among signs in a ritual context. With the later theorizing by Neville in conversation with Xunzi, ritual is taken to be a pervasive dimension of human life, a genus of which language is a species, as will be demonstrated in the chapter five. Rituals

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<sup>1035</sup> Neville, 32.

are made up of elements including objects, words, actions, and participants. Each element is at least potentially (1) a sign of itself to itself; (2) a sign of its role in the ritual to itself; (3) a sign of itself to other elements in the ritual; (4) a sign of its role in the ritual to other elements in the ritual. So too the elements refer to one another as icons, indices, or symbols, their mutual reference constituting them together as a system. The ritual elements are arranged according to an order specific to that ritual within the frame that makes a ritual that ritual. The form also constrains the orientation and reference of the ritual elements such that they achieve coherence according to the ritual order, thereby effecting a transformation of at least some of the elements and achieving objectification. The ritual process is the means by which the ritual form transforms at least one of the ritual elements from one location, status, state, or condition to another in order to generate its functions: new interpretants, be they cultural systems, interpersonal interactions, or even the physical location of a ritual element, transition of interpretants from foreground to background, or from an intentional to a taken for granted production from the perspective of the ritual elements, by virtue of repetition of the ritual. Of course, these interpretants are only generated insofar as the ritual is performed and the ongoing performances of many interwoven rituals construct, maintain, and adjust the cultural conventions of a society, and

are the means of their adoption into the individual lives of the people of that society.

It is also helpful to return at this point to the definition of ritual and interpret it in explicitly semiotic vocabulary: Ritual is “the performance of more or less invariant sequences of formal acts and utterances not entirely encoded by the performers” (Rappaport, 24). The ritual form is fundamentally semiotic, in which the relation between a sign vehicle and its object – whether by common quality, causality, or convention – generates an interpretant. The elements of ritual are often functioning simultaneously as signs, objects, and interpretants as the ritual is being performed, which is expected given that signs are not states but processes of semiosis, although the form, or the symbol system governing conventional signs, is only able to constrain the reference of and to transform signs that are referring symbolically, i.e. conventionally. Rituals are almost always made up of smaller rituals and therefore govern the symbol systems of those smaller rituals. The invariance of the sequencing of those smaller rituals is what makes a given ritual that ritual, and that particular sequence is encoded in its symbol system to be performed invariantly. Three levels of ritual may be distinguished: macro rituals that encode the rituals of society, meso rituals that encode the rituals of daily life and interpersonal interactions, and micro rituals

that encode the rituals that make up the meso rituals. Rituals also overlap with other rituals, and so their performers must be able to negotiate between them in order to minimize the variance introduced for each, and so invariance is never absolute. Thus, rituals are not encoded by their performers, rather the performers have the obligation to perform all of the rituals and sub-rituals they are involved in so as to harmonize them with minimal variance for each; the various options for harmonizing rituals are themselves also rituals. When so harmonized, rituals remain relatively taken for granted, whereas spikes in variance generate cognitive dissonance, sometimes resulting in ritual rectification. Moreover, there is a dipolar tension between the symbol system of the ritual form representing the world as it is and constructing the world as it should be according to either the ritual form in question or a higher order ritual form in which it participates. The representational pole pulls the symbol system toward accordance with the structure of reality. The constructive pole pulls the symbol system toward accordance with an ideal either intrinsic to the ritual in play, a higher order ritual, or even a set of overlapping rituals at the same or a higher order. The reason for this tension is that the symbol system of ritual, by virtue of its nature as system, privileges unified order and pattern, either identifying it in the world, or where it cannot, constructing it. Performers are left to select among the

available rituals for harmonizing the multiple rituals at play at various levels with minimal variance and for resolving the tension between representation and construction, which is their contribution to the ritual encoding.

The Great Vigil of Easter is a decidedly macro ritual of a religious variety that is in turn made up of a number of other macro religious rituals: “The Service of Light,” “The Word of God,” “Holy Baptism and Renewal of Baptismal Vows,” and “The Holy Communion” as outlined in the service leaflet.<sup>1036</sup> Many of these rituals are also made up of other macro rituals, such as the five nocturns recounting salvation history, each of which begins with a reading, concludes with a collect, and has a psalm, canticle, or musical element in between.<sup>1037</sup> There are also rituals that overlap with the Great Vigil of Easter, such as the sign of the cross discussed earlier, which is not intrinsically defined by the symbol system of the Vigil but is rather adopted from its own symbolic encoding as expressed in a range of liturgical uses and extra-liturgical blessings. It is also not the case that absolutely every word or motion that takes place during the Vigil is encoded by the ritual of the Vigil itself. For example, the words spoken by the Dean of the

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<sup>1036</sup> “The Great Vigil of Easter - Service Bulletin”; *The Great Vigil of Easter - Video Recording*. Alternative headings are given in *Book of Common Prayer*.

<sup>1037</sup> “The Great Vigil of Easter - Service Bulletin,” 4–7; *The Great Vigil of Easter - Video Recording*, 17:20-1:01:00.

Cathedral in invitation to the congregation to provide financial support to the mission and ministry of the Cathedral are not prescribed by the ritual itself but arise from meso rituals of interpersonal interaction and communication developed and refined in the Cathedral community.<sup>1038</sup> Also, while the ritual of the Vigil assumes that the communion elements will be distributed in some sense in good order, it does not prescribe what that order will be, instead relying on wider rituals in society to form lines, wait turns, and allow appropriate space.<sup>1039</sup> These rituals, in turn, rely on micro rituals that encode such individualized matters as the very manner by which a given person walks, involving all of the signs necessary to pick up a foot, move it forward, put it back down, make all of those motions flow, and keep them in sync with the parallel motions of the other foot so as to achieve a gait. Someone tripping in line would be a relatively minimal variance, and so would generate a small amount of cognitive dissonance, leaving the ritual mostly taken for granted. Someone grabbing the chalice from the server, dumping the contents on the floor, and running out the door would be a lot of variance, at least potentially generating ritual failure, but these actions too would nevertheless be performances of rituals, namely of

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<sup>1038</sup> *The Great Vigil of Easter - Video Recording*, 1:49:00-1:51:05.

<sup>1039</sup> *The Great Vigil of Easter - Video Recording*, 2:03:10-2:10:25.

rituals of desecration and theft, overlapped with the Eucharist ritual. The tension between the ritual representing the world as is and constructing the world as it should be according to its form is writ large across the Great Vigil of Easter: the world is broken under the weight of sin, and especially in baptism and Eucharist, the world is redeemed by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

### Ritual and Language

For Roy Rappaport, ritual is a solution to two problems inherent in language. In order to understand this solution, it is necessary to understand the problem. Rappaport argues, following Leslie White, that language entails culture, which is in turn “the general way of life consisting of understandings, institutions, customs, and material artifacts, whose existence, maintenance and use are contingent upon language.”<sup>1040</sup> This is to say that language is generative for the socially constructed aspects of reality, by contrast to brute, physical reality.<sup>1041</sup> Furthermore, and again with White, Rappaport considers language to be the primary, if not only, manifestation of symbolic thought, which is unique in

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<sup>1040</sup> Rappaport, *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity*, 7, 464n5; Leslie A. White, *The Science of Culture: A Study of Man and Civilization* (New York, NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1949).

<sup>1041</sup> Rappaport, *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity*, 16–21; Berger and Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality*.

the world to humanity.<sup>1042</sup> However, the relationship between language – and the world it constructs socially – and language user is complicated:

If, as agents, people act, and perhaps can only act, in terms of meanings they or their ancestors have conceived, they are as much in the service of those conceptions as those conceptions are parts of their adaptations. *There is, this is to say, an inversion or partial inversion, in the course of human evolution, of the relationship of the adaptive apparatus to the adapting species.*<sup>1043</sup>

Thus, for Rappaport, there is an intimate connection between language and thought, which for him primarily refers to symbolic reference in semiotic terms.

The first problem with language, according to Rappaport, is that it enables humans to lie by separating sign from signified temporally and spatially such that what signs purport may not accord with reality.<sup>1044</sup> This in turn calls into question the entire social project: “What is at stake is not only the truthfulness or reliability of particular messages but credibility, credence, and trust themselves, and thus the grounds of the trustworthiness requisite to systems of communication and community generally.”<sup>1045</sup> Rappaport argues that, at least with respect to socially constructed reality, “aspects of religion, particularly as

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<sup>1042</sup> Rappaport, *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity*, 7–9.

<sup>1043</sup> Rappaport, 9.

<sup>1044</sup> Rappaport, 11–17.

<sup>1045</sup> Rappaport, 15.



generated in ritual, ameliorate problems of falsehood intrinsic to language to a degree sufficient to allow human sociability to have developed and to be maintained."<sup>1046</sup> Notably, while the problem of religious language is a present concern, the role of religious ritual in ameliorating the problem of falsehoods introduced by the symbolic nature of language is not of central interest because it is ultimately what religious ritual generates, namely religion, and not ritual generally or itself, that addresses the problem of the lie.

Of much more interest is the second problem with language, according to Rappaport, which is that language enables humans to conceive of alternative realities to the present socially constructed order. As Rappaport notes, the ability of language to express that "YHVH is God and Marduk is not" entails the possibility of the alternative that "Marduk is God and YHWH is not," a phenomenon he explains as emerging from linguistic ordering by grammar.<sup>1047</sup> While this capacity to imagine alternative orders generates an extraordinary degree of adaptive flexibility, it concomitantly establishes the grounds of disorder.<sup>1048</sup> In order to maintain social stability, the present order must be

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<sup>1046</sup> Rappaport, 15.

<sup>1047</sup> Rappaport, 17.

<sup>1048</sup> Rappaport, 17.

grounded over against possible alternative orders, which is to say that some words must be established as “true,” at least in a socially constructed sense, as opposed to the “false” alternatives grammar allows.<sup>1049</sup> Again, Rappaport offers religion and ritual as the means for accomplishing this grounding:

It is a major thesis of this book that it is in the nature of religion to fabricate the Word, the True Word upon which the truths of symbols and the convictions that they establish stand. As I suggested at the beginning of this chapter, I take the foundry within which the Word is forged to be ritual.<sup>1050</sup>

Since, as described above, not all ritual is religious for Rappaport, it is not entirely clear whether it is as necessary as he thinks for particularly religious ritual to serve this grounding function, or whether more mundane forms of ritual might do just as well. Part of this problem is caught up in the way in which Rappaport conceives ritual among other domains of life, but for the moment, it is enough to note that this capacity of language to generate alternative possibilities is in part what is meant in chapter six by the subjunctive function of language.

This contrastive view between ritual and language, which gives rise to the contrastive view between ritual and sincerity adopted by Seligman et al, echoes

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<sup>1049</sup> Rappaport, 21.

<sup>1050</sup> Rappaport, 21.

in many respects the predominant view in ritual studies that ritual is not language. The most provocative proponent of this view is Fritz Staal:

What I have attempted to demonstrate in my earlier studies of ritual is not that ritual is a language, but that it is, like language, a *rule-governed activity*. Since it is an activity that is governed by rules, it becomes important to discover what actual rules, and what kind of rules, in fact govern it. In pursuing such questions, I discovered that ritual structures can be analysed in syntactic terms not by methods specific to linguistics, but by mathematical and logical methods that have also influenced linguistics... I tried to show that a syntactic analysis of ritual is not only possible but also fruitful; and that such an analysis demonstrates that the assumption that rituals express meanings like language is not only unnecessary, but inaccurate and misleading.<sup>1051</sup>

Staal is here arguing that both ritual and language are species of the genus of rule-governed activities, but that semantic meaning is a unique quality of the species language, not of rule-governed activities generally, and so not of ritual.

Elsewhere Staal is emphatic about this lack of semantic content in ritual:

A widespread but erroneous assumption about ritual is that it consists in symbolic activities which refer to something else. It is characteristic of a ritual performance, however, that it is self-contained and self-absorbed. The performers are totally immersed in the proper execution of their complex tasks. Isolated in their sacred enclosure, they concentrate on correctness of act, recitation and chant. Their primary concern, if not obsession, is with rules. There are no symbolic meanings going through their minds when they are engaged in performing ritual.<sup>1052</sup>

Leaving aside the question of the adequacy of the claim that ritual has no semantic content, it is notable that this claim is what enables Staal to articulate

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<sup>1051</sup> Frits Staal, "The Sound of Religion I," *Numen* 33, no. 1 (June 1, 1986): 42–43, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3270126>; Staal, *Rules without Meaning*.

<sup>1052</sup> Staal, "The Meaninglessness of Ritual," 3.

the distinctiveness of language as a species of the same genus as ritual and so to distinguish the two: "Ritual systems are like language in that they are governed by rules, but unlike language in that they do not express meanings."<sup>1053</sup> For Staal, syntax is common to all rule-governed activities, but semantics is unique to language, or at least is not common between language and ritual.

The way in which Staal construes the relationship between language and ritual is that they are both species of the genus of rule-governed activities, and species with rather distinct features and entailments at that. According to this schematization, with language and ritual on the same logical level under the higher order logic of rule-governed activities, it is equivalent to say that ritual is not language and that language is not ritual, because if they were, there would be no reason to distinguish them as distinct species. Without addressing the adequacy of the conception of "rule-governed activities" as the genus of language and ritual, it is possible to challenge the conception of language and ritual each being an independent species. Instead, ritual may be conceived within Staal's framework of rejecting semantic content in ritual as the genus of the species language, where ritual is defined as syntactically determined and

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<sup>1053</sup> Frits Staal, "The Sound of Religion II," *Numen* 33, no. 2 (December 1, 1986): 185–224, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3270093>.

language adds the property of semantic content. Furthermore, Staal's analysis of ritual as lacking semantic content is inadequate,<sup>1054</sup> for reasons beginning with his explicitly stated underlying assumption that the Vedic Agnicayana is the best source material for a theory of ritual because of its size, ornamentation, and documentation,<sup>1055</sup> none of which characteristics bear directly upon suitability for generalization. This being the case, it is even more plausible to hypothesize that language, with its distinctive characteristics, whatever they turn out to be, are a species of the genus ritual, with its more general characteristics, whatever they turn out to be. In this configuration, it would remain true to say that ritual is not language, as instantiations of the genus ritual may belong to a species other than language, but that language is ritual, as there can be no member of a species that is not also a member of the same genus.

One of the reasons theorists reject understanding ritual as language is an increasing skepticism toward Saussurean structuralism: "Due to the broader reception of Charles S. Peirce's semiotics in the late 1970s, the paradigm of

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<sup>1054</sup> George Thompson, "On Mantras and Frits Staal," *Journal of Ritual Studies* 9, no. 2 (Summer 1995): 23–44, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44398639>; Francis X. Clooney, "Why the Veda Has No Author: Language as Ritual in Early Mīmāṃsā and Post-Modern Theology," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 55, no. 4 (December 1, 1987): 659–84, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jaarel/LV.4.659>; Clooney, *Thinking Ritually*; Hans H. Penner, "Language, Ritual and Meaning," *Numen* 32, no. 1 (July 1, 1985): 1–16, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3269960>.

<sup>1055</sup> Staal, "The Meaninglessness of Ritual," 2.

linguistic signs that had dominated the former approaches to rituals was called into question and eventually left behind.”<sup>1056</sup> Indeed, more recent work has returned to the idea of ritual as a meaningful mode of communication by adopting a broadly Peircian stance.

Ritual communication is an undertaking or enterprise involving a making of cultural knowledge within locally variant practices of speech-centered human interaction... is artful, performed semiosis, predominantly but not only involving speech, that is formulaic and repetitive and therefore anticipated within particular contexts of social interaction... In this poetic-pragmatic view of ritual language or ritual communication, “meaningfulness” is both a retrospective and a prospective process.<sup>1057</sup>

Unfortunately, this more recent work is rather unclear as to the logic of relations among ritual, language, communication, and meaning, but is at least clear that ritual is not wholly reducible to language. Thus, quite apart from the problematic universalizing of Staal, there is good reason to conclude that ritual is not language, either construed as a strict equivalence or as ritual being a species of the language genus.

The alternative claim that language is a species of the genus ritual was made infamous by Edmund Leach in the publication of his 1966 contribution to a symposium on ritualization behaviors in animals and humans in the *Philosophical*

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<sup>1056</sup> Kreinath, “Semiotics,” 456.

<sup>1057</sup> Senft and Basso, *Ritual Communication*, 1.

*Transactions of the Royal Society of London, Series B, Biological Sciences.*<sup>1058</sup> In the published article, Leach compares the consistency of ethologists in their understanding of ritual with social anthropologists who cannot agree among themselves as to what they mean when they talk about ritual. Not only does he critique his fellow anthropologists for making a distinction without a difference between behavior that communicates according to a code and behavior that is “potent” either in terms of cultural conventions or by invoking occult powers.<sup>1059</sup> Leach also sides with the ethologists in arguing that “speech itself is a form of ritual; non-verbal ritual is simply a signal system of a different, less specialized, kind.”<sup>1060</sup> The ethologists were relying on a theory of ritual derived ultimately from the symbolic interactionist program in anthropology but as interpreted through the lens of evolutionary biology such that “Rituals (*Symbolhandlungen* German) are behavior patterns which serve the function of communication and which undergo changes in the service of this function that enhance their communicative value.”<sup>1061</sup> Leach concludes that in ritual (1) language and action

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<sup>1058</sup> Leach, “Ritualization in Man.”

<sup>1059</sup> Leach, 403–4.

<sup>1060</sup> Leach, 404.

<sup>1061</sup> Irenaus Eibl-Eibesfeldt, “Ritual and Ritualization from a Biological Perspective,” in *Human Ethology: Claims and Limits of a New Discipline*, ed. Mario von Cranach et al., Werner-Reimens-

are indistinguishable, (2) vocabulary is restricted as in mathematics, and (3) this does not lead to ambiguity because of reliance on presumed, i.e. taken for granted, conventional common knowledge.<sup>1062</sup> Meyer Fortes (1906 – 1983) rejects this view on the basis that “It is a short step from this to the position that there is no such thing as ritual per se, no actions, utterances, ideas and beliefs that belong specifically to a domain we can identify by the term ritual, as opposed to everything else in social life that is non-ritual.”<sup>1063</sup> Even Rappaport, who views ritual as communicative, relies on this rejection in order to contrast ritual from language: “To say that ritual is a mode of communication is hardly to suggest that it is interchangeable with other modes of communication. It is a special medium peculiarly, perhaps even uniquely, suited to the transmission of certain messages and certain sorts of information.”<sup>1064</sup> As a result, theorists have not

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Stiftung Colloquium on Human Ethology, 1977 (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 4, 38.

<sup>1062</sup> Leach, “Ritualization in Man,” 408.

<sup>1063</sup> Meyer Fortes, “Religious Premises and Logical Technique in Divinatory Ritual,” *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London. Series B, Biological Sciences* 251, no. 772 (1966): 410, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2416753>.

<sup>1064</sup> Rappaport, *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity*, 52.



given serious consideration to the ethologically grounded notion of language as a species of ritual since Leach.<sup>1065</sup>

Until now. The present project diverges from Rappaport on the issue of the relation between ritual and language, siding with Leach and the ethologists on the basis of the same Peircian semiotics Rappaport adopts. Rappaport argues that language is purely symbolic while ritual retains a wider semiotic capacity for its elements, or in Rappaport's idiom the "contents" or "substance" of ritual, to refer indexically and iconically.<sup>1066</sup> He makes this claim with ethological awareness on the basis that even plants and animals have iconic and indexical modes of communication but that only humans are capable of purely symbolic communication in which sign vehicles are related to their objects purely by law or convention, which sign vehicles are then syntactically combinable into infinitely variable semantic expressions.<sup>1067</sup> Leaving aside for the moment the syntactic combinatorics, Rappaport is here falling into the same trap of mental signification that Peirce struggled, and ultimately failed, to escape, in that he is

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<sup>1065</sup> David J. Parkin, "Ritual," in *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences*, 2nd ed., vol. 18 (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2015), 717–20, <https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-08-097086-8.12141-5>.

<sup>1066</sup> Rappaport, *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity*, 3, 29–32.

<sup>1067</sup> Rappaport, 3.

assuming that symbolic reference relies on laws or conventions that are purely mental. One of the great achievements of Peircian semiotics, however, as recognized in the previous chapter, is that the distinction between physical and mental sign elements is irrelevant to semiosis.<sup>1068</sup> It is thus not symbolic reference that distinguishes humans from animals, plants, and even inanimate things but rather the capacities for recursion and reflex that make us aware that semiosis is taking place and of our role in its process. Likewise, ethologists recognize that linguistic and non-linguistic signifying behavior have the same communicative capacity and together form the basis for understanding uniquely human capacities for recursive syntax and reflexive semantics:

The discovery that verbal and non-verbal behavior can substitute for each other as functional equivalents bridges the gap between them and also provides a unifying theory for the study of a grammar of human social behavior. The basic strategies of social interactions indeed prove to follow the same rules whether verbalized or acted out non-verbally.<sup>1069</sup>

Unfortunately, because of the longstanding influence of structuralist approaches that take language as the model for all signifying systems, “there is still no established set of semiotics concepts for theorizing the pragmatics involved in the performance of ritual actions as it is developed in linguistics for analyzing

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<sup>1068</sup> Deely, “Objective Reality and the Physical World.”

<sup>1069</sup> Eibl-Eibesfeldt, “Ritual and Ritualization from a Biological Perspective,” 39.

spoken and written languages in terms of syntax and semantics."<sup>1070</sup> A central contribution of the present project, then, will be to understand language as part of the larger whole of ritual so as to overcome this deficiency and the limitations of the contrastive approach to ritual and language as developed by Rappaport.

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<sup>1070</sup> Kreinath, "Semiotics," 430.

## CONFUCIAN RITUAL THEORY

The purpose of this chapter is to present the ritual theory of Master Xun (Xunzi 荀子) in the intellectual and historical context of the Confucian tradition with which he identified, and among a wide variety of strains of Chinese thought more generally. The chapter presumes minimal familiarity with Confucian thought or the broad spectrum of Chinese religio-philosophical families of which the Confucian family is one. Indeed, it is only in the Han dynasty (206 BCE – 220 CE) that those who are now considered Confucians were classified together as “Ru 儒,” meaning scholars or classicists, which “indicated not a precise moral orientation or body of doctrines, but a professional training with the general goal of state service.”<sup>1071</sup> Confucius himself is rather like Jesus and Socrates in that he never compiled his own text and so is known exclusively through compilations of his sayings by his students and followers, whose own agendas filtered the articulation, selection, editing, formulation, and codification thereof. Those who followed in Confucius’ lineage, therefore, had to be highly creative and constructive in their own right. The central such figure for consideration here is Xunzi, the great systematizer of early Confucian thought. Against the elder

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<sup>1071</sup> Michael Nylan, *The Five “Confucian” Classics* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008), 3.

Confucian Mencius (Mengzi 孟子), Xunzi believed that humans have an inborn tendency toward excess, which can be curbed and corrected through education and ritual. The claim to be made is that there are aspects and features of his ritual theory, especially the pervasiveness of ritual in thought and action, that emphasize, highlight, press against, and challenge the contemporary Western social scientific ritual theories considered in the previous chapter in various respects. These aspects and features are particularly salient for making the case that language is ritual in subsequent chapters. Further, this chapter explores connections between Xunzi's ritual theory and the Confucian project of "rectifying names," which highlights the importance of common language and meaning for a moral and functional society.

Even before turning to some background in Chinese thought, some orientation regarding notation is in order. All dates are presented with the contemporary convention of being marked "before the common era," abbreviated BCE, or "common era," abbreviated CE. With regard to language, in the first instance all names, titles, (of people, places, books, etc.), and technical terms are provided in translation to English where there is a common convention for such and then also in Pinyin (transliteration of Chinese) and Chinese characters. In all cases, Pinyin appears without tonal markers. Where there is no

sufficient consensus regarding an English translation, or in the case of many personal and place names where translation would be inappropriate, then only the Pinyin and Chinese characters are provided. There is also some combination of English titles and Pinyin names. In all cases, Chinese characters are provided immediately following the Pinyin transliteration without parentheses. When there is an English translation, then Pinyin immediately followed by Chinese characters is provided parenthetically. Subsequent usages will employ only the English translation, if available, or the Pinyin, if not. In some cases of subsequent appearances of the Pinyin, where more than one meaning is possible, Chinese characters may be included again to clarify the intended meaning in the case in question. For example, Li 禮 (ritual) does not mean the same as Li 理 (pattern or principle), and so the character would be included for the sake of clarity. In all cases, the Chinese characters presented are traditional, although in the case of technical terms the simplified characters may also be presented, in which case they will appear following a forward slash after the traditional characters. Pinyin names of people appears in regular font, while names of texts associated with said personages appear in italics. For example, Xunzi is a person, while the *Xunzi* is the body of texts associated with Xunzi.

In spite of this extensive notational apparatus, this presentation of ancient Chinese philosophy generally, and the *Xunzi* more specifically, is not Sinological, aspiring to expertise in Chinese language, literature, and history, but rather philosophical, inquiring into certain Chinese ideas as resources for attaining wisdom. As such, it relies not on original source texts in Chinese but on modern translations of the texts into English. The issue of translation is acute because the translator, of necessity, shapes the meaning of the text for readers by choosing words in English that most closely approximate the interpretation they already have of the text. As we will see, these interpretations can vary widely, and so as much as possible it is important to present the various interpretive frameworks of the translators so that the reader can understand the varying meanings presented by the different translations of the text in question. Secondary literature is thus extremely important for gaining traction on the viability of each framework and their attendant meanings, although again, only secondary sources in English are under consideration. For the sake of brevity, presentation of alternative translations and their attendant interpretive frameworks can only be undertaken extensively for texts pertaining directly to the purposes of this chapter, namely the understanding of Confucian, and particularly Xunzian, ritual theory.

## Chinese Philosophy and Its Early Milieu

One of the original contributions to scholarship made in this chapter is that it is the first attempt to consider the relationships among various streams of thought in ancient China in their sociocultural context according to the timeline developed by E. Bruce and A. Takeo Brooks. Using historical-critical methods of text analysis common in biblical studies, they hypothesize that the *Analects* as a work was written and compiled over almost a quarter of a millenium.<sup>1072</sup> While the scholarship that goes into their hypothesis is robust, their methods are not without critics.<sup>1073</sup> Thus, even as their findings are taken as a strong hypothesis to which no better alternative has been advanced, the presentation of the milieu of ancient Chinese thought here does not depend on the hypothesis being precisely accurate. Rather, their model of the accretions of chapters and passages of the

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<sup>1072</sup> Confucius, 論語辨 *The Original Analects: Sayings of Confucius and His Successors*, trans. E. Bruce Brooks and A. Takeo Brooks (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1998), 1.

<sup>1073</sup> A strong methodological critique is available in John Makeham, "The Original Analects: Sayings of Confucius and His Successors, and: The Analects of Confucius: A Philosophical Translation (Review)," *China Review International* 6, no. 1 (1999): 1–33, <https://doi.org/10.1353/cri.1999.0078>. Note that he is quite sympathetic to the developmental view generally: John Makeham, "The Formation of Lunyu as a Book," *Monumenta Serica* 44 (January 1, 1996): 1–24, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40727082>. An alternative chronology is provided in Shirley Chan, *The Confucian Shi, Official Service, and the Confucian Analects* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 2004), 221–66. Chan's alternative chronology is criticized in Keith Nathaniel Knapp, "Early Confucianism Reconsidered," *Religious Studies Review* 34, no. 3 (September 1, 2008): 161–64, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1748-0922.2008.00289.x>.



*Analects* is taken to demonstrate thematic emphases that resonate with thematic emphases in other streams of thought at play in the Warring States period. If the historical infrastructure of their case for their hypothesis were to crumble, these thematic resonances would remain. Furthermore, the Brooks' hypothesis results in the final chapters of the *Analects* being written while Xunzi was governor of Lu 魯, the state where Confucius' school was established and the text was compiled, and so helps maintain focus on Xunzi and his intellectual project.

Chinese philosophy emerged in the Fifth through Third Centuries BCE<sup>1074</sup> in the midst of socio-political upheaval considered at the time to be the final outcome of a gradual decline of Chinese culture from an idealized golden age.<sup>1075</sup> While this upheaval was brutal and tragic socio-politically, it proved philosophically fecund, generating myriad intellectual responses among what would come to be known as the Hundred Schools (Zhuzi Baijia 諸子百家).<sup>1076</sup> This background is important first because Xunzi was just like all authors, who were "products of their times and were involved in the political and social life of

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<sup>1074</sup> Yu-lan Fung, *A Short History of Chinese Philosophy*, trans. Derk Bodde (New York, NY: Free Press, 1997), 30.

<sup>1075</sup> Nylan, *The Five "Confucian" Classics*, 20.

<sup>1076</sup> Xunzi, *Xunzi: Translation and Study*, I: 50-66.

their age, and the texts were directed at specific audiences with which they interacted. A neglect of the sociopolitical and intellectual settings of a text... often leads to speculative attempts to find in the texts alien political or philosophical ideas,... which in all likelihood were inconceivable to both the authors and their audience."<sup>1077</sup> This leads to the second reason for a thorough consideration of the socio-political and intellectual emergence of Chinese philosophy: While a precise rendering of Xunzi is most philosophically relevant for present purposes, the detection of "synchronic patterns or diachronic processes" enabled by contextualization<sup>1078</sup> is important for gaining traction on debates regarding proper and appropriate interpretation of Xunzi. In particular, such traction is most helpful for adjudicating the debate in the literature regarding whether to interpret Xunzi as a realist or a constructivist.<sup>1079</sup> Consideration of the early milieu of Chinese philosophy begins with a presentation of the prevalent understanding of classical Chinese culture at the time said milieu emerged.

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<sup>1077</sup> Yuri Pines, *Envisioning Eternal Empire: Chinese Political Thought of the Warring States Period* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press, 2009), 8.

<sup>1078</sup> Pines, 6.

<sup>1079</sup> Hagen, *The Philosophy of Xunzi*.

*The Five Classics (Wujing 五經)*

Identifying the Five Classics as the codification of classical Chinese culture to which the philosophical movements of the Hundred Schools responded is highly anachronistic. The very concept of “classics,” after all, came from Xunzi himself,<sup>1080</sup> and it was his students who established the Five Classics during the Western Han dynasty (Hanchao 漢朝) (206 BCE – 8 CE).<sup>1081</sup> Furthermore, many of the Hundred Schools considered other texts of equal authority and antiquity.<sup>1082</sup> Historically, modern scholarship is skeptical of the traditional view that the texts were written in antiquity and then compiled, edited, and commented upon by Confucius himself.<sup>1083</sup> Nevertheless, these texts, in nascent form, were touchstones for most of the Hundred Schools,<sup>1084</sup> either as sources or as antagonists, and “most of the texts were evolving in oral as well as written forms for centuries before they acquired the designation ‘classic’ or

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<sup>1080</sup> Xunzi, *Xunzi: Translation and Study*, I: 41.

<sup>1081</sup> Nylan, *The Five “Confucian” Classics*, 1–6.

<sup>1082</sup> William Theodore de Bary and Irene Bloom, eds., *Sources of Chinese Tradition: Volume 1: From Earliest Times to 1600* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1999), 26.

<sup>1083</sup> de Bary and Bloom, 26. For a magisterial consideration of these texts and their evolution, see Mark Edward Lewis, *Writing and Authority in Early China* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1999).

<sup>1084</sup> de Bary and Bloom, *Sources of Chinese Tradition*; Nylan, *The Five “Confucian” Classics*, 20.

‘Confucian.’”<sup>1085</sup> Finally, they are particularly relevant for present purposes, sourcing, as they do, the Confucian tradition, and particularly Xunzi therein.<sup>1086</sup> They are considered here in the Modern Script order.<sup>1087</sup>

The *Classic of Poetry* (*Shijing* 春秋), or *Odes*,<sup>1088</sup> “existed in some form, oral or written, before the time of Confucius,” likely initially compiled no later than 600 BCE and fixed in its present form at about the start of the Third Century BCE.<sup>1089</sup> “A collection of what appear to be polished folk songs, sophisticated occasional pieces, and solemn dynastic hymns,” the *Odes* “is the most uniformly old compilation of texts included in the Five Classics.”<sup>1090</sup> Since the *Odes* was common among elites by the mid- to late Zhou 周 period (c. 1046 – 256 BCE), it is revelatory of the “material culture, habits, attitudes, and characteristic forms of association” in Zhou times that were revered by the Confucians.<sup>1091</sup> Knowledge

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<sup>1085</sup> Nylan, *The Five “Confucian” Classics*, 2.

<sup>1086</sup> Xunzi, *Xunzi: Translation and Study*, 8.7 (II: 76-77).

<sup>1087</sup> Nylan, *The Five “Confucian” Classics*, 22.

<sup>1088</sup> The two scholarly translations into English are: James Legge, *The Chinese Classics*, vol. 4.1 (Hong Kong: Lane, Crawford & Co., 1871); James Legge, *The Chinese Classics*, vol. 4.2 (Hong Kong: Lane, Crawford & Co., 1871); Bernhard Karlgren, *The Book of Odes* (Stockholm, Sweden: Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities, 1950).

<sup>1089</sup> Nylan, *The Five “Confucian” Classics*, 21.

<sup>1090</sup> Nylan, 72–73.

<sup>1091</sup> Nylan, 74.

of the *Odes* was considered an “insignia of culture” and storehouse of social graces, which “in turn were what made for an impressive character: the ‘sound of virtue’ capable of influencing others for the good.”<sup>1092</sup> So too, the *Odes* both “supply apt metaphors for the process of moral cultivation” and exemplify the exquisite taste of which moral self-cultivation is a kind such that reciting them is a form of ethical training.<sup>1093</sup> With respect to language, the *Odes* “provides the appropriate patterned language, no less than the range of social patterns, by which kindred spirits might recognize one another.”<sup>1094</sup> In Xunzi’s time, the *Odes* were “conceived as wonderful allegories containing the most sublime thoughts on the art of government, on the practice of self-cultivation, and on the nature of the Way and its Power,” and he cites them frequently in his texts.<sup>1095</sup>

The *Classic of Documents* (Shujing 尚書), or *Documents*,<sup>1096</sup> “consists of announcements, counsels, speeches, or similar oral reports said to have been

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<sup>1092</sup> Nylan, 91.

<sup>1093</sup> Nylan, 97–98.

<sup>1094</sup> Nylan, 118.

<sup>1095</sup> Xunzi, *Xunzi: Translation and Study*, I: 43-44.

<sup>1096</sup> The only scholarly translation into English remains that of Legge, although his translation has been updated by Clae Waltham: James Legge, *The Chinese Classics*, vol. 3.1 (Hong Kong: n.p., 1865); James Legge, *The Chinese Classics*, vol. 3.2 (Hong Kong: n.p., 1865); Clae Waltham, ed., *Shu Ching: Book of History: A Modernized Edition of the Translations of James Legge*, trans. James Legge (Chicago, IL: H. Regnery Company, 1971).

made by various rulers and their ministers from the times of the sage rulers Yao and Shun down to the early Zhou period,"<sup>1097</sup> i.e. from 2500 to 500 BCE.<sup>1098</sup> With regard to the history and authorship of the text, although it "contains some indisputably early material dating from early Western Zhou,"<sup>1099</sup> "Confucius seems not to have had [it] in hand... because he repeatedly laments his ignorance of the pre-Zhou period, the main subject of the early chapters."<sup>1100</sup> Xunzi, however, does seem to have had a text similar to the *Documents* known today.<sup>1101</sup> The value of the documents for Chinese philosophers lies in "its presumed ability to shed light on certain central questions of their political existence," that is, of what constitutes a good society and how it should be ordered.<sup>1102</sup> Early Confucian philosophers, and none more than Xunzi, spent much of their intellectual energy reflecting on the five main topics of the *Documents*: "(1) the operation of the Mandate of Heaven; (2) definitions of true kingship; (3) portraits of worthy officials; (4) discussions of the relative merits of rule by punishment

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<sup>1097</sup> de Bary and Bloom, *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, 25.

<sup>1098</sup> Nylan, *The Five "Confucian" Classics*, 121.

<sup>1099</sup> Nylan, 21.

<sup>1100</sup> Nylan, 19.

<sup>1101</sup> Nylan, 22.

<sup>1102</sup> Nylan, 122.

versus rule by virtue; and (5) explications of the role of ‘those below’ vis-à-vis the ruler.”<sup>1103</sup> Notably, there was a change in the linguistic extension of the terms Ren 人 and Min 民 from “men” and “people” within the ruler’s clan, respectively, at the time that at least some of the *Documents* were written, to “men” and “people” generally by the times of Confucius and then Xunzi.<sup>1104</sup> This extension shifted the locus of power in classical Chinese thought from elites to the whole populace,<sup>1105</sup> which would have significant impact on conceptions of Heaven (Tian 天), the Mandate thereof (Tianming 天命), and the notion of meritocracy. Nevertheless, while “Xunzi quotes from the *Documents* twelve times in his works,” “from these quotations and more numerous allusions we cannot develop a ‘school’ of interpretation to be associated with him.”<sup>1106</sup>

The *Rites* (Li 禮), understood as one of the Five Classics, is actually a compendium of three books: the *Book of Rites* (Liji 禮記),<sup>1107</sup> the *Book of Ritual* (Yili

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<sup>1103</sup> Nylan, 136.

<sup>1104</sup> Pines, *Envisioning Eternal Empire*, chaps. 8 & 9.

<sup>1105</sup> Nylan, *The Five “Confucian” Classics*, 154–55.

<sup>1106</sup> Xunzi, *Xunzi: Translation and Study*, I: 43.

<sup>1107</sup> The only scholarly translation of this text is James Legge, trans., *The Sacred Books of China: The Texts of Confucianism Part III*, vol. 3, *The Sacred Books of the East* 27 (Oxford, UK: Clarendon, 1885); James Legge, trans., *The Sacred Books of China: The Texts of Confucianism Part IV*, vol. 4, *The Sacred Books of the East* 28 (Oxford, UK: Clarendon, 1885).

儀禮),<sup>1108</sup> and the *Rites of Zhou* (Zhouli 周禮).<sup>1109</sup> A sixth classic, the *Classic of Music* (Yuejing 樂經), is referred to by Xunzi and other early Ru but is lost by the Han dynasty (206 BCE – 220 CE), although it may have been incorporated, at least in part, as the “Record of Music” (Yueji 樂記) within the *Book of Rites*.<sup>1110</sup> According to Michael Nylan, it is likely that “much of the *Liji* was compiled and edited in early Western Han by Han court specialists, though parts of it closely reflect ideas of the pre-Han classicists, especially Xunzi; certainly the grammar and content of the other two Rites canons, the *Zhouli* and the *Yili*, cannot date to a time much before Han.”<sup>1111</sup> John Knoblock (1937 – 2018), translator and interpreter of Xunzi into English, disagrees: “It is now clear that substantial parts of the texts of both the *Zhou li* and *Yili* circulated in Xunzi's time and before... What is unclear, and still the subject of much dispute, is when the text reached its current form and how far it reflects either actual Western or Eastern Zhou institutions and practices or early Zhou notions of how such institutions ought

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<sup>1108</sup> The only translation into English is John Clendinning Steele, *The I-Li, or Book of Etiquette and Ceremonial* (London: Probsthain, 1917).

<sup>1109</sup> This text has yet to be translated into English.

<sup>1110</sup> Xunzi, *Xunzi: Translation and Study*, I: 45.

<sup>1111</sup> Nylan, *The Five “Confucian” Classics*, 175.



ideally to function.”<sup>1112</sup> Given the overwhelming agreement between Xunzi and the *Rites* texts, the chicken and egg question has minimal philosophical import, but is notable nonetheless. Of greater interest is that, taken together, the *Rites* texts “describe a complete ritual system, which encompasses a broad spectrum of activities from the courtesies of daily life to the most solemn affairs of state.”<sup>1113</sup> Ru masters prior to the unification of China at the start of the Qin dynasty in 221 BCE were considered primarily ritual masters,<sup>1114</sup> Xunzi among them. Rituals were understood as norms for “appropriate and mutually satisfying behaviors built upon emotional insights,”<sup>1115</sup> which “made it possible to transform oneself, to transform others, and to order the cosmos.”<sup>1116</sup> Thus, rituals are pervasive, conventional, and transformative; spelling this out in detail must wait for consideration of Xunzi himself.

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<sup>1112</sup> Xunzi, *Xunzi: Translation and Study*, I: 46.

<sup>1113</sup> Nylan, *The Five “Confucian” Classics*, 174; Antonio S. Cua, *Encyclopedia of Chinese Philosophy* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2013), 370–85.

<sup>1114</sup> Nylan, *The Five “Confucian” Classics*, 168.

<sup>1115</sup> Nylan, 168.

<sup>1116</sup> Nylan, 171.

The *Book of Changes* (Yijing 易經),<sup>1117</sup> in spite of the core divinization text being the oldest text among the classics, was not included among listings of classics until the late Fourth or Third Century BCE.<sup>1118</sup> Even then, its inclusion had more to do with the advent of the appendices, interpreting the divinization text in terms of cosmic correlations and human history, than with its antiquity.<sup>1119</sup> Thus, neither Confucius, nor Mencius, nor Xunzi considered the *Book of Changes* a classic, and none of them referred to it. The core text gives clues to the interpretation of a divination method “based on sixty-four hexagrams (six-line symbolic diagrams) that were consulted through the casting of milfoil stalks.”<sup>1120</sup> The “Ten Wings,” or appendices, often attributed to Confucius, “allowed all components of the many-layered text to be read as one organic treatise of considerable sophistication on man’s changing place with respect to the

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<sup>1117</sup> Three translations of the *Book of Changes* are notable: Richard Rutt, *Zhouyi: A New Translation with Commentary of the Book of Changes*, New Edition 2002 (London: Routledge, 2013); Richard John Lynn, trans., *The Classic of Changes: A New Translation of the I Ching as Interpreted by Wang Bi* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1994); Edward L. Shaughnessy, *I Ching* (New York, NY: Ballantine, 1996). Rutt is notable for its scholarship; Lynn for its scholarship and inclusion of the commentary by Wang Bi; Shaughnessy for its inclusion of the Mawangdui manuscript.

<sup>1118</sup> Nylan, *The Five “Confucian” Classics*, 20.

<sup>1119</sup> Nylan, 20.

<sup>1120</sup> de Bary and Bloom, *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, 25.

experiential world.”<sup>1121</sup> While the text of the *Book of Changes* is not directly helpful for interpreting Xunzi,<sup>1122</sup> its appendices do articulate a prevalent cosmology of the time and a conception of Dao 道,<sup>1123</sup> which are important for understanding Xunzi as part of his intellectual milieu.

Mencius first made the case for the *Spring and Autumn Annals* (Chunqiu 春秋), or *Annals*,<sup>1124</sup> being of equal importance to texts such as the *Odes*, *Documents*, and *Rites*. It “chronicles major political events affecting the small state of Lu, the home state of both the Duke of Zhou and Confucius, and its neighbors ... from 722 to 481 BCE”<sup>1125</sup> and was considered “an infallible guide to proper authority, its relation to power, and the conditions for timely transfers of power.”<sup>1126</sup> Furthermore, the text is “authentic and early, being based on entries written

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<sup>1121</sup> Nylan, *The Five “Confucian” Classics*, 20–21. Note careful choice of masculine terminology in this case.

<sup>1122</sup> Xunzi, *Xunzi: Translation and Study*, I: 44–45.

<sup>1123</sup> Richard Joseph Smith, *Fathoming the Cosmos and Ordering the World: The Yijing (I Ching, Or Classic of Changes) and Its Evolution in China* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2008).

<sup>1124</sup> There are two scholarly translations into English: James Legge, *The Chinese Classics*, vol. 5.1 (Hong Kong: Lane, Crawford & Co., 1872); James Legge, *The Chinese Classics*, vol. 5.2 (Hong Kong: Lane, Crawford & Co., 1872); Burton Watson, trans., *The Tso Chuan: Selections from China’s Oldest Narrative History* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1992). Note that the Watson translation is incomplete.

<sup>1125</sup> Nylan, *The Five “Confucian” Classics*, 253.

<sup>1126</sup> Nylan, 254.

down not long after the events they record."<sup>1127</sup> Alas, most who encountered the text were at a loss for exactly what that guidance was supposed to be,<sup>1128</sup> such that Xunzi described the *Annals* as "laconic and their import not quickly grasped."<sup>1129</sup> Whereas later Confucians were able to overcome this obstacle by reference to commentaries,<sup>1130</sup> particularly the *Gongyang* 公羊, the *Guliang* 穀梁, and the *Zuo* 左氏,<sup>1131</sup> Xunzi put the opacity of the text to work as reinforcement for his argument that an excellent teacher is necessary, beyond reading classical texts, for the fullness of learning to be achieved.<sup>1132</sup> Nevertheless, Xunzi may have been aware of the *Gongyang* and the *Zuo*, as "it now appears that both ... were transcribed in the late Warring States period."<sup>1133</sup> Among the Hundred Schools, the Confucian orientation depended on the *Annals* like none of the others: "Since they argued that their doctrines represented the true teachings of the sages transmitted to Confucius and handed down since his time from master to

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<sup>1127</sup> Nylan, 256.

<sup>1128</sup> Nylan, 254.

<sup>1129</sup> Xunzi, *Xunzi: Translation and Study*, I: 47.

<sup>1130</sup> Nylan, *The Five "Confucian" Classics*, 255.

<sup>1131</sup> Xunzi, *Xunzi: Translation and Study*, I: 48-49.

<sup>1132</sup> Xunzi, I: 139-40.

<sup>1133</sup> Nylan, *The Five "Confucian" Classics*, 257-58.

student to their own times, an accurate record of antiquity and its institutions was indispensable.”<sup>1134</sup> Indeed, the *Annals* depict not only the golden age itself but also the gradual breakdown of the supposed golden age<sup>1135</sup> that sparked the entire Chinese philosophical project.

*The Spring and Autumn Period (Chunqiu Shidai 春秋時代) (771 – 453 BCE)*

Confucius lived at the end of the period known as Spring and Autumn, after the titles of the *Annals* that claim to chronicle most of it, and Chinese philosophy emerged from there during the Warring States period that followed. Understanding something of the Spring and Autumn period is important for understanding the emergence of Chinese philosophy because, “for example, most of the pivotal terms of [Warring States] discourse, such as *Dao* (the Way), *ren* (benevolence), and *zhong* (loyalty), do not occur in Western Zhou texts; others, like *de* (charisma, virtue) and *li* (ritual), do occur but have different semantic meanings. These and other differences suggest that the two and a half centuries between the end of the Western Zhou period and Confucius lifetime

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<sup>1134</sup> Xunzi, *Xunzi: Translation and Study*, I: 47.

<sup>1135</sup> Nylan, *The Five “Confucian” Classics*, 302.

may be the missing link in the genesis of Chinese thought.”<sup>1136</sup> These transformations can be described politically and intellectually.

Politically, the early part of the Spring and Autumn period (771 – 643 BCE) was marked by the establishment of the Zhou capital in the east resulting in a sharp decline in royal power and the rise of the hegemons (Ba 霸), or military surrogates for the king, at the start of the middle part (643 – 546 BCE). By the later part of the period (546 – 453 BCE), the hegemony was being passed around among non-Zhou (by kinship or culture) states in the south and the north suffered from “increasing turmoil and pandemic war” due to a leadership vacuum.<sup>1137</sup> What should be taken from this is that, “first, the major malady of the Chunqiu age was the continuous disintegration of political power on the international and the domestic level. Second, the major source of social tension throughout the Chunqiu period was the strife of the aristocratic lineages for power, first against the overlords, and then against the rising *shi*.”<sup>1138</sup>

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<sup>1136</sup> Yuri Pines, *Foundations of Confucian Thought: Intellectual Life in the Chunqiu Period, 722-453 B.C.E.* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press, 2002), 1–2.

<sup>1137</sup> An overview of these political transformations is available in Pines, 2–5. For fuller coverage of the political and social transformations, consult Michael Loewe and Edward L. Shaughnessy, eds., *The Cambridge History of Ancient China: From the Origins of Civilization to 221 BC* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 545–82.

<sup>1138</sup> Pines, *Foundations of Confucian Thought*, 6.

During the Western Zhou dynasty (1045 – 771 BCE), a Shi 士 had “the status of a common gentleman” in the aristocracy, and would have “nominally received an education in six fields: ritual, music, archery, charioteering, writing, and mathematics. In principle, *shi* were prepared to serve the state in both military and civil capacities. They were expected to be not just robust warriors, but also gentlemen with good manners and minds.”<sup>1139</sup> By the end of the Spring and Autumn period, however, these minor aristocrats had achieved significant influence, such that Shi came to refer to “a person of excellence, one with high capabilities as well as character; it came to refer to a cultural status rather than social grouping. This new cultural elite brought a new consciousness of their responsibility to serve the world.”<sup>1140</sup> Thus, the public interests of the Shi were to limit political disintegration and restore social stability, but as a social class they also had private interests regarding their own, and their families’, advantage. As Yuri Pines notes,

When the overt aim of restoring stability and order coincided with the private needs of the aristocratic thinkers, they obtained impressive intellectual achievements, such as elaborating the concept of rule by ritual (*li zhi*). When, however, the interests of political stability were at odds with preserving the exalted position of the aristocracy, as in the

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<sup>1139</sup> Loewe and Shaughnessy, *The Cambridge History of Ancient China*, 583.

<sup>1140</sup> Loewe and Shaughnessy, 584.

case of administrative innovations, Chunqiu thinkers were indecisive, and their thought was ambivalent.<sup>1141</sup>

Resolving this tension was the intellectual project for the period.

*Confucius (Kongzi 孔子) (551 – 479 BCE)*

This background of the Spring and Autumn period is extremely important for understanding the orientation and purposes of Confucius, a member of the Shi class whose response to the political and intellectual crises of the day would inspire many generations of Ru scholars and ministers. Born in the state of Lu in the northeast, Confucius traveled to the courts of a number of states seeking an office that would allow him to implement his views,<sup>1142</sup> but his only post, if later biographical accounts are accurate, was as Minister of Crime in his native Lu.<sup>1143</sup> His orientation was quite conservative<sup>1144</sup> in the sense that he looked back toward the Western Zhou court as the exemplar for governance and social order, but quite progressive, and loyal to the Shi, by arguing that noble character was what

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<sup>1141</sup> Pines, *Foundations of Confucian Thought*, 6.

<sup>1142</sup> de Bary and Bloom, *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, 41–42.

<sup>1143</sup> Jeffrey Riegel, “Confucius,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Summer, 2013, <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2013/entries/confucius/>.

<sup>1144</sup> Angus Charles Graham, *Disputers of the Tao: Philosophical Argument in Ancient China* (La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1989), 9–10.



made the court so, and not noble birth.<sup>1145</sup> His purpose, then, was “to promote the style and manners of the noble person (*junzi*) and the efficacy of moral force or virtue (*de*), rather than violence and coercion, as a strategy for rulers.”<sup>1146</sup>

Living at the end of the Spring and Autumn period, Confucius’ orientation toward the past was what he hoped would allow him to gain favor and currency at court even while his ideological loyalty was to his own Shi class. His genius, or at least that of the community that followed him, was to thread the needle between noble power and Shi values by arguing that it was the embodiment of Shi values by prior rulers that made them good leaders, and thus worthy of emulation for their ability to bring about social stability.

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<sup>1145</sup> Nylan, *The Five “Confucian” Classics*, 9.

<sup>1146</sup> de Bary and Bloom, *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, 42.

While Confucius did not write or compile the *Lunyu* 論語, or *Analects*,<sup>1147</sup> himself, they are nevertheless “the oldest source for his teaching,”<sup>1148</sup> and thus the most important for understanding his thought, at least as it was received.<sup>1149</sup> “The English word analects, (from the Greek *analekta*), means ‘a selection,’ while the Chinese title *Lunyu* may be translated as ‘conversations.’”<sup>1150</sup> These texts are therefore neither reliable nor systematic, and so reading the *Analects* is not unlike reading the Gospels in that doing so responsibly requires keeping in mind that the agenda(s) of the later authorial communities are very much in play. Rather than a single-authored work, the *Analects* are better understood as “a history of

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<sup>1147</sup> There have been many translations of the *Analects* over the past 150 years. Of scholarly significance today, a few are notable. Watson provides a learned translation with minimal apparatus: Confucius, *The Analects of Confucius*, trans. Burton Watson (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2007). Slingerland takes the opposite approach, providing significant traditional commentary: Confucius, *Analects: With Selections from Traditional Commentaries*, trans. Edward Slingerland (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 2003). Huang is notable for being native Chinese from a Confucian family, and thus one of the few translators who is a native Chinese speaker: Confucius, *The Analects of Confucius*, trans. Chichung Huang (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1997). Ames and Rosemont translate with careful attention to their own interpretation, explicitly stated, of the ancient Chinese worldview: Confucius, *The Analects of Confucius: A Philosophical Translation*, trans. Roger T. Ames and Henry Rosemont, Jr., 1st ed. (New York, NY: Ballantine, 1999). Brooks and Brooks aim to reconstruct the sayings that make up the text chronologically: Confucius, *The Original Analects*. Though incomplete, Bloom provides an excellent teaching resource and topical index: de Bary and Bloom, *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, 41–63. A helpful study aid is Michael Loewe, *Early Chinese Texts: A Bibliographical Guide*, 2007 pdf release (Berkeley, CA: Society for the Study of Early China, 1993), 413–23.

<sup>1148</sup> Graham, *Disputers of the Tao*, 9.

<sup>1149</sup> de Bary and Bloom, *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, 42.

<sup>1150</sup> de Bary and Bloom, 42.

*early Confucianism*, compiled from year to year by the Confucians of Lu."<sup>1151</sup>

Indeed, it is likely that only the fourth chapter of the *Analects* can be attributed to the time of Confucius himself, and then only the fifth and sixth before the end of the Spring and Autumn period.<sup>1152</sup> Further, later material in the texts shows signs of response to the sociopolitical challenges that were prevalent more during the Warring States period.<sup>1153</sup> Thus, only Chapters 4-6 will be considered here in order to emphasize Confucian intellectual response to the particular sociopolitical challenges of the Spring and Autumn period as outlined above.

Numbering of the passages here follows that of James Legge.<sup>1154</sup>

Four passages from the *Analects* are particularly instructive for understanding the Confucian response to the Spring and Autumn period.

4:5 The Master said, "Wealth and honor are what people desire, but one should not abide in them if it cannot be done in accordance with the Way. Poverty and lowliness are what people dislike, but one should not avoid them if it cannot be done in accordance with the Way. If the noble person rejects humaneness, how can he fulfill that name? The noble

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<sup>1151</sup> Confucius, *The Original Analects*, 77. For an alternative chronology of the text's compilation see Chan, *The Confucian Shi, Official Service, and the Confucian Analects*, 221–65. Brooks' and Brooks' chronology is maintained here due to the methodological concerns raised with regards to Chan in Knapp, "Early Confucianism Reconsidered."

<sup>1152</sup> Confucius, *The Original Analects*, 1, 13–37, Appendices 1 & 2. The dating of the end of the Spring and Autumn period is understood here to be later than Brooks and Brooks cite, namely Confucius' death in 479 BCE.

<sup>1153</sup> Chan, *The Confucian Shi, Official Service, and the Confucian Analects*.

<sup>1154</sup> James Legge, *The Chinese Classics*, 2nd ed., vol. 1 (Oxford, UK: Clarendon, 1893).

person does not abandon humaneness for so much as the space of a meal. Even when hard-pressed he is bound to it, bound to it even in time of danger."<sup>1155</sup>

This passage is especially relevant because it brings into relationship three key concepts. The first concept is that of the Noble Person (Junzi 君子). "Originally, the meaning of the term *junzi* was 'son of a lord,' ... Here the *junzi* is less the noble man whose nobility derives from inherited *social* nobility than the noble person whose nobility derives from personal commitment and a developed *moral* power."<sup>1156</sup> Confucius' political project was to convince the social nobility that they should cultivate moral power as it is the most effective form of governance, having proven from past experience to generate the greatest social stability.

Moral Power (De 德) is the ability of the ruler to unify and provide direction to society. "Its meaning seems to grow out of a common idiom, in which its sense is 'gratitude': if I do something for you that causes you to feel grateful and compelled to respond favorably, I 'have *de* from' (i.e. in relation to) you. You come to feel this compulsion as a psychological force emanating from me; this for you is my *de*."<sup>1157</sup> This moral power emerges from the Humaneness

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<sup>1155</sup> de Bary and Bloom, *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, 48.

<sup>1156</sup> de Bary and Bloom, 42.

<sup>1157</sup> Loewe and Shaughnessy, *The Cambridge History of Ancient China*, 749.

(Ren 仁) of the person, which “is the foremost project taken up by Confucius.”<sup>1158</sup>

Humaneness Ren 仁 was the stative verb form of Person Ren 人, “which the aristocratic clans of Zhou used to distinguish themselves from the common people... The noble, civilized, fully human, pride themselves on their manners and conventions, but above all on the virtues which give these meaning and which distinguish themselves from the boors and savages who do not know how to behave.”<sup>1159</sup> Notably, however, “the fact that Confucius is asked so often what he means by the expression *ren* would suggest that he is reinventing this term for his own purposes, and that those in conversation with him are not comfortable in their understanding of it.”<sup>1160</sup> Indeed, what Confucius is about here is the meritocratizing of the concept of humaneness such that it is humaneness that determines whether or not one is a noble person and not hereditary kinship.

Passage 4.9 helps clarify this project: “The Master said, ‘Those scholar-apprentices (*shi* 士) who, having set their purposes on walking the way (*dao* 道), are ashamed of rude clothing and coarse food, are not worth engaging in

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<sup>1158</sup> Confucius, *The Analects of Confucius*, 1999, 48.

<sup>1159</sup> Graham, *Disputers of the Tao*, 19. Note updating from Wade-Giles “Chou” to Pinyin “Zhou.” See also above discussion of the *Documents*.

<sup>1160</sup> Confucius, *The Analects of Confucius*, 1999, 50.

discussion.”<sup>1161</sup> Confucius is not talking here to the nobility about humaneness, but rather to his own ministerial class, the Shi.

Humaneness is signified in this passage by the setting of “purposes on walking the way,” which is the third concept: Way (Dao 道). Passage 4.5 “suggests that Confucius had, not without emotional difficulty, come through such a trial by distress, and had kept his principles (Dao 道, his ‘way’) intact. Ren is an at-large virtue; only an individual commitment to it makes it a personal dao, or principle, for that person.”<sup>1162</sup> This definition of dao as an individual, personal, moral principle is important because it is almost precisely inverse from the conception future Confucians will have of dao as a cosmological, universal, metaphysical principle. “The word *dao* 道, originally meaning ‘way’ or ‘road,’ is used everywhere by the philosophers to mean the way to do something, or the (right moral) ‘Way,’ or (later) the ‘Way’ of all nature.”<sup>1163</sup> Dao eventually moves from an internal principle to more of an external norm, but “for Confucius, *dao* is

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<sup>1161</sup> Confucius, 91. The Ames and Rosemont translation is quoted here because this passage was not included in the selective translation of Bloom and for its highlighting the importance of humaneness for the Shi class.

<sup>1162</sup> Confucius, *The Original Analects*, 14.

<sup>1163</sup> Loewe and Shaughnessy, *The Cambridge History of Ancient China*, 750–51.

primarily *rendao* 人道, that is ‘a way of becoming consummately and authoritatively human,’”<sup>1164</sup> for nobles or ministers alike.

Another passage from the fourth chapter of the *Analects* invokes the means of cultivating humaneness as measured against the way in order to become a noble person, namely, ritual (Li 禮/礼): “4:13 The Master said, ‘If one can govern a state through rites and yielding, what difficulty is there in this? If one cannot govern through rites and yielding, of what use are the rites?’”<sup>1165</sup> Notably, this is the only reference to ritual in the fourth chapter, and thus traceable to Confucius himself.<sup>1166</sup> That said, as evidenced by many later passages in the *Analects*, such as 2.3, 3.18, 3.19, and 11.25,<sup>1167</sup> ritual quickly becomes central to the Confucian understanding of the most effective means of governing the state. The *Zuo* commentary on the *Annals* also reflects this view: “Deference is the mainstay of ritual propriety. In an ordered age, gentlemen honor ability and defer to those below them, while the common people attend to their agricultural labors in order to serve those above them. In this way, both above and below

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<sup>1164</sup> Confucius, *The Analects of Confucius*, 1999, 46.

<sup>1165</sup> de Bary and Bloom, *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, 49.

<sup>1166</sup> Confucius, *The Original Analects*, 16.

<sup>1167</sup> de Bary and Bloom, *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, 44.

ritual prevail, and slanderers and evil men are dismissed and ostracized.”<sup>1168</sup>

Most of the interpretations of Confucius’ understanding of ritual involve an eisegetical reading of this later understanding of the role of ritual in governing back onto this passage.<sup>1169</sup> Nevertheless, Confucius does here seem to indicate something like “faith in the power of trained manners, customs, and rituals to harmonise attitudes and open the inferior to the influence of the superior.”<sup>1170</sup>

This definition of ritual at the social level reflects its emergence as a systematization of the concept of filial piety (Xiao 孝), meaning “honor and obedience to one’s parents.”<sup>1171</sup> Not yet a model of governance, ritual is thus for Confucius more of a theory of effective leadership. This was his response to the crumbling effectiveness in leadership among Spring and Autumn period nobles: as “masters of the rites,”<sup>1172</sup> Confucius and his students offered not to lead themselves but rather to teach the nobles how to lead effectively.

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<sup>1168</sup> Confucius, *Analects*, 33.

<sup>1169</sup> Graham, *Disputers of the Tao*, 13–15; Confucius, *The Analects of Confucius*, 1999, 51–52; Confucius, *Analects*, 33–34.

<sup>1170</sup> Graham, *Disputers of the Tao*, 15.

<sup>1171</sup> Loewe and Shaughnessy, *The Cambridge History of Ancient China*, 749.

<sup>1172</sup> Nylan, *The Five “Confucian” Classics*, 168.



Two passages from the sixth chapter demonstrate two other important developments in Confucian thought in response to the sociopolitical dynamics of the Spring and Autumn period:

6:20 Fan Chi asked about wisdom. The Master said, "Devote yourself to what must rightly be done for the people; respect spiritual beings, while keeping at a distance from them. This may be called wisdom." He asked about humaneness. The Master said, "One who is humane first does what is difficult and only thereafter concerns himself with success. This may be called humaneness."

6:21 The Master said, "The wise take joy in water; the humane take joy in mountains. The wise are active; the humane are tranquil. The wise enjoy; the humane endure."<sup>1173</sup>

First, the definition of wisdom as devotion "to what must rightly be done for the people" participates in the shift in the understanding of "people" (Min 民) from the inner circle of the nobility to people generally, as described above. "This is the first hint of a concept of popular right, a prelegal social expectation amounting to a social obligation."<sup>1174</sup> Second, these passages contrast wisdom, or knowledge, with humaneness, which "esoteric pairing of Knowing and (in the adept sense) Unknowing"<sup>1175</sup> may be a way of advocating for effortless leadership by moral force over against the energy depleting activity of governing by laws. This would indicate a replacement in Shi values during the latest days

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<sup>1173</sup> de Bary and Bloom, *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, 50.

<sup>1174</sup> Confucius, *The Original Analects*, 36.

<sup>1175</sup> Confucius, 36.

of the Spring and Autumn period “of an external warrior ethic by an internal personal ethic.”<sup>1176</sup> This more mystical connotation of humaneness resulting from meditation,<sup>1177</sup> along with their focus on ritual mastery,<sup>1178</sup> may have had to do with the application of the name Ru 儒, meaning “weak” or “pliable,”<sup>1179</sup> to Confucius and his followers.

*The Warring States Period (Zhanguo Shidai 戰國時代) (453 – 221 BCE)*

The end of the Spring and Autumn and the start of the Warring States periods is somewhat fluid but can be set roughly at 453 BCE in association with the Partition of Jin (Sanjia Fen Jin 三家分晉) according to the *Zuo* commentary on the *Annals*.<sup>1180</sup> The end of the Warring States period can be assigned more decisively with the establishment of the first imperial dynasty in the wake of the unification of China by the state of Qin 秦 in 221 BCE.<sup>1181</sup> The period itself is

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<sup>1176</sup> Confucius, 37.

<sup>1177</sup> Confucius, 36.

<sup>1178</sup> Robert Eno, *The Confucian Creation of Heaven: Philosophy and the Defense of Ritual Mastery* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1990).

<sup>1179</sup> Nylan, *The Five “Confucian” Classics*, 23; Eno, *The Confucian Creation of Heaven*, 190–97.

<sup>1180</sup> Pines, *Foundations of Confucian Thought*, 1–2, 247n6. An alternative date is 481 BCE, presumably because it is the date suggested in the *Annals* themselves. Loewe and Shaughnessy, *The Cambridge History of Ancient China*, 587.

<sup>1181</sup> Loewe and Shaughnessy, *The Cambridge History of Ancient China*, 745; Pines, *Envisioning Eternal Empire*, 1.

centrally characterized by perpetual social and political upheaval and war,<sup>1182</sup> but this constant state of crisis also provoked intellectual inquiry aimed toward socio-political stability.<sup>1183</sup> The result was a reconceptualization of rulership, the emergence of an educated, elite ministerial class, including an intellectual substratum, and envisioning of a political science recognizing “the people as the foundation of the polity.”<sup>1184</sup> In order to carry out this program, the intellectuals had to rethink the entire conceptual system of Chinese culture and society.

Perhaps the most remarkable aspect of the reconceptualization of rulership during the Warring States period is its continuity with earlier conceptualizations, albeit highly nuanced. “The late Western Zhou thinkers believed that if the ruler properly performed the ceremonies at court, in the temple, and elsewhere, he would become a model for his subjects and thus inspire them to follow orderly rule.”<sup>1185</sup> Then, by halfway through the Spring and Autumn period, “the entire ritual-based sociopolitical order was on the verge of collapse, and nowhere was the crisis more evident than in the case of the

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<sup>1182</sup> Loewe and Shaughnessy, *The Cambridge History of Ancient China*, 587–660.

<sup>1183</sup> Loewe and Shaughnessy, 745–812.

<sup>1184</sup> Pines, *Envisioning Eternal Empire*, 2–4.

<sup>1185</sup> Pines, *Foundations of Confucian Thought*, 92.

declining authority of the rulers.”<sup>1186</sup> Given the rise of the Shi during this period, the possibility of a shift to an aristocratic oligarchy was at least a possibility,<sup>1187</sup> but instead the Shi “sided decisively with the lords in their drift toward centralization,”<sup>1188</sup> that is to monarchism, during the Warring States period.<sup>1189</sup> While transitional figures, such as Confucius and his Lu-based lineage, looked back to the Zhou dynasty for the model of a monarch as the ritual pinnacle of society,<sup>1190</sup> they innovated by also insisting that the monarch be a moral paragon who would be emulated by the people, an idea taken to extreme by Mozi 墨子.<sup>1191</sup> The immediate problem then becomes the disparity between this ideal and reality.<sup>1192</sup> Two main strategies emerged as to how to resolve this contradiction: a strategy of reform or, if necessary, replace during the middle part of the Warring States period,<sup>1193</sup> and later in the period a strategy of limiting “the ruler’s direct

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<sup>1186</sup> Pines, *Envisioning Eternal Empire*, 20.

<sup>1187</sup> Pines, 23.

<sup>1188</sup> Pines, 24.

<sup>1189</sup> Pines, 25–27.

<sup>1190</sup> Pines, 27–30.

<sup>1191</sup> Pines, 30–36.

<sup>1192</sup> Pines, 54–55.

<sup>1193</sup> Pines, chap. 3.

involvement in policy-making, thereby diminishing the potentially negative consequences of his ineptitude, while retaining the symbolic importance of his position.”<sup>1194</sup> The latter strategy, articulated by Xunzi and his student Han Feizi 韓非子, became the foundation of the political philosophy behind two millennia of imperial rule.<sup>1195</sup>

The intellectual substratum of the Shi class,<sup>1196</sup> which was emerging “from the lower segment of the hereditary aristocracy to the ruling elite,”<sup>1197</sup> was responsible for this reconceptualization of rulership. This emergence was accomplished by disassociating pedigree from worthiness and replacing it with competence evidenced principally by moral rectitude.<sup>1198</sup> Moral rectitude, in turn, was constituted by particularly the intellectual Shi identifying themselves as “possessors of the Way” Dao 道, and therefore authoritative, autonomous, and

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<sup>1194</sup> Pines, 82. See also all of chap. 4.

<sup>1195</sup> Pines, 107–11; Loewe and Shaughnessy, *The Cambridge History of Ancient China*, 587.

<sup>1196</sup> Pines, *Envisioning Eternal Empire*, 117; Chan, *The Confucian Shi, Official Service, and the Confucian Analects*.

<sup>1197</sup> Pines, *Envisioning Eternal Empire*, 115; Chan, *The Confucian Shi, Official Service, and the Confucian Analects*. An alternative interpretation of the intellectual Shi, or at least those who considered themselves to be Ru (Confucian), as uninterested in official service is made in Eno, *The Confucian Creation of Heaven*; Lewis, *Writing and Authority in Early China*.

<sup>1198</sup> Pines, *Envisioning Eternal Empire*, 119–23.

morally superior even over rulers.<sup>1199</sup> Nevertheless, a key value of the Shi class was the imperative to political involvement and service, arising from both egoistic and idealistic interests, which enabled them to become “a particularly powerful stratum that combined spiritual and political authority to an extent barely known elsewhere.”<sup>1200</sup> Notably, the intellectual Shi themselves were remarkably unsuccessful in actually achieving political office, although a few of them had influence through their students. Taken together, it was the intellectual Shi and the perhaps less intellectual but instead politically successful Shi whose clamoring with respect to rectifying the social disintegration of the Warring States period was codified as the so-called “Hundred Schools:”<sup>1201</sup> these were the “disputers of the Dao”<sup>1202</sup> who initiated the lineages of Chinese philosophy. Alas, their attempt to resolve the tension between the moral superiority and hierarchical servitude of the Shi by reconceptualizing the ruler-minister relationship as reciprocal backfired, leading to a wave of anti-ministerial and

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<sup>1199</sup> Pines, 123–31.

<sup>1200</sup> Pines, chaps. 6, quote on 161.

<sup>1201</sup> Loewe and Shaughnessy, *The Cambridge History of Ancient China*, 641–42.

<sup>1202</sup> Graham, *Disputers of the Tao*.

anti-Shi reaction in the late Warring States period, and their subsequent subjugation to the rulers in the imperial regime.<sup>1203</sup>

What rulers, ministers, and intellectuals alike, regardless of ideological orientation, took for granted was that “the people are the root” (Min Ben 民本) of society, and thus the welfare of the people is the responsibility of the ruler and the government exists for their sake.<sup>1204</sup> During the Western Zhou dynasty, the conception of “the people” (Min 民) was of the Zhou clan,<sup>1205</sup> which conception shifted during the Spring and Autumn period to include “capital dwellers” (Guoren 國人), or “male inhabitants of the capital, including petty nobles (*shi*) and unranked commoners.”<sup>1206</sup> In the Warring States period, “the assertion that the government exists ‘for the people’ became paradigmatic”<sup>1207</sup> due to military and economic concerns, as well as increased social mobility,<sup>1208</sup> and the conception of “the people” expanded further to include “All under Heaven.”<sup>1209</sup>

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<sup>1203</sup> Pines, *Envisioning Eternal Empire*, chap. 7.

<sup>1204</sup> Pines, 187–88, 204.

<sup>1205</sup> Pines, 189–91.

<sup>1206</sup> Pines, 191–97, quote on 192.

<sup>1207</sup> Pines, 203.

<sup>1208</sup> Pines, 199–201.

<sup>1209</sup> Pines, 203–4.

Nevertheless, the possibility of a participatory polity was never considered, in large part because of the assumed moral inferiority of commoners. While in principle the juxtaposition of the noble person (Junzi 君子) and the petty person (Xiaoren 小人) is purely moral, in practice they “also have explicit social connotations.”<sup>1210</sup> The immorality of petty people, who de facto include all commoners, precludes them from political participation.<sup>1211</sup> Of course, there are plenty of petty Shi and rulers as well, so the problem becomes ascertaining and addressing the best interests of all of these morally compromised people.

It should be little surprise, then, that early Chinese philosophers would “focus their attention on the ideal form of political and social (familial) relationships on the one hand, and on the other the qualities a man should have to serve in those relationships; and this focus was on political and moral philosophy.”<sup>1212</sup> Already a number of basic concepts common to those participating in this emerging philosophical project are in view: the Way, the Noble Person, the Petty Person, Moral Power, Humaneness, and Ritual. One other concept that has made an appearance, Heaven (Tian 天), would benefit

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<sup>1210</sup> Pines, 210.

<sup>1211</sup> Pines, 210–14.

<sup>1212</sup> Loewe and Shaughnessy, *The Cambridge History of Ancient China*, 752.



from further consideration before moving on to consider the various ways these basic concepts were conceived and related to one another by various trajectories of thought. Fung Yu-lan notes five meanings of Heaven in early Chinese writings: 1) material or physical Heaven, which together with Earth (Di 地) constitute the physical universe; 2) anthropomorphic ruling or presiding Heaven; 3) fatalistic Heaven; 4) naturalistic Heaven, or nature; and 5) ethical Heaven.<sup>1213</sup> Heaven is ubiquitous among the trajectories of thought in the Warring States period as an element of their cosmologies, even as the nature of Heaven and its role and relationship vis-à-vis Earth and Humanity (Ren 人) were deeply contested.<sup>1214</sup> One way of construing their relationship is in a correlational cosmology, “in which entities, processes, and classes of phenomena found in nature correspond to or ‘go together with’ various entities, processes, and classes of phenomena in the human world.”<sup>1215</sup> A highly influential strand of sinological research in the West takes correlational cosmology to be “a fundamental

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<sup>1213</sup> Yu-lan Fung, *A History of Chinese Philosophy, Volume 1* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983), 31.

<sup>1214</sup> Michael J. Puett, *To Become a God: Cosmology, Sacrifice, and Self-Divinization in Early China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center for the Harvard-Yenching Institute, 2002).

<sup>1215</sup> Benjamin Isadore Schwartz, *The World of Thought in Ancient China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 351. He relies heavily for this definition on Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1966).

commitment of the Chinese sensibility,<sup>1216</sup> but more recent scholarship challenges and undermines this assumption.<sup>1217</sup> Given the extent to which the present project relies on Western sinology, this predilection must remain carefully in view and avoided, particularly given the extent to which Heaven is involved in addressing the sociopolitical and moral concerns at the heart of Chinese philosophy. For example, All Under Heaven (Tianxia 天下), at this time meaning “the world,”<sup>1218</sup> was instrumental in reconceptualizing “the people.” Heaven was also important for the project of reconceptualizing rulership, since

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<sup>1216</sup> David L. Hall and Roger T. Ames, *Anticipating China: Thinking Through the Narratives of Chinese and Western Culture* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1995), 257. This cultural-essentialist strand of thinking goes back to Marcel Granet, *La Pensée Chinoise* (Paris, France: La Renaissance du Livre, 1934). It continues through Kwang-chih Chang, *The Archaeology of Ancient China* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1986); Graham, *Disputers of the Tao*; Frederick W. Mote, *Intellectual Foundations of China* (New York, NY: McGraw-Hill, 1993); Joseph Needham, *Science and Civilisation in China: Volume 1, Introductory Orientations* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1954). A related, less dominant, but equally problematic evolutionary strain of thought can be traced through Max Weber, *The Religion of China: Confucianism and Taoism* (New York, NY: Free Press, 1951); Fung, *A History of Chinese Philosophy, Volume 1*; Karl Jaspers, *The Origin and Goal of History* (London: Routledge, 2010); Heiner Roetz, *Confucian Ethics of the Axial Age: A Reconstruction under the Aspect of the Breakthrough Toward Postconventional Thinking* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1993); Schwartz, *The World of Thought in Ancient China*. For an excellent analysis of these two trajectories in Western sinology, see Puett, *To Become a God*, 5–21.

<sup>1217</sup> Puett, *To Become a God*; Nathan Sivin, “State, Cosmos, and Body in The Last Three Centuries B. C.,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 55, no. 1 (June 1, 1995): 5–37, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2719419>; Aihe Wang, *Cosmology and Political Culture in Early China* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

<sup>1218</sup> Kung-chuan Hsiao, *History of Chinese Political Thought, Volume 1: From the Beginnings to the Sixth Century, A.D.* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015), 19.

the legitimacy and authority of a ruler derived from their having received the Mandate of Heaven (Tianming 天命), and thus becoming a Son of Heaven (Tianzi 天子). What precisely the Mandate of Heaven is, though, was highly contested, in part based on the understanding of Heaven at play.<sup>1219</sup>

*The Analects and The Hundred Schools (Zhuzi Baijia 諸子百家)*

The intellectual movement in the Warring States period is represented by the so-called Hundred Schools, although none of these “schools” should be conceived as discrete or distinct entity with anything even remotely resembling institutional boundaries. Rather, “all the pre-Han and early Western Han thinkers seem to have been, in essence, ‘eclectics’ when viewed from the much stricter normative models of later times.”<sup>1220</sup> This is particularly relevant with regard to Xunzi, who was influenced by a number of the trajectories at play in his milieu, most of which were represented at the Jixia 稷下 Academy where he studied, taught, and led.<sup>1221</sup> Ultimately, “ancient Chinese intellectuals—like political thinkers elsewhere—should be engaged on their own ground, in terms of

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<sup>1219</sup> Pines, *Envisioning Eternal Empire*, 17, 38–44, 74–76, 170–71, 235n11.

<sup>1220</sup> Mark Csikszentmihalyi and Michael Nylan, “Constructing Lineages and Inventing Traditions through Exemplary Figures in Early China,” *T’oung Pao*, Second Series, 89, no. 1/3 (January 1, 2003): 59–99, <https://doi.org/10.1163/156853203322691329>.

<sup>1221</sup> Xunzi, *Xunzi: Translation and Study*, 50–66.

their immediate goals and the adequacy of these goals to contemporaneous political context.”<sup>1222</sup> Nevertheless, the trope of the schools does help to gain some traction on the trajectories at play, and so is gainfully employed here despite its anachronism. The *Records of the Scribe* (*Shiji* 史記),<sup>1223</sup> conceived by Sima Tan 司馬談 toward the end of the second century BCE and completed by his son, Sima Qian 司馬遷,<sup>1224</sup> considers six schools of thought during the Warring States period. The *Seven Epitomes* (*Qilue* 七略) of Liu Xin 劉歆, the

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<sup>1222</sup> Pines, *Envisioning Eternal Empire*, 219.

<sup>1223</sup> There are two scholarly translations of the *Shi Ji*. The first, in two volumes, is by Burton Watson, and includes about 70% of the original text: Sima Qian, *Records of the Grand Historian: Han Dynasty I*, trans. Burton Watson, Revised Edition (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1993); Sima Qian, *Records of the Grand Historian: Han Dynasty II*, trans. Burton Watson (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1993). The second is an exhaustive translation in nine volumes, (the fifth itself in two parts), of which six are available, overseen by William H. Nienhauser, Jr.: Sima Qian, *The Grand Scribe's Records: The Basic Annals of Pre-Han China*, ed. William J. Nienhauser, Jr., trans. Tsai-Fa Cheng et al., vol. 1 (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994); Sima Qian, *The Grand Scribe's Records: The Basic Annals of Han China*, ed. William J. Nienhauser, Jr., trans. Weiguo Cao et al., vol. 2 (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2002); Sima Qian, *The Grand Scribe's Records: The Hereditary Houses of Pre-Han China*, ed. William J. Nienhauser, Jr., trans. Weiguo Cao et al., vol. 5.1 (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2006); Sima Qian, *The Grand Scribe's Records: The Hereditary Houses of Pre-Han China*, ed. William J. Nienhauser, Jr., trans. Weiguo Cao et al., vol. 5.2 (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2006); Sima Qian, *The Grand Scribe's Records: The Memoirs of Pre-Han China*, ed. William J. Nienhauser, Jr., trans. Tsai-Fa Cheng et al., vol. 7 (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994); Sima Qian, *The Grand Scribe's Records: The Memoirs of Han China*, ed. William J. Nienhauser, Jr., trans. Meghan Cai et al., vol. 8 (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2008); Sima Qian, *The Grand Scribe's Records: The Memoirs of Han China*, ed. William J. Nienhauser, Jr., trans. J. Michael Farmer et al., vol. 9 (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2010).

<sup>1224</sup> William H. Nienhauser, Jr., “Sima Qian and the *Shiji*,” in *The Oxford History of Historical Writing: Beginnings to AD 600*, ed. Andrew Feldherr and Grant Hardy, vol. 1 (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2011), 463.

curator of the imperial library,<sup>1225</sup> includes four more schools. Finally, Yangism (Yangzhuxuepai 楊朱学派) had merged with the Daoists by the Han dynasty,<sup>1226</sup> when the schools were identified, and the School of the Military/Strategy (Bingjia 兵家) was influential among leaders but was nonetheless left out.<sup>1227</sup>

As already noted, the School of Scholars (Rujia 儒家), now often referred to as Confucians, is characterized by reflection on and with classical literature,<sup>1228</sup> idealization of the height of the Zhou dynasty vis-à-vis excellent sociopolitical order and stability, and emphasis on continuity between moral leadership and societal flourishing. As a result, thinkers in this school were concerned with moral self-cultivation through education and ritual in order to achieve humaneness and moral force, and encouraging rulers to participate in this program. Some scholars have suggested that their focus on moral self-cultivation

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<sup>1225</sup> Lee Hur-Li, "Epistemic Foundation of Bibliographic Classification in Early China," *Journal of Documentation* 68, no. 3 (2012): 378–401, <https://doi.org/10.1108/00220411211225593>.

<sup>1226</sup> Graham, *Disputers of the Tao*, 170–72.

<sup>1227</sup> Krzysztof Gawlikowski, "The School of Strategy (Bing Jia) in the Context of Chinese Civilization," *East and West* 35, no. 1 (September 1, 1985): 167–210, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/29756718>.

<sup>1228</sup> By the Han dynasty, the Ru lineage was identified primarily in terms of its reverence for the five classics, such that "Ru" could be translated "classicist." This interpretation colors understanding of the Ru trajectory during the Warring States period. Csikszentmihalyi and Nylan, "Constructing Lineages and Inventing Traditions through Exemplary Figures in Early China."

meant that Shi in this intellectual trajectory were not focused on government service or political activity,<sup>1229</sup> but this view does not necessarily hold up under scrutiny.<sup>1230</sup> Confucius himself has already been presented as responding to the sociopolitical situation of the Spring and Autumn period, and Mencius and Xunzi, the two other most influential members of this trajectory, will be engaged in detail below. Something should be said here, however, regarding the school of thinkers who followed in Confucius' footsteps in Lu during the Warring States period, and are quite possibly represented in the *Analects* in the chapters preceding and following chapters four and five.<sup>1231</sup>

According to the hypothesis of Brooks and Brooks, the oldest passages of *Analects* chapters seven through nine, written during the Warring States period before the time of Mencius, ca. 450 – 400 BCE, were composed under the auspices of Zengzi 曾子 and his successor in leading the Confucian school in Lu, likely his eldest son.<sup>1232</sup> Zengzi is known by tradition as “the foremost exponent of the filial

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<sup>1229</sup> Eno, *The Confucian Creation of Heaven*; Lewis, *Writing and Authority in Early China*.

<sup>1230</sup> Chan, *The Confucian Shi, Official Service, and the Confucian Analects*, 118–23. See also Csikszentmihalyi and Nylan, “Constructing Lineages and Inventing Traditions through Exemplary Figures in Early China.”

<sup>1231</sup> Confucius, *The Original Analects*, 1, 201–62.

<sup>1232</sup> Confucius, 39.

virtues (*xiao* 孝),<sup>1233</sup> “was known for his daily self-introspection (*Analects* 1.4),” and “highlighted the importance of being watchful when one is alone (*shendu* 慎獨).”<sup>1234</sup> Lacking any actual experience in government, he focused exclusively on personal ethics, but later Warring States Confucians would link the filial virtues to political merit.<sup>1235</sup> The seventh chapter of the *Analects*, possibly compiled by Zengzi in order to share something with Confucius’ school about the founder he never knew, “is a portrait of Confucius” that “defines him in terms of the sage” (*Sheng* 聖). Sage is “a word absent from earlier chapters, and makes him a transmitter of antiquity, not an inculcator of more recent feudal-military values,” marking a shift in the school from a period of direct remembrance to a period of mythic adaptation.<sup>1236</sup> Whereas chapter eight represents Zengzi’s orientation toward personal formation, chapter nine, from the period after his death, demonstrates “an interest in government, perhaps reflecting an upturn in the school’s political fortunes.”<sup>1237</sup> Notably, the only reference to ritual in all of the

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<sup>1233</sup> Confucius, *The Analects of Confucius*, 1999, 6.

<sup>1234</sup> Vincent Shen, ed., *Dao Companion to Classical Confucian Philosophy* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2014), 107.

<sup>1235</sup> Shen, 108–10.

<sup>1236</sup> Confucius, *The Original Analects*, 39–45.

<sup>1237</sup> Confucius, 57.

*Analects* passages of this period is in 9:10 where it expresses a mode of moral formation that “limits” (Yue 約) excessive desires, a meaning that will reemerge with Xunzi after a period of including luxury within propriety during the intervening century.<sup>1238</sup>

Indeed, the next accretion of the *Analects*, including chapters ten, eleven, and the preposed<sup>1239</sup> chapter three, would have reframed the entire text as a ritual treatise.<sup>1240</sup> At this point, ca. 400 – 342 BCE, leadership of the school has been returned from the Zeng family to the Kong family, i.e. Confucius’ descendants, particularly Confucius’ grandson Zisi 子思, Zengzi’s student who would go on to teach Mencius.<sup>1241</sup> With this change of leadership comes a change in orientation from focusing around the concept of humaneness (Ren 仁) to focusing around ritual (Li 禮/礼). Chapter ten is a primer of elite behavior for the non-elite novice, and so is a response to the social mobility noted above as characteristic of the Warring States period.<sup>1242</sup> Chapter eleven is primarily concerned with

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<sup>1238</sup> Confucius, 53.

<sup>1239</sup> Preposition refers to placing a later chapter prior to an earlier chapter in order to emphasize its contents and reframe the work as a whole.

<sup>1240</sup> Confucius, *The Original Analects*, 79.

<sup>1241</sup> Confucius, 59.

<sup>1242</sup> Confucius, 67.



reevaluating the lineage of Confucius' disciples according to the interests of the new leadership. Chapter three, which by virtue of having been preposed would now have been the first, expands the theory of ritual from the propriety described in chapter ten to also include state sacrifices.<sup>1243</sup> Further, chapter three takes positions on a number of dimensions of ritual that are contested between other Ru trajectories. Passage 3.8 takes the position that in order for ritual to be effective it requires a baseline of proper emotional orientation,<sup>1244</sup> which orientation further includes inner sincerity (Cheng 誠) of participation in the ritual as distinguished from outward belief in what the ritual purports (3.12).<sup>1245</sup> In passage 3.15 Confucius asks many detailed questions about the ritual practice in the Great Ancestral Temple as a way of politely critiquing improper practices, (i.e. asking rather than telling),<sup>1246</sup> but also thereby indicating that proper understanding of ritual (i.e. theory) is necessary for proper ritual practice. Finally, the series of passages 3.18-20 testifies to the importance of poise and balance in the practice of ritual so that the practitioner is not obsequious (18), so

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<sup>1243</sup> Confucius, 79.

<sup>1244</sup> Confucius, 81; Confucius, *Analects*, 19–20.

<sup>1245</sup> Confucius, *The Original Analects*, 82; Confucius, *Analects*, 21–22.

<sup>1246</sup> Confucius, *The Original Analects*, 83; Confucius, *Analects*, 23.

that relationships are properly harmonized (19), and so that desire and emotion are restrained from either overabundance or insufficiency (20).<sup>1247</sup>

The subsequent accretion of chapters twelve, thirteen, and the preposed chapter two (326 – 317 BCE) reflects ongoing engagement with a number of other trajectories of thought among the Hundred Schools. Furthermore, chapter twelve shows significant influence from Mencius, who may have been attendant in Lu at the time, with such influence declining in chapter thirteen and seemingly absent in chapter two.<sup>1248</sup> As a result, it is helpful to consider these intellectual movements before returning to the development of the *Analects*.

The Mohist School (Mojia 墨家) and its text, the *Mozi* 墨子,<sup>1249</sup> are named after the founder of the school, Mo Di (墨翟) (ca. 479 – 381 BCE), about whom

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<sup>1247</sup> Confucius, *The Original Analects*, 83–84; Confucius, *Analects*, 24–25. Note that on this interpretation Slingerland wrongly interpolates “wrongly” into passage 3.18.

<sup>1248</sup> Confucius, *The Original Analects*, 89, 99, 109.

<sup>1249</sup> A complete translation of the text into English is only recently available: Mo Di, *墨子全譯 The Mozi: A Complete Translation*, trans. Ian Johnston (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2010). Prior to this time, three selective translations were available: Mo Di, *The Ethical and Political Works of Motse*, trans. Y.P. Mei (London: Arthur Probsthain, 1929); Mo Di, *Mo Tzu: Basic Writings*, trans. Burton Watson (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1963); Mo Ti and Gunnar Sjöholm, “Readings in Mo Ti: Chapters XXVI–XXVIII on the Will of Heaven” (PhD diss, Lund University, 1982). In addition, a translation of the “dialectical chapters (40–45)” is available in Angus Charles Graham, *Later Mohist Logic, Ethics and Science* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 2004). A helpful study aid is Loewe, *Early Chinese Texts*, 336–41.

very little is known.<sup>1250</sup> Whereas Confucius and the Confucians arose from the minor aristocracy of the Shi class, the Mohists, and perhaps even Mo Di himself, likely arose from a lower class of artisans into the Xie 楔 class of knights-errant.<sup>1251</sup> The Mohist school is characterized by ten doctrines in five pairs: The meritocratic emphasis is expressed in the doctrine of “elevating the worthy” based on competence and moral merit while “conforming upward” to the moral example of superiors expresses the monarchic ideal. “Inclusive care” requires a radical egalitarianism and benevolence toward all regardless of family, social, or communal affiliation, while the rooting of military aggression in selfish gain, and so failing to fulfill inclusive care, requires “rejecting aggression.” In order to preserve as many resources as possible for the exercise of care and benevolence, luxury goods and useless expenditures must be eliminated (“thrift in utilization), and this is particularly pointed toward wasteful spending on extravagant funerals (“thrift in funerals”). Heaven and “heaven’s intention” are understood rather anthropomorphically as establishing and holding people accountable for objective moral standards, and “elucidating ghosts” who dole out rewards and punishments advances moral order. Finally, and negatively, extravagant musical

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<sup>1250</sup> Fung, *A Short History of Chinese Philosophy*, 49; Graham, *Disputers of the Tao*, 33.

<sup>1251</sup> Graham, *Disputers of the Tao*, 34; Fung, *A Short History of Chinese Philosophy*, 50–52.

entertainment is wasteful, and so the school advocates “rejecting music,” while belief in predetermined fate “interferes with the pursuit of economic wealth, a large population, and social order (three primary goods that the humane person desires for society),” so the school also advocates “rejecting fatalism.”<sup>1252</sup> In establishing and defending these ten doctrines, the Mohist school deploys a threefold mode of argumentation:

‘Theories must have three criteria.’ What are the three criteria? Master Mo Zi spoke, saying: ‘There is the foundation; there is the source; there is the application. In what is the foundation? The foundation is in the actions of the ancient sage kings above. In what is the source? The source is in the truth of the evidence of the eyes and ears of the common people below. In what is the application? It emanates from government policy and is seen in the benefit to the ordinary people of the state. These are what are termed the “three criteria”.’<sup>1253</sup>

Notably, the latter two criteria rest on the evaluation of the “common” or “ordinary” people, as opposed to elite classes, and so participating in the expansion of the concept of “the people,” while the first criteria rests on the authority of antiquity and thus participating in the defense of monarchism.

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<sup>1252</sup> Chris Fraser, “Mohism,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Summer, 2014, <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2014/entries/mohism/>. To see how different Mohist sects interpreted each of these doctrines as expressed within the *Mozi*, see Graham, *Disputers of the Tao*, 36. An excellent, more extended introduction to the doctrines is available in Mo Di, 墨子全譯 *The Mozi: A Complete Translation*, xxxiv–lxvi.

<sup>1253</sup> Mo Di, 墨子全譯 *The Mozi: A Complete Translation*, 318–21. An interesting comparison is with the three modes of persuasion in Aristotle, *On Rhetoric*, I.3, 1358a37ff.

The overwhelming egoism read into Yangism (Yangzhuxuepai 楊朱学派) by its Confucian opponents likely overstates the reality of the views the school espoused,<sup>1254</sup> which are more charitably articulated in the early Han dynasty text *Huainanzi* 淮南子: “Keeping your nature intact, protecting your authenticity, not allowing things to entangle your form: these were established by Yangzi.”<sup>1255</sup> The first of these three doctrines is of great significance as it introduces the concept of human nature (Xing 性) into Chinese discourse.<sup>1256</sup> Other schools, including Xunzi and the Confucians, would take up the idea that nature is what heaven endows humanity, but the distinctive Yangist interpretation is that “nothing seems more ‘natural’ for humans than to preserve their own lives and satisfy their own desires.”<sup>1257</sup> Notably, Mencius indicated that the Yangists were influential in his day, although it is unlikely that this influence was broad in scope so much as presenting a challenge to his own way of thinking to which he

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<sup>1254</sup> Graham, *Disputers of the Tao*, 54–55.

<sup>1255</sup> Liu An, *The Huainanzi: A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Government in Early Han China*, by Liu An, *King of Huainan*, trans. John S. Major et al. (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2010), 501.

<sup>1256</sup> Graham, *Disputers of the Tao*, 56–57.

<sup>1257</sup> Philip J. Ivanhoe and Bryan W. van Norden, eds., *Readings in Classical Chinese Philosophy*, 2nd ed. (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 2001), 369.

felt compelled to respond.<sup>1258</sup> Nevertheless, the influence of the Yangist position would increase with its incorporation into the Daoist perspective of the *Zuangzi* 莊子, which becomes more influential among the Lu Confucians in subsequent accretions.

In chapters twelve, thirteen, and two of the *Analects*, however, the text of the Daoists (Daojia 道家) of greatest interest is the *Daodejing* 道德經<sup>1259</sup> traditionally attributed to Laozi 老子, who is purported by tradition to have taught Confucius.<sup>1260</sup> The text itself is quite ambiguous, with date, authorship,

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<sup>1258</sup> Kwong-loi Shun, *Mencius and Early Chinese Thought* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997), 35–36. This view is consonant with the alternative historical claim that the Yangists did not actually introduce the concept of human nature but rather adopted it in a contrasting way to the Confucians from earlier discourse. See Franklin Perkins, “Recontextualizing Xing: Self-Cultivation and Human Nature in the Guodian Texts,” *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 37 (December 1, 2010): 16–32, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-6253.2010.01618.x>.

<sup>1259</sup> Of the myriad translations of the Dao De Jing into English, few could be considered scholarly. Some of the recent translations that can be so considered are: Laozi, *The Tao of the Tao Te Ching: A Translation and Commentary*, trans. Michael LaFargue (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1992); Laozi and Wang Bi, *A Chinese Reading of the Daodejing: Wang Bi's Commentary on the Laozi with Critical Text and Translation*, trans. Rudolf G. Wagner (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2003); Laozi, *Daodejing*, 2003; Laozi, *The Daodejing of Laozi*, trans. Philip J. Ivanhoe (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 2003); Laozi, *Dao de Jing: The Book of the Way*, trans. Moss Roberts (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2004). While not as definitive as its subtitle proclaims, also notable is Laozi, *Tao Te Ching: The Definitive Edition*, trans. Jonathan Star (New York, NY: Jeremy P Tarcher/Penguin, 2003). A syncretic translation is given in Laozi, *The Old Master: A Syncretic Reading of the Laozi from the Mawangdui Text A Onward*, trans. Hongkyung Kim (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2012). See also Livia Kohn and Michael LaFargue, *Lao-Tzu and the Tao-Te-Ching: Studies in Ethics, Law, and the Human Ideal* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1998).

<sup>1260</sup> Confucius, *The Original Analects*, 97.

and approach to interpretation remaining contested, but nevertheless also addresses itself to the sociopolitical challenges of the day,<sup>1261</sup> which is of greatest interest for present purposes. The primary concept in this regard is Wuwei 無爲, which is often translated as “non-action” but might better be translated “effortless action.”<sup>1262</sup> The idea is that a ruler should not have to act with intention because they act according to “naturalness,” which is not here Xing but rather Ziran 自然, or “self so; so of its own, so of itself,”<sup>1263</sup> and a state without desire. When acting according to naturalness, a ruler has moral force as an expression of Dao, which in turn inspires the people to act according to naturalness. Thus, “the problems of political decline are traced to excessive desire, a violation of *ziran*... If the ruler could rid himself of desire, the *Laozi* boldly declares, the world would be at peace of its own accord (chs. 37,

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<sup>1261</sup> Alan Chan, “Laozi,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Spring, 2014, <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2014/entries/laozi/>. It is somewhat likely that the *Daodejing* was compiled over the period of 340 – 249 BCE: Confucius, *The Original Analects*, 151. This range is consistent with the view that at least a significant portion of the work was in circulation when Xunzi was at the Jixia Academy from 275 – 265 BCE: Xunzi, *Xunzi: Translation and Study*, I: 11-16.

<sup>1262</sup> Edward Slingerland, *Effortless Action: Wu-Wei As Conceptual Metaphor and Spiritual Ideal in Early China* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2003).

<sup>1263</sup> Slingerland, 97.

57).<sup>1264</sup> The Lu Confucians, Mencius, and Xunzi will each take up these concepts, and how they do so is elaborated in the discussion below, but it is important to keep in mind that their conception of nature not as Ziran but as Xing requires refinement by moral formation through learning and ritual, which is the primary site of contention with the Daoism of the *Daodejing*.

The conception of the Legalists (Fajia 法家) as a school is the most clearly anachronistic Han interpolation on Warring States period thought of any of the schools covered thus far.<sup>1265</sup> Legalist thinkers might be best identified as those who emphasized the need to establish sociopolitical order by external means, including rule of law and coercive measures,<sup>1266</sup> by contrast with the Confucian emphasis on inner transformation by education and ritual to achieve social harmony. Early texts affiliated with this intellectual movement include the *Book of Lord Shang* (Shang Jun Shu 商君書)<sup>1267</sup> by Lord Shang (Shang Yang 商鞅, aka

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<sup>1264</sup> Chan, "Laozi"; Xiaogan Liu, *Dao Companion to Daoist Philosophy* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2014), 48–58.

<sup>1265</sup> Graham, *Disputers of the Tao*, 268. For a strong case that the terms "legalist" and "legalism" should be abandoned entirely, see Paul R. Goldin, "Persistent Misconceptions About Chinese 'Legalism,'" *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 38, no. 1 (March 1, 2011): 88–104, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-6253.2010.01629.x>.

<sup>1266</sup> Graham, *Disputers of the Tao*, 268.

<sup>1267</sup> The only English translation is Shang Yang, *The Book of Lord Shang: A Classic of the Chinese School of Law*, trans. Jan Julius Lodewijk Duyvendak (Clark, NJ: Lawbook Exchange, 1928).



Gongsun Yang 公孫鞅; ca. 390 – 338 BCE), the *Shēnzi* 申子 of Shen Buhai 申不害 (d. 337 BCE),<sup>1268</sup> and the *Shènzi* 慎子<sup>1269</sup> of Shen Dao 慎到 (fl. ca. 300 BCE), the latter two having survived in minimal portions.<sup>1270</sup> While the legalist strain of thought mostly comes to the fore at the end of the Warring States period, the Lu Confucians make their position with respect to at least its nascent emergence known in *Analects* 12.13: “The Master said, ‘When it comes to hearing civil litigation, I am as good as anyone else. What is necessary, though, is to bring it about that there is no civil litigation at all.’”<sup>1271</sup> The Confucians thereby disparage legal judgment as requiring no special training, skill, or talent, and then insist that litigation never arises when society is governed by moral force transforming the people such that there are no disputes. Notably, it is two of Xunzi’s students,

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<sup>1268</sup> see Herrlee Glessner Creel, *Shen Pu-Hai: A Chinese Political Philosopher of the Fourth Century B.C.* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1974).

<sup>1269</sup> see David R. Knechtges and Taiping Chang, *Ancient and Early Medieval Chinese Literature: A Reference Guide*, vol. 2 (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 871–74.

<sup>1270</sup> Yuri Pines, “Legalism in Chinese Philosophy,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Winter, 2014, <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2014/entries/chinese-legalism/>.

<sup>1271</sup> Confucius, *Analects*, 132.

Li Si (李斯; ca. 280 – 208 BCE)<sup>1272</sup> and Han Fei (韓非; ca. 280 – 233 BCE),<sup>1273</sup> who would codify legalism and implement its sociopolitical vision in the short-lived Qin (秦) dynasty (221 – 206 BCE).

The Miscellaneous School (Zajia 雜家), “often understood as a specific intellectual formation with an eclectic or ‘syncretist’ outlook, may simply describe a category for books that did not fit anywhere else in the library.”<sup>1274</sup> For example, the *Annals of Lü Buwei* (*Lüshi Chunqiu* 呂氏春秋)<sup>1275</sup> of the late Warring States period is a summary of the various trajectories of thought at the time without attempting to integrate them, and so might better be interpreted as eclectic rather than syncretic.<sup>1276</sup> Understanding this “school” as a catchall category in the classificatory schemes of Han dynasty imperial librarians is an important historical advance, but there is nevertheless a body of literature that is

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<sup>1272</sup> Kenneth J. Hammond, *The Human Tradition in Premodern China* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 2002), 15–26.

<sup>1273</sup> The only English translation remains Han Fei, *Han Fei Tzu*, trans. Burton Watson (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1964). See also Paul R. Goldin, *Dao Companion to the Philosophy of Han Fei* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2012).

<sup>1274</sup> Wiebke Denecke, *The Dynamics of Masters Literature: Early Chinese Thought from Confucius to Han Feizi* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), 23.

<sup>1275</sup> Lü Buwei, *Lü Shi Chun Qiu*, trans. John Knoblock and Jeffrey K. Riegel (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000).

<sup>1276</sup> 校·尸 Shizi, *Shizi: China's First Syncretist*, ed. Paul Fischer (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2013), 10.

self-consciously syncretic in its method of drawing on multiple trajectories of thought from the Warring States period. This literature includes the *Huainanzi*<sup>1277</sup> of the early Han dynasty and the *Shizi* 尸子<sup>1278</sup> by Shi Jiao 尸佼 (ca. 390 – ca. 330 BCE) of the Warring States period states of Jin 晉 and Shu 蜀. The intellectual egalitarianism of the *Shizi*<sup>1279</sup> may have inspired the functioning of the Jixia Academy,<sup>1280</sup> where Xunzi studied and taught, particularly given the emergence of the apparently syncretic Huanglao 黃老 school of thought therefrom.<sup>1281</sup>

Mencius (Mengzi 孟子; 372 – 289 BCE) also spent time at the Jixia Academy while a minister in the state of Qi 齊 (ca. 314 BCE) after studying with the Lu school of Confucians.<sup>1282</sup> The text *Mencius*,<sup>1283</sup> likely written either entirely

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<sup>1277</sup> Liu An, *The Huainanzi*; Charles LeBlanc, *Huai-Nan Tzu: Philosophical Synthesis in Early Han Thought: The Idea of Resonance (Kan-Ying) with a Translation and Analysis of Chapter Six* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1985).

<sup>1278</sup> *Shizi*, *Shizi*.

<sup>1279</sup> *Shizi*, 120–21.

<sup>1280</sup> Masayuki Sato, *The Confucian Quest for Order: The Origin and Formation of the Political Thought of Xun Zi* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 63–162.

<sup>1281</sup> Fabrizio Pregadio, *The Encyclopedia of Taoism* (London: Routledge, 2008), 508–10.

<sup>1282</sup> Graham, *Disputers of the Tao*, 111–13.

<sup>1283</sup> There are three scholarly translations of the Mencius into English. Van Norden includes substantial commentary, primarily from Zhu Xi 朱熹, the Song dynasty Neoconfucian who codified the Four Books (Sishu Wujing 四書五經) and heavily influenced subsequent Confucian developments: Mengzi, *Mengzi: With Selections from Traditional Commentaries*, trans. Bryan W. Van Norden (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 2008). Bloom is a very good recent translation: *Mencius*, *Mencius*, trans. Irene Bloom (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2009). Lau is somewhat

by Mencius himself or with some additions and editions by his immediate disciples,<sup>1284</sup> is divided into seven books (I-VII), each divided into two parts (A and B), with numbered sections of the parts. Two doctrines emerge as both contested and of central importance in the *Mencius*: the role of heaven and human nature. With respect to sociopolitical order, Mencius argues that the mandate of heaven is expressed through the people:

[Yao] caused [Shun] to preside over the sacrifices, and the hundred spirits enjoyed them. This shows that Heaven accepted him. He put him in charge of affairs, and affairs were well ordered, and the hundred surnames were at peace. This shows that the people accepted him. Heaven gave it to him; the people gave it to him. This is why I said that 'the Son of Heaven cannot give the realm to someone.' ... The 'Great Declaration' says, 'Heaven sees as my people see, Heaven hears as my people hear.' This is what was meant.<sup>1285</sup>

The result is that while Confucius sought sociopolitical stability through government by ritual, Mencius expects rulers to bring about political and economic reforms in order to win over the people who express heaven's mandate.<sup>1286</sup> Furthermore, Mencius enters the debate, ongoing among Confucians at the time, regarding the nature that heaven endows humanity, and makes the

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dated but still used regularly in classes and anthologies: Mencius, *The Book of Mencius*, trans. D. C. Lau (New York, NY: Penguin, 1970).

<sup>1284</sup> Graham, *Disputers of the Tao*, 111.

<sup>1285</sup> Mencius, *Mencius*, 5A5, 104.

<sup>1286</sup> Graham, *Disputers of the Tao*, 113.

case for the ultimate goodness of human nature. His argument begins by noting the innate, natural inclination to do good for the sake of good, and not for any personal benefit, as illustrated in the parable of the child falling into the well:

Now, if anyone were suddenly to see a child about to fall into a well, his mind would be filled with alarm, distress, pity, and compassion. That he would react accordingly is not because he would hope to use the opportunity to ingratiate himself with the child's parents, nor because he would seek commendation from neighbors and friends, nor because he would hate the adverse reputation [that could come from not reacting accordingly]. From this it may be seen that one who lacks a mind that feels pity and compassion would not be human; one who lacks a mind that feels shame and aversion would not be human; one who lacks a mind that feels modesty and compliance would not be human; and one who lacks a mind that knows right and wrong would not be human.<sup>1287</sup>

It is from these feelings that Mencius derives the four cardinal virtues:

humaneness (Ren 仁), rightness (Yi 義), propriety (Li 禮), and wisdom (Zhi 智

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virtue. Mencius' argument for the goodness of human nature continues with the

claim that the nature of a thing is what the thing would be without injury,

disruption, or malnourishment: "One's natural tendencies enable one to do good;

this is what I mean by human nature being good. When one does what is not

good, it is not the fault of one's native capacities."<sup>1289</sup> Instead, Mencius concludes,

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<sup>1287</sup> Mencius, *Mencius*, 2A6, 35.

<sup>1288</sup> Mencius, 2A6, 35; Graham, *Disputers of the Tao*, 113.

<sup>1289</sup> Mencius, *Mencius*, 6A6, 124.

doing what is not good is a result of letting lesser natural desires, associated with the senses, overcome pursuit of greater natural desire for the good, associated with the thinking heart: “One who nurtures the smaller part of oneself becomes a small person, while one who nurtures the greater part of oneself becomes a great person.”<sup>1290</sup> As will be demonstrated, these doctrines of heaven and human nature, along with the concept of ritual, undergo a complete reconceptualization by Xunzi.

Returning to the *Analects*, by the time of the accretion of chapters twelve, thirteen, and two in 326 – 317 BCE, according to the hypothesis of Brooks and Brooks, the Lu school of Confucians has transitioned from the leadership of Zisi through that of Zishang 子上 and Zijia 子家 to that of Zijong 子京.<sup>1291</sup> The school is responding in these chapters to themes important to the Mohists, Daoists, and Legalists, and at least chapter twelve seems to be influenced by Mencius.<sup>1292</sup> “[Daoist] ideas tend to be *sources* of Analects doctrine, whereas Legalist ones

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<sup>1290</sup> Mencius, 6A14-15, 129; Graham, *Disputers of the Tao*, 129–32.

<sup>1291</sup> Confucius, *The Original Analects*, 285–87.

<sup>1292</sup> Confucius, 89.

cause reactions and reformulations."<sup>1293</sup> *Analects* 12.22 is particularly notable for its relationship to Mohist and Mencian doctrines:

Fan Chi asked about Goodness.

The Master replied, "Care for others."

He then asked about wisdom.

The master replied, "Know others."

Fan Chi still did not understand, so the Master elaborated: "Raise up the straight and apply them to the crooked, and the crooked will be made straight."

Fan Chi retired from the Master's presence. Seeing Zixia, he said, "Just before I asked the Master about wisdom, and he replied, 'Raise up the straight and apply them to the crooked, and the crooked will be made straight.' What did he mean by that?"

Zixia answered, "What a wealth of instruction you have received! When Shun ruled the world, he selected from amongst the multitude, raising up Gao Yao, and those where were not Good then kept their distance. When Tang ruled the world, he selected from amongst the multitude, raising up Yi Yin, and those who were not Good then kept their distance."<sup>1294</sup>

Both the meritocratic motif of elevating the worthy and the redefinition of the Confucian concept of humaneness in terms care or love (Ai 愛) betray a Mohist influence.<sup>1295</sup> The care for others here also reflects Mencius in *Mencius* 1B1: "If Your Majesty simply will share your enjoyment with the people, you shall be a true king."<sup>1296</sup> This model of leadership contrasts with the model espoused earlier

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<sup>1293</sup> Confucius, 97.

<sup>1294</sup> Confucius, *Analects*, 136.

<sup>1295</sup> Confucius, *The Original Analects*, 95–97.

<sup>1296</sup> Mencius, *Mencius*, 14; Confucius, *The Original Analects*, 97.

in 12.10-16 of the more authoritarian, albeit benevolent, transforming sage, which accords with the concept of rule by moral force espoused in the *Daodejing*.<sup>1297</sup>

The next accretion, of chapters fourteen and fifteen in ca. 310 – 305 BCE, engages with more of the trajectories among the Hundred Schools, which are in turn profitably engaged here.

On one hand, Yinyang (Yinyangjia 陰陽家) is less a philosophical school than a scientific cosmology<sup>1298</sup> that explores the emergence of reality from complementary interactions among contrary forces,<sup>1299</sup> giving rise to the phenomenal processes of the Five Phases (Wuxing 五行),<sup>1300</sup> which are the bases for the Daoist alchemical and magical traditions, Feng Shui 風水, and traditional Chinese medicine.<sup>1301</sup> On the other hand, Yinyang is more of a school than many of the others as it has a focal figure in the person of Zou Yan 鄒衍 (ca. 305 – 240

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<sup>1297</sup> Confucius, *The Original Analects*, 97.

<sup>1298</sup> Joseph Needham, *The Shorter Science and Civilisation in China*, ed. Colin A. Ronan (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 142; Graham, *Disputers of the Tao*, 315–25.

<sup>1299</sup> Robin R. Wang, *Yinyang: The Way of Heaven and Earth in Chinese Thought and Culture* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 1–40; Graham, *Disputers of the Tao*, 330–40; Xunzi, *Xunzi: Translation and Study*, I: 221.

<sup>1300</sup> Graham, *Disputers of the Tao*, 340–56.

<sup>1301</sup> Wang, *Yinyang*.



BCE),<sup>1302</sup> who integrated the Yinyang metaphysical theory with the Five Phases cosmological theory<sup>1303</sup> and whose time at the Jixia Academy would have overlapped that of Xunzi.<sup>1304</sup> In fact, it may very well have been Zou Yan who Xunzi had in mind when he criticized Zisi and Mencius for contaminating true Confucian doctrine with the Five Phases cosmology, which they did not actually do, and which accusation resulted in Xunzi being labeled a heretic in later eras.<sup>1305</sup> Apparently, he had cause to be alarmed as Zou Yan was ascendant in a number of Warring States courts, including Wei 魏, Zhao 趙, and Yan 燕,<sup>1306</sup> as a result of the attractiveness of his claim that dynasties rise and fall according the order of the Five Phases,<sup>1307</sup> and some of Xunzi's own students may have adopted this cosmological theory.<sup>1308</sup> When further integrated with the divinization scheme of the *Book of Changes*, the Yinyang and Five Phases theories would

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<sup>1302</sup> Xinzhong Yao, *The Encyclopedia of Confucianism* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2015), 855; Graham, *Disputers of the Tao*, 328–30.

<sup>1303</sup> Wang, *Yinyang*, 36–40.

<sup>1304</sup> Xunzi, *Xunzi: Translation and Study*, I: 64–65.

<sup>1305</sup> Xunzi, I: 214–19.

<sup>1306</sup> Wang, *Yinyang*, 37.

<sup>1307</sup> Graham, *Disputers of the Tao*, 329.

<sup>1308</sup> Xunzi, *Xunzi: Translation and Study*, I: 216.

constitute China's correlative cosmology,<sup>1309</sup> which has been taken by some sinologists as constitutive of Chinese thought generally.<sup>1310</sup> While the importance of correlative cosmology in Chinese culture should not be downplayed, this latter claim is quite dubious on both historical and hermeneutical grounds.<sup>1311</sup>

The School of the Military, or of Military Strategy, (Bingjia 兵家), was a school of practical philosophy that was well received in many of the Warring States courts for its promised advantages in military campaigning, and so was a strong competitor to the other schools for influence.<sup>1312</sup> The most recognized progenitor of the school is Sunzi 孫子, who purportedly lived during the late Spring and Autumn period (ca. 544 – 496 BCE) and authored *The Art of War* (Sunzi Bingfa 孫子兵法), which was actually compiled in the Warring States period.<sup>1313</sup> Sun Bin 孫臏 did live during the Warring States period, may have been

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<sup>1309</sup> Graham, *Disputers of the Tao*, 319–20.

<sup>1310</sup> Granet, *La Pensée Chinoise*; Hall and Ames, *Anticipating China*; Roger T. Ames and David L. Hall, *Focusing the Familiar: A Translation and Philosophical Interpretation of the Zhongyong* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press, 2001), 19–25.

<sup>1311</sup> Graham, *Disputers of the Tao*, 320; Angus Charles Graham, *Yin-Yang and the Nature of Correlative Thinking* (Singapore: Institute of East Asian Philosophies, National University of Singapore, 1986); Puett, *To Become a God*, 145–200.

<sup>1312</sup> Ralph D. Sawyer, trans., *The Seven Military Classics of Ancient China* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1993); Confucius, *The Original Analects*, 7.

<sup>1313</sup> Sunzi, *The Art of War: Sun Zi's Military Methods*, trans. Victor H. Mair (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2009), 1–29; Loewe, *Early Chinese Texts*, 246–55.

Sunzi's descendent, and compiled his own *Art of Warfare* (Sunbin Bingfa 孫臏兵法), which has only recently been rediscovered.<sup>1314</sup> While focusing on military planning, strategy, and tactics, these texts also consider the economics of warfare, qualities of leadership among generals and rulers, and the sociopolitical functioning of states that are successful in military campaigning. Notably, the Lu Confucians agreed with the militarists that victories should be sought that minimize losses. Sunzi argues,

Therefore, he who is skilled at waging war causes his opponent's soldiers to submit without having to fight a battle, causes his opponent's cities to fall without having to attack them, and destroys his opponent's kingdom without having to engage in prolonged war. Instead, with a comprehensive strategy, he contends before all under heaven. Therefore, his soldiers are not worn down, yet his advantages are preserved intact. This is the method of attack by stratagem.<sup>1315</sup>

Similarly, the Lu Confucians argue for careful planning in *Analects* 7.11, which is likely interposed from the time of *Analects* 14 in ca. 310 BCE.<sup>1316</sup>

Zilu interposed, "If you, Master, were to lead the three armies into battle, who would you want by your side?

The Master replied, "I would not want by my side the kind of person who would attack a tiger barehanded or attempt to swim the Yellow River, because he was willing to 'die without regret.' Surely I would want someone who approached such undertakings with

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<sup>1314</sup> Sun Bin, *Sun Bin: The Art of Warfare: A Translation of the Classic Chinese Work of Philosophy and Strategy*, trans. D. C. Lau and Roger T. Ames (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2003).

<sup>1315</sup> Sunzi, *The Art of War*, 85–86.

<sup>1316</sup> Confucius, *The Original Analects*, 124.

a proper sense of trepidation, and who came to a decision only after having thoroughly considered the matter.”<sup>1317</sup>

However, only a few years later in *Analects* 15.1 the Lu Confucians repudiate any governmental concern with warfare:

Duke Ling of Wei asked Confucius about military formations (*chen* 陳). Confucius replied, “I know something about the arrangement of ceremonial stands and dishes for ritual offerings, but I have never learned about the arrangement of battalions and divisions.” He left the next day.<sup>1318</sup>

Rather than rejecting warfare outright, Xunzi synthesizes ritual with the militarists’ emphasis on planning and restraint. Knoblock summarizes the argument of *Xunzi* 15.4-5:

In antiquity, the armies of the sage kings, which depended on ritual and moral principles to instruct the people and to transform them, were able to make a common effort and moved as though with one mind. Thus, their armies were never tested. There were punitive expeditions to chastise but no warfare. Thus, wherever the influence of a sage king penetrates or knowledge of him reaches, everyone follows him and submits to him, stumbling and falling over each other in their rush to be near him.<sup>1319</sup>

As will be explained, this difference with the Lu Confucians will be no small matter in interpreting Xunzi.

One of Sunzi’s principles of warfare was that armed combat should be reserved as a last resort, achieving the subjugation of other states through

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<sup>1317</sup> Confucius, *Analects*, 67.

<sup>1318</sup> Confucius, 174.

<sup>1319</sup> Xunzi, *Xunzi: Translation and Study*, 218.

diplomatic coercion whenever possible,<sup>1320</sup> which gave rise to another practical philosophy: the school of Diplomats (Zonghengjia 縱橫家). These two schools shared a common lineage in the figure Guigu Xiansheng 鬼谷先生, who was likely mythical, and was purported to have taught Sun Bin<sup>1321</sup> as well as the principle advocates of both the Vertical and Horizontal Alliances, Su Qin 蘇秦 (d. 284 BCE) and Zhang Yi 張儀 (d. 309 BCE), respectively.<sup>1322</sup> Guigu was also the ostensible author of the *Guiguzi* 鬼谷子, which concerned itself “with the subject of persuasion: how to make someone do what you want them to do while they presume they are acting on their own behalf.”<sup>1323</sup> The persuasive diplomatic accomplishments of both Su Qin and Zhang Yi, along with a number of other members of the rhetorically oriented School of Diplomacy, are recounted in the *Strategies of the Warring States* (*Zhanguo Ce* 戰國策).<sup>1324</sup> Notably, according to the text, “Su Qin concerns himself with nothing but personal welfare. The authors praise this self-interest: this is the way of the world, they say; even family values

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<sup>1320</sup> Sawyer, *The Seven Military Classics of Ancient China*, 154–55.

<sup>1321</sup> Sun Bin, *Sun Bin*, 6.

<sup>1322</sup> Michael Robert Broschat, “Guiguzi: A Textual Study and Translation” (PhD diss, University of Washington, 1985), 1, <https://digital.lib.washington.edu/researchworks/handle/1773/15506>.

<sup>1323</sup> Broschat, 2.

<sup>1324</sup> James I. Crump, trans., *Chan-Kuo Ts'e* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon, 1970).

pale in comparison with career considerations, and the aim of a *shi* is to attain glory and riches.”<sup>1325</sup> Xunzi considered both Su Qin and Zhang Yi to have been “sham ministers.”<sup>1326</sup>

Precious little historical detail exists regarding the school of the Agronomists (Nongjia 農家), although Xu Xing 許行, the central figure of the school, and his disciples settled in the minor state of Teng 滕 around 315 BCE.<sup>1327</sup> The school took as its progenitor the legendary inventor of agriculture and ancient sage king, “the Divine Farmer” Shennong 神農, who ostensibly ruled without rewards or punishments and farmed alongside the people.<sup>1328</sup> The political philosophy of the school is summarized in the *Mencius*: “The exemplary man works alongside the people and eats what they eat. He prepares his own meals, morning and evening, while at the same time he governs.”<sup>1329</sup> At the same time, “the Utopia of Shen-nung appears to be an anarchistic order based on mutual trust in small communities, and one may well ask what function is left

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<sup>1325</sup> Pines, *Envisioning Eternal Empire*, 144.

<sup>1326</sup> Xunzi, *Xunzi: Translation and Study*, 13.1, 198; 193–94.

<sup>1327</sup> Angus Charles Graham, “The ‘Nung-Chia’ 農家 ‘School of the Tillers’ and the Origins of Peasant Utopianism in China,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London* 42, no. 1 (January 1, 1979): 66–100, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/614828>.

<sup>1328</sup> Graham, *Disputers of the Tao*, 64–70.

<sup>1329</sup> Mencius, *Mencius*, 3A4, 54–55.

for an Emperor and nobles who work with their own hands for a living, and do not command, make laws, reward or punish, [or] go to war.”<sup>1330</sup> Whereas Mencius cited the Agronomist philosophy in order to dispute it, *Analects* 14.5 is more appreciative thereof:

Nangong Kuo said to Confucius, “Yi was a skillful archer, and Ao was a powerful naval commander, and yet neither of them met a natural death. Yu and Hou Ji, on the other hand, did nothing but personally tend to the land, and yet they both ended up with possession of the world.”

The Master did not answer.

After Nangong Kuo left, the Master sighed, “What a gentlemanly person that man is! How he reveres Virtue!”<sup>1331</sup>

However, by *Analects* 18:6 the Lu Confucians are less sanguine about the Agronomist movement.<sup>1332</sup> Xunzi only ever cryptically alludes to the Agronomist school, but is overall sympathetic to their goals of rule by moral force without the need for rewards and punishments while preferring the Confucian method of moral cultivation by ritual and education.<sup>1333</sup>

Again with respect to the School of Names (Mingjia 名家), the Han classification scheme vastly overstates the coherence among Warring States

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<sup>1330</sup> Graham, *Disputers of the Tao*, 69.

<sup>1331</sup> Confucius, *Analects*, 14.5, 155.

<sup>1332</sup> Confucius, 216–17; Confucius, *The Original Analects*, 174.

<sup>1333</sup> Xunzi, *Xunzi: Translation and Study*, II: 9; I: 171-72; 3.14, 180-81.

period thinkers interested in language, logic, dialectics, and disputation,<sup>1334</sup> even as these themes and methods were pervasive throughout the period.<sup>1335</sup> In addition to the figures identified in the *Shiji*, particularly Deng Xi 鄧析 (d. 501 BCE), Yin Wen 尹文 (ca. 360 – 280 BCE), Hui Shi 惠施 (ca. 380 – 305 BCE), and Gongsun Long 公孫龍 (ca. 325 – 250 BCE), the later Mohists are often considered under the rubric of the school even though they were critical of positions taken by their predecessors.<sup>1336</sup> The rhetorical form of the school, the persuasion (Shuo 說), disputation, or discrimination (Bian 辯) was “primarily a type of analogical argumentation,” which, “like much legal rhetoric, often took the form of citing a precedent, analogy, or model (*fa*, also ‘law’) and explaining why the case at hand should be treated similarly or not.”<sup>1337</sup> The ideas of the school regarding language and logic were addressed above in Chapter Two on “Language and Logic in China,” and will be addressed again below as they intersect with Xunzi in the program of Rectifying Names as it relates to ritual. For the moment, it is notable

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<sup>1334</sup> Chris Fraser, “School of Names,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Winter, 2012, <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2012/entries/school-names/>.

<sup>1335</sup> Bao Zhiming, “Language and World View in Ancient China,” *Philosophy East and West* 40, no. 2 (April 1, 1990): 195–219, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1399228>.

<sup>1336</sup> Fraser, “School of Names.”

<sup>1337</sup> Fraser. See also the supplement “Disputation in Context.”



that the Lu Confucians were ambivalent regarding the whole project of examining language. In *Analects* 15.41 the community seeks to delimit the conversation regarding language to pragmatics: “The Master said, ‘Words should convey their point, and leave it at that.’”<sup>1338</sup> By the time of *Analects* 13.3, however, which Brooks and Brooks date to ca. 253 BCE, the Rectifying Names program is given first priority:

If names are not rectified, speech will not accord with reality; where speech does not accord with reality, things will not be successfully accomplished. When things are not successfully accomplished, ritual practice and music will fail to flourish; when ritual and music fail to flourish, punishments and penalties will miss the mark. And when punishments and penalties miss the mark, the common people will be at a loss as to what to do with themselves. This is why the gentleman only applies names that can be properly spoken and assures that what he says can be properly put into action. The gentleman simply guards against arbitrariness in his speech. That is all there is to it.<sup>1339</sup>

While Xunzi pursued the Rectifying Names project, and developed it into a sophisticated theory of language, he was outright condemnatory toward the disputers of his day who were merely “showing off their rhetorical skills.”<sup>1340</sup>

Two accretions within the *Analects* accrue during the first half of the third century, the first of chapters one and sixteen in ca. 294 – 285 BCE and the second

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<sup>1338</sup> Confucius, *Analects*, 189; Confucius, *The Original Analects*, 135.

<sup>1339</sup> Confucius, *Analects*, 139; Confucius, *The Original Analects*, 190; John Makeham, *Name and Actuality in Early Chinese Thought* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1994), 35–50.

<sup>1340</sup> Xunzi, *Xunzi: Translation and Study*, 160.

of chapters seventeen and eighteen in ca. 270 – 262 BCE. Under the leadership of Zigao 子高, the school was suffering under a protracted loss of court influence and so made an ideological shift to emphasize a citizen ethic apart from state service as evidenced in chapter one.<sup>1341</sup> Chapter sixteen sees a return to contact with the Lu court with an attendant shift among interlocutors as the Mohists have declined in influence and the Daoists ascended.<sup>1342</sup> Chapter seventeen reflects concerns in the school, now led by Zishen 子慎, about responding to an invitation to return to state service in Lu in spite of the fact that the new prince was effectively a vassel puppet of the state of Chu 楚, and returns to the topic of human nature.<sup>1343</sup> Chapter eighteen returns to the dilemma of service to an illegitimate ruler, but changes positions such that what is decisive is no longer the credentials of the ruler but rather the needs of the state and society.<sup>1344</sup> This move is representative of the shift in the Warring States period, noted above, from insisting that the ruler be a moral paragon to finding ways of limiting the

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<sup>1341</sup> Confucius, *The Original Analects*, 145.

<sup>1342</sup> Confucius, 159.

<sup>1343</sup> Confucius, 161, 171.

<sup>1344</sup> Confucius, 173.

involvement and influence of the ruler in policymaking while retaining the symbolic role of the position.

The *Zhuangzi* 莊子,<sup>1345</sup> usually lumped together in the Daoist school with the *Daodejing* but actually quite distinct therefrom,<sup>1346</sup> was at least in part written by Zhuang Zhou 莊周 during the third century BCE, and consists of 33 chapters in three sections: the “inner chapters” (1-7), the “outer chapters” (8-22), and the “miscellaneous chapters” (23-33).<sup>1347</sup> Whereas the *Daodejing* advocated a method for political leadership, the *Zhuangzi* rejects the very possibility of political involvement, instead incorporating the Yangist retreat from public life and personal self-cultivation as a spiritual program. “The Way (*dao* 道) that Zhuangzi advocates is one in which we each cultivate our own particular natural Potency (*de* 德) to attain a spontaneity that is so responsive to the way the world is, and to the circumstances in which we are surrounded, that we attain the heights of a

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<sup>1345</sup> There are four notable scholarly translations of the *Zhuangzi* into English: Zhuangzi, *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu*, trans. Burton Watson (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1968); Zhuangzi, *Chuang-Tzu: The Inner Chapters*, trans. Angus Charles Graham (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1981); Zhuangzi, *Wandering on the Way: Early Taoist Tales and Parables of Chuang Tzu*, trans. Victor H. Mair (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press, 1998); Zhuangzi, *Zhuangzi*.

<sup>1346</sup> Graham, *Disputers of the Tao*, 170.

<sup>1347</sup> Liu, *Dao Companion to Daoist Philosophy*, 129–57.

sagely practical wisdom and achieve emotional tranquility.”<sup>1348</sup> Brooks and Brooks demonstrate evidence of a conversation between the Lu Confucians and the community that compiled the *Zhuangzi* contained in *Analects* 18.5-7 and *Zhuangzi* 4.1-7.<sup>1349</sup> Xunzi also draws on and responds to ideas from the *Zhuangzi* that were lively in the intellectual circles of his day.<sup>1350</sup>

The final two chapters of the *Analects*, from ca. 253 – 249 BCE, find themselves in direct engagement with the protagonist of the present project: Xunzi, and so their consideration is postponed for his.

## Xunzi

### *Biography, Text, and Translation*

In spite of claims to the contrary,<sup>1351</sup> there is quite a bit to be known biographically about Xunzi 荀子 given he lived well over 2000 years ago. Born in approximately 310 BCE in the state of Zhao 趙, Xunzi was named Xun Kuang 荀况 but known as Xun Qing 荀卿, or “Minister Xun,” for the office he held later in

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<sup>1348</sup> Liu, 159.

<sup>1349</sup> Confucius, *The Original Analects*, 258, 174–75.

<sup>1350</sup> Liu, *Dao Companion to Daoist Philosophy*, 148; Xunzi, *Xunzi: Translation and Study*, III: 6-7, 9-10, 94, 102, 121.

<sup>1351</sup> Goldin, *Rituals of the Way*, xi.

life as Magistrate of Lanling (蘭陵令).<sup>1352</sup> At the age of fifteen he traveled to Qi 齊 to study at the Jixia 稷下 Academy where he mastered the doctrines of many of the schools of thought of the time along with their forms of argumentation and rhetorical techniques.<sup>1353</sup> Having failed to persuade Tian Wen 田文, Lord of Mengchang (孟嘗君) and prime minister of Qi, to follow his prescriptions for governance, and then watching as Qi collapsed, Xunzi fled to Chu 楚 in 284-283 BCE where he became acquainted with the doctrines of the Mohists.<sup>1354</sup> After a period of instability in Chu and the establishment of King Xiang 襄王 in Qi, he returned to Qi in 276-274 BCE where he was invited on three separate occasions to serve as libationer and make the sacrifice of wine at the Jixia Academy, thereby establishing him as the preeminent scholar.<sup>1355</sup> Following an episode of slander, he left for Qin 秦 in approximately 265 BCE<sup>1356</sup> but then returned to his home state of Zhao in approximately 260 BCE.<sup>1357</sup> In 255 BCE Xunzi received his

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<sup>1352</sup> Xunzi, *Xunzi: Translation and Study*, I: 3.

<sup>1353</sup> Xunzi, I: 4.

<sup>1354</sup> Xunzi, I: 4-8.

<sup>1355</sup> Xunzi, I: 8-11. Brooks and Brooks date these years as 257-255 BCE: Confucius, *The Original Analects*, 185.

<sup>1356</sup> Xunzi, *Xunzi: Translation and Study*, I: 16.

<sup>1357</sup> Xunzi, I: 24.

only ministerial appointment, and thus “his first and only opportunity to implement his policies,” when he was made Magistrate of Lanling in Lu by Huang Xie 黃歇, Lord of Chunshen (Chunshen Jun 春申君) and prime minister of Chu.<sup>1358</sup> Notably, this would have brought him into the orbit of the Lu Confucians, who may have taken him as an “intellectual nemesis.”<sup>1359</sup> Alas, sometime between 246 BCE and 240 BCE, a retainer convinced Chunshen that Xunzi was a threat because his own worthiness positioned him to conquer the world, even from a relatively minor fief.<sup>1360</sup> When Xunzi departed for Zhao, where he was made a senior minister, Chunshen recalled Xunzi in 240 BCE, who initially refused, but after relenting, he served again as Magistrate until Chunshen was assassinated in 238 BCE and he was again dismissed.<sup>1361</sup> Retired in Lanling, Xunzi lived out his days as the Qin consolidated all of China into the first imperial dynasty (221-207 BCE), dying at the age of ninety to one hundred years in 220-210 BCE.<sup>1362</sup>

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<sup>1358</sup> Xunzi, I: 28.

<sup>1359</sup> Confucius, *The Original Analects*, 173; 6, 9, 185, 193.

<sup>1360</sup> Xunzi, *Xunzi: Translation and Study*, I: 28.

<sup>1361</sup> Xunzi, I: 28-30.

<sup>1362</sup> Xunzi, I: 31-35.

While the purposes of this chapter do not include a text-critical analysis of the text of the *Xunzi*, it is nevertheless helpful to know something of their reception<sup>1363</sup> and to consider briefly issues of translation. Liu Xiang 劉向 (77-6 BCE) collected, edited, and collated Xunzi's works during the Han dynasty (206 BCE – 220 CE); Xunzi himself did not write all of the books contained therein as singular works.<sup>1364</sup> In the late Tang dynasty (618-907 CE), the scholar Yang Liang 楊諒 wrote the first commentary on the *Xunzi* and reordered some of the books, establishing the standard format.<sup>1365</sup> Knoblock takes a strong view of the authenticity of the work thus passed down:

We may conclude that the works transmitted by Liu Xiang and Yang Liang are in general the authentic works of Xunzi. Except for interpolations identified in the notes, the text is exceptionally reliable and may be used with confidence.<sup>1366</sup>

Notably, the purposes of this chapter do not require such a strong view, relying instead on the text as it has been received and interpreted in more recent scholarship.

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<sup>1363</sup> Knoblock provides exquisite detail regarding the history and authenticity of the text: *Xunzi*, I: chap. 7.

<sup>1364</sup> *Xunzi*, I: 6.

<sup>1365</sup> *Xunzi*, I: 110-12.

<sup>1366</sup> *Xunzi*, I: 128.

Issues of translation, however, are significantly more salient to present purposes. There are four substantive English translations of *Xunzi* into English. The first is by Homer H. Dubs in 1928,<sup>1367</sup> and the second by Burton Watson in 1963,<sup>1368</sup> but both translated only select chapters that they deemed the most important. The first complete translation of the *Xunzi* by John Knoblock was published in three volumes from 1988 to 1994, includes extensive introduction and commentary, and remains the definitive scholarly translation.<sup>1369</sup> All quotations of *Xunzi* in what follows will be taken from this translation and cited first with book and section separated by a period and then with volume and page numbers separated by a colon in parentheses, while quotations from the commentary will simply be cited with volume and page numbers. In 2014, Eric L. Hutton published a complete translation in a single volume, although it is intended more for teaching than scholarship.<sup>1370</sup> Nevertheless, as we will see, all of these translations assume a realist interpretation of *Xunzi* and his project,

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<sup>1367</sup> *Xunzi, The Works of Hsiüntze. Translated from the Chinese, with Notes*, trans. Homer H. Dubs (London: Arthur Probsthain, 1928).

<sup>1368</sup> *Xunzi, Basic Writings*, trans. Burton Watson (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1963).

<sup>1369</sup> *Xunzi, Xunzi: Translation and Study*.

<sup>1370</sup> *Xunzi, Xunzi: The Complete Text*, trans. Eric L. Hutton (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014), xi–xviii.



which means they can be called into question when a constructivist interpretation is offered.<sup>1371</sup> In this way, the secondary literature returns full circle to the interpretive frameworks behind the translations of the primary text.

### *Distinctive Doctrines*

Consideration of three doctrines, which Xunzi develops in distinctive ways, and their interrelationships, is important for gaining traction on his own responses to the problematic of the Warring States period.

Xunzi is probably best known in the history of Chinese thought for being a “heretical” Confucian due to his doctrine of Human Nature (Xing 性) as E 恶, which is usually translated “evil,” in contrast to the supposedly orthodox Mencius who argued that it is good, as noted above.<sup>1372</sup> As has been noted by many modern scholars, however, Mencius and Xunzi employed different operational definitions of “nature,” which Mencius takes to include human agency and artifice (Wei 偽), and thus the basic moral impulse to do good. Xunzi,

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<sup>1371</sup> Hagen, *The Philosophy of Xunzi*.

<sup>1372</sup> Xunzi, *Xunzi: Translation and Study*, I: 99; III: 139-62. For debate over orthodoxy, see Homer H. Dubs, “‘Nature’ in the Teaching of Confucius,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 50 (January 1, 1930): 233–37, <https://doi.org/10.2307/593076>; Herrlee Glessner Creel, “Confucius and Hsün-Tzū,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 51, no. 1 (March 1, 1931): 23–32, <https://doi.org/10.2307/593216>.

by contrast, distinguishes nature and artifice such that any moral formation at all falls under the category of artifice,<sup>1373</sup> while human nature “embraces what is spontaneous from Nature, what cannot be learned, and what requires no application to master.”<sup>1374</sup> Furthermore, this nature is made up of various competing desires, the senses for discriminating their satisfactory fulfillment, and the drive to in fact fulfill them.<sup>1375</sup> Attempting to fulfill all of these desires to their ultimate extent simultaneously leads to chaos and conflict such that none of them may in fact be fulfilled, and so education and ritual are needed to limit and harmonize the desires for their maximal satisfaction.<sup>1376</sup> Following this analysis, the translation of Xunzi to say that human nature is “evil” may be rejected in favor of a more nuanced translation that human nature is “crude,” in the sense that it requires refinement by education and ritual just as a block of stone requires refinement by a sculptor to turn it into a piece of art.<sup>1377</sup> What the conception of crudeness fails to capture, however, is what Xunzi took to be the

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<sup>1373</sup> T. C. Kline and P. J. Ivanhoe, *Virtue, Nature, and Moral Agency in the Xunzi* (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 2000), 103–4, 128n1-10; Goldin, *Rituals of the Way*, 1–37; Hagen, *The Philosophy of Xunzi*, 121–45; Graham, *Disputers of the Tao*, 244–51.

<sup>1374</sup> Xunzi, *Xunzi: Translation and Study*, 23.1c (III: 152); III: 139-50.

<sup>1375</sup> Xunzi, 23.1e (III: 153), 4.9-10 (I: 191-92).

<sup>1376</sup> Xunzi, 19.1a (III: 55); Kline and Tiwald, *Ritual and Religion in the Xunzi*, 79–80.

<sup>1377</sup> Hagen, *The Philosophy of Xunzi*, 122–23.

inevitably disastrous outcomes of failing to refine human nature through education and ritual, which is a situation entirely unlike the decision of a sculptor to simply leave the stone be. Thus, perhaps the best way of understanding human nature for Xunzi is to say that human nature is ominous.<sup>1378</sup>

Unlike human nature, Heaven (Tian 天) is decidedly not ominous for Xunzi, even though it is responsible for imparting the ominous nature to humanity, although neither could it be considered propitious.<sup>1379</sup> Rather, heaven is the sum total of the constant processes that direct the world, and Xunzi frequently uses Tian 天 to refer to Tiandi 天地, or heaven and earth, wherein earth is the material of the world that heaven directs.<sup>1380</sup> While it is true that it is impossible to understand how Xunzi conceived heaven apart from the analogy to the relationship between a ruler and the people,<sup>1381</sup> heaven was nevertheless depersonalized and naturalized in his thought such that it should not be expected to respond to ritual invocation or seen as responsible for signs and

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<sup>1378</sup> I am grateful to my friend and colleague Bin Song 宋斌 for this translation, which he received from John Berthrong, who believes he may have heard it from someone else a long time ago.

<sup>1379</sup> Xunzi, *Xunzi: Translation and Study*, III: 4-7; Goldin, *Rituals of the Way*, 39-54.

<sup>1380</sup> Xunzi, *Xunzi: Translation and Study*, III: 3-4; Graham, *Disputers of the Tao*, 238-44.

<sup>1381</sup> Xunzi, *Xunzi: Translation and Study*, III: 8; Graham, *Disputers of the Tao*, 243.

omens.<sup>1382</sup> Nevertheless, humanity does interact with both heaven and earth in order to order them, as described in the concept of the Trinity of heaven, earth, and humanity: “Heaven and Earth give birth to the gentleman, and the gentleman provides the organizing principle for Heaven and Earth. The gentleman is the triadic partner of Heaven and Earth, the summation of the myriad of things, and the father and mother of the people.”<sup>1383</sup> Furthermore, heaven serves as something of a metaphysical or cosmological principle, although a minimally elaborated one,<sup>1384</sup> and the trinity of heaven, earth, and humanity serves as something of a rejoinder to the Yin-Yang and Five Phases cosmology described above.<sup>1385</sup> Finally, the conception of heaven promulgated by Xunzi is remarkable for its consonance with the *Daodejing* and Zhuangzi with respect to its constancy, such that “the principles, the Way, controlling it are invariable, that its patterns are regular, and that, when the Triad of Heaven,

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<sup>1382</sup> Xunzi, *Xunzi: Translation and Study*, III: 13-14, 4-6; Goldin, *Rituals of the Way*, 53.

<sup>1383</sup> Xunzi, *Xunzi: Translation and Study*, 9.15 (II: 103); 17.2a (III: 15).

<sup>1384</sup> Sor-hoon Tan, “Li (Ritual/Rite) and Tian (Heaven/Nature) in the Xunzi: Does Confucian Li Need Metaphysics?,” *Sophia* 51, no. 2 (June 1, 2012): 155–75, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11841-012-0304-6>; Robert C. Neville, “New Projects in Chinese Philosophy,” *The Pluralist* 5, no. 2 (July 1, 2010): 45–56, <https://doi.org/10.5406/pluralist.5.2.0045>.

<sup>1385</sup> Goldin, *Rituals of the Way*, 53; Graham, *Disputers of the Tao*, 238–44. This is not to say that Xunzi does not, on occasion, refer to Yin and Yang principles: Xunzi, *Xunzi: Translation and Study*, 19.6 (III: 67).

Earth, and Man is complete, its order is systematic and hierarchical.”<sup>1386</sup> In so doing, Xunzi is rejecting the central Mohist doctrine of heaven’s intention described above.<sup>1387</sup>

Consideration of human nature and heaven enables an initial statement of how Xunzi conceived Ritual Propriety (Li 禮/礼) to be elaborated further in the course of the remainder of this section. The translation of Li 禮 as “ritual propriety” or “ritual” is not uncontested, as the term has been translated “rites,” “customs,” “etiquette,” “propriety,” “morals,” “rules of proper behavior,” and “worship,” among others.<sup>1388</sup> Indeed, the conception of Li 禮 includes at least all of these translations, and the concept evolved from referring primarily to religious rites, to all social habits and customs, to any right and reasonable rule.<sup>1389</sup> The translation “ritual” is employed here for the sake of its prevalence in the literature and the bridge it provides with Western ritual theory.

For Xunzi, ritual encompasses “the highest sense of morality, duty, and social order as well as the most minor rules of good manners, the minutiae of

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<sup>1386</sup> Xunzi, *Xunzi: Translation and Study*, III: 7.

<sup>1387</sup> Xunzi, III: 6.

<sup>1388</sup> Confucius, *The Analects of Confucius*, 1999, 51; Cua, *Encyclopedia of Chinese Philosophy*, 370–71.

<sup>1389</sup> Cua, *Encyclopedia of Chinese Philosophy*, 371.

polite forms, and insignificant, it seems to us, details of costume and dress.”<sup>1390</sup>

As noted above, ritual is crucial for forming and shaping human nature from crudeness to refinement and to avoid its otherwise ominous tendencies by restraining unbounded desire:

How did ritual principles arise? I say that men are born with desires which, if not satisfied, cannot but lead men to seek to satisfy them. If in seeking to satisfy their desires men observe no measure and apportion things without limits, then it would be impossible for them not to contend over the means to satisfy their desires. Such contention leads to disorder. Disorder leads to poverty. The Ancient Kings abhorred such disorder; so they established the regulations contained within ritual and moral principles in order to apportion things, to nurture the desires of men, and to supply the means for their satisfaction. They so fashioned their regulations that desires should not want for the things which satisfy them and goods would not be exhausted by the desires. In this way the two of them, desires and goods, sustained each other over the course of time. This is the origin of ritual principles.

Thus, the meaning of ritual is to nurture.<sup>1391</sup>

The role of ritual in restraining unbounded desire makes it the basis of social ethics by providing “the rules that lead to the general welfare of society by promoting conservation, attendance to the needs of others, and care for the comfort and well-being of others.”<sup>1392</sup> Furthermore, ritual is the ideal means of governing, such that the ruler will embody ritual principles and thereby influence the people through the resulting moral force to follow ritual principles

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<sup>1390</sup> Xunzi, *Xunzi: Translation and Study*, III: 49.

<sup>1391</sup> Xunzi, 19.1a,b (III: 55).

<sup>1392</sup> Xunzi, III: 50.

and thus achieve a harmonious society.<sup>1393</sup> Indeed, government by ritual is the human contribution to the trinity of heaven, earth, and humanity: “Heaven has its seasons; Earth its resources; and Man his government.”<sup>1394</sup> Notably, however, Xunzi is a political realist who recognizes the unlikelihood of rulers so fully embodying ritual, so he encourages less able rulers to hand the reins of power to more able ministers to manage in accordance with ritual.<sup>1395</sup>

*Xunzi, the Analects, and “Confucianism”*

Gaining traction on the distinctive contributions of Xunzi both generally and regarding ritual particularly requires interrogating the relationship between Xunzi and the *Analects* community, and what this might mean for interpreting Xunzi as a “Confucian.” Xunzi was deeply antagonistic toward the Lu Confucians who compiled the *Analects*, including calling out three people by name affiliated with the Lu school as “base Ru,”<sup>1396</sup> and perhaps directly insulting Zisi and Mencius for adopting the Five Phases theory.<sup>1397</sup> E. Bruce and

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<sup>1393</sup> Xunzi, 8 (II: 63-84).

<sup>1394</sup> Xunzi, 17.2a (III: 15).

<sup>1395</sup> Pines, *Envisioning Eternal Empire*, 82–97.

<sup>1396</sup> Xunzi, *Xunzi: Translation and Study*, 6.13 (I: 228-29); I: 222.

<sup>1397</sup> Xunzi, 6.7 (I: 224). See also I: 214-15 for the alternative argument that Xunzi was attacking those who imputed the Five Phases on Zisi and Mencius.

A. Takeo Brooks describe Xunzi as the “intellectual nemesis of Lu,”<sup>1398</sup> and find evidence in chapters seventeen, nineteen, and twenty of the *Analects* that the antagonism was reciprocated. Particularly, they argue that Xunzi vilifying the three Lu affiliates is a direct response to his views being caricatured in their names in *Analects* nineteen.<sup>1399</sup>

This antagonism is present in the conception of ritual in the *Analects* and the *Xunzi*, although marked agreement on ritual is present as well. As has already been noted, the only reference to ritual in the chapter of the *Analects* directly attributable to Confucius is in 4.13, and then only ambivalently. In the context of the rest of the chapter, as Brooks and Brooks note, the ambivalence of this passage demonstrates that humaneness (Ren 仁) “is central to *Confucius*,” whereas ritual (Li 禮/礼) “is central to *Confucianism*.”<sup>1400</sup> Indeed, by roughly three generations after Confucius’ death he is portrayed as deeply concerned with the performance details, or mostly the lack of proper attention thereto, of both court and family rites and ceremonies, as well as interpersonal relations, beginning in

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<sup>1398</sup> Confucius, *The Original Analects*, 173.

<sup>1399</sup> Confucius, 193.

<sup>1400</sup> Confucius, 16.



*Analects* 9.3 and especially in chapters ten and three.<sup>1401</sup> Notably, this focus on the details of ritual performance does not seem to rely on an underlying ritual theory as would be developed in the third century BCE by Xunzi and in the texts that would become the *Rites* classic.<sup>1402</sup> The reason for this may be that Confucius himself did not need for ritual to fix an utterly broken sociopolitical order, but rather only to shore up waning leadership. Furthermore, Confucius did not have the sophisticated theories of governance to contend with that would emerge after him during the Warring States period, which would stimulate the kind of sophisticated ritual theory that later Confucians would develop. Unfortunately, the vast majority of the literature on the *Analects* in English both reads back the later ritual theories onto what is said about ritual in the *Analects* and assumes that all of the ideas in the *Analects* can more or less be associated with Confucius himself.<sup>1403</sup> The result of these paired confluences is a massive overstatement of the coherence and consistency of Confucian thought during the Warring States period.

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<sup>1401</sup> Confucius, 51, 59–67, 79–87.

<sup>1402</sup> Xunzi, *Xunzi: Translation and Study*, I: 133.

<sup>1403</sup> e.g. Amy Olberding, ed., *Dao Companion to the Analects* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2014); Confucius, *Analects*; Confucius, *The Analects of Confucius*, 1999.

One place where the *Analects* community and Xunzi do agree is the role of ritual in restraining human tendencies. For Xunzi, as has been described, ritual is a key doctrine for restraining the otherwise ominous human nature. The *Analects* community, at least at this stage, does not have a doctrine of human nature, but instead conceives the work of ritual in terms of establishing Limits (Yue 約).<sup>1404</sup> In *Analects* 6.27, which is still early in the tradition, ritual limits conduct: “Someone who is broadly learned with regard to culture, and whose conduct is restrained by the rites, can be counted upon to not go astray.”<sup>1405</sup> Later, in *Analects* 9.11, the limit shifts from conduct to the self, although without a doctrine of human nature, it is hard to draw an overly sharp distinction between the two concepts: “The Master is skilled at gradually leading me on, step by step. He broadens me with culture and restrains me with the rites, so that even if I wanted to give up I could not.”<sup>1406</sup> The implication here is that self-transformation cannot be achieved alone but requires a skilled teacher.

By the time of the accretion of chapter twelve ca. 360 BCE, a more complex relationship among humaneness (translated “goodness” by Slingerland), ritual,

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<sup>1404</sup> Confucius, *The Original Analects*, 53.

<sup>1405</sup> Confucius, *Analects*, 62.

<sup>1406</sup> Confucius, 90.

and the self emerges in *Analects* 12.1: “Restraining yourself and returning to the rites constitutes Goodness. If for one day you managed to restrain yourself and return to the rites, in this way you could lead the entire world back to Goodness. The key to achieving Goodness lies within yourself – how could it come from others?”<sup>1407</sup> Brooks and Brooks explain the relationship between humaneness and ritual in this passage: “It says that (1) [humaneness] is something to which one ‘goes’ (it is voluntary) after overcoming the self (it is not innate); (2) it is conformity to [ritual] ‘propriety’ and has no content apart from [ritual]; and (3) as in 3:9, it is a virtue not of the minister but of the ruler, and through him affects the whole populace.” They further note that at this stage in the Lu community ritual is the “ideal human and social condition.”<sup>1408</sup> Note that the need for restraint of the self to achieve humaneness, which means that it is not innate, points more toward the ominous human nature of Xunzi than the predilection toward humaneness of Mencius, even as the location of the key to achieving humaneness within the self leans back toward Mencius. The theory of

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<sup>1407</sup> Confucius, 125.

<sup>1408</sup> Confucius, *The Original Analects*, 89.

human nature developed later in *Analects* 17, particularly 17.2, is decidedly more Xunzian.<sup>1409</sup>

In spite of their shared conception of an intimate relationship between ritual and restraint, however, the *Analects* community and Xunzi diverge on how that restraint actually works. The *Analects* describes overcoming the self in order to return to ritual, which they may have adopted from the thinkers affiliated with the *Daodejing* in Lu,<sup>1410</sup> whereas for Xunzi it is by embodying ritual that the self (i.e. ominous human nature) is overcome: “the meaning of ritual is to nurture.”<sup>1411</sup> This divergence has a further implication in their respective understandings of sincerity (Cheng 誠). For the *Analects* community, sincerity “denotes a praiseworthy and admirable quality or attribute in a statement or person... It characterizes people or things as themselves and differentiates them from other beings.”<sup>1412</sup> For example, in *Analects* 13.11 Cheng 誠 is translated “true:” “If excellent people managed the state for a hundred years, then certainly they could overcome cruelty and do away with executions’ – how *true*

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<sup>1409</sup> Confucius, *Analects*, 200.

<sup>1410</sup> Xunzi, *Xunzi: Translation and Study*, III: 343n92.

<sup>1411</sup> Xunzi, 19.1b (III: 55).

<sup>1412</sup> Yanming An, *The Idea of Cheng (Sincerity/Reality) in the History of Chinese Philosophy* (New York, NY: Global Scholarly, 2005), 13.

this saying is!"<sup>1413</sup> In this sense, sincerity means realness or reality (Shi 實),<sup>1414</sup> which correlates to the achievement of humaneness through restraint of self.

For Xunzi, achievement of humaneness results from human nature proceeding through a parallel process of transformation by education and change by ritual:<sup>1415</sup> "It is through ritual that the individual is rectified. It is by means of a teacher that ritual is rectified. If there were no ritual, how could the individual be rectified? If there were no teachers, how could you know which ritual is correct?"<sup>1416</sup> As already noted, the purpose of ritual for Xunzi is to nurture, and one of the things ritual nurtures is sincerity, which in turn empowers humaneness, (note that "truthfulness" is again how Knoblock translates Cheng 誠):<sup>1417</sup> "For the gentleman to nurture his mind, nothing is more excellent than truthfulness. If a man has attained perfection of truthfulness, he will have no other concern than to uphold the principle of humanity and to behave with justice."<sup>1418</sup> Notably, sincerity is not all that ritual cultivates as a

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<sup>1413</sup> Confucius, *Analects*, italics added, 144; Yanming An, *The Idea of Cheng*, 12.

<sup>1414</sup> Yanming An, *The Idea of Cheng*, 13.

<sup>1415</sup> Yanming An, 48–50.

<sup>1416</sup> Xunzi, *Xunzi: Translation and Study*, 2.11 (I: 157).

<sup>1417</sup> Xunzi, I: 166–67, 242.

<sup>1418</sup> Xunzi, 3.9a (I: 177); Yanming An, *The Idea of Cheng*, 48.

quality of humaneness,<sup>1419</sup> but it is the quality at the heart of moral force at the heart of his conception of ideal leadership.<sup>1420</sup>

Thus, for the *Analects* community restraint of self constitutes sincerity and is a prerequisite for proper participation in ritual such that humaneness is achieved. For Xunzi, participation in ritual restrains the self such that it becomes sincere, among other things, and thus achieves humaneness. This construal of the relationship between ritual and sincerity in Xunzi derives from both his doctrine of human nature and his doctrine of heaven. In his treatise on ritual principles, Xunzi is emphatic that:

Inborn nature is the root and beginning, the raw material and original constitution. Conscious activity is the form and principle of order, the development and completion. If there were no inborn nature, there would be nothing for conscious exertion to improve; if there were no conscious exertion, then inborn nature could not refine itself. Only after inborn nature and conscious exertion have been conjoined is the concept of the sage perfected, and the merit of uniting the world brought to fulfillment.<sup>1421</sup>

Ritual for Xunzi falls under the category of conscious activity as distinct from inborn nature and the method of formation from being crude and ominous to humane and sagely.<sup>1422</sup> Ritual “completes” human nature, which is to say that

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<sup>1419</sup> Xunzi, *Xunzi: Translation and Study*, 2.6 (I: 155).

<sup>1420</sup> Xunzi, 3.9a-c (I: 177-79); 3.10 (I: 179); I: 258n61.

<sup>1421</sup> Xunzi, 19.6 (III: 66).

<sup>1422</sup> Xunzi, 23.1c (III: 152).

ritual makes human nature sincere and thus humane. Furthermore, ritual is related to sincerity in the doctrine of heaven, and more particularly in the doctrine of the trinity of heaven, earth, and humanity, as sincerity is given cosmological dimension.<sup>1423</sup> Yanming An notes that ritual and sincerity are analogous for Xunzi in two ways (note that An here translates heaven as “Nature”):

First, they both originate from the human world, and latter (sic) are “read into” Nature. Secondly, they are both regarded as general principles after the journey of being read into Nature, and thereby acquiring an imperative force to regulate human conducts (sic). Obviously, there is a similar circle of reasoning in both cases, which begins and ends at the same point – human society.<sup>1424</sup>

Thus, both ritual and sincerity for Xunzi are conscious activity and so are human artifacts with correlations in the cosmic order. This correlation is given causal force through the concept of pattern (Li 理), from which ritual is derived and “which are in turn considered the real design of nature.”<sup>1425</sup>

This discussion of the contrasting views regarding the relationships among ritual, humaneness, sincerity, and restraint leads naturally into the debate in the contemporary literature on Xunzi between interpreting him as a realist or a

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<sup>1423</sup> Yanming An, *The Idea of Cheng*, 50–53; Xunzi, *Xunzi: Translation and Study*, 19.2c (III: 60).

<sup>1424</sup> Yanming An, *The Idea of Cheng*, 54.

<sup>1425</sup> Hagen, *The Philosophy of Xunzi*, 49–50.

constructivist. Before turning to that debate, however, it is important to consider briefly what the distinctiveness of the *Analects* community with respect to Xunzi might mean for conceiving “Confucianism” during the Warring States period. Clearly, both the *Analects* community and Xunzi considered themselves genuine heirs of Confucius’ teaching, although they disagreed about exactly what that was.<sup>1426</sup> This divergence may result in part from the different contexts of their development. Xunzi was shaped intellectually in the Jixia Academy where many different strains of Warring States period thought were debated, and his stature there demonstrates at least some ability to move credibly and civilly among them. Xunzi also developed a relatively generous pragmatism in his political philosophy after seeing first hand during his travels the terrible suffering brought about by the incessant wars instigated by rampant sociopolitical disorder. This pragmatism is evidenced in his carving out space for a role for law as a secondary but likely necessary complement to ritual as the basis for sociopolitical order.<sup>1427</sup> The *Analects* community, by contrast, sought political influence in the Lu court, and so was under constant pressure to distinguish its views from other options. Such pressure necessarily results in more ideological,

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<sup>1426</sup> Xunzi, *Xunzi: Translation and Study*, 7 & 8 (II: 53-84).

<sup>1427</sup> Xunzi, 25.46-50 (III: 185-86); I: 22, 32–33.



as opposed to pragmatic, prescriptions. It also keeps the focus of the community significantly more narrowly on politically relevant doctrines, as opposed to the broader systematic, and at times cosmological, treatises of Xunzi. The Confucian perspective exhibited marked internal diversity among the diverse perspectives of the Warring States period. Therefore, it is critical, with Michael Puett, to resist the prevalent cultural-essentialist and evolutionary interpretations of Confucianism, the Warring States period, and Chinese thought generally, at least in part for the sake of improving comparative approaches to these texts and contexts.<sup>1428</sup>

#### *Realism vs. Constructivism*

With the publication of *The Philosophy of Xunzi: A Reconstruction*, Kurtis Hagen ignites a debate with the vast majority of prior English-language scholarship over the proper interpretation of Xunzi as a realist or a constructivist. The strong version of realism that Hagen disputes “maintains not merely that there is a reality independent of our thoughts about it, but that there is a privileged description of this reality, that concepts can and should mirror it, and

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<sup>1428</sup> Puett, *To Become a God*, 5–26.

that there is a uniquely correct way of being in it."<sup>1429</sup> Instead, Hagen interprets Xunzi as advocating what might be called a strong version of constructivism in which "there is no privileged description of the world – concepts, categories, and norms, as social constructs, help us effectively manage our way through the world rather than reveal or express univocal knowledge of it."<sup>1430</sup> Unfortunately, in making this case, Hagen relies heavily on a cultural-essentialist approach to the Warring States period: "I have endeavored to provide a textually grounded interpretation, which strives to be loyal to not only to Xunzi (sic), and to the text that bears his name, but to sensibilities that I understand as characteristic of the early Confucian tradition generally."<sup>1431</sup> Nevertheless, the dichotomy of realism versus constructivism does provide yet further entre into the conception of ritual in Xunzi, particularly regarding his understanding of the relationship between ritual and language. In the process of unpacking Xunzi from the cultural-essentialist paradigm, the question of interpreting him as a realist or constructivist may be answered: yes.

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<sup>1429</sup> Hagen, *The Philosophy of Xunzi*, 8.

<sup>1430</sup> Hagen, 9.

<sup>1431</sup> Hagen, xi.

The realist side of Xunzi arises, once again, from his doctrine of the trinity of heaven, earth, and humanity. As has already been noted, earth provides the material of the world and heaven provides that material form and pattern (Li 理). Important here is the concept of constancy, noted above to have derived from the *Daodejing* and Zhuangzi, which has to do with the consistent application of general principles, the Way (Dao 道), as opposed to having to do with longevity: “when Heaven and Earth conjoin, the myriad things are begot”<sup>1432</sup> and “the Way itself is constant in its form yet completely changeable.”<sup>1433</sup> Heaven is thus characterized in terms of the regularity of change according to constant principles.<sup>1434</sup> This constancy of patterned material in humans is what Xunzi calls “inborn nature,” or the crude, ominous nature prior to being refined and restrained by ritual and education, which is what is given to humanity by heaven.<sup>1435</sup> The reality of the world, including human nature among the rest of nature, is thus objective and independent; this is the very meaning of constancy for Xunzi.

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<sup>1432</sup> Xunzi, *Xunzi: Translation and Study*, 19.6 (III: 67).

<sup>1433</sup> Xunzi, 21.4 (III: 103).

<sup>1434</sup> Xunzi, III: 7.

<sup>1435</sup> Xunzi, 23.1a-e (III: 150-153).

The constructivist side of Xunzi, on the other hand, arises from his conception of the human role in the trinity as arising from artifice in the form of ritual and morality, which are the cornerstones of government and an ordered society. In contrast with inborn nature, “what must be learned before a man can do it and what he must apply himself to before he can master it yet is found in man is properly called ‘acquired nature.’”<sup>1436</sup> It is this acquired nature that enables human participation in the trinity with heaven and earth:

Now, if the man in the street were induced to cleave to these methods, engage in study, focus his mind on a single aim, unify his intentions, ponder these principles, accomplish them each day over a long period of time, and to accumulate what is good without slacking off, then he could penetrate as far as spiritual intelligence and could form a Triad with Heaven and Earth. Thus the sage is a man who has reached this high state through accumulated effort.<sup>1437</sup>

The acquired nature arises from the conscious effort of humans, not from their inborn nature endowed by heaven: “ritual principles and moral duty, laws and standards, are the creation of the acquired nature of the sage and not the product of anything inherent in his inborn nature.”<sup>1438</sup> This acquired nature, then, is what

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<sup>1436</sup> Xunzi, 23.1c (III: 152).

<sup>1437</sup> Xunzi, 23.5a (III: 159).

<sup>1438</sup> Xunzi, 23.2a (III: 154).

makes humanity distinctive in the trinity with heaven and earth: “Heaven has its seasons; Earth its resources; and Man his government.”<sup>1439</sup>

The relationship between realism and constructivism in Xunzi is demonstrated first by returning to the concept of sincerity (Cheng 誠) and the harmony of its ethical and cosmic dimensions. Xunzi describes both the constancy of heaven and the activity of sages in terms of sincerity, (translated by Knoblock again as “truthfulness”): “Heaven and Earth are indeed great, but were they to lack truthfulness, they could not transmute the myriad things. Sages to be sure are wise, but were they to lack truthfulness, they could not transmute the people.”<sup>1440</sup> While heavenly cosmic sincerity and human ethical sincerity are a common principle for Xunzi,<sup>1441</sup> heavenly cosmic sincerity is a direct result of its constant nature, which is exhibited through and through, whereas human ethical sincerity is a result of the acquired nature that refines the inborn nature of humanity, that is, of the consciousness and intentionality that heaven lacks.<sup>1442</sup> This intentionality is also what distinguishes humans from animals: “What is it

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<sup>1439</sup> Xunzi, 17.2a (III: 15).

<sup>1440</sup> Xunzi, 3.9c (I: 178).

<sup>1441</sup> Yanming An, *The Idea of Cheng*, 53.

<sup>1442</sup> Yanming An, 51.

that makes a man human? I say that it lies in his ability to draw boundaries."<sup>1443</sup>

This consciousness and intentionality are crucial for the constructive contribution of humanity, which Xunzi describes in terms of transmutation and transformation:

If a man has attained perfection of truthfulness, he will have no other concern than to uphold the principle of humanity and to behave with justice. If with truthfulness of mind he upholds the principle of humanity, it will be given form. Having been given form, it becomes intelligible. Having become intelligible, it can produce transmutation. If with truthfulness of mind he behaves with justice, it will accord with natural order. According with natural order, it will become clear. Having become clear, it can produce transformation. To cause transmutation and transformation to flourish in succession is called the "Power of Nature."<sup>1444</sup>

(Note that "nature" is one of the translations Knoblock uses for what is otherwise translated "heaven"). Nevertheless, this construction is not over and above what heaven forms from the material of earth, but rather flourishes as it accords with the constancy of heaven: "the gentleman is guided by what is constant."<sup>1445</sup> Yet, heaven is lacking without the constructive work of humanity:

When Heaven and Earth conjoin, the myriad things are begot; when the Yin and Yang principles combine, transformations and transmutations are produced; when inborn nature and conscious activity are joined, the world is made orderly. Heaven is able to beget the myriad things, but it cannot differentiate them. Earth can support man, but it cannot govern him. The myriad things under the canopy of heaven and all those who

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<sup>1443</sup> Xunzi, *Xunzi: Translation and Study*, 5.4 (I: 206).

<sup>1444</sup> Xunzi, 3.9a (I: 177-78).

<sup>1445</sup> Xunzi, 17.5 (III: 17).

belong among living people depend upon the appearance of the sage, for only then is each assigned its proper station.<sup>1446</sup>

Xunzi is assiduous in avoiding any subordination in his doctrine of the trinity.

The intertwining of realism and constructivism is further demonstrated in the distinctively Xunzian project of Rectifying Names (Zhengming 正名). In this project, Xunzi develops his own conception of language as ritual in dialogue with the other strains of thinking about language during the Warring States period considered above, particularly the later Mohists.<sup>1447</sup> While the conception of rectifying names appears in *Analects* 13.3, the logical chain argument in the second half of the passage indicates to Brooks and Brooks that the direction of influence was actually from Xunzi into the *Analects* and not vice versa as is usually assumed.<sup>1448</sup> The ultimate purpose of rectifying names, like virtually everything for Xunzi, is social stability. With respect to a true king, who would be a sage, Xunzi says: “Because fixed names keep objects distinguished and because when his Way is practiced his goals are universally understood, he takes pains to produce uniformity [in regard to names and his Way] among the

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<sup>1446</sup> Xunzi, 19.6 (III: 67); 9.15 (II: 103).

<sup>1447</sup> Makeham, *Name and Actuality in Early Chinese Thought*, 57; Xunzi, *Xunzi: Translation and Study*, III: 118.

<sup>1448</sup> Confucius, *The Original Analects*, 190.

people.”<sup>1449</sup> After considering how the senses are involved in distinguishing kinds and qualities, Xunzi proceeds to explain how then to name things according to a classification of names.<sup>1450</sup> He then goes on to examine the nature of names:

Names have no intrinsic appropriateness. They are bound to something by agreement in order to name it. The agreement becomes fixed, the custom is established, and it is called “appropriate.” If a name differs from the agreed name, it is then called “inappropriate.” Names have no intrinsic object. They are bound to some reality by agreement in order to name that object. The object becomes fixed, the custom is established, and it is called the name of that object.

Names do have intrinsic good qualities. When a name is direct, easy, and not at odds with the thing, it is called a “good name.”<sup>1451</sup>

Names, which is to say language, is thus a subset of ritual for Xunzi, requiring sages to construct them in conformity with the Way such that social order is established and maintained. The ritual of language includes both pragmatics and syntax:

The “use” of a particular name consists in the object being clearly understood when the name is heard. The “linkage” of names [into syntactical units] consists in compositions being formed by stringing words together. When both the use and the links between names are grasped, we are said to know the name.<sup>1452</sup>

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<sup>1449</sup> Xunzi, *Xunzi: Translation and Study*, 22.1c (III: 128); 22.2b (III: 128-29).

<sup>1450</sup> Xunzi, 22.2f (III: 130).

<sup>1451</sup> Xunzi, 22.2g (III: 130-31).

<sup>1452</sup> Xunzi, 22.3f (III: 132).



Xunzi also identifies a continuum from words through sentences to rhetoric and connects these with mind and reality:

Names are used to define different realities. Propositions connect the names of different realities in order to express a single idea. Dialectics and explanations, by not allowing objects to become differentiated from their names, are used to illustrate the Way of action and repose. Defining and naming are the function of dialectics and explanation. Dialectics and explanation are the mind's representation of the Way. The mind is the artisan and manager of the Way. The Way is the classical standard and rational principle of order.<sup>1453</sup>

In this way, names as rituals participate in the restraint of the mind such that it may accord with the constancy of heaven and thereby generate order: "When the mind conforms to the Way, explanations conform to the mind, propositions conform to explanations, and when names are used correctly and according to definition, the real and true qualities of things are clearly conveyed."<sup>1454</sup> The constructive contribution of humanity in naming is fulfilled in its accord with objective and independent reality, or heaven.

Bearing on the question of realism and constructivism in the *Xunzi*, much of the recent literature on Xunzi interprets him as a pragmatist, less concerned with the particularities of the ritual forms of his day than with the importance of effective rituals. Paul Goldin, for instance, claims that, "Xunzi has specific rituals

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<sup>1453</sup> Xunzi, 22.3f (III: 132).

<sup>1454</sup> Xunzi, 22.3f (III: 133).

in mind – as of salutation, of mourning, of eating – but the precise nature of the rituals is of only secondary importance to his argument.”<sup>1455</sup> For the constructivist case, this interpretation allows for a variety of ritual constructions that are effective in guiding life. Kurtis Hagen spends significant energy contesting the Watson translation of a passage from *Xunzi* 20.3, as “Music is unalterable harmonies. The rites are unexchangeable patterns,” and contests its employment by other scholars.<sup>1456</sup> Instead he prefers the translation A.C. Graham offers: “‘Music’ is the unalterable in harmonising, ‘ceremony’ is the irreplaceable in patterning.”<sup>1457</sup> Notably, Hagen shares the cultural-essentialist orientation with Graham, which enables interpreting *Xunzi* as part of a much more widely accepted Chinese cosmology rather than as a contestant over the very principles of the cosmology. He neglects the translation offered by Knoblock entirely: “music embodies harmonies that can never be altered, just as ritual embodies principles of natural order that can never be changed.”<sup>1458</sup> This translation

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<sup>1455</sup> Goldin, *Rituals of the Way*, 68.

<sup>1456</sup> *Xunzi*, *Basic Writings*, 117; Hagen, *The Philosophy of Xunzi*, 99–103; Kline and Ivanhoe, *Virtue, Nature, and Moral Agency in the Xunzi*, 120–21; Philip J. Ivanhoe, “A Happy Symmetry: Xunzi’s Ethical Thought,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 59, no. 2 (July 1, 1991): 309–22, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jaarel/LIX.2.309>.

<sup>1457</sup> Graham, *Disputers of the Tao*, 261.

<sup>1458</sup> *Xunzi*, *Xunzi: Translation and Study*, 20.3 (III: 84); 326n25.

indicates that it is not music and ritual in themselves that are unalterable, as this would be inconsistent with the principle that ritual is a human creation and artifact, but rather the harmonies and natural order that music and ritual embody.

As desirable as abstracting the theory of ritual from the particularities of practice in ancient China might be, as the present project in fact does, ascribing the acceptability of the procedure to Xunzi is an overinterpretation. For example, Xunzi justifies the appropriateness of the ritual of three years of mourning as “equal to the emotions involved,” and thus “they admit neither of diminution nor of addition. Thus it is said that they are methods that are matchless and unchanging.”<sup>1459</sup> Even if he is employing hyperbolic rhetoric here, there is nevertheless an indication of the objective superiority of the funeral practices established by the Ancient Kings: “Thus, the Ancient Kings acted to establish proper forms wherein men could express the full measure of their obligation to pay honor to those deserving honor and to show affection to those whom they cherished.”<sup>1460</sup> It is not that the rituals of mourning are in principle unalterable,

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<sup>1459</sup> Xunzi, 19.9a (III: 69).

<sup>1460</sup> Xunzi, 19.11 (III: 72).

but rather that the rituals established by the ancient kings most fully embody the natural order of human emotions and so altering them would be foolish.

Furthermore, in *Rectifying Theses*, the second thesis Xunzi refutes is that Tang 湯 (Shang 商) and Wu 武 (Zhou 王) were false kings because they overthrew and executed their immoral predecessors, Jie 桀 (Xia 夏) and Zhou Xin 紂辛 (Shang 商). Instead, Xunzi argues that Tang and Wu were true kings and sages because they governed by ritual and moral principles, whereas Jie and Zhou Xin were corrupt and “predators of the people.”<sup>1461</sup> In the course of making this argument, Xunzi defines kingship particularly in relationship to the ritual customs of ancient China: “In antiquity, the Son of Heaven had a thousand offices in his government and the feudal lords each had a hundred. To use these thousand offices to execute orders in all the countries of the Xia Chinese traditions is what is meant by being ‘King.’”<sup>1462</sup> Knoblock comments:

The term *xia* 夏 here transcends its usual meaning of the Xia dynasty. In this context it refers to all those countries that followed the common polite forms, rites and rituals, and sense of decorum and bearing – *li* 禮 in all its ramifications – by which the Central States distinguished themselves from the surrounding barbarians. In the language of this time, it referred to the core of states in the center of the Chinese world that looked back to a

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<sup>1461</sup> Xunzi, 18.2 (III: 35).

<sup>1462</sup> Xunzi, 18.2 (III: 34); 5.4 (I: 206-07).

past of great renown and power in contrast to the present dominated by upstart, semi-barbarian states beyond the pale of Xia culture.<sup>1463</sup>

For Xunzi, the fit of ritual in culture is clearly connected with the particular social formations of ancient China, however ideal and aspirational they may be: “The sage clearly understands ritual, the scholar and gentleman find comfort in carrying it out, officials of government have as their task preserving it, and the Hundred Clans incorporate it into their customs.”<sup>1464</sup> In sum, it is unclear that Xunzi had access to a philosophical imagination that could entertain a ritual order beyond the sociopolitical context of Warring States period China. Again, the constructive work of humanity in creating and adjusting ritual is a construction toward both an objective, independent, real, natural order, and toward an ideal social reality.

Further nuance is brought to the particular brand of realism Xunzi espouses by considering how he conceives ritual with respect to religion. Already noted is that religious ceremonies are only one form of ritual that Xunzi advocates. Nevertheless, his inclusion of religious ceremonies in the range of things that constitute ritual requires a reconceptualization of their function, albeit

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<sup>1463</sup> Xunzi, 305n18.

<sup>1464</sup> Xunzi, 19.11 (III: 72).

not their form. Xunzi distinguishes between the perspective on ritual upheld by commoners and the perspective upheld by noble persons:

If you pray for rain and there is rain, what of that? I say there is no special relationship – as when you do not pray for rain and there is rain... We do these things not because we believe that such ceremonies will produce the results we seek, but because we want to embellish such occasions with ceremony. Thus, the gentleman considers such ceremonies as embellishments, but the Hundred Clans consider them supernatural. To consider them embellishments is fortunate; to consider them supernatural is unfortunate.<sup>1465</sup>

Edward Machle (1919 – 2011) provides an alternative translation:

When we sacrifice for rain, it rains. Why? I say, there is nothing to ask “why?” about. It rains even though we don’t sacrifice.... This isn’t something to be regarded from the point of view of obtaining something we seek, but from a cultured standpoint. Consequently, although the gentleman looks on it as a matter of humane culture, the lower gentry see it as a matter of dealing with spirits. Regard it as a matter of humane culture and good fortune follows; regard it as a matter of dealings with spirits and misfortune follows.<sup>1466</sup>

As Machle further notes, Xunzi is not weighing in here on the existence of spirits, but rather denying “the efficacy of rituals to effect some change in events *independent* of their place in the total lives and development of the people involved.”<sup>1467</sup> Nevertheless, Xunzi allows for distinct understandings of what is actually going on in religious rituals depending on social role: “For the gentleman, ritual observances are considered to be part of the Way of Man.

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<sup>1465</sup> Xunzi, 17.8 (III: 19-20).

<sup>1466</sup> Kline and Tiwald, *Ritual and Religion in the Xunzi*, 25–26.

<sup>1467</sup> Kline and Tiwald, 26.

Among the Hundred Clans, they are thought to be a matter of serving the ghosts of the departed."<sup>1468</sup> However, Xunzi also claims that "at the offering of sacrifices one reverently serves the spirit" of the deceased.<sup>1469</sup> Rather than Machle's interpretive gymnastics, these apparently contradicting statements are best harmonized by attending to the final paragraph of the *Discourse on Ritual*

*Principles:*

One divines with the tortoise shell and milfoil, determines auspicious days, purifies oneself and fasts, repairs and sweeps the temple, lays out the low tables and bamboo mats, presents the ceremonial offerings, and informs the invocator as though someone were really going to enjoy the sacrifice. One takes up the offerings and presents each of them as though someone were really going to taste them. The chief waiter does not lift up the wine cup, but the chief sacrificer himself has that honor, as though someone were really going to drink from it. When the guests leave, the chief sacrificer bows and escorts them out, returns and changes his clothing, resumes his place, and weeps as though someone had really departed with the guests. How full of grief, how reverent this is! One serves the dead as one serves the living, those who have perished as those who survive, just as though one were giving visible shape to what is without shape or shadow, and in so doing one perfects proper form!<sup>1470</sup>

In the context of this passage, the second passage does not conflict as the reverence is "as if" the spirit of the person were present. The outcomes of ritual, for Xunzi, "are independent of the ontological status of the object of any specific ritual and so not dependent on the actual existence of any *particular* object, such

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<sup>1468</sup> Xunzi, *Xunzi: Translation and Study*, 19.11 (III: 72).

<sup>1469</sup> Xunzi, 19.7b (III: 68).

<sup>1470</sup> Xunzi, 19.11 (III: 73).

as a ghost or spirit or a responsive Heaven,"<sup>1471</sup> even as the success of ritual does depend on its accord with the constancy of heaven. "Ritual exemplifies, therefore, 'locative religiosity,' the kind of religiosity where crucial features of true flourishing consist in properly locating one's self within a complex social [and natural] order thought to have sacred qualities."<sup>1472</sup> It is ritual treating "as if" certain objects are real that the

old religion is secularized and humanized in Xunzi's doctrine of the "three roots" (*san ben* 三本) of ritual principles. First, Xunzi links Heaven and Earth and considers sacrifices to them as homage to the roots of life. In analogous fashion, sacrifices to forebears (ancestor worship) are homage to the roots of kinship, and sacrifices to lords and teachers are homage to the roots of social order.<sup>1473</sup>

This subjunctive quality of ritual anchors the answer to be advanced in this project to the problem of religious language.

*Ritual is Pervasive, Conventional, and Transformative*

Three aspects of Xunzian ritual theory are particularly important for comparative consideration with Western ritual theory and for the present project of conceiving language as ritual, as Xunzi himself does.

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<sup>1471</sup> Kline and Tiwald, *Ritual and Religion in the Xunzi*, 106.

<sup>1472</sup> Kline and Tiwald, 84.

<sup>1473</sup> Xunzi, *Xunzi: Translation and Study*, III: 51; 19.2a (III: 58-59).



First, ritual is pervasive. Articulating a conception of ritual as pervasive is one of the most original contributions Xunzi made to Warring States period thought, demonstrating the capacity of ritual to operate at the cosmological, social, and personal levels. John Knoblock is eloquent on this point:

Xunzi transformed the concepts of ritual from an aristocratic code of conduct, a kind of *courtoisie* that distinguished gentlemen from ordinary men, into universal principles that underlay society and just government. Man's nature, which Xunzi believed to produce evil results if left undeveloped, made it necessary to have ritual principles... These concepts pervaded later generations and were among Xunzi's most important and enduring legacies.<sup>1474</sup>

Furthermore, each of these levels of ritual operation is interconnected with the others.

At the cosmological level, as Philip Ivanhoe notes, Zhuangzi influenced Xunzi to conceive the Way as “the underlying patterns and processes of the universe itself,” in contrast with many other thinkers of the time. But Xunzi broke with Zhuangzi regarding the value of human culture, understood principally as ritual:

Xunzi’s perspective on the role of the rites was nothing less than universal. The sage needed to view things in such a manner in order to attain his grand vision of universal harmony. Only such a comprehensive and systematic approach could take account of and bring into balance the myriad constituents, various considerations, and diverse aspects of the Way. The Way served not only humans but Heaven and Earth as well...

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<sup>1474</sup> Xunzi, I: 47, 133.

For Xunzi, the Way extended far beyond society. It united the human and Natural realms into a single seamless web.<sup>1475</sup>

Indeed, in the *Discourse on Nature*, "'Way' regularly subsumes 'ritual principles.'"<sup>1476</sup> For Xunzi, deviation from the Way leads to ruin, while adherence leads to order, and this order is accomplished "by minutely examining everything in terms of ritual principles. In the past, the Ancient Kings minutely observed ritual principles so that wherever they went in making the circuit of the world, their acts involved no impropriety."<sup>1477</sup>

At the personal level, it is the pervasiveness of ritual in life that transforms inborn nature into acquired nature, thus generating the noble person who is able to participate as a member of the trinity with heaven and earth, providing them order: "The gentleman is the beginning of ritual and moral principles. Acting with them, actualizing them, accumulating them over and over again, and loving them more than all else is the beginning of the gentleman."<sup>1478</sup> As Knoblock notes, the restraint of human nature by ritual is what makes a person suitable for society: "the sacrifices gave ornamented expression to the emotions that

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<sup>1475</sup> Kline and Tiwald, *Ritual and Religion in the Xunzi*, 51.

<sup>1476</sup> Xunzi, *Xunzi: Translation and Study*, III: 14.

<sup>1477</sup> Xunzi, 12.3 (II: 179); II: 134.

<sup>1478</sup> Xunzi, 9.15 (II: 103).

otherwise would have no proper outlet and would become socially dangerous."<sup>1479</sup> Positively, ritual shows us "how to express reverence in all that we do and how to comport ourselves with dignity and gravity so that everything seems to be the product of deep thought."<sup>1480</sup> The pervasiveness of ritual in life is the fulfillment of humanity and the achievement of the Way of the Sage: "When both end and beginning have been fully attended to, then the service proper for a filial son is finished and the Way of the Sage is fulfilled."<sup>1481</sup> Without ritual, life is not even possible: "A man without ritual will not live."<sup>1482</sup>

At the social level, ritual sets the standards for relationships on analogy to physical measures for physical things: "Measures are the standards of things. Ritual principles are the standards for obligations."<sup>1483</sup> The standards set over society by ritual principles constitute the Way as embodied at the social level: "As a general rule, to obtain mankind one must adhere to the Way. What then is this Way? I say that it is just ritual and moral principles, polite refusals and

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<sup>1479</sup> Xunzi, I: 100.

<sup>1480</sup> Xunzi, III: 52.

<sup>1481</sup> Xunzi, 19.7b (III: 68).

<sup>1482</sup> Xunzi, 27.41 (III: 217).

<sup>1483</sup> Xunzi, 14.6 (II: 208); I: 100.

deference to others, and loyalty and trustworthiness.”<sup>1484</sup> Also, “rites are the highest expression of order and discrimination, the root of strength in the state, the Way by which the majestic sway of authority is created, and the focus of merit and fame.”<sup>1485</sup>

The fullest and most eloquent articulation of the pervasiveness of ritual in the *Xunzi* is in the first of the *Fu – Rhyme-Prose Poems*, quoted here in full:

Here there is a great thing:  
It is not fine silk thread or cords of silk,  
– Yet its designs and patterns are perfect, elegant compositions.  
It is not the sun, nor is it the moon,  
Yet it makes the world bright.  
The living use it to live to old age;  
The dead to be buried.  
Cities and states use it for their security;  
The three armies use it for strength.  
“Those who possess it in pure form are True Kings;  
“Those who have it in mixed form are lords-protector;  
“And those who lack any at all are annihilated.”  
Your servant stupidly does not recognize it  
And presumes to ask Your Majesty about it.  
The King replied:  
Is it not something that has cultivated form, yet is not brightly colored?  
Is it not suddenly and easily understood, yet especially possesses natural order?  
Is it not what the gentleman reveres and the petty man does not?  
Is it not something that if inborn nature does not acquire it, one is like a wild beast;  
And if inborn nature does acquire it, it produces elegant forms?  
Is it not something that, if one of the masses would exalt it, he would become a sage?  
And if one of the feudal lords exalted it, he would unite all within the four seas?  
It provides the clearest of expressions, yet it is concise;  
It is the extreme of obedience to the natural course of things, yet must be embodied in  
conduct.

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<sup>1484</sup> *Xunzi*, 16.4 (II: 243).

<sup>1485</sup> *Xunzi*, 15.4 interpolated into 19 (III: 57).

I suggest where all these qualities come together is ritual principles.<sup>1486</sup>

Second, ritual is conventional. This is to say that rituals are human constructs, human artifacts. While they participate cosmologically as the human function within the trinity with heaven and earth, they are decidedly not cosmologically derived.

The Way of the Ancient Kings lay in exalting the principle of humanity and in following the mean in their conduct. What is meant by the “mean”? I say that it is correctly identified with ritual and moral principles. The Way of which I speak is not the Way of Heaven or the Way of Earth, but rather the Way that guides the actions of mankind and is embodied in the conduct of the gentleman.<sup>1487</sup>

Indeed, the sage kings are credited with creating the ritual forms in order to curb ominous human nature: “In antiquity the sage kings took man’s nature to be evil, to be inclined to prejudice and prone to error, to be perverse and rebellious, and not to be upright or orderly. For this reason they invented ritual principles and precepts of moral duty.”<sup>1488</sup> Because ritual is a human creation, “they are things that people must study to be able to follow them and to which they must apply themselves before they can fulfill their precepts.”<sup>1489</sup> Xunzi even describes how it is that a sage creates ritual: “The sage accumulates his thoughts and ideas. He

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<sup>1486</sup> Xunzi, 26.1 (III: 194-95); III: 190-91.

<sup>1487</sup> Xunzi, 8.3 (II: 71).

<sup>1488</sup> Xunzi, 23.1b (III: 151); 19.11 (III: 72); III: 149.

<sup>1489</sup> Xunzi, 23.1c (III: 152); III: 141.

masters through practice the skills of his acquired nature and the principles involved therein in order to produce ritual principles and moral duty and to develop laws and standards."<sup>1490</sup> This creative work is on analogy to an artisan, whose artifacts are not part of the nature of the artist: "The artisan carves wood to make a vessel, but how could the wooden vessel be regarded as part of the artisan's inborn nature? The sage's relation to ritual principles is just like that of the potter molding his clay."<sup>1491</sup> Unlike the artisan, however, the material that the sage crafts is their own inborn desires:

Shun said: "It is only through following my desires that I have become orderly." Thus, ritual was created on behalf of men from worthies down to the ordinary masses but not for perfected sages. Nonetheless, it is also the means by which to perfect sages. Not to study is never to be perfected.<sup>1492</sup>

This path toward sagely perfection is claimed for Confucius in *Analects* 2.4: "At fifteen, I set my mind upon learning; at thirty, I took my place in society; at forty, I became free of doubts; at fifty, I understood Heaven's Mandate; at sixty, my ear was attuned; and at seventy, I could follow my heart's desires without overstepping the bounds of [ritual] propriety."<sup>1493</sup>

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<sup>1490</sup> Xunzi, 23.2a (III: 153-54); III: 122.

<sup>1491</sup> Xunzi, 23.4a (III: 157).

<sup>1492</sup> Xunzi, 27.13 (III: 210).

<sup>1493</sup> Confucius, *Analects*, 9.

Though conventional, rituals are not arbitrary. Xunzi identifies behavior as indecorous (Gou 苟) if it is “contrary to the mean of behavior prescribed by ritual and moral principles.”<sup>1494</sup> Knoblock cites Arthur Waley’s (1889 – 1966) explication of the range of meanings of indecorous:

The Chinese have a special word for things done “after a fashion” ... but not according to the proper ritual. What is done in this way may seem for the moment to “work,” ... but the gentleman’s code, like that of the old-fashioned artisan, compels him to “make a good job” of whatever he undertakes. A temporary success secured by irregular means gives him no satisfaction; it is stolen, not honestly come by. *Gou* ... is used when things are done “somehow or other,” in a “hit or miss” offhand fashion, when everything is “left to chance.” ... It applies wherever a result is achieved by mere accident and not as a result of inner power (*de*).<sup>1495</sup>

Ritual is the contrast term to this accidental functioning, indicating action with consciousness and intent: “Ritual principles use obedience to the true mind of man as their foundation. Thus, were there no ritual principles in the *Classic of Ritual*, there would still be need for some kind of ritual in order to accord with the mind of man.”<sup>1496</sup> Here, the “true mind” seems to correspond with the “mind of the Way” in *Dispelling Blindness*, upon which Knoblock comments:

Both the “mind of man” and the “mind of the Way” are the mind; the first emphasizes the essential qualities of man, which Xunzi regarded as bad, and the second the

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<sup>1494</sup> Xunzi, *Xunzi: Translation and Study*, 3.1 (I: 174).

<sup>1495</sup> Xunzi, I: 160.

<sup>1496</sup> Xunzi, 27.19 (III: 211).

conversion of these qualities through conscious exertion into what is right and proper and accords with the Way.<sup>1497</sup>

The accordance between ritual and the mind, in turn, would seem to have to do with the role of ritual in enabling the mind to make distinctions and discriminations, as was cited above from *Contra Physiognomy* 5.4 above. Again, Knoblock comments: “What distinguishes man from the animals is not his external characteristics, but his ability to draw distinctions and to make discriminations. This ability enables him to give good and proper form to his behavior through ritual principles, which he alone can conceive.”<sup>1498</sup> He goes on to cite the *Liji* (“Quli” 曲禮, 1.6b-7a): “Now when men today are lacking ritual principles, though they too can speak, do they not also have merely the mind of an animal? ... For this reason, the sages created ritual principles to instruct man and cause him to know that it is only through rites that they are different from the beasts.”<sup>1499</sup> The drawing of distinctions and discriminations is thought itself: “The emotions being so paired, the mind’s choosing between them is called ‘thinking.’”<sup>1500</sup> The drawing of distinctions and discriminations is thus thought

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<sup>1497</sup> Xunzi, III: 96.

<sup>1498</sup> Xunzi, I: 202.

<sup>1499</sup> Xunzi, I: 203.

<sup>1500</sup> Xunzi, 22.1b (III: 127).



operating according to ritual: “Those who keep to the mean provided by ritual and are able to ponder and meditate on it are said to be able to think.”<sup>1501</sup> Thus ritual as the prerequisite to thought results in an alternative definition of Gou 苟 as “thoughtless.”

The rituals of language are the primary means of drawing distinctions: “fixed names keep objects distinguished.”<sup>1502</sup> Thus, the project of rectifying names for Xunzi is crucial for having common distinctions that allow society to accord with the Way. Without rectified names, the whole rest of the ritual apparatus falls apart:

Alienated minds influence the factors that are relative in the terms we use to illustrate our meaning; and in regard to different things, the connection between the name and the object is obscure, what is noble and base is unclear, and things that are alike and things that are different are not distinguished. Given this situation, intentions are certain to be frustrated through a failure to explain fully, and the execution of a person’s duties is certain to suffer from being hampered and obstructed.<sup>1503</sup>

Here Xunzi talks about the work of sages making distinctions in terms of language:

Wise men made “distinctions” and “separations.” They instituted names to refer to objects, making distinctions in order to make clear what is noble and what base and

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<sup>1501</sup> Xunzi, 19.2d (III: 61).

<sup>1502</sup> Xunzi, 22.1c (III: 128).

<sup>1503</sup> Xunzi, 22.2b (III: 128-29).

separations in order to discriminate between things that are the same and those that are different... This is the purpose of having names.<sup>1504</sup>

Elsewhere he likewise speaks of the sages making distinctions through ritual:

“As a consequence of their perfected form there are the various distinctions made by ritual principles, and as a consequence of their perfect discernment there are explanations provided for everything.”<sup>1505</sup> This leads Xunzi to a further consideration of the conventionality of ritual, especially the ritual of language, namely, that names, and rituals, do not have an intrinsic appropriateness, an intrinsic object, or intrinsic good qualities. Instead, names, and rituals,

are bound to something by agreement in order to name it. The agreement becomes fixed, the custom is established, and it is called “appropriate.” If a name differs from the agreed name, it is then called “inappropriate.” ... [Names] are bound to some reality by agreement in order to name that object. The object becomes fixed, the custom is established, and it is called the name of that object... When a name is direct, easy, and not at odds with the thing, it is called a “good name.”<sup>1506</sup>

Kurtis Hagen celebrates the lack of an intrinsic connection between names and realities, which is to say nominalism, in Xunzi, but he also denies the independent, objective reality of the objects to which the conventional names are correlated, instead claiming that the process of naming constructs the very reality

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<sup>1504</sup> Xunzi, 22.2b (III: 129).

<sup>1505</sup> Xunzi, 19.2c (III: 60).

<sup>1506</sup> Xunzi, 22.2g (III: 130-31).

of objects.<sup>1507</sup> This neglects the fact that if a good name is to be “not at odds with the thing,” then there must be a thing with sufficient determinateness that a name could be at odds with it or not. That is, reality must have sufficient contours that names fit or do not, which contours are prior to the names themselves, not constructed by them. Moreover, as with rituals, the reason that agreement is achievable is that the capacity for making distinctions and discriminations lies in the sense organs: “What is the basis of deeming something the same or different? I say that it is based on the sense organs given us by nature.”<sup>1508</sup> Since everyone has the same sense organs and lives in the same world made up of the same things, the representations of what the organs sense is the same: “Whenever things belong to the same category of being or have the same essential characteristics, the representation of them presented by the senses is the same.”<sup>1509</sup> This keeps language grounded in the Way of humanity, which is a participant, when rectified by ritual, in the trinity with heaven and earth.

Third, ritual is transformative. Xunzi testifies to the transformative capacity of ritual from the very first chapter: “If you would take the Ancient

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<sup>1507</sup> Hagen, *The Philosophy of Xunzi*, 61–69.

<sup>1508</sup> Xunzi, *Xunzi: Translation and Study*, 22.2c (III: 129).

<sup>1509</sup> Xunzi, 22.2c (III: 129); 22.2d-e (III: 129-30).

Kings as your source and the principle of humanity and justice as your foundation, then ritual principles will rectify the warp and woof, the straightaways and byways of your life.”<sup>1510</sup> Moreover, only after being rectified by ritual is a person capable of considering the Way:

Thus, after ritual principles are respected in his actions, you can discuss with him the methods of the Way; after his speech is guided by ritual principles, then you can discuss the principles of the Way; and after his demeanor is obedient to ritual principles, then you can discuss the attainment of the Way.<sup>1511</sup>

This rectification is what Xunzi means by self-cultivation, as Knoblock notes:

“Self-cultivation requires an understanding of ritual principles and cannot easily succeed without a teacher to lead one through the Classics.”<sup>1512</sup> Even the physiological and material conditions of life must be transformed by ritual or else suffer physiological and material consequences: “When one’s food and drink, clothing and dress, dwelling and home, activity and repose follow the dictates of ritual, they are harmonious and measured. But when they do not, they become offensive and excessive and so will produce illness.”<sup>1513</sup>

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<sup>1510</sup> Xunzi, 1.11 (I: 141).

<sup>1511</sup> Xunzi, 1.12 (I: 141).

<sup>1512</sup> Xunzi, I: 104.

<sup>1513</sup> Xunzi, 2.2 (I: 152).

Mark Berkson provides a helpful contrast between the perspective of Xunzi and that of some of his contemporaries:

For the Mohists, ritual was a wasteful, unnecessary activity that took away energy and resources from the valuable pursuits of creating wealth, population, and order in the state. For the Daoists, ritual was a form of artifice that prevented the spontaneous expression of our nature and thus cut us off from the rhythm of the Dao.<sup>1514</sup>

As has already been noted, the necessity of transformation by ritual for Xunzi is precisely because of the crudeness and ominousness of human nature:

Now, can one truly take man's inborn nature to have as its essential characteristics correctness, accord with natural principles, peacefulness, and order? Were that the case, what use would there be for sage kings, and what need for ritual and moral principles! And even supposing that there were sage kings and ritual and moral principles, what indeed could they add to correctness, natural principles, peace, and order!<sup>1515</sup>

Xunzi in part refutes the claim of "original simplicity and childhood naiveté" of humanity Mencius makes by arguing that ritual provides no real transformation unless this simplicity and naiveté are "lost or destroyed" in the process.<sup>1516</sup>

Having overcome crude and ominous human nature, through rituals "we become true friends, devoted servants, filial sons, loving fathers, and proper hosts."<sup>1517</sup>

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<sup>1514</sup> Kline and Tiwald, *Ritual and Religion in the Xunzi*, 107.

<sup>1515</sup> Xunzi, *Xunzi: Translation and Study*, 23.3a (III: 155).

<sup>1516</sup> Xunzi, 23.1d (III: 152-53).

<sup>1517</sup> Xunzi, III: 52.

While ritual seeks to transform conduct, the transformation of conduct is for the sake of the tranquility of the emotions: “When what ritual mandates, you make so in your conduct, then your emotions will find peace in ritual.”<sup>1518</sup> Xunzi emphasizes that “ritual may cause us to act in a certain way, but it cannot cause us to feel in a way consonant with what we do.”<sup>1519</sup> Therefore, emotional tranquility can be described in terms of the harmony of ritual and emotion:

All rites begin with coarseness, are brought to fulfillment with form, and end with pleasure and beauty. Rites reach their highest perfection when both emotion and form are fully realized. In rites of the next order, emotions and form in turn prevail. In the lowest order of rites, all reverts to emotion through returning to the conditions of Primordial Unity.<sup>1520</sup>

Emotional tranquility or harmony is likely the main content of what Xunzi intends by sincerity as a result of ritual:

When form and principle are emphasized and emotions and offerings are treated perfunctorily, there is the greatest elaboration of ritual. When emotion and offerings are emphasized and form and principle are treated perfunctorily, there is greatest simplification of ritual. When form and principle, and emotion and offerings, are treated as inside to outside, external manifestation to inner content, so that both are translated into action and commingled, there is the mean course of ritual.<sup>1521</sup>

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<sup>1518</sup> Xunzi, 2.11 (I: 157).

<sup>1519</sup> Xunzi, III: 79.

<sup>1520</sup> Xunzi, 19.2c (III: 60).

<sup>1521</sup> Xunzi, 19.3 (III: 62).

Religious rituals have a particular import with regard to emotional tranquility, as Lee Yearly points out: "They modify emotions, especially those powerful emotions that certain kinds of situations generate. These modifications ensure that such emotions do not disturb the self's equilibrium and proper functioning."<sup>1522</sup> Emotional tranquility is likely an import from Daoist thinkers, but for Xunzi the tranquility of the noble person enables the transformation of society toward order: "A gentleman creates order in terms of ritual and moral principles; he does not create order with what is contrary to them."<sup>1523</sup> Indeed, ritual transforms reality: "Rites trim what is too long, stretch out what is too short, eliminate excess, remedy deficiency, and extend cultivated forms that express love and respect so that they increase and complete the beauty of conduct according to one's duty."<sup>1524</sup> Again, ritual and language are connected in their fulfillment of the Way by means of the transformation of persons: "When the inner mind finds contentment with ritual principles and when speech is

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<sup>1522</sup> Kline and Tiwald, *Ritual and Religion in the Xunzi*, 92.

<sup>1523</sup> Xunzi, *Xunzi: Translation and Study*, 3.7 (I: 176-77).

<sup>1524</sup> Xunzi, 19.5b (III: 65).

closely connected to categories encompassed in ritual, then the Way of the Ru is fully realized.”<sup>1525</sup>

### Xunzi and Western Ritual Theory – A Comparison

The aspects of ritual as pervasive, conventional, and transformative emphasized in Xunzi now enable a robust comparison with Western ritual theory in semiotic terms.

#### *Pervasive*

Among Western ritual theorists, the ritual theory of Roy Rappaport in *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity* understands ritual to be relatively pervasive. Nevertheless, Rappaport also articulates significant limits on the pervasiveness of ritual, which he believes are necessary for the concept of ritual to provide any traction on the phenomena it encompasses. For example, he is clear that not all religious behaviors qualify as ritual: “There is little point, however, in attempting to force alms-giving or the avoidance of adultery, or all acts of respect for one’s father and mother into the definition [of ritual]’s mold.”<sup>1526</sup> In fact, “all acts of respect for one’s father and mother” are at the heart

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<sup>1525</sup> Xunzi, 29.1 (III: 251).

<sup>1526</sup> Rappaport, *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity*, 25.



of ritual for Xunzi. Rappaport and Xunzi agree that it is participation in ritual that makes people humane, but for Xunzi the ritual forms that accomplish this pervade life to a far greater depth and extent than for Rappaport. Moreover, as was demonstrated above, the category of ritual for Xunzi extends beyond human life to have cosmological dimensions as well. Part of the reason for the difference between the two is that Rappaport is still focused on the necessarily religious entailments of the ritual form, whereas there is no distinction between sacred and secular for Xunzi. More recent developments in ritual studies that build upon Rappaport point to modernist ethnography as articulating the ritual communication involved in the everyday and to theorists of interaction rituals who “emphasize the ritual nature of just about every move people make in social interaction” in order to “challenge the contrast between private and public, micro- and macrosociological events.”<sup>1527</sup> These types of ritual theories are moving in the direction of Xunzi and recognizing the pervasiveness of the ritual form.

Alas, for many Western theorists, “the distinction between ritual and non-ritual is a constituent of the hierarchy of values which shapes our Western

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<sup>1527</sup> Senft and Basso, *Ritual Communication*, 7–10.

society's social relations."<sup>1528</sup> After all, Meyer Fortes critiqued Leach for identifying language as a species of ritual on the basis that "it is a short step from this to the position that there is no such thing as ritual per se, no actions, utterances, ideas and beliefs that belong specifically to a domain we can identify by the term ritual, as opposed to everything else in social life that is non-ritual."<sup>1529</sup> Xunzi, of course, sides with Leach. The question then arises whether this must inevitably lead to the sort of indeterminacy of the category of ritual that Fortes prophesies. Notably, the sort of claim that Fortes is making, namely of the type "if everything is x then nothing is x," which would render in this case as "if everything is ritual than nothing is ritual," is a logical fallacy as  $\forall x(x) \neq \neg\exists x(x)$ . That said, the functional claim that the distinction between the two propositions in a particular instance – in this case of ritual – is without a difference should be taken seriously as the claim that if all social behavior is ritual then we can stop talking about ritual and just get on with talking about social behavior. This is where it becomes important with Rappaport and Xunzi to insist on a formal definition of ritual such that any given social behavior cannot be reduced to ritual as a domain of activity but rather there is a ritual mode or

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<sup>1528</sup> Daniel de Coppet, *Understanding Rituals* (London: Routledge, 1992), 3.

<sup>1529</sup> Fortes, "Religious Premises and Logical Technique in Divinatory Ritual," 410.

dimension to any and all social behaviors: ritual is not a domain alongside economics, politics, religion, etc.; it is a dimension of all of them. Hence, the question is not whether a given behavior is ritual or not but rather whether the ritual dimension of a behavior is harmonized with constituent and overlapping rituals so as to minimize variance with each and the tension between the situation as is and the way the ritual insists it could be is at least addressed. The question is not ritual or not ritual. The question is good ritual versus bad ritual.

### *Semiotics*

Expecting Xunzi to have anything like a developed semiotics, let alone one that would somehow prefigure that of Charles Sanders Peirce, is anachronistic. Yet, as Robert Neville notes, the conventionality of ritual in Xunzi and the conventionality of symbolic signs and of sign systems in Peirce provide an important bridge between the two theoretical paradigms.<sup>1530</sup> Whereas Xunzi lacks a metaphysics of signs, which Peirce develops in exquisite detail, Peirce is less than attentive to the construction and maintenance of sign systems, which Xunzi develops in detail principally with respect to the sign systems of politics. In arguing that the solution to the social devolution of the Warring States period

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<sup>1530</sup> Neville, *Ritual and Deference*, 30–32.

is for rulers and the ruling class to cultivate themselves with ritual in order to attain moral force and thereby restore socio-political order, Xunzi is in effect arguing for the rectification of the sign systems that relate individuals to families, families to their communities, communities to the state, and rulers to the people. These sign systems he calls ritual, and they are means of simultaneously understanding the situation as it is and transforming it into something better. In addition to these macro rituals, the harmonization of desires within an individual that takes place in processes of moral self-cultivation is the integration of meso and micro rituals, the integrity of which generates moral force. Similarly, John Deely notes that

The semiotic point of view is the perspective that results from the sustained attempt to live reflectively with and follow out the consequences of one simple realization: the whole of our experience, from its most primitive origins in sensation to its most refined achievements of understanding, is a network or web of sign relations.<sup>1531</sup>

The metaphor of the web comes from Jakob von Uexküll (1864 – 1944): “As the spider spins its threads, every subject spins his relations to certain characters of the things around him, and weaves them into a firm web which carries his existence.”<sup>1532</sup> The threads with which that web is spun are ritual.

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<sup>1531</sup> Deely, *Basics of Semiotics*, 2005, 16.

<sup>1532</sup> Jakob Von Uexküll, “A Stroll through the Worlds of Animals and Men: A Picture Book of Invisible Worlds,” *Semiotica* 89, no. 4 (1992): 327, <https://doi.org/10.1515/semi.1992.89.4.319>;

## *Conventional*

By contrast with Xunzi, the majority of the Western ritual theory literature, having been overly influenced by Saussurean semiology, takes ritual to be conventional and arbitrary: “The bond between the signifier and the signified is arbitrary.”<sup>1533</sup> Rather than taking convention to be arbitrary, Peirce says of a symbolic sign that it is “a conventional sign, or one depending upon habit (acquired or inborn),”<sup>1534</sup> and “belief of a rule is a habit.”<sup>1535</sup> Since rules are usually made for a reason and habits are either natural to the interpretant or derived from beyond the interpretant, this linking of rule and habit with the conventionality of symbolic signs delimits their arbitrariness. Furthermore, rituals as symbol systems are further constrained by the encoding of the system such that the form of the system establishes the extensionality of any given sign. At the representational pole this means that symbolic signs in the symbol system

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Thomas Albert Sebeok, *Contributions to the Doctrine of Signs, Sources in Semiotics 4* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1985), 149–88.

<sup>1533</sup> de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, 67; David Holdcroft, *Saussure: Signs, System, and Arbitrariness* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

<sup>1534</sup> Peirce, *The Essential Peirce 2*, 2:9; Bergman and Paavola, “Symbol”; Peirce and Welby, *Semiotic and Significs*, 33.

<sup>1535</sup> Peirce, *The Collected Papers*, 2.643; M. Bergman and S. Paavola, eds., “Habit,” in *The Commens Dictionary: Peirce’s Terms in His Own Words*, accessed July 5, 2018, <http://www.commens.org/dictionary/term/habit>.

must refer to their object such that the resulting interpretant accords with reality as it is, while at the constructive pole they must refer to their object such that the interpretant accords with reality as the symbol system idealizes it to be.

Rappaport picks up on this by incorporating the fact that rituals are “not entirely encoded by their performers” into his definition of ritual. Performers cannot arbitrarily adopt signs to refer to objects; they must adopt signs as encoded in the ritual form to refer to their objects in order to generate the desired interpretants. Rituals are conventions in that the symbol systems they encode are human constructs, but they cannot be constructed arbitrarily: they must be constructed so as to accord heaven and earth.

In his discussion of symbols, Peirce also distinguishes between natural dispositions, which he sometimes calls a law, and conventional habits, both of which he takes to be symbols, but whereas conventions rely upon common agreement among the interpretants, laws are inherent in the natural order.<sup>1536</sup> The question then arises as to whether the term “ritual” is applicable to both sorts of symbol. A definitive answer is not necessary here, given that the major topic of inquiry is language, which is decidedly conventional, but given that Peircian

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<sup>1536</sup> Peirce, *The Collected Papers*, 2.307; Bergman and Paavola, “Symbol.”

semiotics generally demurs from overly strong distinctions between the physical and the ideal, an initial hypothesis may be advanced that in fact ritual is applicable in both instances as the symbol system that encodes either natural laws or conventional orders.

Rappaport makes his case for distinguishing language and ritual on the basis that language, which he says is purely symbolic, allows for the conception of alternative orders and thus enables lying, whereas ritual, by virtue of being grounded in indexicality, disallows lying by insisting on its own order over against any possible alternatives. Peirce provides ample grounding for the claim that language is purely symbolic. For example, he says of symbols:

Any utterance of speech is an example. If the sounds were originally in part iconic, in part indexical, those characters have long since lost their importance. The words only stand for the objects they do, and signify the qualities they do, because they will determine, in the mind of the auditor, corresponding signs.<sup>1537</sup>

On the other hand, Peirce consistently refers to at least certain types of pronouns as indices: “demonstrative and relative pronouns are nearly pure indices, because they denote things without describing them.”<sup>1538</sup> The confusion becomes

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<sup>1537</sup> Peirce, *The Collected Papers*, 2.92.

<sup>1538</sup> Charles Sanders Peirce, *Writings of Charles S. Peirce: A Chronological Edition - 1884-1886*, ed. Christian J.W. Kloesel et al., vol. 5 (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1993), 162–63, 243; M. Bergman and S. Paavola, eds., “Index,” in *The Commens Dictionary: Peirce’s Terms in His Own Words*, accessed July 9, 2018, <http://www.commens.org/dictionary/term/index>.

explicit when Peirce says that “A word is the same word every time it occurs and if it has any meaning has always the same meaning; but *this* and *that* have different applications every time they occur.”<sup>1539</sup> Apparently Peirce does not consider “this” and “that” to be words. Nevertheless, these pronouns are part of language, so language *en totum* is not purely symbolic according to Peirce. Furthermore, the claim by Rappaport that the problem of implicating alternative orders arises “as much or more from the ordering of symbols through grammar”<sup>1540</sup> means that the syntactic ordering of symbol systems in ritual implicates alternative orders just as language does. Indeed, the interpretant of having sins washed clean in baptism implies that the baptizand might just as well have been left to wallow in sin among the great unwashed. A better account of what Rappaport is attempting to ascribe to ritual, namely the capacity to reliably mediate social life without the medium itself having to be constructed from scratch in each instance, is better accomplished without having to distinguish ritual from language by the notion of effective rituals becoming more or less taken for granted. Moreover, at the heart of the ritual theory Xunzi

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<sup>1539</sup> Robin, *Annotated Catalogue of the Papers of Charles S. Peirce*, MS 409: 95-96. Available in Bergman and Paavola, “Symbol.”

<sup>1540</sup> Rappaport, *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity*, 17.



develops is the recognition that when rituals cease to be effective it becomes very important to remember their conventionality, i.e. that we were the ones who constructed them in the first place, so that we can set about rectifying them. Of course, rectifying the conventions of ritual generally begins with rectifying the conventions of language. In fact, the ability to implicate alternatives is absolutely necessary in order to rectify ritual orders such that they are good rituals instead of bad rituals.

*Transformative: Sincerity & Subjunctivity Again*

Xunzi provides an alternative for construing the relationships among ritual, sincerity, and subjunctivity from that of Seligman et al as elaborated in the previous chapter: Xunzi claims that ritual transforms the crude, ominous human nature into a sincere self in harmonious relationship with society and the natural world.<sup>1541</sup> Rather than contrasting the ritual *as if* with the sincere *as is*, Xunzi recognizes that the ominous human nature enters the subjunctive ritual space and abides there until the subjunctive becomes indicative such that the new reality of the human person sincerely accords with the ritual norms. Since ritual is a human convention, it is reflexive in that humans make ourselves humane by

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<sup>1541</sup> Xunzi, *Xunzi: Translation and Study*, 19.11 (III: 73).

constructing and participating in rituals to bring about our own transformation. In this understanding of ritual reflexivity, the subjunctive space of ritual is a reflex of its participants on themselves and their realities to become indicative in life. In this, Victor Turner remarkably echoes Xunzi in terms of the role of ritual in moving from the subjunctive to the indicative:

Ritual and its progeny, the performance arts among them, derive from the subjunctive, liminal, reflexive, exploratory heart of the social drama, its third, redressive phase, where the contents of group experiences (*Erlebnisse*) are replicated, dismembered, remembered, refashioned, and mutely or vocally made meaningful (even when, as so often in declining cultures, the meaning is that there is no meaning as in some Existentialist theatre).<sup>1542</sup>

However, there is a second aspect of reflexivity in ritual for Xunzi, this one connecting up with the reflexive origins of ritual as articulated by Kimberly Patton in *Religions of the Gods*. Patton concludes that “religious action ought to be understood as an *attribute and reflex of the divine*, not simply as the projection of human ritual obligation, or as paradigmatic showcase for right action.”<sup>1543</sup> As in Patton, for Xunzi, Dao 道 as a rough analogue with divinity serves as a guiding norm in the human construction of ritual. Notably, Dao is not a supernatural agent with focal attention and awareness as the divine is schematized in Patton’s

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<sup>1542</sup> Victor Witter Turner, “Are There Universals of Performance?,” in *By Means of Performance: Intercultural Studies of Theatre and Ritual*, ed. Richard Schechner and Willa Appel (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 13.

<sup>1543</sup> Patton, *Religion of the Gods*, 309.

work, but rather a patterned norm inherent in the natural order.<sup>1544</sup> In this sense, ritual is reflexive from the perspective of Dao in that it is the human realization and actualization of natural potential in Dao; it is Dao realizing itself. Then, moving beyond Patton's paradigm, Xunzi articulates a double reflexivity in which ritual is the process by which humanity and Dao are harmonized. The second moment of reflexivity, from the human side, makes humanity humane by realizing the Dao of humanity inherent in the natural order via ritual; human beings become fully human by according themselves with Dao through ritual. This double reflexivity is an outcome of Xunzi's distinctive understanding of the co-creation of reality by humanity and nature (heaven and earth):

When Heaven and Earth conjoin, the myriad things are begot; when the Yin and Yang principles combine, transformations and transmutations are produced; when inborn nature and conscious activity are joined, the world is made orderly. Heaven is able to beget the myriad things, but it cannot differentiate them. Earth can support man, but it cannot govern him. The myriad things under the canopy of heaven and all those who belong among living people depend upon the appearance of the sage, for only then is each assigned its proper station.<sup>1545</sup>

Furthermore, this double reflexivity reflects the double meaning of Cheng 誠 sincerity in Warring States discourse: simultaneously human ethical sincerity in

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<sup>1544</sup> Loewe and Shaughnessy, *The Cambridge History of Ancient China*, 750–51.

<sup>1545</sup> Xunzi, *Xunzi: Translation and Study*, 19.6 (III: 67); 9.15 (II: 103).

the sense of a non-duplicitous self, and heavenly cosmic sincerity in the sense of reality as such.<sup>1546</sup>

The difference between Xunzi and Seligman et al transcends the mechanisms of transformation as it cuts right to the question of the transformative nature of ritual. Seligman et al claim that

The world is inherently fragmented: there is no foundation, there are no overarching sets of guidelines, laws, or principles. There are only actions, and it is up to humans to ritualize some of those actions and thereby set up an ordered world... the criterion for which actions from the past should become part of that ritual canon is simply based on whether a continued performance of them helps to refine one's ability to respond to others."<sup>1547</sup>

This view of ritual is equivalent to the theory Kurtis Hagen wants to ascribe to Xunzi in which humanity constructs the world via ritual, yet there are also several problems with it that go beyond the critique of constructivism already offered. First, there clearly are at least some laws and principles at work in the universe that are not human constructs, e.g. those encoded in the laws of physics. Second, this perspective overplays the individual and collective human capacity to choose which activities to ritualize, which is the implication of the criterion as to which actions "should" become part of the ritual canon. In point of fact, the

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<sup>1546</sup> Yanming An, *The Idea of Cheng*.

<sup>1547</sup> Seligman et al., *Ritual and Its Consequences*, 34.

vast majority of the rituals that pervade our lives have become taken for granted and were never really cognitive enough that they could have become matters even of inquiry let alone choice. This is to advocate a very strong form of realism with regard to ritual: rituals are real completely independent of anyone even recognizing that they exist at all. The final problem with the position of Seligman et al thus follows: creeping nominalism. The ritually constructed orders they prescribe to make living in a fragmented world tolerable are epiphenomenal<sup>1548</sup> with respect to that world and so are incapable of transforming it. Instead, the realist account of ritual advocated here, derived from Rappaport and Xunzi, claims causality for ritual with respect to the world such that ritual actually transforms the fragmented world toward wholeness.

### Summation and Application of the Theory

It is now possible and profitable to give a summary statement of the ritual theory developed over the course of the previous chapter in conversation with Western social scientific theories and the present chapter in conversation with

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<sup>1548</sup> William Robinson, "Epiphenomenalism," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Fall, 2015, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2015/entries/epiphenomenalism/>.

the Confucian theory of Xunzi in preparation for its application to a performance of the autumnal sacrifice to Confucius.

Ritual is “the performance of more or less invariant sequences of formal acts and utterances not entirely encoded by the performers” (Rappaport, 24). This being the case, ritual is a medium in which signs relate to one another and form sign systems, and a matrix that orders those systems amid the tension between the world as it is and as it could be. This tension generates the reflexivity of ritual for its participants as elements of the self-contained sign system, driving its transformative capacity toward adaptive advantage when maximized. The transformations rituals achieve by performing the ordering of their elements in their frame so as to reassign signs to objects then themselves become objectively available, which is to say that the interpretants of ritual are real. These functions that result from ritual transformations pervade life and the world, from the most basic categories all the way up to highly sophisticated systems of signs that constitute civilizations and everything in between, yet remain conventional. Life is the performance of a thick web of rituals, the vast majority of which have dropped from consciousness into the habitus of the performer in a relatively doxastic society, such that contingent circumstance may be recognized, negotiated, and rectified by reflex into the ritual order. Such

performance makes the performer sincere to the subjunctive form of an effective ritual by rendering the form indicative. Thus, ritual communicates by performing the conventional constitution of community out of and in response to the brute reality of the world. This becomes especially complex as nested networks of rituals overlap and constitute one another, requiring harmonization by yet more rituals.

*The Autumnal Sacrifice to Confucius*

In September of 1998, Thomas A. Wilson and Brooks Jessup shot footage of the Autumnal Sacrifice to Confucius at the Confucius Temple in Tainan, Taiwan, and then Stephanie Wong edited the footage, provided historical and contextual commentary, and built a website to host the material.<sup>1549</sup> This section analyzes this material using the novel ritual theory developed over the course of these last two chapters. It is important to note that while the ritual is Confucian, it was developed and codified long after the Warring States period<sup>1550</sup> from a

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<sup>1549</sup> Wong and Wilson, "Introduction"; Stephanie Wong and Thomas A. Wilson, "About the Project," *Autumnal Sacrifice to Confucius: A Study of Confucianism's Sacrificial Tradition*, accessed July 19, 2018, [http://academics.hamilton.edu/asian\\_studies/home/autumnalsacrifice/pages/intro.html](http://academics.hamilton.edu/asian_studies/home/autumnalsacrifice/pages/intro.html).

<sup>1550</sup> Thomas A. Wilson, "Sacrifice and the Imperial Cult of Confucius," *History of Religions* 41, no. 3 (2002): 251–87, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3176534>; Thomas A. Wilson, *On Sacred Grounds: Culture, Society, Politics, and the Formation of the Cult of Confucius* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard

military display-presentation ceremony that predates Confucius<sup>1551</sup> but nevertheless falls well beyond the ritual imagination of either Confucius or Xunzi as applicable to Confucius himself.

The Autumnal Sacrifice to Confucius clearly fits the definition of ritual adopted in the theory of ritual elaborated over the past two chapters. The

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University Asia Center, 2002); Kai-wing Chow, *The Rise of Confucian Ritualism in Late Imperial China: Ethics, Classics, and Lineage Discourse* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996).

<sup>1551</sup> Tung Chin-yue et al., *Confucius, the Sage Adaptable to Change: Inheritance and Transformation of Taipei Confucius Temple* (Taipei, Taiwan: Taipei Confucius Temple Governing Board, 2014), 83–112, <http://data.taipei/opendata/datalist/datasetMeta?oid=9c838cf6-65ef-49d3-8cd3-31fe93dda390>.



sacrifice includes both acts: dancing,<sup>1552</sup> playing music,<sup>1553</sup> processions,<sup>1554</sup>

bowing,<sup>1555</sup> and making offerings,<sup>1556</sup> and utterances: the recitation of blessings,<sup>1557</sup>

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<sup>1552</sup> Stephanie Wong and Thomas A. Wilson, "The Offerings and Prayers: 1 - First Offering," *Autumnal Sacrifice to Confucius: A Study of Confucianism's Sacrificial Tradition*, 1998, 00:32-01:08, [http://academics.hamilton.edu/asian\\_studies/home/autumnalsacrifice/pages/firstoffering.html](http://academics.hamilton.edu/asian_studies/home/autumnalsacrifice/pages/firstoffering.html); Stephanie Wong and Thomas A. Wilson, "The Offerings and Prayers: 3 - Offerings to Correlates," *Autumnal Sacrifice to Confucius: A Study of Confucianism's Sacrificial Tradition*, 1998, 00:12-01:00, [http://academics.hamilton.edu/asian\\_studies/home/autumnalsacrifice/pages/secondarysacrifice.html](http://academics.hamilton.edu/asian_studies/home/autumnalsacrifice/pages/secondarysacrifice.html); Stephanie Wong and Thomas A. Wilson, "The Offerings and Prayers: 4 - Second & Final Offering," *Autumnal Sacrifice to Confucius: A Study of Confucianism's Sacrificial Tradition*, 1998, 00:08-00:42; 01:32-06:13, [http://academics.hamilton.edu/asian\\_studies/home/autumnalsacrifice/pages/secondoffering.html](http://academics.hamilton.edu/asian_studies/home/autumnalsacrifice/pages/secondoffering.html).

<sup>1553</sup> Throughout; see especially Stephanie Wong and Thomas A. Wilson, "Concluding the Ceremony: 1 - Instruments," *Autumnal Sacrifice to Confucius: A Study of Confucianism's Sacrificial Tradition*, 1998, [http://academics.hamilton.edu/asian\\_studies/home/autumnalsacrifice/pages/instruments.html](http://academics.hamilton.edu/asian_studies/home/autumnalsacrifice/pages/instruments.html); Stephanie Wong and Thomas A. Wilson, "Concluding the Ceremony: 3 - Clearing the Feast," *Autumnal Sacrifice to Confucius: A Study of Confucianism's Sacrificial Tradition*, 1998, 03:48-04:46, [http://academics.hamilton.edu/asian\\_studies/home/autumnalsacrifice/pages/clearingfeast.html](http://academics.hamilton.edu/asian_studies/home/autumnalsacrifice/pages/clearingfeast.html).

<sup>1554</sup> Stephanie Wong and Thomas A. Wilson, "Beginning the Ceremony: 2 - Announcing the Ceremony & Procession," *Autumnal Sacrifice to Confucius: A Study of Confucianism's Sacrificial Tradition*, 1998, 00:15-01:57, [http://academics.hamilton.edu/asian\\_studies/home/autumnalsacrifice/pages/announcingceremony.html](http://academics.hamilton.edu/asian_studies/home/autumnalsacrifice/pages/announcingceremony.html); Wong and Wilson, "Concluding the Ceremony: 3 - Clearing the Feast," 02:31-03:26.

<sup>1555</sup> Stephanie Wong and Thomas A. Wilson, "Beginning the Ceremony: 4 - Escorting the Spirit into the Temple," *Autumnal Sacrifice to Confucius: A Study of Confucianism's Sacrificial Tradition*, 1998, 01:59-02:40, [http://academics.hamilton.edu/asian\\_studies/home/autumnalsacrifice/pages/escortingspirit.html](http://academics.hamilton.edu/asian_studies/home/autumnalsacrifice/pages/escortingspirit.html); Stephanie Wong and Thomas A. Wilson, "The Offerings and Prayers: 2 - Reading the Prayer," *Autumnal Sacrifice to Confucius: A Study of Confucianism's Sacrificial Tradition*, 1998, 04:40-04:53, [http://academics.hamilton.edu/asian\\_studies/home/autumnalsacrifice/pages/readingprayer.html](http://academics.hamilton.edu/asian_studies/home/autumnalsacrifice/pages/readingprayer.html); Stephanie Wong and Thomas A. Wilson, "Concluding the Ceremony: 2 - Receiving the Meat and Wine," *Autumnal Sacrifice to Confucius: A Study of Confucianism's Sacrificial Tradition*, 1998,

singing hymns,<sup>1558</sup> and announcements of the steps of the ritual,<sup>1559</sup> each of these elements are themselves rituals that overlap throughout the broader sacrifice ritual. The elements have been extensively codified as to their individual execution,<sup>1560</sup> demonstrating their formality, and as to their sequence.<sup>1561</sup> The ideal of the invariance of these forms and sequences, and recognition of the incompleteness of its fulfillment, is expressed in the codification of its evolution and discussion of contextual factors limiting its consummation.<sup>1562</sup> The long history of the codification of the forms and sequences of elements demonstrates

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00:45-01:01,

[http://academics.hamilton.edu/asian\\_studies/home/autumnalsacrifice/pages/receivingmeat.html](http://academics.hamilton.edu/asian_studies/home/autumnalsacrifice/pages/receivingmeat.html).

<sup>1556</sup> Wong and Wilson, "The Offerings and Prayers: 1 - First Offering"; Wong and Wilson, "The Offerings and Prayers: 3 - Offerings to Correlates"; Wong and Wilson, "The Offerings and Prayers: 4 - Second & Final Offering."

<sup>1557</sup> Wong and Wilson, "The Offerings and Prayers: 2 - Reading the Prayer."

<sup>1558</sup> Wong and Wilson, "Beginning the Ceremony: 4 - Escorting the Spirit into the Temple," Illumination Hymn; Wong and Wilson, "The Offerings and Prayers: 1 - First Offering," 00:01-00:14; 00:14-02:20, Proclamation Hymn; Wong and Wilson, "The Offerings and Prayers: 4 - Second & Final Offering," Ordering Hymn; Wong and Wilson, "Concluding the Ceremony: 3 - Clearing the Feast," Gathering Hymn; Tung Chin-yue et al., *Confucius, the Sage Adaptable to Change*, 133.

<sup>1559</sup> Throughout; see especially Wong and Wilson, "Concluding the Ceremony: 2 - Receiving the Meat and Wine."

<sup>1560</sup> Tung Chin-yue et al., *Confucius, the Sage Adaptable to Change*, 104-7; 133.

<sup>1561</sup> Tung Chin-yue et al., 117-32.

<sup>1562</sup> Tung Chin-yue et al., 113-17.

that present performers have limited involvement in the encoding they enact.<sup>1563</sup>

The existence of video and pictorial evidence demonstrates that these forms in sequence continue to be performed.<sup>1564</sup>

The Autumnal Sacrifice to Confucius is a medium in which signs relate to one another and form sign systems. The signs themselves include the performers,<sup>1565</sup> their costume,<sup>1566</sup> the elements sacrificed,<sup>1567</sup> the text of the prayer,<sup>1568</sup> the musical instruments,<sup>1569</sup> the music itself,<sup>1570</sup> the feathers and flutes

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<sup>1563</sup> Tung Chin-yue et al., 114–15; Stephanie Wong and Thomas A. Wilson, “Temple,” Autumnal Sacrifice to Confucius: A Study of Confucianism’s Sacrificial Tradition, accessed July 20, 2018, [http://academics.hamilton.edu/asian\\_studies/home/autumnalsacrifice/pages/temple.html](http://academics.hamilton.edu/asian_studies/home/autumnalsacrifice/pages/temple.html); Michael Nylan and Thomas Wilson, *Lives of Confucius: Civilization’s Greatest Sage Through the Ages* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 2010), chaps. 4–6; Wilson, *On Sacred Grounds*.

<sup>1564</sup> Wong and Wilson, “Introduction”; Tung Chin-yue et al., *Confucius, the Sage Adaptable to Change*.

<sup>1565</sup> Wong and Wilson, “Beginning the Ceremony: 2 - Announcing the Ceremony & Procession,” sec. Ritual Officers.

<sup>1566</sup> See photographs throughout and some discussion of costume choice especially regarding the dancers in Tung Chin-yue et al., *Confucius, the Sage Adaptable to Change*, pt. III.

<sup>1567</sup> Stephanie Wong and Thomas A. Wilson, “Beginning the Ceremony: 1 - The Offerings,” Autumnal Sacrifice to Confucius: A Study of Confucianism’s Sacrificial Tradition, 1998, [http://academics.hamilton.edu/asian\\_studies/home/autumnalsacrifice/pages/offerings.html](http://academics.hamilton.edu/asian_studies/home/autumnalsacrifice/pages/offerings.html); Tung Chin-yue et al., *Confucius, the Sage Adaptable to Change*, 149–50.

<sup>1568</sup> Wong and Wilson, “The Offerings and Prayers: 2 - Reading the Prayer.”

<sup>1569</sup> Wong and Wilson, “Concluding the Ceremony: 1 - Instruments.”

<sup>1570</sup> Tung Chin-yue et al., *Confucius, the Sage Adaptable to Change*, 133.

held by the dancers,<sup>1571</sup> and the banners, lanterns, censers, halberds, fan, and canopy carried in the procession.<sup>1572</sup> The relations of the signs so as to form a sign system includes the wearing of the costumes by the performers,<sup>1573</sup> the coordination of the dances with the music,<sup>1574</sup> and the movements surrounding the sacrifices of the offerings.<sup>1575</sup> That the ritual is the medium of these signs and sign systems is demonstrated by the fact that the people performing the ritual would be unlikely to wear the costumes, carry the objects, or dance in that manner apart from the ritual of the Autumnal Sacrifice to Confucius. This is to say that the ritual is properly framed both concretely by the space of the Confucius temple itself<sup>1576</sup> and abstractly by the intentionality of the performers in enacting this particular ritual at this time in this place.

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<sup>1571</sup> Tung Chin-yue et al., 126.

<sup>1572</sup> Tung Chin-yue et al., 122–23.

<sup>1573</sup> Wong and Wilson, “Beginning the Ceremony: 2 - Announcing the Ceremony & Procession.”

<sup>1574</sup> Wong and Wilson, “The Offerings and Prayers: 1 - First Offering,” 00:28-01:08; Tung Chin-yue et al., *Confucius, the Sage Adaptable to Change*, 126.

<sup>1575</sup> Wong and Wilson, “The Offerings and Prayers: 1 - First Offering,” 01:09-02:40; Tung Chin-yue et al., *Confucius, the Sage Adaptable to Change*, 126.

<sup>1576</sup> Wong and Wilson, “Temple”; Tung Chin-yue et al., *Confucius, the Sage Adaptable to Change*, 30–53.

At the same time, the Autumnal Sacrifice to Confucius is a matrix of transformation amidst the tension between the world as it is and as it could be. This tension and its transformative capacity are made explicit in the text of the Ordering Hymn sung during the second offering. The hymn begins by adjuring the participants to “Perform the rite without err” and then recounts the perfections of the ritual elements:

Ascend the Hall for the second offering  
Drums and bells sound in accord;  
Genuine, the wine cauldron  
Sincere, the food pots  
Solemn novices,  
Majestic scholars<sup>1577</sup>

This declared perfection is in spite of any imperfections that may actually occur in the ritual performance, such as misplayed notes in the music or one of the dancers fainting.<sup>1578</sup> The ritual thus accepts the world as is, broken and imperfect, and yet the form of the ritual nevertheless transforms the participants to accord with the way the ritual communicates the world could be, as stated in the final two lines of the hymn: “The rites correct us, the music refines us; Made virtuous

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<sup>1577</sup> Wong and Wilson, “The Offerings and Prayers: 4 - Second & Final Offering,” sec. The Ordering Hymn.

<sup>1578</sup> Wong and Wilson, sec. Dances.

are we who observe this rite."<sup>1579</sup> By reflexively including an explicit statement of this transformative process in the hymn, the Autumnal Sacrifice to Confucius achieves objectification in the sense of the act becoming its own object. This objectification also transcends the rite as the participants, having been made virtuous by their performance of the ritual, carry forward the virtuous orientation inculcated in the ritual into wider rituals that constitute the social domain; the subjunctive form of the ritual has been rendered indicative.

In addition to being transformative, the Autumnal Sacrifice to Confucius is also one ritual in the thick web of rituals that pervade the lives of its performers, setting up a dialectic across the various domains governed by the myriad rituals. Not only are there other rituals related to Confucius held at the temple that the participants in the Autumnal Sacrifice might also perform, such as the Spring Sacrifice<sup>1580</sup> and the Joint Puberty Rites,<sup>1581</sup> but more recently than the filmed performance in 1998, the Autumnal Sacrifice itself has been modified by the addition of three procedures so as to incorporate political officials,<sup>1582</sup> and

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<sup>1579</sup> Wong and Wilson, sec. The Ordering Hymn.

<sup>1580</sup> Tung Chin-yue et al., *Confucius, the Sage Adaptable to Change*, 157–82.

<sup>1581</sup> Tung Chin-yue et al., 183–202.

<sup>1582</sup> Tung Chin-yue et al., 117n8, 129.

women are allowed to serve as ceremonial officials.<sup>1583</sup> Moreover, as in the Eucharistic ritual in the context of the Great Vigil of Easter analyzed in the previous chapter, there are many aspects upon which the performance depends that are not governed by the ritual of the Autumnal Sacrifice. For example, as in the Great Vigil it was necessary for participants to come forward to receive the Eucharistic elements but the ritual itself did not encode the manner of their movement, so too in the Autumnal Sacrifice to Confucius the ritual does not prescribe the manner of walking in the procession into the temple. Participants must rely on rituals encoded elsewhere and elsewhere in order to accomplish this basic act of the sacrificial ritual. Even though the prayer chanted in the middle of the sacrifice declares that “We endeavor to follow the regulations and statues, solemnly reveal the minute and obscure, and refined in the sacrificial statues and hereby offer sacrifice,”<sup>1584</sup> the act of walking is not an element of the minutiae of this particular ritual. The neglect of the basic act of walking is due to the fact that, for the majority of people, the act of walking is so deeply inculcated in their habitus that the Autumnal Sacrifice may rely on it as doxastic and so need not encode it separately.

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<sup>1583</sup> Tung Chin-yue et al., 117n7.

<sup>1584</sup> Wong and Wilson, “The Offerings and Prayers: 2 - Reading the Prayer,” sec. The Prayer.

The conventionality of the Autumnal Sacrifice to Confucius becomes obvious when considering the intentionality of its evolution as recorded in *Confucius, the Sage Adaptable to Change: Inheritance and Transformation of Taipei Confucius Temple*. While the historicity of the account cannot be attested, the building of temples to Confucius is associated with Duke Ai setting up Confucius home in Qufu as a shrine in 478 BCE. Holding ceremonies in honor of Confucius is associated with Han Emperor Liu Bang offering sacrifices of ox, sheep, and pig when visiting Lu in 195 BCE. The conferral of the noble title of Duke on Confucius is attributed to Emperor Ping in 1 CE,<sup>1585</sup> the dignity of which expanded through a process of canonization until in 1645 CE Confucius was known as the “Great Completer, Ultimate Sage, Exalted First Teacher of Culture.”<sup>1586</sup> The form of the sacrificial ceremony itself evolved from an ancient military display-presentation ceremony described in the three *Rites* texts and the Zuo commentary on the *Spring and Autumn Annals* and was then transposed to venerate the teachers who founded particular schools.<sup>1587</sup> From there, the display-

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<sup>1585</sup> Tung Chin-yue et al., *Confucius, the Sage Adaptable to Change*, 114.

<sup>1586</sup> Thomas A. Wilson and Stephanie Wong, “Canonization of Confucius,” *Cult of Confucius*, 2010, [http://academics.hamilton.edu/asian\\_studies/home/culttemp/sitePages/canon.html](http://academics.hamilton.edu/asian_studies/home/culttemp/sitePages/canon.html).

<sup>1587</sup> Tung Chin-yue et al., *Confucius, the Sage Adaptable to Change*, 83–95.



presentation ceremony was merged with the sacrificial ritual in the Confucius temple during the Han Dynasty.<sup>1588</sup> While there were further developments over intervening centuries, including additions of sacrifices to disciples of Confucius and other worthies, the form remained relatively stable until the latter half of the twentieth century when the revival of the performance of the sacrifice to the Confucius temple in Tainan, Taiwan was necessitated by the formation of the Republic of China in exile.<sup>1589</sup> This modern performance resulted from two years of research by a working committee resulting in

significant changes in the ritual system of Display-Presentation Ceremony. For the music, it restored to the sacrificial music and movements of the Song and Ming dynasties; added more musical instruments, making the scale of Bayin (eight tunes) more complete; constructed additional musician platform to distinguish the upper and lower furnishings; adopted the Yi dance notation of the Ming dynasty; for the costume of Yi dancers and ritualists, kept the long robe and mandarin jacket in the style of the early Republic of China, only the long robe is in blue to follow the national etiquette.<sup>1590</sup>

More recently, additions were made to the form of the sacrifice in order to create roles for national officials, the ceremony has been shortened from ninety to sixty minutes, and women have been allowed to serve as ceremonial officials.<sup>1591</sup>

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<sup>1588</sup> Tung Chin-yue et al., 102–12, 114–15.

<sup>1589</sup> Tung Chin-yue et al., 116.

<sup>1590</sup> Tung Chin-yue et al., 134.

<sup>1591</sup> Tung Chin-yue et al., 117.

The conventionality of the Autumnal Sacrifice to Confucius has to do with the intentionality of its human origins and formulation but it is not the case that the conventions of the ritual form are either significantly encoded by the performers of the ceremony or that they are arbitrary. While certain individual participants involved in the performance of the sacrifice in question likely did have a role on the working committee that settled its modern form, they nevertheless were themselves constrained by the history of its performance as revealed in their research such that the sacrifice would be recognizable to the rest of the participants. Moreover, changes made to the ritual form had to do with contextual factors such as the change of location, involvement and funding from political stakeholders, and changing social norms regarding gender. These factors themselves were the result of ritual processes that generated new realities to which the Autumnal Sacrifice had to be adjusted, or in a sense adjust itself. Thus, the conventionality of the changes does not make them arbitrary, as would be the case if they were made according to a whim or a preference as opposed to being made in response to an objectively real situation.

Finally, the form of the Autumnal Sacrifice to Confucius generating its entailments is a ritual dimension in the religious domain of the social lives of its participants. The question of the religiosity of the ritual deserves some

consideration before turning to the question of the ritual dimension of the linguistic domain in the next chapter. Whereas the religiosity of the Great Vigil of Easter analyzed in the previous chapter is uncontroversial, the question of the religiosity of Confucianism has been a perpetual conundrum among religious studies scholars, significantly over the issue of whether the tradition seeks to relate to a transcendent reality.<sup>1592</sup> In his ritual theory, Roy Rappaport defines religion in terms of the generation of the conditions for such transcendence out of ritual including cosmological axioms regarding “the establishment of convention, the sealing of social contract, the construction of the integrated conventional orders we shall call *Logoi*, ... the investment of whatever it encodes with morality, [and] the construction of time and eternity,” and ultimate sacred postulates that relate these axioms to what is transcendent of them through “the representation of a paradigm of creation, the generation of the concept of the sacred and the sanctification of conventional order, the generation of theories of the occult, the evocation of numinous experience, the awareness of the divine, the grasp of the holy, and the construction of orders of meaning transcending the

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<sup>1592</sup> Bin Song (宋斌), “A Study of Comparative Philosophy of Religion on ‘Creatio Ex Nihilo’ and ‘Sheng Sheng (Birth Birth, 生生)’” (PhD diss, Boston University, 2018).

semantic.”<sup>1593</sup> The Autumnal Sacrifice to Confucius clearly qualifies according to this definition of religion especially by investing what it encodes with morality<sup>1594</sup> and constructing time vis-à-vis its juxtaposition in the autumn with the Spring Sacrifice.<sup>1595</sup> Aside from the fact that it is not at all clear that all religions or sub-traditions of religions locate the referent of their ultimate sacred postulates in a relationship of transcendence with respect to their cosmological axioms,<sup>1596</sup> it is also not clear that all rituals generate axioms and postulates in the absolute sense of cosmology and ultimacy that Rappaport describes, although it is perfectly legitimate to define religion, and so particularly religious rituals, in terms of cosmology and ontological ultimacy.<sup>1597</sup> For ritual generally, across all domains, it is better to understand the cosmological axioms and ultimate sacred postulates as relative to the frame of the ritual in question such that, for example, the cosmological axioms of the ritual of walking have to do with raising the foot off the ground, extending it forward, and lowering it heel first so as to generate a

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<sup>1593</sup> Rappaport, *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity*, 27, 263–76, chap. 11.

<sup>1594</sup> “The rites correct us, the music refines us; Made virtuous are we who observe this rite.” Wong and Wilson, “The Offerings and Prayers: 4 - Second & Final Offering,” sec. The Ordering Hymn.

<sup>1595</sup> Tung Chin-yue et al., *Confucius, the Sage Adaptable to Change*, 157–82.

<sup>1596</sup> Whitney, “Experience and the Ultimacy of God.”

<sup>1597</sup> Neville, *Defining Religion*, pt. One; Neville, *Ultimates*, I:Introduction, pt. Three.

rolling motion, and the ultimate sacred postulate of the ritual is the locomotion of the person. While seemingly trivial at the micro level of walking, this relativity of axioms and postulates generated by ritual becomes important for understanding the degree and extent to which the ritual of language as discussed in the next chapter can express religious realities as discussed in the final chapter.

## LANGUAGE AS RITUAL

Before turning to the particular problem of religious language, this chapter interprets the many interlocking elements, structures, and functions of language production and reception in terms of the theory of ritual in all its aspects in order to show that language is a species of ritual. To accomplish this, the interpretation must move in both directions, that is, the ritual theory must be shown to be coherent, consistent, adequate, and applicable with respect to language, and language must be shown to be comprehensively addressed by the ritual theory. Since the goal is to show that the theory of ritual as elaborated over the previous two chapters is comprehensive with respect to language as articulated in chapter two, no new material regarding language, ritual, or semiotics will be introduced in this chapter. A great deal has already been said about Peircian semiotics in general and with respect to both language and ritual as it serves as the broader theoretical paradigm in which language and ritual are brought into relation. Nevertheless, a brief summary of the semiotic landscape yet facilitates smoother appropriation of the subsequent bidirectional interpretation of ritual and language. The chapter concludes by elaborating the implications of the resulting theory of language as ritual vis-à-vis three theories of language: Xunzi and the project of rectifying names, Ludwig Wittgenstein and

the concept of language games, and Noam Chomsky and the theory of universal grammar.

This chapter relies on hypothetical examples to illustrate its arguments as opposed to the empirical examples employed to illustrate and test the emerging theory of ritual across the two previous chapters. Such empirical examples are the norm in the social scientific literature drawn upon to construct the novel theory in chapter four, and so it was appropriate to extend this practice to the comparative engagement with Confucian ritual theory in chapter five while shifting focus from a Christian to a Confucian ritual. This chapter shifts among the multiple disciplinary matrices at play in the project back into a primarily philosophical frame to render the semiotic integration of language as ritual, and philosophical discourses are more given to hypothetical than empirical examples. Given this shift, it is important to note that hypothetical examples function differently in philosophical discourse than empirical examples do in social scientific discourse: empirical examples in the social sciences function to test a theory whereas hypothetical examples in philosophy function to illustrate a theory. For the social sciences, the integrity of a theory is determined by its ability to explain the phenomena under consideration, which are represented by the empirical examples the theory is deployed to analyze. For philosophy, the

integrity of a theory is determined by the rigor of the internal logic of the argument, which hypothetical examples render in concrete terms so as to enhance comprehension of the underlying logic. Thus, whereas an empirical example in a social scientific context may be shown to falsify the theory if it contradicts the theory when it was predicted to support it, a hypothetical example in philosophy contradicting the theory does not necessarily result in the theory itself being called into question unless the contradiction illustrates a fallacy in the underlying logic of the theory.

### Semiotics: Language, Ritual, and Mind

Semiotics is the study of the nature and function of signs, rituals are forms ordering sign systems so as to produce effects reliably, and the sign system of language is a massively complex human ritual. Following the semiotic theory elaborated by Charles Sanders Peirce, a sign is an irreducibly triadic relation among an object, a sign vehicle, and the effect of the sign vehicle standing for the object, called the interpretant. The ontology of the sign is not any of the three elements but rather the relation that pertains among them, and so semiotics is a form of realism insisting on the reality of relations exercising causal influence on the elements. Each of the three elements – the object, the sign vehicle, and the interpretant – may be either a physical thing, an action, a relation, or an idea,



rendering irrelevant the distinction between the mental and the physical. Sign vehicles that generate their interpretants by virtue of similarity or identity with their object are called icons. Sign vehicles that generate their interpretants by virtue of correspondence with or proximity to their object are called indices (singular: index). Sign vehicles that generate their interpretants by virtue of being related to their object by convention or law are called symbols. To be a thing, in the sense of anything determinate, is to be a sign in which a sign vehicle relates to an object in order to generate an interpretant. Signs being inherently relational, and the relations being processes generating effects, semiotics is a relational process metaphysics.

In addition to things being signs, things also participate in sign systems in which signs are related to one another as objects and sign vehicles generating interpretants. Many sign systems emerge spontaneously and then cease, but the relational processes of sign systems whose interpretants are valuable to the ecology of interlocking relations may be repeated so as to continue to generate that value. The form of a sign system repeated in relatively invariant sequence so as to reliably generate value is ritual. Rituals are conventional as the ordering of sign systems could at least conceivably be otherwise, but they are not arbitrary because of the pragmatic necessity of reliably generating their effects. The

semiotic processes that the ritual system orders transform the ritual elements in dynamic tension between the way things are and the way the ritual form envisions they could be. Interlocking ritual systems form thick webs that pervade life and constitute experience in a constant process of negotiating among their dynamic processes so as to press toward the limit of coherence. Just as the triadic relations of individual signs are real independent of their elements, so too the nested relations of signs in rituals are real independent of the individual signs that make them up as they achieve objectivity. Rituals are thus performed to establish and maintain valuable regularities amidst the swirling chaos of semiosis, thereby allowing for consistency, continuity, and coherence.

Language is an exceedingly complex ritual that humans perform as a sophisticated way of harmonizing ourselves with one another and the world we inhabit, sometimes by transforming ourselves and sometimes by transforming the world. The rest of this chapter will delve into the complexities of the language ritual in great detail, but it is important not to lose sight of the fact that the language ritual is a sign system. Language is one sign system among many other types of sign system, although all of them participate in the basic triadic process of semiosis, rather than being the sign system on which all other sign systems are based. The richness of the linguistic sign system emerges from its

depth in the form of the precision of its intension (reference), breadth in the form of the expansiveness of its extension (sense), and seemingly infinite combinatorial possibilities yet requiring optimization by sharply delimiting a set of impossibilities approaching infinity. The cognitive capacity to cope with such a rich sign system likely coevolved with the language ritual itself and its intricate, multi-level, nested network of signs, as Terrence Deacon describes. The complexity of language does not mean, however, that it has somehow become independent of or discontinuous with the wider web of ritual sign systems that constitute life and experience.

The issue of the human cognitive capacity to appropriate and utilize the language ritual circles back to the question of the role of the mental that was central to antique and medieval semiotic accounts of language. The signal advance of John Poincaré and then Charles Peirce was to render the distinction between the physical and the mental irrelevant for semiotics. The challenge then becomes to articulate any role at all for mind other than just a node of signs and rituals converging and flowing together. While a systematic theory of mind is far beyond the scope of the present endeavor, an initial hypothesis may be advanced that the role of mind is to privilege and prefer coherent, consistent, and comprehensive orders that provide a sense of unity to life and experience. Mind

thus drives the construction and performance of rituals that harmonize other rituals so as to achieve this end. Xunzi persuasively makes the case that this desire for a unified and whole life and experience is one of myriad competing desires and itself must be cultivated properly by ritual and education in order to in turn harmonize all of the desires. Thus, while choice, reason, and freedom are not wholly illusory, they are never independent of the webs of signs and rituals that delimit their possibilities.

#### Language Under the Aspect of Ritual

If language is ritual, then it must at least be possible to give a comprehensive account of language in terms of the theory of ritual developed over the course of the previous two chapters in all of its aspects. The next section will show how each and every level and function of language, as delineated in the variety of modes of linguistic analysis in chapter two, inheres within the theory of ritual. This section, by contrast, unpacks the theory of ritual as it embraces language *in toto*. The result is a highly theoretical and abstract account of language as a complex sign system enabling humanity to engage the world as it is and to envision and enact its transformation in efficient and effective ways well beyond the capacity of other natural sign systems and processes. This abstraction will be rendered more concrete in the next chapter with respect to

religious language, and would benefit from instantiation with respect to a host of other social and natural realities that are beyond the scope of the present endeavor.

As was noted above, it is important to keep in view the ways in which the language ritual is in constant interaction with other social and natural domains via their shared ritual dimension. The many rituals that make up the highly complex ritual of language are the topic of the next section, but it would not be possible to address language in its totality in this section according to the ritual theory without accounting for the non-linguistic rituals that overlap with language to generate effects under specific conditions. One of the main problems with the various approaches across disciplines that together constitute the broad notion of the linguistic turn is that language is abstracted from the broader realm of ritual sign systems of which it is one due to the undue influence of Saussure, who assumed that the structure of language is the controlling structure of all sign systems. Since language is understood here as a species of the ritual genus, at least some consideration of the relations between language and the rest of the elements of the ritual matrix is entirely appropriate.

### *Definition*

As a species of ritual, language is “the performance of more or less invariant sequences of formal acts and utterances not entirely encoded by the performers” (Rappaport 24). That language encodes utterances, either verbal or written, is analytic, and the robust literature regarding speech acts makes the notion of language as act readily available and uncontroversial. Nevertheless, both will be discussed in exquisite detail in the next section. The formality of the acts and utterances of language has to do with the fact that these elements of the language ritual relate to one another according to the ritual form, which will be discussed in detail below in this section. While the detail of all of the levels of language elements relating to one another according to the linguistic form must await the next section, it is important here to emphasize that language elements cannot be reduced to words and linguistic form cannot be reduced to grammar as this is only one level of linguistic analysis. The relations among phonemes and morphemes according to phonological and morphological forms respectively are also language elements and linguistic forms respectively, as are the relations among sentences according to rhetorical forms. The layering of these many layers of sign systems is what makes language such a dynamic and complex ritual.

The sequences of language elements that define the possibilities of their relations must remain relatively invariant lest language lose the ability to encode the same meaning over multiple and ongoing iterations: for language to fulfill its communicative and constitutive functions, the same linguistic signs must refer to the same linguistic objects in order to generate the same linguistic interpretants reliably. Language change does happen, but it happens slowly and at the level of all language users relatively simultaneously adjusting their usage, which is to say that individual language users are unable to encode new linguistic meanings alone except as an initiation or participation in a broader process of rectifying the language system dependent upon social consensus for its completion. That said, linguistic forms do encode multiple ways to express at least some meanings, introducing a minimal allowance of variance and providing the performers of the language ritual with at least a small degree of freedom to encode a given performance within the prevailing constraints.

Beyond the analytical categories of elements, forms, and sequences and their encoding, language is always a performance in which a given meaning is enacted in speech or written text according to the forms in which sequences of linguistic elements are encoded. Language performances are always performances of a particular language according to its forms, many of which are

specific to itself, others are common among a family of languages, and a few are general or universal. Just as the language ritual interacts with all of the other social and natural rituals that make up the web of signification constitutive of life and experience, languages interact with one another, borrowing structures and vocabulary from one another slowly in the context of ongoing and repeated interaction. The complexity of the language artifact must be dynamically realized in ongoing successive iterations of performance, each of which reflexively feeds back into the process of linguistic evolution, in order for language to achieve its effects.

Consider, for example, the hypothetical case of a mayor of a city bisected by a river presiding over the opening of a new bridge across the river. In the context of the wider bridge opening ritual, the mayor might say something to the effect of, "I now declare this bridge to be open." The wider ritual of the bridge opening might include the mayor cutting a ribbon with a pair of scissors, and perhaps someone would drive a town vehicle across the newly opened bridge. This wider ritual is not of particular interest to an analysis of the language ritual at play, however, which instead focuses on the statement declaring the bridge to be open.



With respect to the language ritual, the declaration of the bridge as being open is notable as containing both verbal utterances and an act. The act in question is the act of opening the bridge. The utterances include the words and sounds put together in sequence so as to achieve the act. If the sequences of words and sounds did not conform to the proper form, for example following the German syntax of placing the main verb at the end of the sentence such that he said "I now this bridge to be open declare," the citizens of the city would look at their mayor perplexed, wondering what had happened to him, although they would likely be able to work out what he meant. Further grammatical changes might disrupt the meaning, however, such as "This bridge to be open declare now I," which could mean that the bridge is declaring the mayor to be open, or may not mean much in the way of anything at all. Neglecting to adhere to proper phonological form, for example by pronouncing all vowels as long vowels, could result in similar disruptions or failures of meaning. Moreover, the rhetorical form of declaring the bridge to be open is what determines the utterance as an act of opening a bridge, so failure to follow this form, perhaps by saying "This bridge is open," shifts the locution from an act of opening the bridge to an act of describing the state of the bridge. Without relative conformity to the proper forms at all levels of the language, or some reference to which forms are being

followed, it is impossible to give an account of what is being said or done in a given expression; the speaker or writer is effectively babbling gibberish.

The linguistic forms themselves are encodings of sequences of language elements that have achieved meaning over multiple iterations of invariant performance. In the case of the example of the mayor opening the bridge, previous mayors, in other places and at previous times have opened bridges using the same sequence of elements, and those elements in those sequences were understood by the people of the relevant municipality to constitute the act of opening a bridge. Had there never been a bridge before, or at least had there never been a bridge opening before, then the sequence likely would have been adopted from an analogous situation, perhaps the opening of a park, and adapted to fit the change to the situation of a bridge. If the mayor varied the sequence of elements, perhaps saying "I now suspect this bridge to be open," the citizens would likely at least be perplexed and may even wonder if the bridge were really open. The confusion resulting from the mayor varying the sequence of elements also demonstrates that individuals, even individuals in positions of power, are not able to unilaterally change the meanings of linguistic elements or their sequences. The performer of the language ritual must submit to the

encoding of the language form as it was *a priori* encoded in order to generate the desired functions; the performer cannot encode the language form themselves.

Of course, if the mayor does not actually say “I now declare this bridge to be open,” then the act of opening the bridge is not actually achieved. Language must be performed in order to generate its effects, even if the effect is merely the locution itself: without performance, there are neither acts nor utterances. As a result, the meaning of an instance of language cannot be located on either the producer or the receiver side of a conversation. Rather, meaning is located in the ways in which linguistic elements are ordered according to the form of the language ritual under the conditions of the situation in which they are deployed. Thus, the mayor saying “I now declare this bridge to be open” has no meaning abstracted from the location of the mayor, there being a bridge, the gathering of citizens to celebrate the opening of the bridge, the river the bridge traverses, and all of the other factors in relation to which the performance of the locution has meaning.

### *Origins*

The origins of ritual are simultaneously ontological and historical. The ontology of ritual has to do with its reflexivity such that the entailments of the ritual process include work on the societies and selves that a given ritual

constitutes. Thus, rituals are self-contained in that they internalize the rationale for the structuring of their elements and adjust that structure through their own processes to continually accord with that rationale. Rituals also overlap with one another, and so are necessarily in a constant process of adjustment in order to maintain the coherence of their rationale in tension with similarly self-adjusting ritual processes. As a species of ritual, the ontology of language is likewise reflexive as a means for humans and human societies to carry out work on themselves. The system of language may represent the world as it is, but since the system is self-contained it is also independent of that which it represents such that it can also represent the world as it could or should become and enact the world to be in the ways the subjunctive articulations of language represent as constrained by the other rituals at play in a given situation. Language arises as a highly complex and elaborate ritual precisely because of its remarkable capacity to carry out this reflexive function efficiently and effectively across a wide range of contexts and situations. Thus, this ontology of language origins is a way of describing the linguistic side of the coevolution Terrence Deacon elaborates between language and the brain.

The history of ritual origins, according to the theory developed in chapter three, has to do with the evolutionarily adaptive advantage of engendering trust

in a society. The costs associated with learning to perform a language ritual not acquired beginning at birth are quite high in terms of time and intensity of effort, to say nothing of the financial burden of taking courses and paying tutors. Moreover, those who perform a given language ritual less than fluently are usually adjudicated skeptically in a society where that language ritual is constitutive and normative; those fluent in the same language have a de facto level of common trust upon which to cooperatively build other aspects of a relationship. On one hand, this trust is maintained by the ongoing use of the common language among the participants in the relationship. On the other hand, the basis of agreements in a common language forms the basis for trust that what was agreed will be enacted on the basis of assumed common understanding and commitment even apart from regular and ongoing communication in the common language. This latter case results from the costly signal of language fluency itself being a highly reflexive endeavor that constitutes relationships articulated under its terms as ongoing concerns enduring beyond the scope of the articulation itself.

Returning to the example of the mayor opening the bridge, the declaration of the bridge as open does work on the city bisected by a river by making passage throughout the municipality more fluid; the bridge being built but left

unused for lack of being communally recognized as ready for use would negate the point of constructing it in the first place. The mayor saying "I now declare this bridge to be open" enacts the process of moving from the state of affairs as they are, which might be represented by the statement "there is a bridge," to the state of affairs as they could be, which might be represented by the statement, "if there were an open bridge across the river it would be easier to get to all parts of the city," the latter two being at least implied in the former. The world as it is, namely the existence of the bridge, is not enough to achieve the goal of improving traffic flow in the city, which requires the declaration to open it. Since language is independent of the world by virtue of its reflexive self-containment, language may represent any of the situations of the world as it is, the world as it could be, and the movement from the former to the latter. Furthermore, assuming that the citizens of the city have English as the normative language in their society, the declaration that the bridge is open by the mayor in English is a trustworthy act that may be taken to be reliable beyond the ceremony of the bridge opening, thereby delimiting the need for the mayor to perpetually stand next to the bridge explaining to the driver of each vehicle that approaches that the bridge is open and they may cross. The language ritual of declaring the bridge open is effective, however, only because of its intersection with the

political ritual of the mayor leading the city, and so the authority of the declaration derives from the political authority of the mayor.

Consider also the situation of two parties entering into a contract to transfer property from one to the other. The contract is written out in language that construes one of the parties as the conveyer and the other as the recipient of the property in question, thus constituting a relationship of transfer between the two. The transfer itself is enacted when the two parties both sign the contract, signaling their acceptance of its terms, which include both statements regarding the property as it is, owned by the conveyer, the property as it might be, as owned by the recipient, and the conditions under which both will understand that it has been transferred. Once the contract is mutually signed and those conditions are met, then the transfer becomes real and the recipient becomes the new owner of the property in question. The reflexive self-containment of language enables language to describe all three of these states with respect to the property because the structure of language is independent of the structure of the world in which the property is in one state or another and so has the capacity for reflexive work on the world to enact the movement from one state to another. Moreover, the mutual understanding of the language of the contract by the two parties enables trust that the terms of the contract endure beyond the moment of

its enactment such that the conveyer will not come back at some point in the future and lay claim to the property. Should such confusion arise, the language of the contract may be interpreted and that interpretation enforced by an independent party such as a court or an arbitrator. Thus, the ontological and historical origins of language as ritual are quite important for the basic constitution, functioning, and perpetuation of human societies.

### *Structure*

As a species of ritual, language exhibits the same structure as ritual. This structure is not to be confused with the syntax or grammar of a language, although it includes them, but rather is the form of the language process ordering and transforming its elements. The elements of language include not only phonemes, morphemes, words, sentences, and other units of discourse, but also the producers and receivers of these linguistic components, as well as the objects, ideas, acts, relations, and situations to which the linguistic components refer. Each of these elements is a sign of itself to itself and the other elements and is a sign of its role in the ritual to itself and the other elements. With regard to the linguistic components, their self-reference includes the semiotic processes that make them up at each of their levels in the language in question. That all of the elements of language are signs of themselves to themselves and each other is an



important point often overlooked in linguistic analyses as the meaning of a particular instance of language use may depend, at least in part, on the fuller set of roles and relationships an element in play inhabits apart from the particular role being played in the given language ritual. Going back to the example of the mayor opening the bridge, it matters to the meaning of the statement “I now declare this bridge to be open” that it is uttered by the mayor, and not someone else. Even though someone else could play the role of language producer in this particular language ritual, the utterance would not have the same meaning as when it is said by the mayor.

The elements of language must be arranged according to the order prescribed by the given language at play including syntax and grammar, but also phonological and morphological rules, and rhetorical norms. The network of references among the elements constitutes the order of the ritual, but only insofar as it adheres to the order as encoded independently by prior iterations of the performance of the language ritual. The constitution of the order by the language elements is the conventionality of the order, while the independence of the encoding of the ritual is its concreteness as opposed to the order being arbitrary. The process by which the elements are brought into accord with the various orders of language is the means by which they are transformed: the order is the

form of a process, and the ordering of the language elements is the performance of the language ritual. The mayor saying “I now declare this bridge to be open” puts himself as an element in temporal relation with the element of his act of declaring with respect to the element of the bridge as object and ascribing the status element of openness to it. All of the elements existed prior to the declaration, but the performance of the language ritual by the mayor brings all of the elements as signs, and thus their referents, into relation in a way they had not been previously according to an order none of them can claim credit for, which is to say the linguistic performance generates a new interpretant.

The frame of language rituals is extraordinarily complex because of the fact that language rituals are actually networked systems of rituals, which are themselves systems of signs. The rituals at multiple levels that make up language rituals generally each have their own frames that interact as they are compiled in order to constitute the frame of a given linguistic expression. Whereas the elements and ordering of elements are relatively straightforwardly abstractable from the complexity of layered network systems, this is not the case for the frames of language rituals because they are responsible for the layering of the networks. As a result, much of the detail of the framing feature of ritual structure must await elaboration in the next section, in which the many layers of linguistic

ritual are parsed, but the most basic framing elements of the language ritual are either patterned vocalization or textuality. Others include lexicon, syntax, and rhetoric. Notably, the very fact that there are particular terms in language to articulate the framing elements of language indicates the high degree of reflexivity of language, which is to be expected as a networked system of rituals. The frame of the mayoral statement “I now declare this bridge to be open” includes its patterned vocalization by the mayor, its adoption of the English language lexicon and adherence to English language syntax, and its fulfillment of the rhetorical function of civic enactment.

The ordered elements of language in their frame effect a transformation of at least some of the elements. If nothing else, the ordering of the particularly linguistic components in their frame makes that utterance a contribution to the ongoing development of the encoded order of the language ritual. In many cases, individual linguistic components are given nuance if not outright new meaning by the relations they are brought into in a given utterance, and this changes their capacity to refer to the realities with respect to which they started as sign vehicles. The ordering brought about by the language ritual may also alter the very ordering of the elements to which the linguistic components refer, such as by changing the status of a bridge from “closed” to “open.” This is a rather

practical result of a language ritual on the external world, namely the bridge, thereby demonstrating the technical capacity of language rituals and thus ritual more generally. Finally, language producers and receivers are at least transformed into the producer of a particular utterance or the receiver thereof, respectively. The mayor will forever be the person who opened the bridge, and the citizens who attended the opening will forever be the ones who received the declaration of opening as representatives of all those for whom the bridge is now open.

Last, the transformations of the language elements ordered together in their frame achieve objectification. This is to say that a given utterance or text becomes available as an element of further ritual process by drawing from the storehouse of linguistic ritual constructions and contributing back thereto, either in the form of further instantiating a particular ritual process or by contributing to the revision of one. A given utterance, once uttered, or a text once written, is available to further linguistic process and so language becomes its own object. At the same time, the interpretant(s) of the linguistic process become objects of further signification independent of the sign process that generated it. Again, this independence of language from the reality it engages does not result in arbitrariness because it draws from and gives back to the realities constituted by

its and other ordering processes and must contribute positively among them in order to justify its repetition. Moreover, as ritual, language holds in tension its role in representing reality as it is and transforming reality according to a subjunctive ideal, the reflex of which generates the ritual order itself. The mayor opening the bridge becomes objective first in the sense that the bridge is now perpetually open until otherwise closed. It also becomes objective in the sense that the language of the declaration by the mayor is now available for reference and interpretation by the citizens of the city to further convey what happened, remind one another of the new route through town, or question some aspect of its meaning. The success of the declaration contributes to the language ritual of bridge opening declarations, or detracts from it if it fails, and represents the bridge both as existent and as open in conformity with the reflexed ideal of improved traffic flow in the city.

It is important to stress that the structure of language is independent of the structure of reality yet the two are inextricably intertwined. Language requires independence in order to represent the subjunctive ideal the reflex of which is the norm for the encoding of the ritual, yet must also faithfully represent reality in order to accurately aim its transformative process. The language process, to be elaborated in greater detail below, cannot transform

reality to accord with its order if the structure of reality cannot admit the order with which the language ritual seeks to accord its elements. At the same time, if language and reality had the same structure, i.e. were isomorphic with respect to one another, then there would be no possibility of transformation as the two would merely reflect one another and so language would only be able to represent reality as it is. The independence but inextricable relatedness of the structures of language as a species of ritual and reality drive their mutual development or coevolution, as Terrence Deacon describes the intertwining of language and mind, which is surely a part of reality.

The example of a property transfer contract is again illustrative of the structure of language as ritual. The elements of the contract include the conveyor, the recipient, their agents if any, the property being transferred, the state of the property at various stages leading up to the transfer, the state of the property after the transfer, and any conditions placed on the transfer being completed, as well as the words, terms, phrases, sentences, and clauses that represent all of these things, states, and their relations in text. The text of the contract must be ordered according to the general rules of morphology, syntax, grammar, and rhetoric, but must also be ordered to as to accurately represent both the relationship between the conveyor and receiver, the property in

question and its condition, and the conditions of transfer as they are now, but also as they will be as a result of the transfer process effected by the execution of the contract. The frame of the transfer contract has to do with its formatting and use of terminology in accordance with legal codes and statutes and with past precedent, which may be in some tension with colloquial usages. The contract effects the transformation of the property from the status of belonging to the conveyor to the status of belonging to the receiver. The conveyor and receiver are also themselves transformed into the roles of conveyor and receiver by the language of the contract. Finally, the transformation of the property from belonging to the conveyor to belonging to the receiver becomes objective, as do the roles of conveyor and receiver, as they outlast the moment of execution of the contract, remaining until further modified by another ritual act. The structure of the language of the contract must accurately represent the initial state of the property, the conveyor, and the receiver, their final state, and the process of their transformation from the former to the latter, but that is not to say that the structure of the language mirrors the structure of the relations and their transformation. In fact, clauses in the contract representing the final state of the property being conveyed often appear earlier than clauses establishing the

necessary condition of the property for it to be conveyed, and contracts usually begin by declaring their intention of effecting a given transfer.

### *Process*

Language is a process of construing the elements of a given utterance in a certain way so as to accord with a linguistic order such that at least one of the elements is transformed. Even if an expression is intended to be merely descriptive, the elements described are transformed for having been so described rather than otherwise. The process of a language ritual may assign a general linguistic sign vehicle to a particular object, add a new sign vehicle to an object to render it more complex, remove a sign vehicle from an object to change its status, transfer a sign vehicle from one object to another, or refer a sign vehicle to a novel object, among other processes. In the case of the bridge opening declaration, the statement "I now declare this bridge to be open" refers the sign vehicle "open" to the adjacent bridge so as to change its status from closed to open. As the mayor is making the declaration, the sign vehicle "closed" is stripped from the bridge, and for a sheer instant the bridge is devoid of status signs. This is accomplished largely via the word "now," which might be interpreted as akin to "hereby" signaling that what was true prior to the uttering of the word is no longer true, yet the new reality has not yet been fully declared.



The experience of liminality is relatively trivial for an inanimate object like a bridge, but can be more emotionally and existentially fraught for sentient beings. Language rituals prove quite helpful in clarifying the nature of liminality in ritual processes more generally. A language producer, in the very act of producing a linguistic expression, singles out at least one element of the ritual for transformation and thus discriminates or separates that element from the rest, which is the first stage of the ritual process as described by Van Gennep. In the course of expression, the discriminated elements are ordered with respect to the other elements of the ritual in ways that may have been indeterminate or may have been otherwise ordered prior, and are utterly alone, including among themselves, as the elements being so ordered. This is the liminal stage. From the perspective of the elements being transformed, the liminal stage is utterly lonely and awful as the order that the language ritual will establish for them with respect to the rest of the elements is apocalyptic in the sense of being “already” in the form of the expression but “not yet” in the completion of its utterance. From the perspective of the language receivers, however, the identification of elements as orderable or the discrimination of elements that had become taken for granted as inhabiting a new order leaves them temporarily underdetermined but at the forefront of attention, which is something like the anti-structure generating

*comunitas* that Victor Turner described. Nevertheless, language is clearly a meta-structure vis-à-vis the structure of reality that, like other rituals, operates at a higher logical level so as to facilitate the transformative process of bringing reality perfused by signs into accord with ever-evolving sign systems, which accomplishment is the third stage of the ritual process: reincorporation.

In the case of the bridge opening declaration, the mayor discriminates the bridge for transformation. In course of expression, the status of the bridge is rendered as open instead of its prior state as closed, but the bridge is utterly alone as the element undergoing the transformation, temporarily denuded of the signification of either closed or open until the expression is complete. From the perspective of the citizens listening to the mayor make the declaration, however, the bridge is temporarily in a position of anti-structure, and so having no determinate relation to them, and yet the focus of their attention as the potential fulfillment of their hopes for improved transit throughout the city. It is the meta-structure of language that lifts the bridge out of reality as it is, namely in the state of being closed, and returns it to the new state of being open as encoded in the language of the declaration.

The example of the property transfer contract is even more analogous to a rite of passage, although it is a rite of passage for a piece of property rather than

a person. The author and executors of the contract primarily discriminate the property in question for transformation, although secondarily also discriminate the conveyor and receiver and transform them into those respective roles. The process of transfer temporarily denudes the property of being owned by anyone, which calls into question its very identity as property. Once the conditions outlined in the language of the executed contract are met, the new ownership by the receiver attaches and the property has a new identity as being owned by the receiver. It is the meta-structure of language that achieves this transformation by lifting the property out of its reality as owned by the conveyor and assigning it a new set of signs such that it is thereafter in reality the property of the receiver upon reincorporation. This reassigning of signs has the effect of transforming the property from being a sign vehicle of the conveyor to being a sign vehicle of the receiver, to put the process in the idiom of semiosis.

### *Function*

Whereas the functions of ritual generally are the whole system of culture because ritual is the encoding of all cultural systems, language is one of the cultural systems encoded in the form of the ritual process and so is one of the functions of ritual along with other cultural systems such as economics, politics, religion, etc. That said, cultural systems participating in the ritual form as its

species have more particular functions of their own. The principal function of language is communication, which will be explored in greater detail below. For the moment it is important to note that language generates the function of communication both in the sense of transmitting information and in the sense of constituting a community, achieving the latter by the former, which is distinctive among varieties of ritual. Meanwhile, there are several other aspects of the function of language as a species of ritual deserving attention here.

First, the functions or entailments of language rituals need not be cognitive in spite of the fact that the principal function of language is communication. For example, in the case of the mayor declaring the bridge to be open, the bridge would be open even if there were no citizens there to hear the mayor make the declaration. The state of the bridge being open is a function of the person with the authority to open bridges in the city, in this case the mayor, having declared it so. The declaration is linguistic, but the language need never register cognitively in a given citizen for the entailment of the language to nevertheless hold. Most citizens do not attend bridge openings, yet they are still able to use the bridges that were opened by a declaration by the proper authority. Likewise, the property transferred between the conveyor and the recipient is the property of the recipient following the transfer regardless of

whether a third party is aware of the language of the contract or even that the property had previously been owned by the conveyor. The reason that the functions of language need not be cognitive is that while the particular function of language is principally communication in the sense of the transmission of information, that transmission has the effect of generating the function of ritual more generally, namely community constitution. Admittedly, there would likely be confusion as to whether or not the bridge was really open if no one heard the mayor declare it so, and this confusion might result in people checking further back up the chain until eventually someone queries the mayor who confirms that the bridge is open. Nevertheless, in confirming that the bridge is open, the mayor is referring back to the prior linguistic act of declaring the bridge to be open such that the bridge was open before the question was even raised, not declaring it open anew such that the bridge is only just now open.

There are also interesting linguistic aspects of the transition from foreground to background, i.e. from intentional to taken for granted production, facilitated by ritual generally. In the case of the bridge, once the declaration is made that it is open, then those who ask whether it is open may be told that it is. If they do not believe the first person they ask, they may ask others, or even the mayor who opened it, until they feel confident and then they no longer have to

intentionally wonder whether it is open and so its openness becomes taken for granted. Also, once open the citizens of the town may refer to the bridge as the “new bridge,” and say something like, “hey, let’s take the new bridge,” at least implying that the bridge is open. Eventually, however, the openness of the bridge is not even implied, but rather assumed, such as when an outsider consults a map and directs her driver to “take a left and go over the bridge.” The bridge opening, however, is effectively a rite of passage for the bridge, so is not the best example of the transition from foreground to background. The contract transferring property, however, is an ordinary ritual in that such contracts are executed many times per day for different sorts of property among many different people. The many clauses of contracts, for example, conveying real property, i.e. real estate, were generated in response to problems that arose in prior transfers, and have become part and parcel of the standard contracts for all such transactions going forward so as to avoid the previous pitfalls and thereby enhance confidence in the language ritual of the contract. That such linguistic rituals within real estate contracts have become taken for granted is demonstrated by the fact that in spite of the advent of Global Positioning Systems (GPS), which makes possible an absolute rendering of the location of a piece of real property and its boundaries, the conveyance of real estate is still

ritualized relatively vis-à-vis distances measured from other pieces of property. Apparently, such relative means of geolocating have not become problematic, and so the ritual of the contract has not needed to be so enhanced.

### *Performance*

The form, process, and function of language are abstractions from linguistic performances, as the form, process, and function of ritual are abstractions from ritual performances. As the enactment of generating its functions by its processes according to its form, the performance of language as ritual establishes and maintains the very conventions of its form and constitutes the acceptance of that form by the performer(s). Production of sentences derived from the lexicon and according to proper grammatical construction contributes to the normativity of that vocabulary and grammar. By contrast, repeated use of neologisms and ungrammatical constructions may lead to alternations in the lexicon and grammar, at least among a subgroup of the language community, at least potentially leading to a permanent disjunction. For example, “pants” refers to trousers in the United States while referring to underwear in England. Thus, linguistic performance is fundamentally reflexive as the means by which work is done on language itself. At the same time, without the performance of the form, linguistic processes are not rendered and so language functions are not

generated. Thus, language performance does real work on and in the world by rendering the processes of the language form to generate its functions, as well as on itself. The declaration of the bridge being open simultaneously maintains the linguistic form and process of bridge opening and opens the bridge. The property transfer contract simultaneously contributes to the precedent of language forms that constitute contracts and effects the transfer of ownership from the conveyor to the receiver.

Since linguistic performance both establishes and maintains language itself and constructs and transforms the world via the functions of its processes, it is the proper aspect for addressing the intersection between language form and the contingencies of reality. As has already been noted, the elements and structures of language are both independent from yet correlated with the elements and structures of reality. In order to generate its effects in reality, language must be correlated enough therewith to for its processes to be applicable. Also, the semiotic systems of language are relatively stable by definition as rituals since rituals are encodings of sign systems reliably generating certain effects. This stability results from the fact that, once learned, language becomes largely taken for granted as part of the habitus of a society except when contingent circumstance intervenes or the performance of



overlapping rituals requires language to adjust in order to minimize overall cognitive dissonance. Reality, by contrast, includes many interpretants generated by sign vehicles standing for objects that are not particularly valuable to the wider ecology of the world and so are never encoded into a system such that they may be repeatedly generated. Language must nevertheless be able to register these contingent realities in order to transform the novel circumstances that result. It is at the intersection of the stability of language form and novelty generated by contingency that participants in a given language ritual enter into a process of negotiating power, roles, relationships, and the elements and forms of language itself.

Consider that a rivet in the bridge over the river may have been improperly manufactured resulting in cascading failures such that the bridge collapses into the river. In declaring the bridge to be open, the mayor is at least implicitly declaring the construction process of the bridge to have been successfully completed such that the bridge is now safe to traverse. In so doing, the mayor is assuming responsibility for the safety of those who use the bridge. When the bridge fails, the mayor is responsible for any injuries and the disruption caused to the city by virtue of being the authority that declared the bridge open in the first place. The defective rivet is a contingent reality that had

no role in the linguistic ritual of declaring the bridge open, yet the mayor is still able to hold a press conference and explain, in the same language used to open the bridge, that the faulty rivet caused the bridge to collapse. Of course, that same language may be used to bring lawsuits against the mayor and the city, or to call into question the adequacy of the person serving as mayor to the role. The failure of the bridge also does work on the language ritual of declaring bridges to be open in that it reduces confidence in them and thus decreases their efficacy.

Similarly, if the property in question were to be destroyed as the process of transfer were being carried out in a way not accounted for in the conditions of transfer outlined in the contract, the rights and obligations of the conveyer and receiver with respect to the property in question would become rather indeterminate, at least potentially resulting in negotiation via legal action by one or both parties. In fact, the conditions that had been accounted in the contract were likely themselves included as a result of contingency striking in a previous transaction. Nevertheless, the relative stability of the rhetorical form of a contract accounting for precedent cannot anticipate every possible contingency, and the contingency that destroyed the property in this case will likely feed back into that rhetorical form as a contingency clause in future contracts. Language is thus more dynamic than reality in having the potential to account for any possible

configuration of the world that might erupt, but also less dynamic than the world that admits such contingencies necessarily banished from the systematization of ritual.

*Sincerity, Subjunctivity, Efficacy, and Play*

To be sure, not all language producers are sincere in what they say or write, so language clearly does not function on the Augustinian model that would demand producers become sincere about what they articulate prior to linguistic production. In fact, the mayor may declare the bridge open even while thinking that taking the low bid meant the contractor used cheaper materials more prone to failure, the conveyer may be transferring the property due to financial distress, and the receiver may wonder if what they got was really worth what they paid, i.e. "buyer's remorse." Equally certain is that language provides no escape from the realities of the self or the world and so provides no contrast to sincerity. Neither would the mayor declaring a nonexistent bridge to be open somehow improve the ability of the citizens of the city to cross the river, nor can one of the construction workers successfully open the bridge by declaring it so no matter how sincere they are in making the declaration. Instead, whether or not they start off sincere, language users become sincere in the course of the language process effected by linguistic performance. A mayor harboring doubts

about the construction quality of a recently opened bridge nevertheless becomes the authority who opened the bridge by virtue of having performed the process of declaring the bridge open. Likewise, a conveyor under duress nevertheless no longer owns the property even as a receiver experiencing remorse is now stuck with it because the language of the contract transferring the property was performed in its execution and so conveyor and receiver are made sincere to its terms regardless. Sincerity is an outcome of the language ritual for its users, neither a precondition nor a contrast to its performance.

Much more will be said about the subjunctivity of language in the next chapter, but for the moment it is enough to say that subjunctivity has to do with the ways in which language articulates reality as it could, should, or would be. Certainly, language is capable of describing reality as it is, but in so doing at least implies that reality in its current state and configuration is as it could, should, or would be. The capacity of language to articulate alternatives to the way things are results from its correlated independence vis-à-vis the world as a conventional sign system, i.e. a ritual. In linguistic performance, language constructs a subjunctive space in which the world is construed and schematized as if it accords with the structure the expression attributes to it. Rather than an escape from the world as it is, language rituals are effective precisely by rendering their

subjunctive constructions indicative by illocutionary force. Linguistic expression generates or adjusts the actions and pattern of relations among the elements of the language ritual by casting the subjunctive form it articulates as normative. The language ritual fails if and when the world is not capable of adhering to that norm or if other rituals at play interfere with the elements according with the norm. Elements that do adhere to the normative subjunctive construction of the language ritual thus become sincere and the language rituals that construct the norms with respect to which the elements become sincere are effective.

Consider the situation of the property transfer contract. The language of the contract sets up a series of subjunctive spaces, first regarding the status of the parties, the property, and the payment prior to the transfer, then the conditions under which the transfer is effected, and finally the status of the parties, property, and payment once the transfer is complete. The correlated independence of the language in which the contract is written is what enables the contract to pick up on the parties, property, and payment, construe them as such, and then articulate their relations among one another at each stage of the transfer. The execution of the contract brings its illocutionary force to bear such that the status of the parties, property, and payment are adjusted to accord with the terms laid out in the contract and rendered sincere with regard to the norms

it articulates; the subjunctive is rendered indicative. If it turns out that the property was not actually in the state outlined in the contract that it must be in prior to transfer, such as in fact being owned by someone other than the conveyer, or if other rituals, such as economic rituals, preclude the payment being made, then the illocutionary force of the contract would be disrupted and the language ritual of the contract would fail.

In addition to linguistically casting subjunctive spaces as normative for the world, language also ritually establishes subjunctive norms and makes its users sincere with respect to itself, i.e. reflexively. In fact, in order for the forms of language to successfully construct subjunctive norms for the world, they must first adhere to the conventions of the language ritual in which that norm is expressed. Each individual linguistic expression is uttered or written as if it is meaningful, meaning being constituted by conformity to the norms of prior instances of language use. In saying "I now declare this bridge to be open," the mayor is operating as if the sounds, words, grammar, and rhetoric of the declaration conform to the norms of English. Since they do, they are meaningful and the mayor is sincere as a competent user of English as are the citizens of the city who understand the declaration and adjust their behavior to accord with the new status of the bridge. If the mayor instead said "I now declare this bridge to

be klarg,” neither would the sentence be meaningful, adopting a word not to be found in the lexicon, nor would the bridge be opened. Thus, the sincerity of language users, the subjunctive spaces language creates, and the efficacy of linguistic expression are always intimately interrelated at two levels simultaneously: the reflexive level and the level of world construction.

The contrast between ritual and play is particularly clear and acute with regard to language. Language users at play must be sincere with respect to the subjunctive norms language casts for itself in order to understand one another but need not be sincere with respect to the subjunctive norms cast in language constituting the arena of play. Thus, play is to be distinguished from ritual primarily on the basis that the norms constituted in play do not endure beyond the framework of the arena of play whereas the norms constituted by ritual do endure beyond the ritual frame. Hence, while language may be used in play, it may never be itself a form of play because adherence to its own subjunctive norms requires its users to be sincere with respect to them and the performance of those norms does reflexively contribute back to their ongoing maintenance. If two children who attended the bridge opening were to get home, place a plank of wood over two cinderblocks, decide among themselves who would play the mayor, and then that one were to declare their “bridge” to be open, then neither

would traffic flow in the city thereby be improved nor would it be safe for a motor vehicle to traverse the plank of wood. Nevertheless, for their play to be play at bridge opening, the child playing the mayor must be sincere with regard to linguistic norms in saying "I now declare this bridge to be open," even while not being sincere about actually opening the plank of wood across the cinder blocks to public access. Language itself is always ritual as it generates sincerity with regard to language even when being used to generate playful worldly norms constrained to their respective arenas of play. Whereas language as ritual is always in correlated independence from the world, play is independent but not correlated.

### *Communication*

That language is a medium of communication is analytic, yet the prevalent approach to theorizing linguistic communication focusing on the propositional content of expressions obscures the fullness of the communication paradigm of language as ritual. The two levels of subjunctive casting rendering linguistic subjects sincere when efficacious correspond to the self-referential and canonical messages encoded in ritual as elaborated by Rappaport, but their interdependence is more readily articulated in the present scheme: self-referential, i.e. reflexive, messages locate their elements and construe their



relationships according to the canonical messages of language encoding, which are then themselves either further instantiated or adjusted by the conformity or variations on the encoding, respectively, they reflexively perform. Self-referential messages thus contribute to the construction and maintenance of linguistic convention, i.e. the canon, and linguistic convention encodes the elements and their relations represented in self-referential messages. The simultaneity of the two levels and their interdependence bridges the gaps between the language producer, the correlated but independent linguistic medium, and the appropriation by the language receiver(s). Alas, this bridge cannot be said to entirely eliminate the possibility of miscommunication, especially given the multiple, interlocking webs of ritual at play in any given situation at any particular moment, i.e. the ubiquity of ritual. Thus, language is only secondarily communication in the sense of signal transmission; language is primarily communication in the sense of community constitution: distinctions among elements and construal of their relations in language depends upon the prior acceptance of the linguistic conventions that render the elements distinct and thus relatable. Just as performing a ritual order depends upon acceptance of what is encoded in the canon of the order, performing a language ritual depends upon acceptance of what is encoded in the canon of the language, namely its

lexicon, grammar, syntax, and rhetoric. Generally speaking, the canon is quite mystified to the performers of a given language ritual as it has become thoroughly taken for granted as part and parcel of the doxa of the linguistic community in question and the sincere habitus of the individual members thereof. The basic purpose of this chapter is to demystify the conventions of the language ritual as such in order to then be able to grapple with the capacity of linguistic convention to address or express that which is indistinguishable.

Not only does the mayor saying “I now declare this bridge to be open” express the proposition that the bridge is open, it also has the effects of opening the bridge, of identifying the mayor as mayor to the citizens in attendance, and of making the mayor the official who opened the bridge. Not only does the property transfer contract express various propositions about the state of the property in question, it constructs the conveyor and receiver in those roles and governs the process of the transition of the property from one set of states to another set with respect to each. The capacity of language to carry out these effects derives from the accretion of conventional norms of structures, forms, and patterns organizing linguistic elements against which the performance in question is measured as meaningful with regard to the realities it seeks to

construe. Communication happens when these norms are relied upon to adequately construe the elements and their relations in the case at hand.

The bridge opening declaration, by according with the canonical linguistic form for bridge opening, first constructs the roles of the various elements. The declaration construes the mayor as the authority capable of opening the bridge, and by in fact making the declaration and exercising that authority, the performance of the bridge opening ritual by the mayor also feeds back reflexively into the ritual of being the mayor as a further instantiation. The declaration also construes the constructed edifice of steel and concrete spanning the river as a bridge, which may seem obvious and thus trivial, but is important if the citizens are going to have confidence in the edifice as adequate to their needs in traversing the river. The syntax of the declaration construes the relationship between the mayor and the bridge as the relationship between the one with the authority to open municipal structures and the bridge in need of being opened. The word “now” locates the illocutionary force of the declaration temporally as contemporaneous with the making of the declaration. The word “declare” indicates what sort of rhetorical form the expression is taking and the type of illocutionary force it imputes. Restriction of the class of bridges to “this” bridge is extremely important for clarifying the precise edifice being opened and

further confirms the status of the edifice indicated as a bridge. In the case that the edifice in question is less than obviously a bridge, the mayor might need to accompany the declaration by a gesture for want of the citizenry casting about for what precisely the mayor is going on about. Use of the verb “to be” renders the declaration as conferring a quality, state, or status on the object, in this case the bridge. In this instance, the conferral is of a status, namely that of being “open.” All of that together reflexively serves to further instantiate the conventions of the linguistic ritual of bridge opening declarations within the even more general canon of declarations.

The aspect of communication provides opportunity to clarify the activity of subjunctive casting that linguistic rituals necessarily undertake. Turning to the property transfer contract, the language of the contract addresses the conveyor and the receiver as if those roles wholly determine them and fully express their determinateness. Of course, the actual people involved in the transfer are not nearly as determinate nor determined by the language of the contract as it would purport. The conveyor and receiver may each also be a mother, daughter, sister, wife, friend, supervisor, employee, student, entrepreneur, contemplative, runner, etc., but these determinations of them are stripped away in the language ritual of the contract: within the frame of the contract, they are merely the conveyor and

receiver. So too, the property in question may have a rich history, may have interacted with many others over the course of its existence, and so may in fact be a kaleidoscope of determinations, yet it is necessarily reduced to the role of property within the linguistic ritual of the property transfer contract. Also, within the ritual frame, the relations among the conveyer, receiver, and property are also reduced to the ways in which they are construed by the contract, even though the conveyer may also be the mother of the receiver and the property in question may be the home built by the parents of the conveyer, now being passed on to the next generation. All language necessarily reduces elements and their relations, i.e. its referents, to the roles they play in the linguistic ritual at hand in order to maintain traction on them and to facilitate the particular process the form of which it is. Without this reduction, the myriad determinacies of the elements and intricate interrelations among them would be entirely unwieldy given the seemingly infinite flexibility of the linguistic medium, so the reduction is a function of efficacy. Also, the restriction of meaning to the frame of the ritual intensifies its reflexivity, further heightening its efficacy. Thus, within the frame of the language ritual it is extremely important for participants to accept the elements and their relations as if they are fully determined by the conventional terms of the canon in order for the linguistic process to come to fulfillment, even

though the full reality of the elements and their relations, metaphysically, are much more complex. The acceptance of the as if is necessary for the efficacy of the linguistic ritual at play, even as the complexity and indeterminateness with respect to the given ritual frame of the as is remains in the wider matrix of ritual webs in which a given subject participates.

### *Pervasive*

Ritual is pervasive, as established in the previous two chapters, but language as a species of ritual is not pervasive in the same sense because other species of ritual, such as religious, political, economic, family, and all of the other myriad ritual types, participate in the pervasion of ritual generally. However, there is a sense in which language is pervasive on analogy to the pervasiveness of ritual generally on the basis that language rituals are frequently party to most of the rest of the species of ritual that are humanly socially significant. For example, a great deal of the analysis of the Great Vigil of Easter in chapter three addressed linguistic expressions therein. Conceptually, then, ritual in general functions architectonically as sign systems formally arranging sign processes taken as metaphysically simple, and language falls at a meso-level between the architectonic of ritual and humanly significant social rituals. Three clarifications are important with regard to this conceptualization. First, as an architectonic of

metaphysically simple sign processes, there are many species of ritual that are not necessarily socially significant for humans, and analysis of which exceeds the scope of this project. Second, language rituals pervade human social experience on two sides: on the side of ritual generally, which is to say on the canonical side of their own conventionality, and on the side of the broader social rituals in which the language rituals are employed, which is to say on the self-referential side reflexing on themselves and on language more broadly. This two-sided mediation is to be expected for a ritual functioning at the meso-level within the ritual web of life and experience, and is the engine driving the process of subjunctive casting rendering elements sincere to the ritual form at the social level. Finally, there is a great deal more to socially significant human rituals than language, and such rituals should be understood to rely on rather than depend on language for their functioning.

The bridge opening declaration is a linguistic ritual constitutive of a political ritual. If the mayor just stood next to the bridge and gestured at it, the citizens of the city would not have any reason to understand that the bridge is open and that they may now use it to traverse the river bisecting their municipality. The elocution “I now declare this bridge to be open” may be interpreted on the side of ritual generally, which underlies the canon of sounds

forming words forming sentences deployed rhetorically. It may also be interpreted on the side of the political ritual of bridge opening, which employs language to construe the mayor as the authority capable of opening the bridge and of changing the status of the bridge from closed to open. While it is in principle possible for some other ritual system to fulfill this function, language is an extremely efficient means of doing so.

Similarly, the property transfer contract is a linguistic ritual constitutive of an economic ritual. Notably, the language itself has effectively nothing to do with the actual exchange involved in the transfer but rather sets the terms by which the transfer takes place. The letters, words, phrases, sentences, paragraphs, clauses, and rhetoric of the contract must conform to the canon of the language in which the contract is written in order to be interpreted as language at all, let alone as an employment of language to encode the terms of transfer of a piece of property between a conveyor and a receiver. Again, language is an efficient means of encoding a mutually understood set of conditions of transfer that may be referred to by an objective party in case of a dispute regarding the terms or their effect. This efficiency coupled with and in spite of the almost infinite flexibility of language to express seemingly any situation is what makes language valuable as an adaptive advantage.



### *Conventional*

Language is conventional because language, as a species of ritual, is a human artifact socially constructed by common consent in correlated independence with the world. With very few exceptions, such as onomatopoeia, and aside from minimal limitation arising from physiological capacities for sound and graphic production, there is nothing inherent in particular sounds, markings, words, or their sequences, syntactic or grammatical rules, or norms of rhetoric that necessitate their serving as sign vehicles for their objects and not some other. Hence the sheer quantity and diversity of languages around the world, and the ability of humans to invent languages wholesale, such as computer languages. Also, because language is correlated but independent of the world, that independence means that there is nothing about the world that could delimit the capacity of a linguistic element to refer to it. Instead, meaning in language is established by accretion, that is, the repetition by multiple members of a community of the use of a linguistic element as a sign vehicle for an object in order to generate a particular interpretant. Eventually the community will forget that it invented that usage in the first place, thereby mystifying its conventionality, and the linguistic element will simply become a part of the doxa of the community and the habitus of its members.

At the same time, language is not arbitrary. New linguistic elements must map into the language system, its norms, and the extensionalities of prevailing elements in order to effectively generate their interpretants. This is to say that, contrary to much of the Western ritual theory literature, the establishment of new linguistic conventions is on the very basis of their technical capacity to reliably generate their interpretants within the given linguistic system. The necessity of this capacity to reliably generate the interpretant may be contrasted with the constraint denials in the previous paragraph, which are constraints imposed by the nature of either the sign vehicle or the object rather than the interpretant. This is how ritual in general and language in particular can be conventional but not arbitrary, namely that their construction is teleological and so cannot be arbitrary, or in the idiom of Xunzi, ritual and language are results of artifice crafted to govern the world by according heaven and earth.

When the mayor speaks to open the bridge by declaring it so, the sounds vocalized so as to form words in sentential sequence draw upon previously established encodings with reference to which the citizens of the city may determine the speech as meaningful or not. There is nothing about the sound or word "I" ("ar") that necessarily refers reflexively to the speaking subject of the sentence, nor is there anything about the mayor that requires the sound or word

“I” to serve as sign vehicle. Instead, the history of speaking subjects using the sound or word “I” to reflexively refer to themselves enables the citizens to recognize that they mayor is so self-indicating, which recognition is the proper interpretant of the mayor so speaking. While conventional, this use of the sound “ai” is not arbitrary because attempting to substitute the sound “ju” would not only fail to generate the proper interpretant because it does not accord with the norms of prior use in the language, it would also generate confusion because of the association of the sound “ju” according to the norms of past use in English with the word “you.”

This articulation of the conventionality of language allows for a more precise rendering of the notion of correlative independence. The social construction of convention establishes and maintains a whole system of linguistic sign vehicles interrelated according to normative patterns established by the ritual form. That system of linguistic sign vehicles is independent of the system of relations among objects in the world to which those vehicles refer in order to reliably generate their interpretants. This independence is characterized by the ability to provide a description and explanation of the language system as a whole without necessarily referencing the system of worldly objects to which the

sign vehicles refer. On the other hand, it is not possible to give an account of the generation of the interpretants of taking the linguistic sign vehicles to stand for their worldly objects without reference to said objects and their relations in the world. Thus, while the linguistic sign system is independent, it must be correlated to the objects in the world and their relations in order to reliably generate its interpretants, which is why language is conventional but not arbitrary. The structure and contents of language need not mimic the structure and contents of the world, but the greater the disparity between them, the fewer interpretants will reliably be generated, so it behooves language to more or less closely mimic the world so as to maximize its efficacy. At the same time, the differences between language and the world are what allow language to construct its subjunctive spaces and render the world sincere with respect to them, so a purely descriptive language, which would precisely mimic the objects in the world and their relations, would inevitably renounce the transformative capacity of language.

Returning to the example of the property transfer contract, the words “conveyor,” “receiver,” “property,” and all of the rest of the vocabulary in the contract must be properly formed words according to the phonetics and morphology of the language in which the contract is written. Furthermore, they

must be sequences according to the syntax and grammar of the language, and those sequences must be deployed so as to construct a valid rhetorical argument. All of these formal norms belong to the linguistic system of sign vehicles, which is also to say the canon of the language ritual, and are independent of the objects in the world and their relations that the language system might be used to describe and transform. In order to actually describe and transform the world, however, the vocabulary, grammar, and rhetoric of the contract must pick up on an actual person who is the conveyor, an actual person who is the receiver, and some object that is the property of the conveyor in order to effectively transform the situation such that the property in question thenceforth belongs to the receiver. Were the language of the contract to, for example, refer to a whole neighborhood instead of a single lot within the neighborhood, the contract would likely be invalid. The vocabulary of the contract, in this case the definition of the property in question, must correlate with the world or risk failing to generate its proper interpretant.

### *Transformative*

As a species of ritual, language transforms its elements to accord with its construal of them according to its form in its frame. This happens in several ways. First, language renders its elements determinate within its frame by

distinguishing them from one another as being as its terms refer to them. For example, the declaration of the bridge as being open distinguishes the person making the declaration as the mayor, i.e. the person with the authority in the city to open bridges, from the bridge, i.e. the structure being opened. The declaration also renders its own illocution temporally determinate as taking place in the present, and renders the issue at play a question of status through its use of the verb "to be." Language also transforms at least some of its elements by removing the sign vehicle that element began with and assigning a new sign vehicle. In the case of the bridge opening declaration, the implied sign vehicle of "closed" is removed and replaced with the explicit sign vehicle of "open." Finally, linguistic expressions construe their elements as relating to one another according to their ideal form as linguistically encoded, and then render these ideal relations indicative through illocutionary force. The declaration of the bridge as open takes the elements of the sentence as determined by the terms of the sentence and renders or re-renders their relations such that the bridge is hereafter open by subjunctively casting them as open, in turn becoming indicative by the illocutionary force imposed by the status of the declaration within the wider frame of the political ritual.

This motion between the subjunctive casting and indicative rendering of language that transforms its elements to accord with the form of the linguistic ritual within its frame is crucial for understanding how language functions in achieving communal and social harmony. When a language user generates a linguistic expression, the elements of the expression enter the social arena as if they are fully determinate according to the terms of the expression and their relations. For example, in the case of the property transfer contract, the conveyer and the recipient are required to operate as if the construal of the property in question by the language of the contract expresses its full reality. This is part of what it means that rituals, and thus language, are framed activities. If the property in question were expressed in the contract as “a crystal vase,” the material of the vase as crystal is taken as if it were fully expressive of the property even though the vase is also nine inches tall, cylindrical, and chipped at the rim. One of the implications of this is that if the status of the property were to be called into question after the contract has been executed, an objective party called in to arbitrate would have no way of determining whether the cubic crystal vase the recipient actually ended up with is the crystal vase that was to have been conveyed through the instrument of the contract or not. The necessary reduction of the objects addressed in language to the interpretants generated

when referred to by the sign vehicles employed inevitably admits a certain vagueness that only an infinity of linguistic expression that is practically impossible could overcome. The reduction entailed in subjunctive casting results in an inherent fragility in the interpretant generated by illocutionary force rendering it indicative. The mystification of the conventional order of the ritual such that it becomes taken for granted serves an important function of reinforcing the fullness of the reality of the interpretant by making it part and parcel of the doxa of the community and thus of the habitus of each of its members.

A counterargument to the case for the transformative capacity of language as elaborated here is that simply declaring "this rock is cheese" does not somehow make the rock cheese. Transposed into the domain of religious ritual, the counterargument may analogously be stated that declaring "this bread is flesh" and "this wine is blood" does not make them so. Several replies may be offered to this counterargument, starting with the fact that it neglects several aspects of the theory of language as ritual as it has already been stated. The counterargument mistakes the communicative nature of language as transmission of information rather than constituting a community for which the rock is cheese, the bread is flesh, or the wine is blood. Moreover, the



counterargument also fails to recognize that the theory under development here acknowledges that linguistic expressions that fail to be properly correlated with the reality of the world do result in ritual failure. It may be that the person declaring the rock to be cheese somehow intended the illocution to magically effect a transformation of the rock into a dairy product. Yet, that does not mean that the socially constructed linguistic medium is actually capable of carrying this out when there is a profound mismatch between the language system and the system of the world. The subjunctive casting of the declaration that “this rock is cheese” lacks illocutionary force and runs counter to the doxa of most communities and societies. The lack of such communities at least in part results from an evolutionary constraint: any community or society that did take rocks declared to be cheese as cheese would likely end up constituted by dentally challenged members who would be less likely to survive.

### Rituals of Language

Just as the previous section started from the theory of ritual elaborated over the previous two chapters and showed how it addresses the phenomenon of language in general, this section returns to the second chapter to interpret the various modalities and levels of linguistic analysis in terms of the ritual theory. In so doing, this section provides an alternative interpretation of the linguistic

turn in its various manifestations as rooted in the semiology of Saussure, instead oriented toward the semiotics of Peirce as developed in the present project to include symbol systems encoded as rituals. The narrow goal in each subsection is to elaborate how a particular level of or angle on language as developed in linguistics, philosophy of language, logic, and hermeneutics, relies on, functions in, or otherwise engages the theory of ritual elaborated over the previous two chapters. In doing so, the section as a whole envisions language as itself made up of many layers of intersecting rituals that in turn bring language users, both producers and receivers, into interaction and relation with one another and the world around them. Achieving this wider goal will constitute success in making the various vantage points on the phenomenon of language coherent and systematic with respect to one another according to the terms of the ritual theory so as to constitute a singular theory of language.

### *Phonology and Morphology*

An atomistic approach to linguistic theorizing starts from the most basic units of language, speech sounds, or phonemes, and builds upwards into morphemes, at which level meaning begins to emerge, and up the hierarchy into syntax, semantics, and eventually pragmatics. This is the approach associated with the *Sound Pattern of English* phonology of Noam Chomsky and the

inheritors of his lineage. By contrast, Optimality Theory (OT) begins at the level of meaning with basic morphological units called lexemes and then derives the most optimal inflections as measured against a range of phonological constraints. In both cases, phonological and morphological analyses proceed on the assumption that linguistic processing happens independent of the realities language engages. The theory of language as ritual (LR) emerging here instead takes the correlation of sound and meaning to be the basic unit of language, the most basic element of the language ritual. The range of sounds available for correlation with elements of reality are limited only by the human physiological capacity to produce them and the auditory capacity to readily distinguish them from other sounds. Phonology in this sense is restricted to the analysis of which sounds are so producible and distinguishable and is an abstraction from, rather than a fundamental unit of, morphology. Moreover, while OT is taken as an advance on atomistic theories, LR takes the lexemes it relies upon to be abstractions and prefers a genealogical, developmental, and systems theoretic analysis of language development rather than the computational paradigm of OT.

The language as ritual paradigm derives the initial stage of its linguistic analysis from the assumptions of ritual as conventional and transformative. At

baseline is the range of sounds, myriad yet finite, that the human vocal apparatus is capable of producing and that the human auditory apparatus is capable of distinguishing, recognizing that individual languages may rely upon the fullness of this range to greater or lesser extents. The conventional character of language means that humans socially and collaboratively construct language, patterning sounds together in mutually meaningful ways so as to correlate with the world as it is and as it could be. The transformative character of language means that the purpose of patterning sounds together so as to be mutually meaningful in correlation with the world as it is and could be is to transform language users and other fragmented elements of the world toward wholeness. These three principles – sonic range, convention, and transformation – provide the theoretical basis for analyzing the basic units of language, namely, meaningful sounds.

Linguistic analysis under the rubric of language as ritual starts with the full yet finite range of sounds and their auditory discrimination. In order to construct a language such that its conventions might be effective in achieving transformation, a language community must begin by identifying a particular sound with a particular element or aspect of reality, thereby establishing its intension. The community must also, in time, collaboratively agree upon the limits of its extension. For example, the sound 'tree' may initially be adopted to

refer to a particular oak tree planted in front of a particular house, but in time may be employed to refer to other oaks, and then to maples, birches, and pines as well. The move from specific to general necessitates drawing upon further sounds to pick up on the particularities of specific instances of the generalized term. The distinction between 'tree' as a collection of sounds linked together phonologically or functioning morphologically as a word are both abstractions from the sound 'tree' referring to a particular oak and its analogues within the extensional range.

As the extension of a sound becomes increasingly fixed within a language community, the availability of that sound for use in other linguistic constructions is restricted. For example, if the sound 's' becomes designated to indicate plurality when appended to the end of nouns, then it is no longer available to designate other qualities of nouns, such as color or size, although it might be put to use otherwise when applied to other parts of speech, such as verbs. Instead, other sounds must be employed to distinguish color and size, such as 'blue,' 'green,' 'big,' and 'small,' and in designating them, they also accrue certain extensionality delimiting their employment for alternate uses. The delineation of a language system thus begins with an ongoing set of correlations among producible and distinguishable sounds, the relations of their intension and

extensional ranges to one other, and the realities in the world those sounds are taken to represent.

There are several constraints that impact the development of these basic elements of language systems. First, once a sound has a fixed extension, it is no longer available to mean something outside the scope of that extension, except by analogy, in which case it is drawing that thing into its extensionality as related. This is what it means for a sound to have become correlated with particular elements or aspects of elements in the world such that while the sounds are independent from reality in principle, they are no longer arbitrary once fixed. Second, language communities will resist using sounds that could easily be confused for sounds employed to discriminate elements of reality or aspects of those elements they take to be most important, and will often use sounds most easily produced for the most frequent elements or aspects engaged. This introduces an element of economic selection into the development of language systems such that ease and efficiency are privileged. Finally, the ways in which sounds are conjoined such that their meanings are conjoined must follow the pattern of relations among elements in the world and the relations of aspects to their elements. This patterning across instances, admitting limited variation for the sake of easing the process of sound production, is a result of

correlation with the systems and processes of the world, not a rule set inherent to language itself. Without such an integral connection to reality, language would be incapable of transforming the world. Moreover, the tendency toward common patterns across instances reflects the ritual privileging of harmonization as a goal of the transformative process and is a means of its achievement. Patterning of combinations of consonants and vowels, and then the further patterning of syllables into words, is better explained by these constraints excluding certain possibilities than by necessary rules built into an innate grammatical function.

This first level analysis of language in a ritual paradigm is necessarily somewhat genealogical as the initial assignment of a sound to an element or aspect of an element in reality is at first arbitrary. Over time, other sounds become assigned to other objects, and the process of interrelating sounds to reflect the interrelation of elements and aspects in reality gets going. Increasingly, it becomes difficult to change the meaning of a particular sound, or to substitute a new sound for a given element or aspect of reality, without destabilizing the whole system. The system of language may also become resistant to accepting changes in the world, or at least changes in the understanding of the world that it was initially developed to represent and transform. Furthermore, it is quite possible to overstate the degree of direct

mapping between the system of language and the system of the world. To resist this temptation, it is necessary to remember that as ritual, language seeks to transform the fragmented world it engages by a process of harmonization toward wholeness. As a result, the system of language tends to overrepresent wholeness by trending toward greater degrees of consistency, regularity, and patterning than the world actually exhibits apart from its having been ritualized.

Language at this level thus adheres to the definition of ritual as “the performance of more or less invariant sequences of formal acts and utterances not entirely encoded by the performers” (Rappaport 24). Most of the time language performers do not wholesale encode which sounds refer to which elements or aspects of reality, but they do further instantiate inherited correlations. That said, they do sometimes have to incorporate new sounds or conjunctions of sounds to pick up on elements or aspects of reality that their language had previously either overlooked or otherwise been unaware of, or had misclassified under the extension of another sound. The ongoing correlation between sounds and elements and aspects of reality result in formal patterns of correlation and relation among correlates. The level of variance in their sequence is an issue properly belonging to syntax, but the optimization of correlation and harmonization even at the phono-morphological level would predict a relatively



high degree of invariance in sequencing phonemes and morphemes. Finally, these correlations and patterns must be performed in speech if they are to be sustained as useful means of transforming selves, societies, and thereby the wider world.

### *Syntax*

While the preceding analysis of language sounds addresses a degree of relation among sounds so as to generate complexes of meaning, syntax is the arena in which relations among meaningful sounds comes to the fore. The purpose of syntax is to package meaningful sounds together against a backdrop of structural precedent in order to generate novel meanings among the participants in the language ritual. This novelty generated by syntactic relations constitutes one aspect of the shift in language from representing the world as it is, toward which the basic units of speech sounds tend, to construing the world as it could be. This syntactic subjunctivity is one of two subjunctive points that together form an ellipse of meaning circumscribing the limits of meaningful and communicative language use. The syntactic pole pulls toward the structural construal of the sound elements such that they conform to the precedent of syntactic ritual norms at play in the language. For example, if a language has the ritual norm of subject-object-verb and a language user instead orders a sentence

verb-object-subject, the structural anomaly of the sentence will impede and occlude the communication of its meaning, if not disrupt that meaning entirely. It is important to contrast the structural subjunctivity of syntax, which has driven the locus of interpretation of language and all other sign systems on its model, with the other pole defining the ellipse, pragmatics, which includes language user intent against the backdrop of a sociocultural knowledge base. Syntactic subjunctivity is the structural norm encoded ritually to which language users must conform in order for their intentional meanings to communicate, but that does not mean that intentional meaning can be reduced to the structure imposed by the ritual form of syntax.

Syntax has to do with the patterned system of relations among the sounds of language that correlate with reality, but this is not to say that the syntactic patterns themselves necessarily mirror the patterns of relations among things in the world that the sounds of language discriminate. Instead, the patterns among sounds follow the formal patterns of the norms ritually encoded in the syntax of the language. The difference between the patterned relations in the world and the patterned relations in language is what constitutes the subjunctivity of syntax, creating space in which to construe the world as it could or should be. As a result of this emphasis on pattern and relation, syntax leans most heavily into

the structural aspect of ritual. The elements of the syntax ritual are the sounds that it inherits from phonology/morphology, which it then orders according to its form within its frame. In so doing, the language ritual transforms at least the perception of the patterned relations among the meanings of its elements, if not the meanings themselves, and these perceptions and meanings achieve objectification as they become taken for granted as so. Thus, language as ritual (LR) harmonizes formalist and functionalist approaches to syntax. On the formalist side it acknowledges the aspiration toward a minimal, common set of norms that guide well-formedness, which is the very structure of the syntactic patterns of relations. On the functionalist side, it recognizes the need to sacrifice rigor in order to adequately pick up on the relations among elements of reality that do not directly mirror the relations encoded in the grammar of the language.

Syntax being the primary mechanism for defining the ritual sequence of language, this harmony of form and function is enabled by that sequence being more or less invariant. If it were entirely invariant, it would be a strict formalism, risking ossification, whereas too much variance leads to incoherence and so risks failure of the communicative function. Instead of admitting a higher degree of structural variance, language introduces numerous mechanisms to allow increasing complexity to account for the discrepancies between the patterned

relations encoded in the syntax of the language and the patterned relations among things in the world that linguistic elements discriminate among.

As the primary structure of the language ritual, syntax is not entirely encoded by the performers. The majority of the encoding emerges from prior performances of the language in question, and a present performance contributes to that encoding process for future iterations, either reaffirming past syntactic forms, or experimenting with alternatives that may be embraced or rejected. One of the problems with generative theories of grammar is that they assume that there is some static thing that is syntax arising from human mental structures. Instead, LR takes the stability of syntax to be a result of fulfilling the communicative function of language rather than an innate mental faculty. Likewise, this obviates the need to explain structural differences among languages, as there is no reason to posit anything like a universal linguistic structure from which individual languages deviate in various ways and to varying degrees.

### *Pragmatics*

The second point defining the elipse of meaning in language is pragmatics, having to do with the context of language use. The elements discriminated by language sounds are ordered one way according to the artificial

patterned norms of syntax, but that artifice must then be realized, which accomplishment often requires yet another schematization of the relations among the elements. In syntax, language establishes a subjunctive space that is artificial in its construal of reality according to its pattern of relations, but in pragmatics that subjunctivity turns back to reality as a potential pattern of relations that could or should apply to the discriminated elements. In some cases, the final meaning of a linguistic utterance adheres quite closely to the syntactic pattern, such as when a speaker says of a red house, "That house is red," although even then the meaning of "that" depends on which house is present in the situation, which is a pragmatic concern. In other cases, the meaning of an utterance has almost nothing to do with the pattern set by the syntax, such as when a speaker expresses anger by saying, "I'm seeing red," which depends instead on assumed common background knowledge, and so the meaning is almost entirely pragmatic. Whereas the elipse of meaning is structural at the syntactic pole, it is functional at the pragmatic pole, and the tension between the two is a main source of the creative capacity of language in human life.

Given its functional role, the pragmatics of language leans heavily into the functional aspect of ritual. On one hand, as was noted in chapter three, language as a cultural system is itself one of the entailments of the pervasive ritual

paradigm in human life as the form of all socio-cultural systems. At the same time, language is a ritual process of meaning-making and so generates its own particular sorts of products, outcomes, and entailments. These functions range from clarifying syntax by picking out the actual reference of deictic terms, to meaning that arises out of implicature constraints, to the social realities communally constituted by communication through the language medium. Whereas syntax relies on the structure of language to derive meaning from speech sounds, pragmatics renders that meaning through the contextual matrices of other ritual forms and processes at play in a given situation, such as social, political, economic, religious, or other language rituals.

Linguistic pragmatics plays the role of aiding the transition from cognitive to taken for granted in several ways. Language is the primary means by which humans grapple with problems that arise in the other ritual forms and processes at play in life, and so language is a means of transforming reality to address aspects of social, political, economic, religious, etc. life that become cognitive because they have become problematic. Once resolved, linguistic repetition of the solution to the problem often plays a role in its becoming taken for granted within the domain for which it is relevant. Also, the successful generation of pragmatic interpretants as solutions to problems makes the linguistic structures,

processes, and meanings that gave rise to a given solution normative for the language in question, and their ongoing success in so generating solutions may result in their also becoming taken for granted. While the solution to a problem in another ritual domain is usually cognitive at least in the first instance, the process of linguistic norms for addressing the problem either becoming normative or reinforcing prior norms is frequently noncognitive for language users. Notably, their being meaningful as linguistically normative is independent of whether they are recognized, i.e. known, as such.

### *Semantics*

Semantics supervenes on phonology and morphology as the meaning of a sound simply is that element or aspect of reality the sound discriminates through use and systematization with respect to other sounds. Semantics supervenes on syntax in that randomly conjoined sounds and words cannot have meaning at all apart from their conforming to syntactic norms according to which their meaning is construed in relation to one another. Semantics supervenes on pragmatics as the meaning of language must always be linguistically, situationally, and contextually realized in reality. Thus, semantics encapsulates phonology/ morphology, syntax, and pragmatics in the conceptual scheme of language as ritual (LR) as the dimension of meaning that each of these elements of the

linguistic system generates independently and together. Semantics literally means “meaning,” but the meaning of a linguistic expression is only ever partially determined by the intensional and extensional ranges of particular sounds, the linguistic structure encoded in syntax, and the functions produced through language use. The surplus of meaning generated by the three elements of the system together as the ritual system of language is the domain of semantics.

Semantics leans most heavily into the process aspect of the theory of ritual as it is the meaning of language that allows it to be a transformative force in the world. The movement among phonology/morphology, syntax, and pragmatics follows the three stages of the ritual process first outlined by Van Gennep. The sounds of language discriminate various objects and relations in reality, which are their meaning, separating them from one another and drawing them into the language ritual. Syntactic meaning is the marginal or liminal stage in which the objects and relations in reality represented in language sounds are reordered according to the norms of the patterned relations of the grammar of the language. Syntactic encoding, being a correlated yet independent pattern of relations from those inherent in reality, is a meta-structure rather than an anti-structure, and so generates ambiguity and disorientation with respect to the



meaning of language against the horizons of real relations and syntactic relations. Pragmatics is the meaning that language offers back to reality both as a reconfiguration of what was and as a novel contribution to its ongoing processes of signification. Semantics is the domain of transformation in which the structure of relations among objects in the world and the syntactically encoded artificial structure of the language tool are rendered together so as to achieve the pragmatic intents of the language user in the understanding of the receivers. Syntax detaches the phonological and morphological signs from their objects and relations in reality and reorders them according to its own pattern of relations in order to pragmatically generate new and renewed semantic realities.

The surplus of meaning in language that semantics encompasses may be analyzed on a spectrum moving from phonology/morphology, or the sound of language, through syntax, or the structure of language, to pragmatics, or the entailments of language. Linguistic meanings having to do with construal of situations tend to fall at the phonological/morphological end of the semantic spectrum, relying more or less heavily on sound features to nuance linguistic elements and relations according to tense, aspect, modality, evidentiality, or situation type. Linguistic meaning having to do with the roles being played in a given situation, and their relative status in the situation, tend to rely more or less

heavily on syntactic structures to locate objects and relations in a particular role and then to foreground or background that role through varieties of voice. Linguistic meanings having to do with cooperative inferences and contextual knowledge fall at the pragmatic end of the spectrum as they account for the relevance of the linguistic entailments. Structurally, semantics supervenes on all three linguistic levels, but genealogically, it is semantics that gives rise to each and to all three together as the ritual of language.

The meaning of language arises from elements of reality encoded as sounds that are then brought into artificial syntactic relation in order to be offered back to reality as an alternative to, or a reinforcement of, what was. Roy Rappaport claimed that language gives rise to the notion of alternative, of the cognitive possibility of things being other than as they are, but alternative is introduced in the liminality stage of all ritual processes, not just language rituals. The general trajectory of modern linguistics and that of language as ritual (LR) are very different in this regard. Modern linguistics interprets all levels and dimensions of language in terms of structure, i.e. phonological structure, morphological structure, syntactic structure, pragmatic structure, semantic structure. This is true whether or not a given linguistic paradigm consciously identifies with structuralism. LR, by contrast, sees a variety of aspects of the

ritual phenomenon at play in linguistic meaning making, including structure, but also process, generation of functions, establishment of convention, and preparation for and realization of transformation. What is interesting about language is not that it has or is an isomorphic set of interlocking structures to be decoded, but rather that it is a dynamic and multifaceted tool for making and remaking reality.

Language as a species of ritual is “the performance of more or less invariant sequences of formal acts and utterances not entirely encoded by the performers” (Rappaport, 24). Language does not have meaning except as performed either in speech and listening or in writing and reading. Performers neither encode which sounds refer to which elements or aspects of reality, nor the syntactic patterns that govern their ordering, but rather inherit them from prior performances. The sequences of sounds performed must adhere to the more or less invariant encoded patterns of syntax in order to be intelligible. That said, the syntactic form alone does not constitute meaning as the acts and utterances of language are always in a particular context of the intentions of the performers against the backdrop of a communal knowledge base. Language is the performance of conventional and transformative speech sounds governed by the syntactic form to achieve pragmatic functions via the semantic process

relating phonology/morphology, syntax, and pragmatics together. The systems of relations among sounds and between sounds and reality are different at each level, but they work together something like gears in an engine in the semantic process in order to render linguistic meaning.

### *Written Language*

Like most of modern linguistics, language as ritual (LR) takes spoken language to be paradigmatic and written language to be secondary. However, whereas most of modern linguistics takes written language to be parasitic on spoken language, LR finds a symbiotic relationship between the two. Written language is yet another ritual system of codifying language, and as such is correlated but independent of both the world language engages and the other linguistic systems. As a result, writing both constrains and adds complexity to language in a variety of ways at each level of linguistic analysis. The codification of speech sounds in an alphabet-based graphemics that seeks to represent all sounds employed in a language as economically as possible may also constrain future deployment of sounds not included in its scheme and standardize pronunciations of sounds that might otherwise have taken on distinctive features. A character-based system, by contrast, may admit multiple pronunciations of a single character, as is the case for Mandarin and Cantonese

within the wider family of Chinese languages. Writing systems rely heavily on a process of abstracting morphemes and phonemes from the sounds of language as part of their codification process, and feed these artificial abstractions back into the understanding of the language by its users as inherent. As a result, syntax is more rigid in writing systems, and speakers of languages that have associated graphemics and orthographies may enforce the written syntax of the language more rigorously in both written and spoken contexts. Writing thus becomes a means of stabilizing language pronunciation and organizational pattern against erosion, thereby slowing the process of language change. Issues of pragmatics are also quite different in the written context, requiring more language in order to elaborate the contextual elements at play that might be able to be assumed in a spoken context, especially with an audience that is reasonably well known. Since written language provides an objectification of spoken language, it also enables a reflexive engagement leading to intentional manipulation of the linguistic artifact that would be more likely to remain taken for granted otherwise.

All of these impacts of writing systems on language may be interpreted in terms of aspects of the theory of ritual as well, especially sincerity, reflexivity, and communication. Writing systems force language users to become more sincere with respect to the formality of the language ritual because the longevity

of the text and the anonymity of the audience require packing more of the meaning of language into the abstractions of phonology and morphology and the artificial structure of syntax since neither pragmatic contexts nor effects may be presumed. Even as writing is a costly signal of human civilization, it also allows language users to adopt a reflexive stance with respect to spoken language, writing being a context in which work is done on language by objectifying it so that it may be addressed. This has the effect of heightening levels of trust among language users not only in one another but also in what their language communicates, thereby enabling an expansion of the circle of trust to encompass those who lie beyond the immediate context. By making language users more sincere with respect to the form rather than the entailments of language, and by making the artifice of language explicit and reflexively available, writing enlarges the site of the tent of a given linguistic community such that it might encompass a much larger public. This is the main reason that writing is the *sine qua non* of human civilization and that written language is crucial for funding the complex civilizational forms of societal domains such as politics, religion, economics, etc.

### *Typology and Relativity*

Language as ritual (LR) provides a systematic treatment of the relationships among language, mind, culture, and reality. It starts with the metaphysical understanding of reality as semiotic, that is, of reality as a proliferation of sign processes. The sign processes of reality form sign systems as rituals in which complexes of processes are performed in relatively invariant sequences. Human minds have evolved to not only pick up on the sign processes and systems at play in reality, but to actively participate in the processes and systems by adjusting existing rituals and constructing new ones. Ideally, signs and rituals are constructed so as to maximize harmony among all of the many elements, at each of their levels of ritualization, in reality, although harmonies often conflict. Humanity is maximally, as opposed to uniquely, capable of evaluating and addressing these conflicts of all known living beings due to the remarkable capacity for ritualization exhibited by our minds.

Language is one of the primary tools that humans use to construct, adjust, and harmonize rituals at play in reality, especially humanly significant ritual systems such as religion, politics, society, economics, etc. Itself a ritual, language maximally leverages the human capacity to pick up on signs and sign systems in the world to socially mediate the process of ritual construction, adjustment, and

harmonization. The ritual of language is therefore schematically located, in one sense, between the ritual capacity of mind and the ritual process of reality, in another sense between the minds in reality and the humanly significant social systems, and yet also a peer of those systems as an entailment of the mental ritual process. Thus, language is simultaneously a product of culture, the fundament of culture, and a cultural artifact and tool. Ritual is the common dimension and feature of mind, culture, and reality, and language is the medium that renders them mutually intelligible and relevant to one another.

LR demurs from the typical views regarding the relationship between language and mind: language being the structure of thought, i.e. mind, in linguistic relativity and linguistic determinism, and a faculty in mind determining language in universal grammar. While more amenable to the proposals of Daniel Everett and Terrence Deacon, who disrupt arguments over direct causation between language and mind, LR insists on ritual as the common element among language, mind, culture, and reality. Human minds are themselves rituals, i.e. semiotic systems, because they are part and parcel of the semiotic web that constitutes reality. The ritual of language is a further ritualization of the mind ritual, which as Deacon describes co-evolves with minds in order to increase their reflexive capacity to transform reality by



adjusting, constructing, and harmonizing the rich array of social rituals that constitute culture. This co-evolution is constrained by the need to cultivate the particular purpose of language to accurately and transformatively engage reality in ways that lead to improved harmonization of its rituals. Language does not structure thought. There is no universal language faculty. Instead, language and thought mutually participate in the domain of ritual, and so influence one another through dialectical, rather than direct, causality.

### *Meaning*

The section on philosophy of language in chapter two framed the whole project of philosophy of language as a series of debates about how language is meaningful. Hilary Putnam showed that a theory of language must be able to show how language is a medium of interaction among individual thought, social convention, and the real world in order to be adequate and thus meaningful. The theory of language as ritual (LR) locates itself precisely at this intersection as a sign system capable of transforming the world by imposing its structure in order to enact its process and thereby achieve its entailments.

The abstraction of elements and aspects of reality and their relations into speech sounds renders the discriminations of the world in thought into linguistic elements, but the systematic relations among the elements so abstracted is purely

sonic rather than semantic. The meaning of speech sounds is the realities in the world to which they refer intensionally and extensionally according to the network of relations socially encoded in the sound system of the language in question. Like the truth condition theories of Quine and Davidson, LR adopts semantic holism such that the meaning of an individual speech sound is dependent on all other speech sounds. However, LR does not adopt Davidsonian compositionality, rather allowing for different sorts of meaning to emerge in syntax and pragmatics. Within discussion of the system of speech sounds, LR is compatible with the Kripkean causal-historical theory of reference, wherein the reference of a name depends upon the social convention of its employment for that purpose, but extends this manner of reference to all words due to having adopted semantic holism. Thus, in LR, the issue of reference is one aspect of the larger question of meaning, and particularly the aspect having to do with the meaning of speech sounds.

At the level of syntax, the question of meaning shifts from the reference of speech sounds to the pattern of relations among words to accord with the structure of the language. Whereas the system of speech sounds relies on distinctions among sounds mapping to distinctions in mind among things and relations in and aspects of reality, the syntactic system shifts to socially

constructed conventions of relations among speech sounds. The issue of meaning at the level of syntax has to do with whether or not a particular utterance conforms to these conventions, and so is an issue of the well-formedness of particular linguistic expressions. Some of these conventions arise as ways of privileging the economy and efficiency of communication to varying degrees. It is also important that syntactic patterns allow sounds to be rendered together in a way that reflects reality as it is and as it could or should be, and so must correlate with the pattern of relations in the world without necessarily corresponding to them. That said, many syntactic conventions are relatively arbitrary individually but become necessary as a system of structural norms, adjustment to any one of which may result in at least changes in, if not outright breakdown of, meaning. LR thus subscribes not only to semantic holism with regard to speech sounds, but also with regard to syntax, even though the two systems are whole in themselves and so not coterminous.

The meaning of syntax is the validity of a linguistic utterance according to its expression in logic. This is because syntactic meaning has only to do with the meaning that arises from ordering the sonic elements of speech sounds according to the conventions of patterned relations encoded in the syntax. Thus, the meaning of syntax is at the furthest remove from linguistic engagement with

reality, and so the metalanguage of logic is particularly apt for evaluating syntactic meaning given its goal of formalization, i.e. codifying linguistic structure. While logic includes the usual understanding of syntax as the ordering of words in sentences, logic also expands the notion of syntax as including criteria of validity among sentences and maintenance of meaning through stretches of discourse. At the same time, the notion of logic at play in syntax demurs from issues of truth and truth conditions, and so LR may be read as a type of logical instrumentalism. Indeed, the relative invariance of the syntactic sequence is what makes language an effective tool for communication.

Nevertheless, reality does place constraints on syntax as its structure must be capable of both adequately construing speech sounds such that they maintain their reference to elements of reality, and facilitating the pragmatic processes of transforming reality by generating linguistic entailments. Thus, LR may best be interpreted as a form of logical pluralism that embraces a variety of logics as identifying differing loci of stability within reality and as toolkits for facilitating processes that either address different problems or address the same problems differently. Based in critical realism, LR expects that the diversity among loci of stability, problems, and thus possible solutions, should be relatively minimal.

Whereas at the level of speech sounds, meaning is the elements of reality referred to, and at the level of syntax, meaning is the artificial structure to which language must conform, at the level of language use, or pragmatics, meaning is what it is that language does, that is, its entailments or products. In addressing the meaning generated in language use, the theory of language games developed from Wittgenstein and the theory of performative language derived from Austin both suffer from overemphasizing the social context in which language is used such that meaning is reduced to the wider ritual frames in which it is employed. The Gricean advance is to acknowledge speaker intent and syntactic norms deployed according to the efficiencies of conversational implicature, but this program stops short of showing how actual outcomes are achieved. Donald Davidson points toward a resolution of this deficiency by giving an account of what would need to be the case in order for language to produce its entailments in a given case, but this largely has to do with the reference of speech sounds. LR identifies the pragmatic meaning of language as the actual products that language use entails when it instantiates syntactically patterned speech sounds in reality amongst the conventional patterns at play. The pragmatic meaning of the statement "I am seeing red" changes depending on whether the speaker and receiver are standing side by side facing a red barn or are facing one another

commenting on election outcomes precisely because the statement produces different entailments in each case. In the first case the speaker is describing the color of the barn, which may result in either concurrence or dissent. In the second case the speaker is expressing anger, which may either be shared or not. Of course, whether any entailments at all are produced may be called into question if the two people are facing a red barn while discussing election outcomes.

Pragmatic meaning thus has to do with the situation of reality as it receives the artificially patterned speech sounds referring to other elements, relations, and aspects of reality. The wider ritual frames elaborated as games or performances are extremely important here, and focal, as they are for Wittgenstein and Austin, but as one dimension of meaning, namely pragmatic meaning, rather than as meaning *per se*.

Phonological, syntactic, and pragmatic meaning thus having been distinguished, semantics as a whole was described above as the process by which speech sounds are structured so as to generate entailments and the surplus of meaning arising from that process. This means that meaning overall, not just meaning as expressed in either the phonological, syntactic, or pragmatic mode, is the result of taking the whole process of language to stand for the process of reality moving from what is to what it could or should become. Thus, meaning is

semiotic in two senses. First, the syntactic sign vehicle standing for the speech sound elements that refer to reality generates the pragmatic entailments as interpretants. Second, the whole semantic process is itself a sign vehicle of the process of reality undergoing transformation, and taking the semantic vehicle as a sign of reality becoming, itself generates interpretants in reality. Written language intensifies these semiotic processes by making them more rigorous and reflexing them on themselves. At the semantic level, then, LR fulfills the demands set by Hilary Putnam that linguistic meaning arise from and account for the ideas and intentions of the language user amidst social conventions of language structure to address the reality of the world.

A final question regarding meaning as a philosophical category is whether any room has been left in LR for a concept of truth. Clearly, truth cannot be conceived in LR as anything like a simple correspondence between an utterance and reality because neither language nor reality is a single system that could correspond to another. Instead, both are ongoing, complex, interlocking system processes made up of system processes that interact with one another at multiple levels. Truth must therefore be equally complex, consisting in the success of the whole process of abstracting distinguished elements from reality and ordering them according to the syntactic pattern of the language in play so as to generate

the intended functions within the frame of the ritual as constrained by other social rituals. An utterance could thus be phonologically true by successfully referring to distinguished elements of reality but syntactically false by violating norms of word order. Likewise, an utterance could be syntactically true by following the right patterns but phonologically false by not referring to anything real. An expression could be pragmatically true by generating its function, such as turning the public on an opposing official, but phonologically false by employing speech sounds that do not refer to anything in reality. The same is true for all of the combinations of modes of meaning. Furthermore, it is also possible to conceive of truth in a more holistic sense as the success of the whole expression in all of its modes, in which case it makes a more significant and substantial contribution to the ongoing ritual process of the language in total. This sense of truth thus turns to the reality of language as ritual as a performance, reflexively rendering its own patterns and processes as normative, and constituting its elements and entailments as individuals and collectives participating in the ongoing processes of reality and society.

### *Hermeneutics*

The individual capacity to produce meaningful language is insufficient in establishing language as ritual (LR) as a comprehensive theory of language



because it does not yet address how meaning produced is then received, interpreted, and understood. This requires a turn to the set of domains categorized in chapter two under the heading of hermeneutics and their reinterpretation as themselves participating in aspects of ritual. The tradition of hermeneutics broadly construed as described in chapter two shifted from aspiring to universality to privileging the particular. LR, by contrast, demurs from making linguistic interpretation determinative for interpretation across all domains of human ritualization, while acknowledging that linguistic interpretation participates in many, if not all, of these domains. Likewise, LR resists the tendency to relativize linguistic interpretation to individual social events and their reigning ideologies, instead recognizing common interpretive processes that are generalizable as they are rooted in cognition.

The interpretation of linguistic utterances involves three simultaneous, interlocking movements between the language producer and the receiver(s). The first movement pertains to the ascertainment as to the reference of speech sounds. A language receiver must connect the speech sounds heard with particular discriminations of reality. Both the producer and the receiver assume that they are connecting the speech sounds in question with the same discrimination of reality, but in a given act of interpretation this connection may

vary between the two to greater or lesser degrees. For example, a producer may use the word “fork” to refer to a fork with four tines, but if the receiver expects that forks only have three tines, the language ritual may either fail or require further linguistic process to establish the connection. This is a different distinction that that put forward by Kripke between speaker reference and semantic reference because LR does not assume, as Kripke does, that syntax is capable of bearing referential meaning. Instead, the difference between user reference and receiver reference results from subtle differences between the mappings of speech sounds onto discriminations of reality between the two and from differences in discriminations among elements, aspects, and relations in reality. While discrepancies in the discriminatory matrix between user and receiver may disrupt communication via the language medium, the language ritual is also a means of harmonizing discriminatory matrices by negotiating the proper conception of their contours. To use Gadamerian terminology, the communicative practice of the language ritual aims toward fusion of the horizons of speech sounds that map the discriminatory matrix of elements, aspects, and relations in the world that language users and receivers employ. Understanding in this phonological movement is the result of speech sounds referring to discriminations of reality that are shared between the language

producer and any and all receivers. Interpretation is the work of negotiation to make such sharing possible.

The second movement between language producer and receiver has to do with the degree of variance between the set of formal norms presumed as governing the syntax of the language in use and the form of the utterance in question. If the language producer violates norms that the receiver takes to be determinative of the meaning of the utterance in question, then the receiver may deem the expression uninterpretable or just wrong. It is important to remember that the syntactic norms that pattern linguistic expressions are not mirrors of either the structure of reality or the structure of the human mind, although they must correlate to each to some extent, but rather are artificial structures built up ritually over time by accretion and repetition. This is to say that, for LR, the meaning that syntax encodes on its own is simply adherence to conventionally established norms in the language. As a result, interpretation is less hindered by relatively minor variations in syntax than by minor variations in phonological reference because corrections based on reference to norms and anticipated purpose may be interpolated on the fly. On the other hand, more significant variations often result in a complete breakdown of interpretation as meaning is only communicable between language producers and receivers insofar as it

adheres to those conventional norms; the language ritual is without form apart from syntax. Understanding in this syntactic movement merely consists in knowledge of, conformity to, and adherence to the forms that constitute the syntax of the language, from which interpretation emerges and toward which it contributes.

The third movement connecting the language producer and the receiver(s) in the interpretive work of arriving at understanding has to do with their sharing, or not, in a common context out of which the utterance in question emerges and toward which it makes pragmatic offerings of certain entailments. The issue of the common context is not whether they inhabit the same world or are located in relatively the same place and time within that world. Rather, the issue of the common context has to do with whether their discriminations of the elements, aspects, and relations in the world are aligned such that the expected and perceived entailments generated by the linguistic process may also be aligned. Included in this contextual discernment is a whole set of assumptions that the producer and receiver(s) make about one another and about themselves with regard to motivations, aspirations, and goals. Not only must discriminations of reality be aligned in order for a receiver to pick up on that in the world to which language refers, but they must also be aligned in the

pragmatic movement in order for a receiver to anticipate what a producer is doing in the world via language. Variations between the discriminations made by producers and receivers are thus more disruptive of shared meaning between them than relatively minor divergences in adoption, adherence, and application of syntactic norms. At the same time, it is the variations among discriminations that make ritualization, and especially the ritual of language, necessary as a means of bridging, negotiating, and harmonizing purposive behavior. This analysis of the pragmatic dimension of interpretation leads to a critique of the critique critical theory levels against hermeneutics for aspiring to universality at the expense of social change and liberative practice. LR acknowledges that the universal aspirations of hermeneutics can be problematic, but resists the overcorrection in critical theory that ends up reducing interpretation to the pragmatic movement, thus obscuring the fullness of interpretation encompassing the whole ritual of language. The pragmatic focus of Critical Discourse Analysis, while revelatory in its interpretations of pragmatics, is particularly concerning as it risks turning reduction to pragmatic intent into a form of linguistic determinism.

Ritual is pervasive in human life and in the world as the systematization of semiosis. Language, as a species of ritual, is not pervasive because there are

other species of ritual at play systematizing semiosis in life and the world as well. Nevertheless, interpretation is pervasive, as all rituals require interpretation, albeit not necessarily interpretation by a knowing mind, because they are means of communicating and so must mediate between a producer and at least one receiver. This is to say that rituals systematize reality among their participants so as to constitute that reality and so require that participants in the receiver role interpret the ritual process enacted by those in the producer role. The pervasiveness of interpretation, but not language, leads to an important consideration vis-à-vis semantic holism, which LR adopts. In the hermeneutic tradition as influenced by Ast and Schleiermacher, semantic holism refers to the mutual interdependence of parts and wholes as determinative of meaning. While agreeing with this central insight into whole-part interdependence for meaning, LR agrees with Ray L. Hart that semantic holism applies to language but not to the world to which language refers. This is to say that the meaning of speech sounds depends on the whole system of speech sounds, the meaning of syntax on the whole system of grammar, and the pragmatic meaning on the full set of understandings, intentions, and dispositions of the whole set of ritual elements, but not on the whole system of the world. As Hart insists, there is always more to be revealed from the wellspring of being than can be encoded in a finite system

such as language, although language can register newly revealed elements, aspects, and relations in being due to its nearly infinite capacity for configuration and expansion. Thus, the shared meaning interpreted from language contributes to an ongoing process of accretion and growth in understanding and knowledge.

Returning to the producer perspective within the language ritual, rhetoric relies on the reflexive capacities of the human mind to imagine and anticipate how a receiver will interpret a particular utterance. Selection of speech sounds to incorporate in an utterance may be based on presumed shared discriminations of reality or instead may lean into ambiguity created by presumed divergences in discriminations and reference to those discriminations by particular sounds. Similarly, while effective rhetoric relies on adherence to syntactic norms, the complexity that grammar is capable of generating in language also allows for rendering of norms so as to make the vague clear or vice versa. Perhaps nowhere is the capacity for nuance greater than when a producer accounts for the context and intention of speech to structure sounds to particular effect. While admission of ambiguity, vagueness, and nuance permits language to be deployed for nefarious ends, they are also requisite for language to be an effective medium of communication at the intersection of the world, language producers and their intentions, and language recipients and their interpretations. Harmonizing and

attuning all three requires room for negotiation of how each user discriminates reality, infelicities due to divergences in appropriating syntactic norms, and diversities of participant goals and intentions. Rhetorical space is also necessary for maintaining and sustaining the realities ritually constructed in language and other ritual domains in life amidst the flux and flow of semiosis. Rhetoric relies on the interpretation of the language ritual and its participants and then feeds back into further interpretations, ideally toward common ground for the common good, but always admitting the possibility of malevolent or subversive intent.

As was mentioned in chapter two, stylistics frequently suffers from disciplinary dislocation as a result of its incorporation of concepts and orientations from the hermeneutic stream of thought into linguistics proper. LR locates stylistics as an empirical approach to dimensions of language that are important for guiding rhetoric and facilitating interpretation, particularly in the realm of pragmatics. Stylistics also picks up on features of language that contribute to at least part of the semantic surplus of meaning that exceeds the semantic process linking phonological reference, syntactic structure, and pragmatic entailments. Stylistic analysis is particularly important for exploring the junctures between linguistic rituals and other ritual domains. In fact, stylistics



seeks to render a rigorous analytic framework for understanding many of the aspects of life, such as courtesy and etiquette, that Confucians took to be important for restoring socio-political stability to Warring States China. Confucian interest in minute details that establish genre, tone, and style, characteristic of several stages of development in the *Analects*, is reflected in stylistic interest in such details that stretch beyond the linguistic in modern stylistics. Xunzi was notable to expanding this more limited notion of ritual to encompass all conventional human behavior, and LR reflects this expansion by locating stylistics as one aspect of a more extensive range of ritualizing processes. Moreover, LR honors the interdisciplinary urge in stylistics by locating it at the intersection of linguistic and non-linguistic rituals, but in so doing seeks to ground it in the wider theory so as to avoid untethering.

### *Translation*

As should be expected, LR advances a novel theory of translation as the interpretive work of transposing meaning from a source language into a target language. Just as religious philosophy adopts critical realism as a minimum assumption underlying interdisciplinary work, as explained in chapter one, LR adopts critical realism as a minimum assumption undergirding translation. Critical realism posits that there is a real world independent of what any given

person may think about it, or in the linguistic frame, independent of how any given language may refer to it. On one hand, because there is one common world, any and all languages should be able to refer, at least in principle, to anything in that world. On the other hand, because any two language users may discriminate the elements, aspects, and relations in the world differently, one language may develop ritually on the basis of discriminations that another language may not readily make. So too, two users operating in the same language may discriminate the world differently, which is the way of articulating in LR the underdetermination of meaning Quine identifies as the indeterminacy or inscrutability of reference. Translation at the level of speech sounds, then, given that they refer to elements, aspects, and relations in reality, involves not only finding equivalent speech sounds but also nuancing and complexifying the expression in the target language to specify that to which the source language seeks to refer.

At the level of syntax, translation shifts from privileging the reference to discriminations of reality in the source language to privileging the patterning of sounds according to structural norms in the target language. This is because syntactic meaning inheres in the normative patterns of the language in which meaning is sought, unlike phonological and pragmatic meaning, which inhere in

the reality language discriminates and transforms, respectively. Then at the pragmatic level, translation involves harmonizing what can be known of the purposes of the source text, some of which must inevitably be assumed, with the purposes of the translator in undertaking the translation. Thus, interpreters must account for deviations in purpose between source text and translator when interpreting translations. The pragmatic orientation toward rendering the entailments of the language ritual process also provides a common point of focus for either text and translator or producer and receiver to share in the dialectic, eventually generating concurrence in the radical interpretation of Davidson.

Translation theorists are often at pains to recognize that there is an inevitable loss of meaning in the translation process that must be grieved by those who engage the text in the target language. This is because the surplus of meaning generated in the whole semantic process of phonological reference, patterning according to syntactic norms, and the generation of pragmatic entailments taken together is disrupted. Such disruption is necessitated by the fact that in the LR translation procedure, it is the syntactic norms of the target language and not the source language to which the translator must adhere, and so the semantic process is accordingly different from that in the source language. While a surplus of meaning will, of course, emerge from the process of the

language ritual in the target language, it is a fundamentally different surplus of meaning. Thus, LR affirms the holophrastic indeterminacy identified by Quine.

### Toward a Philosophy of Language as Ritual

With the theory of language as ritual in hand, developed in both directions, it is now possible to step back and begin to suggest ways that the theory has implications for other domains of philosophical discourse. Indeed, it is anticipated that language as ritual (LR), as a theory of language that aspires to be systematic, should have implications across the domains addressed by philosophical inquiry. The next two subsections begin to address some of these implications with respect to logic formalisms and to the framework of critical realism. There are two other areas that would benefit from consideration, and which are touched on in these subsections, but which must await systematic treatment in the future. First, LR denies many notions of mentality that have been dominant in other theories of language, such as universal grammar and linguistic relativitiy, some of which will be discussed in the last section of this chapter, but a comprehensive philosophy of mind exceeds the project at present. Second, reference has been made throughout to a semiotic metaphysics along the lines of that developed by Peirce, and the theory of ritual has been understood as making further metaphysical contributions, but the development of a systematic

metaphysics of semiosis and ritual also exceeds the scope of the project. With regard to logic and critical realism, LR will benefit from articulating a logical formalism in comparative engagement with a variety of global logics, and from more systematically elaborating its notion of critical realism in contrast to both Bhaskar, its theological forms, and other realist alternatives.

### *Logic*

Logic has thus far been engaged as a useful means of rendering syntactic norms, but requires further consideration as to its relationship and function with regard to the full language ritual. It is likely that language as ritual (LR) will need to develop its own logical formalism, but doing so far exceeds the scope of the present project. For the moment it is possible only to sketch some of what that formalism will need to attend to and some of the positions LR takes in philosophy of logic.

The purpose of logical formalisms is to be able to describe the soundness of arguments, that is, the truth of their premises plus their validity. The application of logic to natural language, then, presumes that language formulates such arguments, albeit in ways that do not necessarily privilege explicit and concise explication of the soundness thereof, hence the development of logical formalisms in the first place. Indeed, most of the ways in which logic proceeds

presume that truth arises from reference, and validity from syntax, but this formulation will clearly not do in LR, taking meaning, as it does, as a function of the whole ritual process and not merely true reference plus valid syntax. Neither is the reduction of language to expression of arguments acceptable because language is a transformative system, and so the conceptualization of logic must be expanded such that soundness encapsulates achievement across the range of the ritual process.

Truth has to do with where language and reality meet. Logical discussion of truth has largely either had to do with whether or not phonological reference is achieved, or with whether or not the sound elements of language as syntactically patterned correlates with reality. This is the approach of truth-conditional semantics as elaborated by Donald Davidson. There are several problems with this approach in LR. First, LR does not understand syntactic patterns as truth-bearing because syntax is the codification of formal norms inherent in language largely independent of reality. The correlations between the syntactic patterns in language and the patterns of process in reality are therefore inevitably indirect at most. Second, Davidsonian truth-conditional semantics ignores the pragmatic entailments that language offers back to reality out of its subjunctive semantic process. This negligence arises from the framing of

language as argument in Western logical systems, rather than as process in LR. A logical formalism adequate to LR must be able to codify both the reference of speech sounds to elements, aspects, and relations in reality, and the pragmatic entailments language offers to reality. This is to say that the truth conditions a logical formalism for LR must articulate include not only the descriptive conditions under which language refers to reality as it is, but also the subjunctive conditions toward which language seeks to change or make reality into. These conditions include not only reality as it was found and referred to phonologically, but also all of the elements, including participant elements, in the language ritual that is accomplishing the semantic process. Thus, it is at this point that the Gricean program of accounting for cooperative principles among participants links into Davidsonian truth-conditional semantics as some of the conditions in reality under which the pragmatic entailments of language may be generated by the language ritual process. As such, the cooperative principles are some of the truth conditions that a logical formalism for LR must articulate.

Logical validity is syntactic in that it has to do with adherence to the axioms or rules of the logical system, which are the syntactic norms that pattern it, giving rise to the question as to the measure by which the axioms or rules are to be taken as axiomatic. They may be taken as axiomatic on the basis of their

reflecting patterns and relations in reality, in which case the logic is realistic, or they may be taken as axiomatic on the basis of their reflecting patterns and relations in the mind, in which case the logic is idealistic, or some combination of the two. Assuming that the axioms or rules of the logical system properly adhere to the structures and patterns of reality or the mind, then the conclusions derived by adhering to the rules and axioms are necessarily valid. In spite of its adoption of critical realism, and thus affirmation of the independent reality of the world from knowing minds, LR demurs from connecting the syntactic norms that order the elements of language and are represented in logical axioms and rules with the world. Instead, syntax is inherent to the language in question, the innate form of a given language ritual, not derivative from elsewhere. This does not mean, however, that there is no way to conceive validity in LR. As in any ritual, the structure of language is the form of the ritual process that generates its entailments. Thus, it is not that the syntax of language reflects the structure of reality, but instead that the structure of language is the form of the language process that generates its entailments in and for reality. Validity, then, has to do with adhering to norms that order the elements of language such that they produce their entailments when so patterned. Given that this is the case, valid syntax is inextricably interconnected with true reference at the point of the



language ritual generating its entailments. Moreover, this point of intersection between truth and validity is also the point of intersection between logic and thought: rather than logic merely expressing thoughts, logic describes the process by which thoughts have desired effects on and in reality.

A logical formalism adequate to LR must therefore be able to articulate validity as the syntactic norms that successfully generate entailments for reality. In order to accomplish this, the formalism will need to account for not only the syntactic axioms of the structure of the language, but also the pragmatic axioms of the context in which the syntactic norms patterning linguistic elements successfully generate their entailments. The development of such a formalism is of benefit for improving linguistic clarity and explaining why linguistic expressions succeed or fail in certain cases. That said, the inherent necessity of accounting for the pragmatic context of language use calls into question the capacity of logic to achieve the level of generality, simplification, precision, and rigor to which Western logic, at least, aspires. Nevertheless, the assumption of critical realism in LR means that there is one and only one world, however opaque, on which all of the different language rituals, and other rituals, are operating, rendering logic possible, at least in principle, across the various ritual systems.

Since LR articulates language as a ritual process in which elements of reality are rendered syntactically so as to achieve certain entailments, LR might be assumed to approach logic as instrumental. Since LR adopts critical realism, however, it is better to think of logic for LR as an important component of the critical feedback mechanism that allows for traction on reality. In principle, logic should be able to encode both linguistic and non-linguistic ritual systems that transform reality from what it is into what it could or should be, including both modification of existing elements and dimensions of reality and creation of new ones. Logic is ultimately thoroughly fallibilistic, not only allowing but requiring modification upon encounter with realities or ritual systems that successfully and reliably generate entailments in reality. At the same time, the singularity of the reality being operated on by all ritual processes means that while the logics of various subsystems may develop independently, they are all, at least in principle, able to be systematized together.

In fact, the theory of ritual developed across chapters three and four is itself the logic of LR, albeit decidedly not a logical formalism. The fundamental insight of the theory of language as ritual is that ritual is the logic of sign systems, sequencing signs together according to patterns in order to create and transform reality. Thus, logic is descriptive of the ritual systems that are

themselves processes creating and transforming reality into novel, complex, and beautiful configurations. As these processes are themselves processes in and of reality, logic itself is an element of reality, and so is subject to its own ritual processes and transformations, which constitutes the necessity of its fallibilism. Since ritual is the logic of semiotic systems, and language is one such semiotic system, the logic of language is necessarily consistent, and therefore able to be systematized with, ritual systems generally. At the same time, the logic of language may include specifications that must be included in the more general logic of ritual but are only applicable in the instance of language. This is what it means, from the perspective of logic, that language is a species of the ritual genus.

#### *Universals and Critical Realism*

Reality is real, singular, and opaque. To say that reality is real is to say that individual things in reality are real, as are properties of things, relations among things, and so patterned collections of things; this is what has been meant in preceding sections by elements, aspects, and relations in reality. Reality is singular because there is one, shared reality in which everything participates together, albeit any given thing only ever participates partially. This partial participation is the reason that reality is opaque, because any one thing is only

ever capable of encountering some small range of elements, aspects, and relations in reality. This is so even if that thing, such as a human person, can at least in principle conceive of the totality of reality, its singularity, and the opaque sharing with all other things therein.

The assertion of the reality of things both general and particular is what commits language as ritual (LR) to a form of realism. Not just any realism will do, though. A naïve or simple realism would allow language and thought to refer directly to reality, but in so doing would deny the opacity of reality that LR takes to be the case. Moreover, LR takes language to be a human tool for transforming reality in spite of its opacity, which is to say that the semantic holism with respect to language in LR does not require an epistemic holism with respect to reality. The Peircian metaphysical semiotics advanced in chapter two and developed over the course of the intervening chapters takes ritual to be the process by which signs form systems and thus create general realities.

Individuals participate in the process of transformation by likewise developing and deploying ritual sign systems, such as language. Rituals like language are thus tools of critique, not only representing but transforming reality. The notion of critique in critical realism as deployed here signals the transformative work of language, which echoes the Marxist notion of critique embedded in the

Bhaskarian conception of critical realism. It is very different than the conception of critical realism deployed in certain theological circles, which instead makes linguistic negotiation the only means of common access to a fixed and stable reality without contributing to its change or development.

Important to the conception of critical realism under development here is the notion of discrimination. Speech sounds refer via correlation to elements in, aspects of, and relations among reality that have been discriminated by human minds from the opaque reality in which we participate. The codification of a discrimination by virtue of its correlation with a particular speech sound makes the element, aspect, or relation so discriminated available for ongoing transformative linguistic processes. That said, it is not necessarily the case that two people who use a particular speech sound to refer to a particular element, aspect, or relation are discriminating that element, aspect, or relation in precisely the same way, although their employment of the speech sound in discourse necessarily presumes that they are. Instead, their ongoing transformative work on reality in dialogue will reveal the fissures and fractures between their discriminations as the failure of common correlations result in failure to generate the entailments of the language ritual at play. As a result, the reference of a given speech sound is neither wholly determined by what it refers to in itself, as

conceived by the language producer, or as conceived by the language receiver(s). Instead, as will be explored in greater detail in chapter six, speech sounds refer subjunctively, that is, as if the discriminated element, aspect, or relation in reality, the conception of the language producer, and the conception(s) of the language receiver(s), were one and the same. Speech sounds are therefore sites of negotiation and contestation, some degree of resolution of which results from the entailments being successfully generated through the language ritual process. So too, the understanding of an element, aspect, or relation in reality by a given language user, either producer or receiver, is subjunctive as it lies somewhere between the thing as the mind discriminates it and the thing as it is encoded in the speech sound correlated with it. The subjunctive space that holds the real thing itself, the thing as referred to by a corresponding speech sound, and the thing as understood by a language user, is part of what obscures reality from its participants, resulting in the necessary opacity of reality to its participants. Notably, the opacity of the world does not arise inherently from the world but rather emerges epistemologically from the fallibility of humanity, and part of the role of linguistic communication is a sort of triangulation of reality among the fallible discriminations of the language producer, the receiver(s), and the speech sound correlated to it.

The types of universals that discrimination engages include properties and relations that inhere across individual instances of things discriminated. While LR takes all universals to be real, it is useful to distinguish between this sort of universal, which is real prior to any sort of linguistic transformation process, being abstracted phonologically from preexistent reality, from universals that are real entailments of the language ritual. This is to say that universals are not only something to which language refers, but also something that language makes, both explicitly and implicitly. The explicitly created universals are the entailments of the language ritual themselves, which are general across the elements of the ritual by virtue of resulting from their patterned organization according to the ritual form, that is, the syntax. Implicitly created universals have to do with lingering proclivities toward the syntax of the language that impact the framing of future and other ritual processes. These proclivities have been overdetermined in the linguistic turn derived from Saussure, and stand corrected in LR in the sense of registering among the wider range of linguistic processes and entailments. Some of the universals that are generated in language rituals are relatively close to the same level as the elements that the ritual harmonizes. For example, the universal of friendship may be generated by one person saying to another, "I really enjoy spending time

with you.” Some of the universals that language creates, however, are much higher-level social phenomena, such as whole social, political, economic, cultural, and religious systems. Consider the new political realities created by the language rituals of declaring independence from colonial rulers. These, too, are real as they achieve independence from their individual elements and the particular expression that births them.

Merely taking universals, both of the *a priori* and of the constructed variety, to be real, does not yet escape the limitations of a naïve or simple realism. The nature of critique in the critical realism underlying LR remains to be explicated. The notion of critique that emerges in the critical theory literature, as developed from the initial insight of Marx, contrasts the interpretive approach of hermeneutics with the transformative approach of criticism. LR instead construes an arc from interpretation of reality as given, into the subjunctive space among language, minds, reality, and society, through the transformative ritual process, resulting in a new and novel stage in the ongoing semiosis of the world. The result is that critique is continuous with interpretation at a further point on the arc of linguistic ritual transformation.

With critical theory, LR acknowledges the pervasiveness of politics, i.e. power dynamics, in human interaction, and so necessarily in language rituals as



well. In contrast with critical theory, LR is more hopeful about the prospects of communities of inquiry functioning to meliorate their common situation through collaboration and negotiation rather than presuming intractable agonism. In fact, rituals are crucial to constraining the unbridled exercise of power, serving to channel power toward mutually positive ends by transforming our common reality. Critique in LR therefore has to do with cultivating better rituals rather than reducing all rituals to illegitimate exercises of power.

Likewise, LR concurs with critical theory that truth is provisional, but gives an alternative, positive account of that provisionality from the tendency in critical theory to derive it negatively from anti-essentialism. Truth is provisional in LR in at least two senses. First, reality is a constant process of semiosis, not a set of static substances, and so truth is only ever with respect to the state of reality at a given point in its ongoing process. Also, truth inhabits the subjunctive space among the minds of language users, reality, language, and society, and so varies along with changes in each of those variables. In sum, the provisionality of truth is a result of the provisionality of reality. Whereas critical theory would distinguish contingent from unconditioned truth, LR acknowledges a spectrum between areas of greater and lesser stability amidst the ongoing flow and process of signification that constitutes reality and in which language operates. LR is

anti-essentialist in the sense of rejecting fixed essences of things, but recognizes higher degrees of continuity among dimensions of reality than critical theory tends to admit. Critique in LR thus has to do with the ongoing process of updating truth to keep pace with the ongoing process of semiosis that is reality.

Just as truth must remain in motion in order to keep pace with reality, so too must meaning bob and weave amidst the constantly shifting contours of the semiosis of reality and its ongoing transformation, in part by rituals, including language. Thus, LR also concurs with critical theory regarding the fluidity of meaning contingent upon the ebb and flow of the processes of reality. At the same time, LR presses back against the tendency in critical theory to overread the fluidity of meaning such that it becomes arbitrary and capricious. For critical theory, the meanings of a particular expression are at least potentially infinite, including contradictory meanings, and are impossible to adjudicate among. LR, by contrast, provides a means of identifying the locus of meaning in the subjunctive space among minds, language, reality, and society. While meaning is not fixed, neither is it infinite in any given situation. There is some meaning, or at least range of meanings, intended by a language producer, which may differ from but must be related to the range of meanings appropriated by a language receiver. That set of meanings may also vary from, even as it must also be related

to, the range of meanings bearable by the linguistic encoding employed. The space for meaningful play with respect to reality is more interesting as it arises both from the difference between the contours of reality as they are in reality and as they are discerned by discriminating minds, and from the probabilistic nature of all semiotic processes in generating entailments. In the end, meaning is fluid, but not infinitely so for LR, as it is for critical theory, and so it is possible to uncover historical meaning in the sense of what meanings emerged in a given particular situation, and those meanings may be predictive, albeit not determinative, of future semantic configurations.

One of the reasons that critical theory takes meaning to be infinite is that meaning arises from language use, and language is understood to be determinative of reality. This is to say that, for critical theory, language is not merely descriptive but also constitutive. Clearly, LR goes a long way with this view of language, as it also presses back against descriptive conceptions of language by emphasizing the transformative capacity of linguistic processes. Where LR demurs, however, is in the strong sense in critical theory of language being constitutive of reality, rather than being creative and transformative within reality. The constructionism of critical theory derives from the Saussurean overreading of language structures as determinative of the structures of all sign

processes, whereas LR takes ritual to be the basic mode of sign systematization and language a speciation thereof. This contrast is important for understanding the difference between critical and constructive realism. Constructive realism views reality as constructed, or constituted, by social processes that operate on the model of language. Critical realism understands language as a transformative tool for engaging reality that also provides critical feedback for improving future engagements and their outcomes. This notion of critique positions LR as participatory in the ongoing transformative processes of reality, rather than constitutive of all of reality, which sounds awfully essentialist by contrast. LR seeks to reclaim the notion of critique from those who would convert it to constructionism.

Ironically, the conditional provisionality of critique in LR contrasts with the pervasive determination of constructionism in critical theory so as to reveal the viability of universals that had been deemed illegitimate for being totalizing, absolutizing, and essentializing. Consider the concept of human nature. Critical theory detests notions such as human nature for including within them normative assumptions that in fact fail to pick up on whole ranges of instances that should be included in their respective domains. Unfortunately, because critical theory takes the assumptions of such concepts to be fixed, having been

linguistically constituted, the only option is to wholly write them off and theorists must decamp to narrower ranges of achieving understanding. LR has no trouble acknowledging the shortcomings of the concept of human nature, along with other likewise universal concepts, right alongside the critical theorists. But rather than being left to either persist in the deficiencies of these concepts or abandon them, LR recognizes the critical capacity of language to transform them. If the conception of human nature has left out demonstrably human persons, such as women, people of color, etc., then the concept requires reform so as to properly register the full range to which the concept aspires, not abandonment.

The willingness to write off concepts taken to be totalizing, absolutizing, or essentializing in critical theory reveals a creeping nominalism. LR takes universals to be real, and so of course we need language to refer to universal realities. Moreover, LR acknowledges that the discriminations of reality to which language is correlated may not be accurately discerning the contours of reality. In these cases, it is important to employ all of the tools at our disposal to improve the operative understanding of reality so that the terms refer to reality as it is rather than as it is mistaken to be. Of course, all of this is transpiring amidst the ongoing semiosis of reality, and it is important to distinguish the corrective

function of critique in overcoming linguistic failures from the ongoing adjustment of truth and meaning to account for the flow of reality. Because critical theory takes language to be constitutive, use of the term imposes its concept across all instances to which it is applied. Rather than the term referring to an independent reality, the use of the term instantiates the reality as constructed in and by the term. Thus, when language is taken to be improperly imposing itself, the solution is to simply get rid of the concept and its attendant language, and this is not problematic because there is no reality to which the language refers anyway. LR views this approach as giving too much credit to language, and instead locates language among the rituals that systematize sign processes and transform reality.

Language as ritual, rooted in critical realism, has the capacity to address universals holistically among the four poles demarcated by Putnam of mind, language, reality, and society. This holistic encompassing is demonstrable by considering the contrasting parochialism and resulting reductive myopia of simple realism, nominalism, idealism, and constructionism. Simple realism takes reality and its contours, including universals, to be relatively available to match up to language in more or less one to one correspondence, and conceives universals to be there in reality prior to linguistic representation. LR takes this

form of realism to be woefully naïve, first because of the opacity of reality, requiring the triangulation among minds, society, and language to penetrate, and second because many abstract universals result from, rather than existing prior to, various ritual processes.

Nominalism takes the extensional meaning of language to be an extrinsic identification of commonalities among things that lack an inherent causal connection and have no reality apart from the imposition of the commonality through use of the term. LR rejects nominalism as giving too much credit to the capacity of language to impose generality across instances apart from any real commonality, and for reducing the criteria of commonality to causal relation. Nominalism also inevitably falls into a dichotomy between brute and constructed reality in order to account for the reality, in a secondary sense, of abstract universals that emerge from collective relations. LR instead sees continuity between the brute reality to which ritual processes respond and the constructed realities the ritual produces via itself as medium.

Whereas nominalism puts too much faith in language and simple realism in reality to understand universals, idealism takes universals to be mental schemas that sufficiently discriminate the contours of reality and provide a rational basis for organizing experience. LR again insists upon the opacity of

reality and recognizes that imperfections of the ritual tools for discriminating its contours on their own, which nonetheless are capable of helpfully penetrating the veil when reality is triangulated among them. Also, LR rejects the universality of universals to the extent that it admits variations among the discriminations of universals each in language and the minds of producers and receivers, such that their schemas neither match between the two nor serve as a firm foundation, on their own, for discriminating reality.

Constructionism moves in the direction of recognizing social and cultural universals such as language, cognition, myth, ritual, aesthetics, technology, and society as part and parcel of reality, as does LR. However, it is not clear that the reality constructionists acknowledge has any metaphysical status, because reality as constructed is not independent of the minds that construct and perpetuate it, which means that reality is not really real in the sense realism intends it to be real. Nevertheless, constructionism reduces explanation of events in reality to the variously overlapping magisteria of these socially constructed universals, and so is nominalistic by recourse to society just as idealism is to minds, and nominalism is to language. Language as ritual, by contrast, is realist precisely because it identifies ritual as a common process that generates new realities from extant ones, whether material, mental, linguistic, social, or otherwise, and the



realities thus generated are independent of the process that gave rise to them or its elements. The upshot is that deconstruction and reconstruction is not nearly as straightforward as postmodern constructionists would have it, which is why LR prefers the realist accounts of constructionism developed by the social scientists who initiated the program, especially Berger and Luckmann.

The holistic character of LR comes not from the fact that it accounts for all four of the poles Putnam identifies of reality, minds, language, and society, but from the fact that it non-reductively locates both particulars and universals in a matrix constituted by the four poles. First, LR recognizes that both particular and universal realities are real, independent of their being known, engaged, or represented by minds, language, or society. LR also recognizes that minds play a particular role, to be elaborated in the next subsection, in discriminating elements, aspects, and relations in reality and in embodying the norms that guide ritual performances that transform reality. This is not to say, however, that two minds will necessarily, or even possibly, discriminate reality or embody ritual norms in precisely the same way. Language is therefore an important tool for triangulating reality among collections of minds, and yet LR understands that language picks up on reality in its own way that does not directly correspond to how it is in itself or how minds that engage reality with language take it to be.

Instead, language engages reality with its own intensional and extensional networks of reference between speech sounds and reality, its own system of syntactic norms for ordering those sounds, and its own process for generating entailments. Moreover, the linguistic systems for engaging reality are social and ritual in character, but nevertheless are distinct from other sorts of social rituals that engage reality, generating their own entailments through their own processes. The result of the process of triangulation among reality, minds, language, and society is therefore not a singular point locating reality at a fixed point, but rather the establishment of a space, of varying size and scope, in which reality registers and is transformatively engaged. This space is what will be elaborated in the next chapter in terms of subjunctivity, although in that case it will be discussed in a way that focuses on language. The space among reality, language, minds, and society is subjunctive because it treats reality as if the four poles agree with respect to it, when in fact they do not, and so the subjunctive space is constituted by the differences among them.

The subjunctive space is also the locus of critique in critical realism. Minds, language, and other social rituals all bring their perspectives on reality, and allow individuals and groups to triangulate reality among them, together constituting a network of critical feedback loops that hopefully improve

knowledge. Reality itself generates its own feedback loop on knowledge, resisting mental discriminations, embodied norms, phonologic reference, syntactic construal, pragmatic processes, and employment in and for other social rituals that are inadequate in their modes of engagement, thereby falling outside the subjunctive space of critique. Thus, the notion of critique in critical realism really is crucial because it distinguishes reality as it is in itself, which naïve realism takes to be obvious, from the subjunctive space in which reality registers for us as individuals and as members of societies.

This conception of the critical subjunctive space among the four poles Putnam identified has an important implication for understanding the reality of universals. Properties of discriminated elements of reality may register as more or less universal than they actually are in the subjunctive matrix that emerges from their engagement by minds, language, and other social rituals. While reality critically presses back against such incorrect interpretations to some degree, it is nevertheless possible for language and other ritual processes to generate entailments from what they take to be universal even if those universals do not inhere in reality. For example, it is entirely possible to build an entire political system based on social class distinctions that are based on inadequate discriminations among the people in the society. Such universals may remain

real even when minds shift regarding the proper discrimination of reality as they have become independent of the processes from which they initially arose, which is what it means to say that they are real in the first place.

*Summation: Return to Ritual and to the Linguistic Turn*

The linguistic turn, articulated by Rorty in analytic philosophy and registering largely via Saussure in continental philosophy and the social sciences, sought to make everything, or at least the answers to all philosophical questions, turn on language. This was taken as an advance on either everything turning on metaphysical principles, i.e. essentialism, or everything turning on epistemological foundations, i.e. foundationalism. While the results of the linguistic turn have in fact resulted in powerful anti-essentialist and anti-foundationalist discourses, they have struggled to provide a positive alternative that is coherent, consistent, adequate, and applicable. Indeed, these projects may rightly be critiqued, and have been from various quarters, for either taking for granted metaphysical essences or epistemological foundations even amidst their own denials, or for making language and what are taken to be its progeny as analogous to an essence or a foundation. Language as ritual (LR) joins in this criticism, while acknowledging that the perspectives that have emerged from the linguistic turn have made important contributions and provided necessary

correctives in various ways. What LR enjoins, that other critics of the inheritors of the linguistic turn have yet to elaborate, is an alternative positive vision for metaphysics, epistemology, and language. The category that LR offers for uniting all three is ritual.

Ritual, or “the performance of more or less invariant sequences of formal acts and utterances not entirely encoded by their performers” (Rappaport, 24), is taken metaphysically as the means of systematizing together various semiotic processes in which sign vehicles refer to objects, and in so doing generate interpretants. In epistemology, rituals are the normative patterns against which semiotic processes register as meaningful. Language is itself a ritual, a species of the ritual genus, but also operates at a meso-level between ritual and other social processes, such as politics, economics, culture, etc., by virtue of being substantially constitutive thereof. Language and other rituals receive from and help the minds of participants in ritual processes gain traction on what is otherwise opaque reality, but in a sense also serve as their own epistemologies apart from mental engagement with reality. In fact, it will be important for LR to be able to give an account of the ritual capacities of minds, which is to say an account of mentality vis-à-vis ritual, as its distinctive philosophy of mind emerges. Central to the theory of LR is that the ritual form and process is

continuous among reality, mentality, language, and society, not as an essence or a foundation, but as a matrix from which each draws, toward which each contributes, and that mediates each to and from the others. Rather than taking one or another of reality, mind, language, or society as most basic, ritual is a medium among them that harmonizes the four poles around a common subjunctive space.

The notion of ritual as a locus of harmony and process of harmonization derives from the Confucian ritual theory of Xunzi and others during and after the Warring States Period in China. The notion of ritual in the theory of language as ritual exceeds that of the Confucian conception of ritual, however, in that for Confucians ritual is a locus of harmony and process of harmonization for humans, whereas for LR ritual transcends human interests to encompass all of reality and the world. For the Confucian lineage, ritual is any and all conventional human behavior guided by socially constructed norms that harmonize humans with one another and humanity with the rest of the natural world. That said, ritual is distinctively human, and in fact the human contribution to the trinity with heaven and earth, which is government. In LR, ritual is also understood in terms of government, but the governmental function of ritual is not scaled to human interests alone. Rituals are crucial for maintaining

stability amidst the otherwise chaotic maelstrom of perpetual semiosis. They achieve this because their formal sequences are more or less invariant, the invariance promoting stability, but the admission of some variance enabling ritual to cope with a world of constant change. With the Confucians, LR recognizes that stability is the result of convention established by invariance of ritual form and process, but finds all of reality to be governed by convention, not just human societies.

As a species of ritual, language is made up of a set of conventions regarding speech sounds correlated, albeit not necessarily corresponding, to the world as discriminated by language users and adhering to its own historically developing system of intensional and extensional references. Language is also made up of conventional syntactic norms for patterning the sounds so referred in order to enact a process that generates certain desired functions. According to LR, the variance in the patterns of reference and of syntactic norms is inversely proportional to the capacity of language to facilitate the sharing of meaning among participants in the language ritual. The greater the variance in its sequences, the less language is capable of communicating, and the less likely that the desired entailments will result. Language is one ritual among other social rituals by which humans triangulate their mental discriminations with reality so

as to improve them toward being able to improve their situation more generally. Language is a tool for transformation, not merely a means of describing reality as encountered, and it provides a particular perspective, proper to its own ritual forms and processes, on the reality it is in process of transforming even as reality itself undergoes perpetual semiosis.

### Some Implications of Language as Ritual

Eventually, the theory of language as ritual (LR) will need to be elaborated in two ways in order to supplant the dominant theories of language that pervade the study of language at present. First, it will need to be developed dialectically as a detailed, systematic account that addresses intractable problems in each of the domains and subdomains of linguistics, philosophy of language, and hermeneutics, as well as metaphysics, epistemology, logic, and philosophy of mind. Second, it will need to be transposed into an analytic framework for studying languages, drawing on, revising, and replacing current analytic approaches, that is then made available for evaluation and assessment as to its comprehensiveness and rigor, as well as baseline qualifications of adequacy and applicability. Such elaboration vastly exceeds the scope of the present project, which main goal is to apply the theory of language as ritual to the problem of religious language, which is the focus of the next chapter. However, some brief



remarks are possible here regarding three ways of interpreting language that arose from Confucian ritual theory, philosophy of language, linguistics, and Western ritual theory, respectively, in the preceding chapters.

### *Xunzi and Rectifying Names*

In one sense, the Confucian project of rectifying names, likely as not carried over into Confucianism from Moist and Legalist disputes picked up on by Xunzi at the Jixia Academy, is the closest interpretation to the theory of language as ritual (LR) given that Xunzi too theorizes language as ritual. In this sense, LR merely develops a more rigorous framework on the basis of Western social scientific ritual theories, linguistics, and Western philosophy of language to explicate this core insight from Xunzi that language is a species of ritual. With Xunzi, LR takes reality to be real and so independent of what anyone thinks of it, how language encodes it, or how societies engage it, and so language, thought, and society must pick up on reality as it is lest they meet resistance in the form of failure to engage or generate their functions. Therefore, again with Xunzi, LR understands speech sounds, which Xunzi calls “names,” to be conventional but not arbitrary, which is to say they correlate but do not necessarily correspond with the elements, aspects, and relations of reality to which they refer.

In addition to these important and central commonalities, however, there are equally important differences between Xunzi and LR. One of these is that Xunzi views the project of rectifying names as fundamentally aimed at social stability, resulting in several problems in his construal of language vis-à-vis minds, reality, and society. First, Xunzi recognizes that for the vast majority of people, reality remains mostly opaque, but he allows that for a small subset of people, namely sages, it is possible to pierce the haze masking reality in order to see reality as it really is. The project of rectifying names, then, is to be undertaken by these sages who are thus able to fix language such that it correlates with reality as it is. This class distinction seems to espouse a naïve realism for sages, who then socially transmit their purchase on reality to the masses by rectifying names. On one hand, LR acknowledges that those who employ a wider range of rituals have a greater number of angles from which to triangulate reality, which mirrors the meritocratic approach Xunzi is advocating without the implication of a social class distinction that he carries over into his conception. On the other hand, LR rejects the idea that any degree of triangulation will ever fully overcome the opacity of reality, and so some subjunctive space must always exist as a remainder among reality, minds, language, and society.

Also, Xunzi indicates that when a society has agreement about what elements of reality names refer to respectively, then the society at least has the potential for social stability and harmony. LR finds this expectation to be inadequate in two ways. First, since the opacity of reality is irreducible, language never directly and decisively refers to reality, which is to say it never corresponds to reality, anyway. Instead, language correlates indirectly by referencing reality as mentally discriminated and as it registers in the extensional network of speech sounds, which are then ordered together according to the syntactic patterns inherent to the language in use in order to generate its entailments. Similarly, Xunzi finds that names can be inherently better or worse for referring to a given element of reality, which inadequately acknowledges the opacity of reality. LR better explains the facility of names in referring to objects as resulting from their extensional location in the phonological system of the language.

Second, Xunzi presumes that minds are capable of discriminating reality in precisely the same ways by rooting mental discriminations in sense organs that are in common among humans. Notably, the notion of discrimination as a basic mental function comes from Xunzi. Nevertheless, LR recognizes that in spite of the commonality of sense organs, which do enable relatively similar

discriminations of reality, the interpretation of those perceptions is inevitably colored by the unique set of experiences and the particular matrix of ritual participations each individual brings to a given situation. Thus, LR takes the disjuncture among mental discriminations involved in a given ritual engagement with reality as constitutive of the irreducibility of the subjunctive space among the four poles. As a result, there is a persistent disjuncture between minds, language, reality, and society such that the achievement of social stability and harmony is only ever fragmentary and temporary. That said, LR is in full agreement with Xunzi regarding the role of ritual, including language, in restraining mental discriminatory excesses. This is what LR means by many rituals allowing minds to better triangulate reality and thus improve their discriminations, which is the critical function in critical realism. The difference is that Xunzi believes that sufficient triangulation leads to perfect clarity, whereas LR insists upon the irreducible opacity of reality.

One reason that Xunzi and LR diverge is that LR identifies ritual as the common matrix of language, mind, society, and reality, whereas Xunzi identifies their common matrix as the Way (Dao 道). Since the Way functions as a cosmological, if not ontological, concept for Xunzi, his program ends up privileging the forms and patterns inherent in reality, and then rituals function to

harmonize humans with those forms and patterns so as to be able to effectively govern. LR similarly insists upon the independence of reality from its being known and engaged, but advances his program by recognizing the role of ritual in patterning and harmonizing reality prior to human involvement. Ritual does this by serving as the form of the process that systematizes semiosis into pockets of stability, coherence, and consistency. In LR, then, the Way is the Way by virtue of having achieved ritual harmonies and stabilities amidst the maelstrom of semiosis, rather than an *a priori* set of patterns and orders independent of the ritualization humans undertake to accord themselves with reality.

### *Wittgenstein and Language Games*

From the perspective of analytic philosophy of language, an immediate question for the theory of language as ritual (LR) has to do with justifying the shift to ritual from the highly developed notion of language games developed from Wittgenstein. It should be obvious by now that LR would take this line of inquiry to be drastically naïve, but it is worthwhile nonetheless to play out the contrasts for the sake of clarifying the theory even further and distinguishing it from the Wittgensteinian program. Adding encouragement to address the commonalities and differences between the two theories is the fact that Seligman, Weller, et al, in their reading of Roy Rappaport, theorize ritual quite closely to

play, and thus to games, whereas LR does not read Rappaport this way. They are not the only ritual theorists who link ritual and play, of course, and since LR depends heavily on a systematic theory of ritual, the issue of the relationship between ritual and play, and thus games, demands consideration. The contrasts drawn with play in the third chapter center around the fact that the norms of ritual and its entailments endure beyond its frame into future iterations and into other ritual domains. The norms of play, however, are only normative within the frame of the game being played, and their entailments do not become objective, and so real. As a result, it is not at all clear that Wittgenstein intends his language games to be forms of play in this sense, especially given his understanding that games are played against the broader background of forms of life. In this sense, then, language games are closer to rituals in the sense LR understands ritual than they are to play among theorists of play and ritual theorists who take ritual and play to be closely linked.

Wittgenstein elaborates his notion of language games in terms of games, and thus language, being rule governed behaviors. The rules determine what counts as proper or improper uses of language in a given game, and so are crucial to his conception of meaning as language use. Rules therefore function primarily pragmatically, setting the conditions under which a given utterance

will generate certain entailments. The closest analogy to game rules in LR is the patterned norms of syntax that are the forms of the processes by which language generates its products, functions, or entailments. The difference between the two is that rules in the Wittgensteinian sense operate on the pragmatic end of semantics, rather than the syntactic end where LR locates formal patterns. Sellars adjusts the notion of rules in language games to locate meaningful language use in appropriating the inferences implied in the course of the game being played in order to reject appeals to universal truth conditions. This is to say that for Sellars, rules govern the inferences expected to be drawn in a particular game scenario rather than just individual instances of language use as proper or improper. As a result, he is able to pick up on the syntactic rules that Wittgenstein appears to either ignore or at least downplay. A common problem that the two nevertheless still share, from the perspective of LR, however, is that use is operating entirely at the social level without any recourse to reality. LR is therefore an advance on the notion of language games because it grounds the process of generating pragmatic entailments as a process rendering speech sounds that correlate with, even if they do not quite correspond to, reality.

The rules of the language games Wittgenstein posits are to be played against the backdrop of a form of life, which has to do with wider pragmatic

context, and which is intended to ground the consistency of language across different games being played by different rules. The advantage of the notion of forms of life as deployed by Wittgenstein, and which LR affirms, is that the consistency of language is guaranteed by real relations among people, either at the level of society or of culture in some sense, without having to appeal to abstract and absolute logic. Rather than distinguishing between games and forms of life, however, LR locates both the immediate context of language use and the broader context of objectivated meanings as expressions, at different levels, of the ritual form and process. With Wittgenstein, LR is skeptical of the capacity of logic to successfully evaluate, let alone guarantee, the truth and validity of expressions apart from the pragmatic contexts in which language operates. However, LR addresses this neglect by seeking to include context within a logical formalism rather than rejecting logic outright. Whereas the later Wittgenstein sought to redress the neglect of context by rejecting logic as the basis for meaning and shifting meaning entirely to use, the lineage of use theories inaugurated by Austin is more amenable to logical formalisms. As a result, LR derives its own pragmatics in more sustained conversation with speech act theorists than with Wittgenstein.



Wittgenstein was attempting to overcome the limitations of entity theories of meaning, where a word refers directly to an entity. As a result, he, like Austin and the speech act theorists, shifted the locus of meaning from entities in reality to contexts of use. Language as ritual shares some of the suspicions of entity theories of truth, betraying, as they do, a predilection toward a naïve realism about the entities to which language refers. The problem is that a shift to a theory that locates meaning exclusively in terms of the pragmatic context results in a form of nominalism with regard to social universals as described above with regard to constructionism. Rather than swinging the pendulum so decisively away from entity theories of meaning, as do the use theories of Wittgenstein, Austin, and their successors, LR deploys the theory of ritual to explain language as a continuum that picks up on reality and transforms it through use. This allows LR to acknowledge the elements, aspects, and relations in reality to which language refers, but to avoid locating the meaning of language exclusively in that initial act of reference, withholding the ascription of meaning until the completion of the language ritual process. Also, LR distinguishes the correlation of speech sounds to reality from full correspondence. The nomenclature of correspondence is taken to indicate that each discrimination of reality would have a one to one relation with a particular speech sound. Correlation, by

contrast, allows that speech sounds pick up on the contours of reality in various ways so as to be able to express discriminations in reality at times in a one to one relation but frequently through varieties of combinations of sounds giving voice to a single discrimination. This is to say that the whole system of speech sounds is capable of expressing relevant discriminations of reality without the system having to represent each and every element of the system of the world. Meaning begins to emerge at the level of the system of speech sounds correlating to reality, but comes to fruition only once those sounds are rendered according to the patterned norms of syntax, which is the form of the language process generating its transformative entailments.

*Chomsky and Universal Grammar*

That language is innate in human cognition, biologically encoded and genetically transmitted, such that language faculties are universal across all human beings, is the most influential linguistic theory in the second half of the twentieth century. This theory of universal grammar, discussed in greater detail in chapter two, is singularly creditable to Noam Chomsky, and its advent ignited a revolution in linguistics and analytic philosophy of language. Increasingly, however, this view is coming under attack, and language as ritual (LR) joins a rising chorus of linguists and biological anthropologists who are dismantling

what evidentiary basis existed to justify its conclusions and offering alternative explanations. Daniel Everett instead locates the commonalities across languages, some of which may prove universal, in the sharing of cultural norms and values. Terrence Deacon, by contrast, identifies language as a tool that correlates and then coevolves with the human capacity for symbolic thinking. LR is skeptical of Everett for failing to account for any role at all for mind, resulting in a sort of cultural determinism mediated through language, which is *ipso facto* linguistic determinism. LR also finds Deacon unsatisfactory for inadequately distinguishing symbolic thinking from what Chomsky would call an innate faculty, and for failing to address the relationships of minds, languages, and societies with reality. Indeed, none of these paradigms adequately theorizes all four of the poles identified by Putnam of mind, language, society, and reality and their interrelations. Chomsky overemphasizes cognitive, i.e. mental, faculties. Everett overemphasizes cultural, i.e. social, determination. Deacon attempts to correlate mind and society, but leaves out reality and renders language overly determined by mental capacities. LR aspires to theorize all four poles together as interrelated but not interdetermined by identifying their sharing in the ritual form and process and their location around a common subjunctive space.

Since universal grammar starts with a strong theory of mind, and it is the most influential theory on offer to which language as ritual must respond, it is important at this stage to clarify further the way LR construes mind and its role among reality, language, and society. Central to the role of mind is the capacity for discrimination, which has to do with perceiving reality and ascertaining the respects in which elements, aspects, and relations in reality are relevantly determinate with respect to one another. Mind itself is a result of ritual processes generating a set of stable capacities for interpreting and engaging the world that proved evolutionarily advantageous. So too, some of those capacities are especially attuned to the ritual processes at play in reality, and are able to contribute to rituals, which is to say mental rituals generate entailments that perform yet further rituals. Many of the rituals that minds perform are themselves social rituals, which norms are shared among societies and cultures. Society itself is constituted by minds together performing a common set of norms and cognitively revising their shared norms through further processes of ritualization such that new entailments are generated as appropriate in the ongoing process of semiosis in reality.

This is a very different way of thinking about what mind is and does than that propounded in the theory of universal grammar. For Chomsky and his ilk,

mind is made up of faculties corresponding to brain states that enable interaction with an external environment by coordinating the various faculties in different ways, much like a computer employs a relatively discrete set of functions in combination to enact a wide variety of processes. LR demurs from the notion of faculties and instead finds mind to be in continuity with reality, language, and society as sharing in the common matrix of ritual. Ritual is not a faculty. It is a form and process at play across domains of reality that minds participate in with a particularly high degree of acuity. Deacon identifies the capacity for symbolic thought as the mental function that enables humans to engage the cultural artifact of language. While this approach has the advantage of acknowledging that language itself is cultural artifice, instead of innate in human brains, it is not at all clear that the capacity for symbolic reference alone, properly understood, is either unique to humans or sufficient for explaining the incredibly intricate, nested, and multi-level network of signs that constitute language as a sign system. LR identifies ritual as both the matrix in which semiotic processes achieve stability together as sign systems, and the matrix to which mind is acutely attuned so as to enable engagement with and contribution to the world made up of greater and lesser degrees of ritualized stability. Language is a particular mode of such engagement and contribution to the world by enabling

communication among minds such that they can coordinate their engagements and contributions.

The discriminations that minds make have to do with ascertaining how the contours of reality are relevantly determinate with respect to one another. This is not to say that reality in itself is so determinate. The determinateness that minds discriminate are the determinations relevant to those minds, or at least the determinations discerned as relevant in a given situation. The elements, aspects, and relations in reality are almost never as determinate as either they are discriminated to be by minds perceiving them or as encoded in the speech sounds of a language. That said, minds discriminating reality in relationship with one another, principally through language but also through many other social rituals, are better able to gain common traction on reality by virtue of being able to triangulate their discriminations with their representations in other ritual modes. This too is very different from a universal grammar that guarantees a common discrimination of reality in language due to language itself being an inborn faculty. Instead, LR preserves the opacity of reality to knowing minds and allows the ubiquity of language to emerge organically as an outworking of the evolutionarily advantageous capacity for discrimination and ritualization in human minds.

One of the struggles of the universal grammar program is to be able to articulate necessary and sufficient mental functions to account for the structures found universally across all languages. An alternative program to universal grammar that instead attempts to locate language structures in culture, such as that advanced by Daniel Everett, runs into an analogous problem of explaining how culture is structured such that it may in turn structure language. This strategy inverts Saussurean semiology, in which the structure of language is taken to be the structure common across all sign systems, such that instead the structure of the sign systems that constitute culture determine the structure of language. In the case of semiology, the commonality of linguistic structure with non-linguistic sign systems is merely empirically false, whereas its inversion leaves open the question of what constitutes the structure supposedly common between language and culture. LR answers this question with ritual as the common form and process embodied in the sign systems of language and the other social rituals that together constitute culture. That said, LR denies the direct causality from culture to language as in Everett, instead recognizing that commonalities among linguistic and other rituals arise from their ongoing common response to a singular, albeit opaque, reality. Thus, LR has the added advantage over the cultural determinism theory of being able to ground the high

degree of commonality between, and translatability among, languages in the fact that languages, cultures, and the minds that create and employ them are working together to increasingly adequately discriminate reality. The common denominator is reality, constituted itself by ritual, and discriminated and transformed by ongoing ritual processes of language, culture, and the human minds that together constitute them. What LR shares with Everett is the notion of language as a tool, enabling people to accomplish things cooperatively in the world, which is why LR emphasizes the ritual, and thus linguistic, process transforming reality.

*Returning to Rappaport on Language*

As discussed in chapter three, Roy Rappaport diagnoses two maladies in human life that are symptoms of the underlying condition of language, and he prescribes ritual as the medicine to cure the disease. Clearly, language as ritual (LR) rejects this strange medicine due to the fact that it takes language to be a species of the ritual genus rather than an alternative system to it. That said, LR does have alternative ways of considering both the illnesses Rappaport diagnoses and the ways in which they might be resolved.

The first illness introduced by language, according to Rappaport, is that of the lie, because language may be employed to represent reality as other than it



really is. Importantly, Rappaport prescribes ritual as the cure for the linguistic lie because ritual generates religion, in his theory, and religion is what actually gets the job done to ameliorate the ill effects of falsehoods. LR has an alternative conception of the lie, and thus also an alternative prescription for addressing it. Of course, people do lie, and they do so in the medium of language, but people also lie using other rituals, including religious rituals. Sometimes that lie is told in language, but other times the lie is told through other means, including sartorial means, such as when the priest wears vestments to signal that they are functioning as Christ in the Eucharistic liturgy, but of course they are not in fact Christ. Lies are not, therefore, unique to language rituals but rather to rituals generally, and the reason that they are possible arises from the subjunctive space among reality, minds, language, and other social rituals that are always at play in any given situation. The subjunctive space holds reality as it is discriminated by the minds participating in the ritual, as it is represented in language and in other rituals, and as it is in itself, all at the same time, even though these things are not actually one and the same. This is why the subjunctive space is a space and not a point: it must be able to hold the same thing in different ways simultaneously, that is, the reality being discriminated mentally, represented linguistically, and addressed ritually, even as it is present really. This discrepancy means that as the

ritual processes of mind, language, and society get going, it is quite possible that they are not in fact picking up on reality as it is, and yet the process moves forward and may even generate the desired entailments if what they do pick up and ritualize is close enough for that purpose.

Lies are capable of generating new realities. In LR, however, the solution to this problem is not some other form or process that corrects it, but rather just more and better ritual. This gets back to criticism being critical, i.e. crucial, for critical realism as rituals provide feedback for their participants, and the many rituals that make them up, to improve their discriminations of reality.

Eventually, a reality ritually generated that inadequately engages reality will be revealed and displaced when it is unable to function in other rituals due to its inadequate discrimination of reality, which may initiate a process of ritual reconstruction. While this may sound like a radically progressive vision, holding out hope for the eventual ritual reconciliation of all things, it is important to keep in mind that reality is irreducibly opaque, and the threshold for instigating inquiry in stably funded experience is quite high. This means both that false rituals are stubbornly persistent, and that holding out hope for perfect knowledge is false hope. Nevertheless, lies are at least in principal always correctible, even if there will never be an expression of the fullness of truth.

The second illness Rappaport diagnoses as arising from language is that it enables the conception of alternative realities to the present order, excluding the possibility of an ultimately stable absolute that finally grounds individuals in societies over against the constant threat of things being otherwise. These alternatives are not themselves lies, because the alternative is actually possible, not false as in a lie. The threat of the alternative, then, is that it threatens to undermine the medium itself, which Rappaport takes to be language, the further medium of which LR takes to be ritual. Rappaport ends up theorizing religion as the ultimate backstop that legitimates a particular conception of reality over against any and all alternatives as that to which language can, should, and must refer. It is important to keep in mind that religion, for Rappaport, is an entailment of the ritual form and process, and so the backstop grounding ritual ends up being something that the ritual itself generates, which is at least circular.

LR abandons the search for an ultimately stable absolute that can ground the many and various sorts of ritualization, settling instead for the singularity and reality, albeit with its concomitant opacity, of reality. Language, and all sorts of other rituals, do by their existence imply that reality could be other than as they pick up on it. In fact, as processes that transform and generate new realities, rituals more than imply that reality could be different, they actually make reality

different. That said, reality also constrains how far rituals can go in their transformations. The ritual process is not so powerful as to be able to generate absolutely any alternative. Rituals that attempt to do so will fail, or their entailments will sputter out and die. Since the goal of ritual is to establish stable patterns out of the maelstrom of semiosis, the ritual process must accord itself with reality, and so too the participant minds that perform it. It is the tension between reality and the ritual process of its transformation that generates the subjunctive space in which reality becomes other than as it is in itself, rather taken as it is for minds that discriminate it, and rituals, such as language, that make with it. The subjunctive is the space in which reality is treated as if it accords with the discriminations of mind and the forms and processes of rituals. It is therefore this tension, and the space it opens among reality, language, minds, and society, that enables language to say what cannot be said. How this is so is what is left to be explained in the next chapter.

## SUBJUNCTIVE RITUAL AND RELIGIOUS LANGUAGE

At long last, with the theory of language as ritual in hand, the problem this dissertation set out to solve returns to the center of focus. Having meandered so long and so far since the initial statement of the problem, it is important to be reminded of what the problem of religious language is understood to be that the remainder of the chapter will address: The problem of religious language inquires about the adequacy, capacity, correlation, and propriety of language, speech, texts, and their enactments, on one hand, and ultimate realities and the human, cosmic, and environmental dimensions contingent thereon, on the other. Thus, the problem of religious language had two sides. One side has to do with the nature of language, and the other with the nature of that which language seeks to engage. The theory of language as ritual has held these two sides together throughout its elaboration, emphasizing in its critical realist frame that language is always engaging and transforming reality. This chapter will show how the subjunctive space that arises from the tension between rituals, including language, and reality, makes it possible for the ritual process of language to engage even infinite realities, such as God. The central thesis of the chapter is that, contrary to the common assumption that language functions primarily indicatively and propositionally, language is in fact always functioning in the

subjunctive mood. This thesis in turn grounds the continuity between the operation of language with respect to infinite realities with its operation vis-à-vis finite realities.

The first section of this chapter carefully considers the subjunctive mood as it registers in linguistics, social theory, and logic, and how the subjunctive is resisted in several strains of modern philosophy and theology. The second section returns to semiotics in order to give an account of the subjunctive in terms of the critical realist theory of language as ritual. Section three considers linguistic situations often assumed to be indicative and propositional, namely description, conversation, community, and things that are taken to be unaddressable by language, and reinterprets them in the subjunctive frame. Section four develops a typology of religious language, distinguishing three ways in which the subjunctive space may be construed among minds, language, society, and reality, and then concluding by showing how each type of linguistic expression is a form of poetic creativity. A fifth section undertakes some housekeeping by first distinguishing the solution to the problem of religious language derived via the theory of language as ritual in this dissertation from two interrelated and prevalent alternatives: language as metaphor and language as model. This section also points to three areas for future development of the

project with respect to metaphysics, ritual, and mind and religious experience.

The conclusion of the chapter is a meditation on theopoetics, situating the solution of the problem of religious language advanced here as an attempt to broaden the site of the theopoetic tent as it has been erected in recent literature.

### The Subjunctive Mood

The first step in demonstrating that infinite objects are able to register in the subjunctive space among minds, language, society, and reality is to gain further traction on what is meant by subjunctive space. This in turn requires interrogating the very notion of subjunctivity, arising as it does in the fields of linguistics, social theory, and logic, which while related are not entirely coherent with respect to one another. As an initial foray into the notion, subjunctive is defined in the *Oxford English Dictionary* as “Designating or relating to a verbal mood that refers to an action or state as conceived (rather than as a fact) and is therefore used chiefly to express a wish, command, exhortation, or a contingent, hypothetical, or prospective event.”<sup>1598</sup> It is also helpful to contrast the subjunctive as it arises in these disciplinary matrices with the predilection

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<sup>1598</sup> “Subjunctive, Adj. and n.,” in *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, A.1.a, accessed December 21, 2018, <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/192731>.

toward indicative and propositional speech in modern philosophy and theology, highlighting the respective allergies to subjunctivity diagnosable in the thinking of Rene Descartes, Immanuel Kant, and Karl Barth (1886 – 1968). These considerations of subjunctivity and its alternatives are the terms of debate into which language as ritual will enter the lists and compete in the next section.

### *Subjunctive Mood and Modality in Linguistics*

The concept of the subjunctive, as it is employed in linguistics, is a particular species of the genus of mood, which “refers to a formally grammaticalized category of the verb which has a modal function.”<sup>1599</sup> Such a definition merely shifts the locus of inquiry to the topic of modality, which linguistics generally takes to be “the semantic domain pertaining to elements of meaning that languages express.” Languages accomplish this by “the addition of a supplement or overlay of meaning to the most neutral semantic value of the proposition of an utterance, namely factual and declarative.”<sup>1600</sup> This is to say that

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<sup>1599</sup> Joan L. Bybee and Suzanne Fleischman, *Modality in Grammar and Discourse* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1995), 2.

<sup>1600</sup> Bybee and Fleischman, 2; F. R. Palmer, *Mood and Modality* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2001), chap. 1.2.1; Paul Portner, *Mood* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2018); Paul Portner, *Modality*, Oxford Surveys in Semantics and Pragmatics (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2009).



meaning is taken to be expressible in terms of propositions, and the basic semantic value of any given proposition is whatever it is declaring as fact. Modality, in this sense, adds a bit of ornamentation to convey something of the attitude of the language user to whatever the proposition of the sentence might be.<sup>1601</sup> This is what it means to say that modality is “consideration of alternative realities mediated by an authority,”<sup>1602</sup> where the authority mediates those alternatives via linguistic ornamentation. These authored alternatives, or attitudes, are generated syntactically via verb modification, through lexical additions, or by phonological or morphological changes.<sup>1603</sup> Mood is thus distinguishable from tense and aspect, which frame linguistic events temporally and show how those events move through time, respectively, as emphasizing not the events but the perspective of the language user on those events with respect to how they are or could be otherwise.<sup>1604</sup> Of course, this notion of modality

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<sup>1601</sup> Joan Bybee, Revere Perkins, and William Pagliuca, *The Evolution of Grammar: Tense, Aspect, and Modality in the Languages of the World* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 176.

<sup>1602</sup> Shopen, *Language Typology and Syntactic Description: Grammatical Categories and the Lexicon*, III:315.

<sup>1603</sup> Bybee and Fleischman, *Modality in Grammar and Discourse*, 2.

<sup>1604</sup> Palmer, *Mood and Modality*, 1; Shopen, *Language Typology and Syntactic Description: Grammatical Categories and the Lexicon*, vol. III, chap. 5.

assumes that there is enough traction on how things are to differentiate them from how they could be otherwise.

The distinction between how things are and alternatives to that situation gives rise to the most basic distinction in analysis of linguistic modality between the realis and irrealis: “The realis portrays situations as actualized, as having occurred or actually occurring, knowable through direct perception. The irrealis portrays situations as purely within the realm of thought, knowable only through imagination.”<sup>1605</sup> Not all linguists are sanguine with regard to employing this distinction, however, for the very reason that Roy Rappaport identified as the inherent linguistic capacity to suggest the alternative. As Alan Timberlake notes, even a statement so seemingly obviously in the realis mood as a description necessarily implies that the language receiver might have thought the situation to be otherwise, and so the language producer is responding to at least the potential of that alternative.<sup>1606</sup> One way of resolving this tension is by noting that the distinction between the realis and irrealis applies with respect to developing a syntactic typology of modality, but collapses into the irrealis when

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<sup>1605</sup> Marianne Mithun, *The Languages of Native North America* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 173.

<sup>1606</sup> Shopen, *Language Typology and Syntactic Description: Grammatical Categories and the Lexicon*, III:316.

shifting to the work of rhetorical analysis. The former has to do with what a given linguistic expression purports to be doing according to its syntax, and so is applicable in an analysis of mood, whereas the latter has to do with the pragmatic context of its emergence and interpretation as a function of semantic modality.<sup>1607</sup> It is little wonder, then, given that “there is no common semantic or pragmatic basis for the terminology”<sup>1608</sup> because the distinction only applies at the level of syntax, that there is little cross-linguistic commonality with regard to the grammaticalization of the categories.<sup>1609</sup> Nevertheless, the distinction remains important precisely because the syntax construes situations to be real, when in fact the meaning of the expression has to do with the attitudes and perspectives of the language user.

The loosening of linguistic traction with reality enabled by irrealis modalities in language emerges from three dimensions of relations among language users and elements, aspects, and relations in reality.<sup>1610</sup> The first

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<sup>1607</sup> Petar Kehayov, *The Fate of Mood and Modality in Language Death: Evidence from Minor Finnic* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017), 18.

<sup>1608</sup> Marianne Mithun, “On the Relativity of Irreality,” in *Modality in Grammar and Discourse*, ed. Joan L. Bybee and Suzanne Fleischman (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1995), 368.

<sup>1609</sup> Bybee, Perkins, and Pagliuca, *The Evolution of Grammar*, chap. 6.12.

<sup>1610</sup> Shopen, *Language Typology and Syntactic Description: Grammatical Categories and the Lexicon*, III:329–30.

dimension has to do with the degree of confidence a language user has that their mental discriminations of reality are true and relevant, and so may be termed the epistemic dimension,<sup>1611</sup> denoting “necessity, probability, or possibility in reasoning.”<sup>1612</sup> The second dimension has to do with language producers locating and transferring responsibility for enacting changes in reality either on themselves, on language receivers, or on reality itself,<sup>1613</sup> and so may be termed the ethical dimension, denoting “real-world obligation, permission, or ability.”<sup>1614</sup> The third dimension, not always classed with the other two, has to do with identifying states of affairs in reality that, should they pertain, necessitate further states of affairs, and so may be termed the ontological dimension, denoting causality, contingency, and dependency in conditional cases.<sup>1615</sup> One of the challenges for linguists in grappling with the irrealis modality is that there are few, if any, commonalities across languages in terms of how the various

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<sup>1611</sup> Shopen, III:316–18.

<sup>1612</sup> Eve E. Sweetser, “Root and Epistemic Modals: Causality in Two Worlds,” *Annual Meeting of the Berkeley Linguistics Society* 8 (June 25, 1982): 484, <https://doi.org/10.3765/bls.v8i0.2049>.

<sup>1613</sup> Shopen, *Language Typology and Syntactic Description: Grammatical Categories and the Lexicon*, III:318–21; Palmer, *Mood and Modality*, chap. 1.2.2. This dimension is called here “deontic.”

<sup>1614</sup> Sweetser, “Root and Epistemic Modals,” 484. The ethical dimension is here referred to as “root.”

<sup>1615</sup> Shopen, *Language Typology and Syntactic Description: Grammatical Categories and the Lexicon*, III:321–26.

dimensions and their subsets are marked, and yet meanings associated with these three dimensions are present in virtually all languages.<sup>1616</sup> Moreover,

There is no single accepted name; traditions differ, and usage differs in different languages. The term *subjunctive* points to the fact this mood will commonly appear in embedded structures. *Conditional* points to one major function of marked modality, that of indicating contingency in explicit conditional structures. *Potential* covers a broad range of especially future possibilities. When there is no established term in some tradition, *irrealis* is useful.<sup>1617</sup>

The result of this multifarious terminology and diversity of linguistic marking across languages<sup>1618</sup> is that, while the presence of irrealis modalities across languages is acknowledged, the space the irrealis demarcates among language, minds, reality, and society is undertheorized in the literature.

With this conception of modality, and the distinction between realis and irrealis, in hand, it is now possible to locate the subjunctive mood within the irrealis modality as a particular verb form. On one hand, “the term ‘subjunctive’ is a translation of the Classical Greek *hypotaktiké* which literally means

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<sup>1616</sup> Mithun, “On the Relativity of Irreality”; Palmer, *Mood and Modality*, chap. 1.6.

<sup>1617</sup> Shopen, *Language Typology and Syntactic Description: Grammatical Categories and the Lexicon*, III:326.

<sup>1618</sup> Caterina Mauri and Andrea Sansò, “What Do Languages Encode When They Encode Reality Status?,” *Language Sciences*, Papers selected from the “What do languages encode when they encode reality status?” workshop at the 41st Annual Meeting of the Societas Linguistica Europaea, Forlì, Italy, 17-20 September 2008, 34, no. 2 (March 1, 2012): 99–106, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.langsci.2010.11.004>.

subordinate,” and so “one of the functions of the subjunctive is simply that of being subordinate, in that it is typically the mood used in subordinate clauses.”<sup>1619</sup> On the other hand, the subjunctive grammatical construction has come to be used to express the irrealis modality far beyond the limited scope of subordinate clauses.<sup>1620</sup> For languages that do not have a subjunctive grammatical mood, the irrealis modality may be marked by other features, but “it is, perhaps, a little unfortunate that the terms ‘realis’ and ‘irrealis’ have been adopted as grammatical terms in place of the traditional terms ‘indicative’ and ‘subjunctive’.”<sup>1621</sup> The subjunctive is thus the linguistic markings, whether “individual suffixes, clitics, and particles,” “inflection,” or “modal verb,”<sup>1622</sup> that distinguish expressions in the irrealis from expressions in the realis, in which case they are unmarked or indicative.<sup>1623</sup> The concept of the subjunctive in the disciplinary matrix of linguistics is thus a typological category for expressing the notion of irrealis as it is expressed in language. The concept of subjunctive as

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<sup>1619</sup> Palmer, *Mood and Modality*, chap. 5.1.

<sup>1620</sup> Palmer, chap. 5.

<sup>1621</sup> Palmer, chap. 6.2.

<sup>1622</sup> Palmer, chap. 1.6.

<sup>1623</sup> Palmer, chap. 7.1.

the space among language, minds, reality, and society therefore inverts the type/notion relation by using subjunctive to refer to the notion of irreality. The justification for doing so emerges from consideration of the subjunctive in ritual and social theories, which will proceed following consideration of semantic theories of modality in linguistics.

Understanding of how the irrealis is formed, often through the use of subjunctive verbal constructions, does not yet reveal very much about what linguistic constructs that invoke the irrealis might mean. The most prevalent formal approach to the semantic question is that developed by Angelika Kratzer, hewing closely to the framework of modal logic and its attendant possible world semantics, to be discussed in greater detail below.<sup>1624</sup> Kratzer adjusts the semantics of modal logic by acknowledging the necessity of accounting for context in delimiting the possible meanings of modal expressions in her notion of a “conversational background,” “a function from worlds to sets of propositions which serves as a parameter of interpretation.”<sup>1625</sup> An alternative formalization

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<sup>1624</sup> Portner, *Modality*, chap. 3.1; Angelika Kratzer, *Modals and Conditionals: New and Revised Perspectives* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2012).

<sup>1625</sup> Portner, *Modality*, 51; Kratzer, *Modals and Conditionals*, chap. 1.

derives instead from dynamic logic,<sup>1626</sup> an extension of modal logic, in which “the meaning of a sentence is a function which modifies the context in which it's used,” either “the knowledge of some participant in the conversation” or “the pragmatic presuppositions of the conversation.”<sup>1627</sup> While potentially facilitating a wider interpretation of a wider range of modalities, the shift to dynamic logic, in which meaning is an action rather than an object,<sup>1628</sup> requires abandoning modal contributions to truth conditions,<sup>1629</sup> in addition to suffering from underdevelopment among semantically oriented linguists.<sup>1630</sup> Another approach to semantics that aspires to formality, albeit perhaps not in the same way as do the approaches rooted in modal logic, is that of cognitive semantics, in which meaning is identified as a metaphorical transposition of basic concepts from embodied experience in the world into abstract domains.<sup>1631</sup> Paul Portner raises an important point about the cognitive approach pressing semantics too hard toward the mental dimension of meaning, and negating pragmatics entirely as a

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<sup>1626</sup> Portner, *Modality*, chap. 3.2.

<sup>1627</sup> Portner, 87.

<sup>1628</sup> Portner, 86.

<sup>1629</sup> Portner, 101.

<sup>1630</sup> Portner, 101–4.

<sup>1631</sup> Portner, chap. 3.3.1.



result.<sup>1632</sup> Returning pragmatics to the fold does not make things any clearer, however, as Barbara Dancygier and Eve Sweetser note regarding a particular subset of the irrealis modality: “In the last twenty-five years, speech-act theorists and pragmatics scholars have uncovered the uses of conditional forms in presenting speech acts, thus setting up a tradition which parallels the logical one and presents problems for it.”<sup>1633</sup> Their aspiration to bridge the gap between form and function is thus laudable, even if their particular approach, rooted in the theory of universal grammar, is questionable for reasons that will be discussed below.

#### *The Subjunctive in Ritual and Social Theories*

The notion of the subjunctive emerges in social theory with the ritual theory of French sociologist Émile Durkheim (1858 – 1917) in *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*<sup>1634</sup> in which social realities are treated “as if” they are elements of brute reality. Reflecting general trends in French social thought at the time, Durkheim agrees with Saussure regarding the arbitrariness of signs with

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<sup>1632</sup> Portner, chap. 3.3.4.

<sup>1633</sup> Barbara Dancygier and Eve Sweetser, *Mental Spaces in Grammar: Conditional Constructions* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 5; Portner, *Modality*, chaps. 4 & 5.

<sup>1634</sup> Durkheim, *Elementary Forms Of The Religious Life*.

respect to their objects,<sup>1635</sup> noting that a soldier might be willing to die to recapture a flag when “he forgets that the flag is only a symbol that has no value in itself but only brings to mind the reality it represents. The flag itself is treated *as if* it was that reality.”<sup>1636</sup> Likewise regarding the symbolic elements of rituals, then, after encountering which “everything happens *as if* they really were working. People are more confident because they feel stronger, and they are stronger in reality because the strength that was flagging has been reawakened in their consciences.”<sup>1637</sup> For Durkheim, then, ritual inhabits a fundamentally unreal “as if” space between society and reality that nevertheless has real effects when it is taken as real, in effect realizing a determinate trajectory through reality that could have been otherwise should another trajectory have been taken. The problem is that because the symbolic elements of the ritual are taken to be arbitrary, there is no way to evaluate whether one trajectory is or could be better than another. Notably, the grammatical construction of treating a subordinate reality “as if” if were a superior one is only one linguistic function of the

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<sup>1635</sup> Mark Aronoff and Janie Rees-Miller, *The Handbook of Linguistics* (Malden, MA: John Wiley & Sons, 2017), 108.

<sup>1636</sup> Durkheim, *Elementary Forms Of The Religious Life*, 222. Italics added for emphasis.

<sup>1637</sup> Durkheim, 350. Italics added for emphasis. See also Durkheim, 365, 411.

subjunctive mood, but the whole of the meaning of the subjunctive in social and ritual theories that employ the concept.

A second locus of consideration of the subjunctive within social theory emerges from the social philosophy of Alfred Schutz (1899 – 1959), operating at the intersection of sociology and phenomenology.<sup>1638</sup> Like Durkheim, Schutz does not use the nomenclature of the subjunctive but has a related notion of a space of irreality in his conception of multiple realities. Of course, “phenomenology is concerned with that cognitive reality which is embodied in the processes of subjective human experiences,”<sup>1639</sup> and so Schutz conceives reality within mental experience rather than as it is independent of thought, as critical realism would have it. Concurring with William James (1842 – 1910), Schutz says that “reality means simply relation to our emotional and active life; whatever excites and stimulates our interest is real.”<sup>1640</sup> The totality of this reality Schutz refers to, with Edmund Husserl (1859 – 1938), as the “life-world,” which “is the whole sphere of everyday experiences, orientations, and actions through

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<sup>1638</sup> Michael Barber, “Alfred Schutz,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Spring, 2019, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2018/entries/schutz/>.

<sup>1639</sup> Alfred Schutz, *On Phenomenology and Social Relations* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1970), 13.

<sup>1640</sup> Schutz, 252.

which individuals pursue their interests and affairs by manipulating objects, dealing with people, conceiving plans, and carrying them out."<sup>1641</sup> Within the life-world is a "paramount reality" that James identified with sense perception, but Schutz expands the domain somewhat by including a modicum of semantic relation such that things sensed might function as "socio-cultural objects."<sup>1642</sup> This indicative paramount reality may be contrasted with two subjunctive dimensions. The first subjunctive dimension is that of "nonparamount realities," e.g. "the world of dreams, of imageries and phantasms, especially the world of art, the world of religious experience, the world of scientific contemplation, the play world of the child, and the world of the insane."<sup>1643</sup> The second is that of "transcendence," which consists in "my knowledge that nature transcends the reality of my everyday life both in time and in space," as does "in a similar way the social world."<sup>1644</sup> Moreover, for Schutz, unlike James, the nonparamount

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<sup>1641</sup> Schutz, 14–15, chap. 2.

<sup>1642</sup> Schutz, 253.

<sup>1643</sup> Schutz, 255.

<sup>1644</sup> Schutz, 245.

realities depend on, as “modifications” of, paramount reality,<sup>1645</sup> and so are properly subordinate as subjunctive realities.

The nomenclature of the subjunctive enters into the social and ritual theory literature with the work of Victor Turner, who links the subjunctive with liminality in his theory of the ritual process. Eric W. Rothenbuhler links the notion of liminality and its subjunctive character in Turner back to Durkheim, although he locates them in the Durkheimian distinction between the sacred and the profane.<sup>1646</sup> Turner self-consciously draws the analogy between cultural performances such as “ritual, carnival, festival, theater, film, and similar performative genres,” and the subjunctive mood, by contrast with “the indicative mood of culture,” which “controls the daily arenas of economic activity, much of law and politics, and a good deal of domestic life.”<sup>1647</sup> He further connects the subjunctivity of cultural performances with the liminal stage of the ritual process, discussed in detail in chapter three, in which participants experience

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<sup>1645</sup> Schutz, 256.

<sup>1646</sup> Eric W. Rothenbuhler, “The Liminal Fight: Mass Strikes as Ritual and Interpretation,” in *Durkheimian Sociology: Cultural Studies*, ed. Jeffrey C. Alexander (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 66–67.

<sup>1647</sup> Victor Witter Turner, “Liminality and the Performative Genres,” in *Rite, Drama, Festival, Spectacle: Rehearsals Toward a Theory of Cultural Performance* (Philadelphia, PA: Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1984), 20–21.

communitas free from structure and hierarchy: “The antistructural liminality provided in the cores of ritual and aesthetic forms represents ... its subjunctive mood, where suppositions, desires, hypotheses, possibilities, and so forth, all become legitimate.”<sup>1648</sup> This notion of the subjunctive is thus of a “time and place in which quotidian roles and statuses do not apply.”<sup>1649</sup>

The new rules correspond to the domains of the “potential,” or the “desirable.” Norms are no longer ideal constructions, inaccessible models, lofty guidelines, both revered and neglected because of their unattainability. When it accedes to the subjunctive mode, a society becomes, at least temporarily, what it ought to be. It enacts its professed objectives, reiterates its own principles.<sup>1650</sup>

Unlike Durkheim and Schutz, who admit of the ambivalence of the subjunctive dimensions of life, Turner renders the subjunctive as “ontologically privileged” as it enables envisioning and articulating the world as it could be by contrast with the indicative mood describing the world as it is.<sup>1651</sup> This binary contrast between in the indicative and the subjunctive moods in cultural performances

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<sup>1648</sup> Turner, *The Ritual Process*, vii. See also Turner, 127; Turner, “Liminality and the Performative Genres,” 21. Richard Schechner develops this theoretical insight into an analytic paradigm in performance studies in Schechner, *Between Theater and Anthropology*, chap. 2.

<sup>1649</sup> Rothenbuhler, “The Liminal Fight: Mass Strikes as Ritual and Interpretation,” 66.

<sup>1650</sup> Daniel Dayan and Elihu Katz, “Articulating Consensus: The Ritual and Rhetoric of Media Events,” in *Durkheimian Sociology: Cultural Studies*, ed. Jeffrey C. Alexander (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 167.

<sup>1651</sup> Graham St. John, *Victor Turner and Contemporary Cultural Performance* (New York, NY: Berghahn, 2008), 16.

may be rightly critiqued for neglecting the interaction between them, including both the exercise of control over the subjunctive by the indicative and the drive of the subjunctive toward the imperative, or the world as it should be.<sup>1652</sup>

The most extensive engagement of the subjunctive mood as the sine qua non of ritual and social theory is that undertaken by Seligman et al in *Ritual and Its Consequences*<sup>1653</sup> and addressed extensively in chapter three. There is much to commend about their theorizing the subjunctive space in which ritual operates, especially their insistence that “ritual activity – and, with it, the construction of a subjunctive universe – occurs throughout many different modes of human interaction, not just religion.”<sup>1654</sup> However, whereas Turner contrasts the “as if” of the subjunctive with the “as is” of the indicative, these theorists associate the “as is” with the notion of sincerity, which they identify with Protestantism and as seeking “to replace the ‘mere convention’ of ritual with a genuine and thoughtful state of internal conviction. Rather than becoming what we do in

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<sup>1652</sup> St. John, 16–17; Jon Mckenzie, *Perform or Else: From Discipline to Performance* (London: Routledge, 2001), 168, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203420058>; Don Handelman, *Models and Mirrors: Towards an Anthropology of Public Events* (New York, NY: Berghahn, 1998), chap. 3; Jeffrey C. Alexander, “Cultural Pragmatics: Social Performance between Ritual and Strategy,” *Sociological Theory* 22, no. 4 (2004): 527–73, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3648932>.

<sup>1653</sup> Seligman et al., *Ritual and Its Consequences*.

<sup>1654</sup> Seligman et al., 21.

action through ritual, we do according to what we have become through self-examination.”<sup>1655</sup> Unfortunately, their positing of an oppositional binary between sincerity and subjunctivity results in the same challenges Turner faces in positing an oppositional binary between the subjunctivity of liminality that characterizes the antistructure of *communitas* and the ritual reintegration into the indicative mood of everyday life. Moreover, the oppositional binary results in a creeping nominalism in which the conventions of ritual leave reality fundamentally unchanged as fragmented and disordered, as was discussed in chapter four. This results in Seligman et al misinterpreting Xunzi as similarly a nominalist constructivist when he in fact envisions ritual as the human contribution to harmonizing humanity with heaven and earth in an ongoing process of mutual transformation toward wholeness. The purpose of ritual is not an alternative to sincerity but rather the very means to become sincere to the form of the ritual process. Ritual does establish “an order *as if* it were truly the case,”<sup>1656</sup> and then goes on to make it so.

The notion of virtuality as developed by Bruce Kapferer serves as a corrective to the theory that ritual creates subjunctive space as an alternative

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<sup>1655</sup> Seligman et al., 103.

<sup>1656</sup> Seligman et al., 20.



either to the indicative of everyday life or an internal disposition of sincerity.<sup>1657</sup> In spite of their proclivity toward totalizing the relations among their elements, “some rites may come to influence experience and affect the structuring of relations outside the domain of ritual performance through processes that are not directed to the representation of such realities.”<sup>1658</sup> Returning to theorists such as James G. Frazer (1854 – 1941), Bronisław Malinowski, and Claude Lévi-Strauss (1908 – 2009), Kapferer views ritual “as a technological dynamic for the (re)creation, (re)generation, (re)production, redirection, or intervention within the circumstances and continuity of personal realities and social and political forms of human life.”<sup>1659</sup> This is to say that his conception of reality, like that of Schutz, is phenomenological, and so pertains to reality as perceived in minds and society. The independent reality of critical realism Kapferer calls “actuality” and identifies with a process metaphysics: “It is not something fixed or stable, but is always in process, subject to forces that are always extending beyond any human knowledge of them.”<sup>1660</sup> The transformative capacity of virtuality is possible

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<sup>1657</sup> Bruce Kapferer, “Virtuality,” in *Theorizing Rituals: Issues, Topics, Approaches, Concepts*, ed. Jens Kreinath, Jan Snoek, and Michael Stausberg, vol. 1 (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 671–84.

<sup>1658</sup> Kapferer, 671.

<sup>1659</sup> Kapferer, 672, 676–77.

<sup>1660</sup> Kapferer, 674–75.

because, in line with Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari, and Susan Langer,<sup>1661</sup> it is conceived as part and parcel with reality. A virtual space is “a construction, but a construction that enables participants to break free from the constraints or determinations of everyday life, and even from the determinations of the constructed ritual virtual space itself.”<sup>1662</sup> Kapferer identifies virtuality, and especially ritual virtuality, as a space in which emergence emerges, which is to say a space that opens up within reality but is irreducible thereto, and in which its representations are techniques for transforming reality.<sup>1663</sup> “The virtualizing machine of ritual holds certain dimensions of actuality in abeyance while exposing the formational processes of other aspects of actuality, *while in the midst of it*, to exploration, manipulation and, perhaps, to reconfiguration.”<sup>1664</sup> In recognizing the affinity of his theory with the analysis of liminality undertaken by Turner, Kapferer locates his notion of virtuality within what is understood here as the subjunctive, although the “as if” space opens within and then

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<sup>1661</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1994); Susanne K. Langer, *Feeling and Form: A Theory of Art Developed from Philosophy in a New Key* (New York, NY: Scribner, 1953).

<sup>1662</sup> Kapferer, “Virtuality,” 673.

<sup>1663</sup> Kapferer, 674.

<sup>1664</sup> Kapferer, 676.

transforms reality rather than transcending from and contrasting with the quotidian.<sup>1665</sup>

Terrence W. Deacon, at the outset of *The Symbolic Species: On the Co-Evolution of Language and the Brain*, identifies subjunctivity as the demarcating boundary between humans and nonhuman animals. He is worth quoting extensively on this point as he notes that humans

live in a world that no other species has access to. We inhabit a world full of abstractions, impossibilities, and paradoxes. We alone brood about what didn't happen, and spend a large part of each day musing about the way things could have been if events had transpired differently. And we alone ponder what it will be like not to be. In what other species could individuals ever be troubled by the fact that they do not recall the way things were before they were born and will not know what will occur after they die? We tell stories about our real experiences and invent stories about imagined ones, and we even make use of these stories to organize our lives. In a real sense, we live our lives in this shared virtual world. And slowly, over the millennia, we have come to realize that no other species on earth seems able to follow us into this miraculous place.<sup>1666</sup>

Deacon goes on to elaborate language as the human cultural artifact and tool for engaging this subjunctivity, employing the language of virtuality to articulate the common space among language, reality, minds, and society that humans, to varying extents, mutually inhabit. The power of his notion of co-evolution between language and brains is precisely that the richness of these subjunctive mental spaces would likely be impossible without the transformative work

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<sup>1665</sup> Kapferer, 682–84.

<sup>1666</sup> Deacon, *The Symbolic Species*, 21–22.

undertaken with the language tool to render them so. The limitation of the framework, as elaborated above in chapter two, is that it overemphasizes the work of representation of reality in language, and so ultimately inadequately recognizes that the transformative work of language as ritual proceeds irrespective of representational adequacy. Nevertheless, Deacon provides the most robust account of how language deploys and employs subjunctivity to accomplish its transformative work in the social science literature to date. The main advance of the present project on this accomplishment is to press the notion of subjunctivity back from the species of language to the genus of ritual and to enrich the notion of subjunctivity in language by recourse to a systematic treatment of linguistics and logic as dimensions of the ritual process.

### *The Subjunctive Mood and Modal Logic*

The notion of the subjunctive has taken center stage in the study of logic since the advent of modern modal logic with the work of Clarence Irving Lewis (1883 – 1964) in the early twentieth century.<sup>1667</sup> Also important for logical consideration of the subjunctive, emerging at the intersection of logic, linguistics,

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<sup>1667</sup> Bruce Hunter, "Clarence Irving Lewis," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Winter, 2016, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2016/entries/lewis-ci/>; Clarence Irving Lewis and Cooper Harold Langford, *Symbolic Logic* (New York, NY: Century, 1932).

and cognitive science, is the rich contemporary literature regarding conditional constructions, including the conditional mood. However, before turning to these developments, it is helpful to return to an earlier logical discussion of the subjunctive in medieval supposition theory.

In the medieval period in Western philosophy, especially in the development of logic in the latter decades of that epoch, supposition and signification together constituted a semantic theory. Signification has to do with reference in the sense of the relations among words in natural language, concepts as codified in mental language, and things in the world,<sup>1668</sup> and so is a theory of meaning prior to either syntax or pragmatics. Supposition, by contrast, only pertains in the context of a proposition, and so is the meaning of language when it is actually used to talk about things, whether or not that meaning has anything to do with what any given term or their composition together in the proposition signifies.<sup>1669</sup> Supposition, then, accounts for syntax but only insofar as it contributes to the meaning of language as used, which is to say it lies at the

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<sup>1668</sup> Paul Vincent Spade, *Thoughts, Words and Things: An Introduction to Late Mediaeval Logic and Semantic Theory*, 1.2 (n.p.: Paul Vincent Spade, 2007), chaps. 3–6, [http://pvspade.com/Logic/docs/Thoughts,%20Words%20and%20Things1\\_2.pdf](http://pvspade.com/Logic/docs/Thoughts,%20Words%20and%20Things1_2.pdf).

<sup>1669</sup> Spade, chap. 8A.

pragmatic pole of the semantic ellipse of meaning.<sup>1670</sup> Catarina Dutilh Novaes argues that the complex taxonomies developed in supposition theories are ways of analyzing all of the different meanings a given expression could have: “supposition can be seen as a piece of machinery which, when given propositions as input, outputs their possible readings.”<sup>1671</sup> This is to say that medieval theories of supposition are means of mapping the subjunctive space among language, minds, reality, and society and charting the process of transformation that plays out therein.

In modern logic, modal logic stands in for the supposition theories of medieval logic in providing a mechanism for analyzing subjunctivity in the form of what John L. Pollock (1940 – 2009) calls “subjunctive reasoning.”<sup>1672</sup> Pollock notes that subjunctivity suffers from philosophical neglect “because it seems to presuppose a strange metaphysically suspicious sort of logically contingent necessity,” but since “subjunctive concepts do make sense... the problem cannot

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<sup>1670</sup> Catarina Dutilh Novaes, *Formalizing Medieval Logical Theories: Suppositio, Consequentiae, and Obligationes*, Logic, Epistemology and the Unity of Science, v. 7 (Dordrecht: Springer, 2007), pt. 1.

<sup>1671</sup> Novaes, 1.4.4.

<sup>1672</sup> J. L. Pollock, *Subjunctive Reasoning* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2012), chap. 1.1.

be whether they make sense, but what sense they make."<sup>1673</sup> The apparatus of modal logic, with its additional operators, was detailed in chapter two, and some consideration was given to the various metaphysical and epistemological possibilities undergirding the possible worlds framework in which that apparatus operates. Of interest here are two issues in philosophy of logic with respect to modal logics and how they construe subjunctivity, and then the main way in which logicians have addressed subjunctivity, namely in terms of conditionals.

The first issue in the philosophy of modal logic is epistemological, having to do with underlying assumptions regarding the relationships in analytic philosophy, where modal logic emerged and developed, among the four poles of mind, language, reality, and society that Putnam identified as grounding linguistic meaning. As Richard Rorty (1931 – 2007) argues in *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, modern epistemology relies upon the assumption that mental organization of sense data mirrors reality, although his conversationalist alternative to this overemphasis on mental representation may similarly be

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<sup>1673</sup> Pollock, 2–3. W.V.O. Quine (1908-2000) denied that modality is a feature of reality, even if it is a feature of language, and so rejected this move to modal logic. Quine, *Word and Object*, chap. 6.41.

critiqued for overemphasizing the social pole.<sup>1674</sup> Modal logic reflects this assumption of mental representations mirroring reality precisely because, as logic, it gives expression to principles of sound reasoning such that reasoning reflects relationships in the world, or at least in a possible world.<sup>1675</sup> At the same time, under the influence of the theory of universal grammar developed by Noam Chomsky and inculcated in analytic philosophy, language is understood to mirror mind as the structures of language are determined by certain mental faculties.<sup>1676</sup> This purported connection between mind and language justifies modal logic as not merely a codification and systematization of subjunctive linguistic expression but rather of a deeper “subjunctive reasoning.”<sup>1677</sup> The result is a double mirroring between mind and reality and between language and mind that closely resembles the Saussurean assumption in continental philosophy that the structure of language is the same structure as in all sign systems. Of import for considering the construal of subjunctivity is that the reduction of the space

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<sup>1674</sup> Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*; Bjørn Ramberg, “Richard Rorty,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Spring, 2009, sec. 2.1, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2009/entries/rorty/>.

<sup>1675</sup> Garson, “Modal Logic,” secs. 1, 6.

<sup>1676</sup> Chomsky, *Language and Mind*.

<sup>1677</sup> Pollock, *Subjunctive Reasoning*.



among mind, language, and reality to the process of mirroring effectively collapses the three together, which in turn enables the collapse of the subjunctive into conditional propositions, thereby translating them into the indicative. A central goal of the present project is to provide an account of mind, language, reality, and society as more independent from one another by envisioning a larger space among them, in which they nevertheless mutually condition and transform one another.

The second issue in philosophy of modal logic is metaphysical, having to do with the ways in which different interpretations of possible worlds construe subjunctivity. Possible worlds semantics are necessary for modal logic to function as the modal operators make claims about elements, aspects, and relations in reality that do not inhere in the actual world and so must be predicated of a possible world.<sup>1678</sup> These possible worlds thus inhabit the subjunctive space of interest in the present project, and so their metaphysical status is of interest. However, an immediate problem arises with the concrete physical realist approach, as epitomized by David Lewis (1941 – 2001), in that the possible worlds modal logic refers to are entirely cut off from one another:

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<sup>1678</sup> Menzel, "Possible Worlds," sec. 1.

They are isolated: there are no spatiotemporal relations at all between things that belong to different worlds. Nor does anything that happens at one world cause anything to happen at another. Nor do they overlap; they have no parts in common, with the exception, perhaps, of immanent universals exercising their characteristic privilege of repeated occurrence.<sup>1679</sup>

The problem is that the modal operators, and the subjunctive linguistic expressions they logically encode, while functional, are thus rendered irrelevant, as describing some other world that has nothing to do with the actual one.<sup>1680</sup>

Subjunctivity is thus real, but relegated to a mere opportunity for imaginative wonderment entirely cut off from any relevance to the ongoing processes of life in the actual world; subjunctivity is reduced to serving as a marking of discussion of a possible rather than the actual world.

The reigning alternative to concrete physical realism in interpreting possible worlds is abstractionism,<sup>1681</sup> in which possible worlds are maximal (total) states of affairs which elements, aspects, and relations are determined to the extent that every subset thereof is fully determined, i.e. included or precluded.<sup>1682</sup> Only one possible world actually obtains, although its constituent

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<sup>1679</sup> Lewis, *On the Plurality of Worlds*, 2.

<sup>1680</sup> Nathan U. Salmon, review of “*On the Plurality of Worlds*,” by David Lewis, *The Philosophical Review* 97, no. 2 (1988): 237–44, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2185263>.

<sup>1681</sup> Menzel, “Possible Worlds,” sec. 2.2.

<sup>1682</sup> Plantinga, *The Nature of Necessity*, pt. IV.1.

states of affairs also exist across worlds that, as totalities of states of affairs, do not obtain.<sup>1683</sup> At the same time, since it is states of affairs as abstract entities, rather than the things from which states of affairs abstract, that are ontologically primitive, abstractionism is generally committed to actualism such that only things in the world that obtains exist in any possible world.<sup>1684</sup> The language of ontology and abstract entities signals that abstractionism need not be merely a mental process of construing possibilities, and thus commits abstractionism to an irreducibly modal metaphysics that precludes the semantic extensionality possible worlds were developed to recover in the first place.<sup>1685</sup> This irreducibility of possibility among states of affairs means that subjunctivity is thus pervasive on the abstractionist account, reality being perfused by possible states of affairs, some of which actually obtain. The pervasiveness of subjunctivity is further inculcated by the commitment to transworld identity, wherein the same

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<sup>1683</sup> Menzel, "Possible Worlds," 2.2.1.

<sup>1684</sup> Menzel, 2.2.3. Notably, the notion of existence in debates regarding actualism vs. possibilism is somewhat equivocal, as noted in E. Zalta, *Abstract Objects: An Introduction to Axiomatic Metaphysics* (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1983), chap. II.3.

<sup>1685</sup> Menzel, "Possible Worlds," 2.2.2.

individual has different properties and relations in different possible worlds,<sup>1686</sup> among abstractionists. That said, given this pervasiveness, their commitment to actualism, and their willingness to sacrifice extension to irreducible modality, it is unclear why abstractionists need to posit possible worlds at all instead of simply positing subjunctivity as a metaphysical principle of the one actual world.

Combinatorialism is a close cousin to abstractionism that takes facts understood as the conjuncts of particulars and properties/relations to be ontologically basic:<sup>1687</sup>

The simple individuals, properties and relations may be combined in *all* ways to yield possible atomic states of affairs, provided only that the form of atomic facts is respected. That is the combinatorial idea. Such possible atomic states of affairs may then be combined in *all* ways to yield possible molecular states of affairs. If such a possible molecular state of affairs is thought of as the totality of being, then it is a *possible world*.<sup>1688</sup>

By pressing its ontology back from states of affairs into a type of atomism and then making supervening facts derivative therefrom, combinatorialism is able to constrain its notion of states of affairs such that it may remain reductive to first-

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<sup>1686</sup> Menzel, 2.2.1; Penelope Mackie and Mark Jago, "Transworld Identity," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Winter, 2017, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2017/entries/identity-transworld/>.

<sup>1687</sup> Menzel, "Possible Worlds," 2.3.

<sup>1688</sup> David Malet Armstrong, "The Nature of Possibility," *The Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 16, no. 4 (December 1986): 579.

order propositional and predicate logic and thereby retain extensionality.<sup>1689</sup> Moreover, given the proclivity toward scientific reductionism in the account given by David Malet Armstrong (1926 – 2014), it is unsurprising that his combinatorialism adopts modal fictionalism<sup>1690</sup> with regard to possible worlds such that non-actual worlds do not exist but may be spoken of as if they do. Subjunctivity on the combinatorialist account has to do with the different ways that atomic facts may be combined into atomic and then molecular states of affairs, quite apart from the indicative, and so adherent to predicate and propositional logic, of those atomic facts and their individuals, properties, and relations. Furthermore, on the fictionalist account embraced by Armstrong, subjunctivity is the means by which the modality of states of affairs is reduced to the indicative of first-order propositional and predicate logic by treating fictional possibilities as if they are real.

Logicians frequently address the topic of modality, and thus subjunctivity, in natural languages by recourse and reduction to conditional constructions.

Interest in conditionals was sparked primarily by a paper by F.P. Ramsey (1903 -

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<sup>1689</sup> Menzel, "Possible Worlds," 2.3.7.

<sup>1690</sup> Daniel Nolan, "Modal Fictionalism," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Spring, 2016, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2016/entries/fictionalism-modal/>.

1930) that puts to the question the rationale for disagreement regarding conditional statements when the facts at hand are agreed upon.<sup>1691</sup> An early response locates the source of disagreement not in the facts at hand but in the contextual factors, such as physical laws and circumstances, in which those facts are to play out so as to result in the consequent.<sup>1692</sup> More recently, three approaches to explaining conditionals in natural language have emerged most prominently. The first makes recourse to the possible world semantics developed to provide truth conditions in modal logic to provide truth conditions to conditional statements by evaluating for truth in a possible world where the antecedent is true.<sup>1693</sup> The interpretations of subjunctivity just discussed for the three main interpretive traditions of possible world semantics thus hold for this

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<sup>1691</sup> Frank P. Ramsey, "General Propositions and Causality," in *F.P. Ramsey: Philosophical Papers*, ed. D.H. Mellor (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Horacio Arlo-Costa and Paul Egré, "The Logic of Conditionals," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Winter, 2016, 2, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2016/entries/logic-conditionals/>.

<sup>1692</sup> Pollock, *Subjunctive Reasoning*, chap. 1.2; Arlo-Costa and Egré, "The Logic of Conditionals," 1; Roderick M. Chisholm, "The Contrary-to-Fact Conditional," *Mind* 55, no. 220 (1946): 289–307, <https://doi.org/10.1093/mind/LV.219.289>; Roderick M. Chisholm, "Law Statements and Counterfactual Inference," *Analysis* 15, no. 5 (1955): 97–105, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3326359>; Nelson Goodman, *Fact, Fiction, and Forecast* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983); Nicholas Rescher, *Hypothetical Reasoning* (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1964). A recent recovery of this trajectory is Christopher Gauker, *Conditionals in Context* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005).

<sup>1693</sup> Robert Stalnaker, "A Theory of Conditionals," in *Studies in Logical Theory: Essays*, American Philosophical Quarterly Monograph Series 2 (Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 1968), 98–112; Lewis, *Counterfactuals*; Arlo-Costa and Egré, "The Logic of Conditionals," 2.1, 3.

interpretation of conditional constructions as well. The other approaches demur from attempting to provide truth conditions for conditional constructions, instead providing reasons for accepting or rejecting conditional claims.<sup>1694</sup> Ernest W. Adams (1926 – 2009) determines the acceptability of conditionals on the basis of the probability of the consequent given the antecedent,<sup>1695</sup> introducing a probabilistic mapping of the topology of subjunctivity. Peter Gärdenfors brings a cognitive semantics approach to conditional constructions, arguing that the consequent is acceptable as an element of knowledge only if the antecedent has already been included in the set of beliefs that constitute knowledge.<sup>1696</sup> This last move returns mentality to the domain of subjunctivity, recognizing the cognitive suspense the underdetermination of conditional constructions invokes.

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<sup>1694</sup> Arlo-Costa and Egré, “The Logic of Conditionals,” 2.2.

<sup>1695</sup> Ernest W. Adams, *The Logic of Conditionals: An Application of Probability to Deductive Logic* (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1975); Ernest W. Adams, *A Primer of Probability Logic* (Stanford, CA: Center for the Study of Language and Information, 1998); Arlo-Costa and Egré, “The Logic of Conditionals,” 4.

<sup>1696</sup> Peter Gärdenfors, “Conditionals and Changes of Belief,” in *The Logic and Epistemology of Scientific Change*, ed. Ilkka Nüniluoto and Raimo Tuomela, *Acta Philosophica Fennica* 30 (Amsterdam: North-Holland, 1979), 381–404; Peter Gärdenfors, *Knowledge in Flux: Modeling the Dynamics of Epistemic States* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1988); Arlo-Costa and Egré, “The Logic of Conditionals,” 5.

*Resisting the Subjunctive in Modern Philosophy and Theology*

In *Ritual and Its Consequences*, Adam Seligman et al contrast a notion of sincerity they link genealogically with Protestantism with their notion of the ritual subjunctive.<sup>1697</sup> Without necessarily buying into either their historical analysis or their general conception of the notion of sincerity, it is nevertheless quite clear that the inheritors of Protestantism in Enlightenment thought and then modernity more generally have been exceedingly suspicious of subjunctivity. While tracing the full development of this skepticism toward the subjunctive through modern philosophical and theological thought vastly exceeds the scope of the present project, consideration of a few highlights illustrates the contrast between the indicative aspirations of modernity and the subjunctivity advocated here.

René Descartes (1596 – 1650), a French Catholic who set the stage for much of the modern program in philosophy and theology, to say nothing of his work in the sciences, is perhaps best known for his dictum, “Cogito, ergo sum,” “I think, therefore I am.”<sup>1698</sup> This conclusion, providing as it does the basis for a

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<sup>1697</sup> Seligman et al., *Ritual and Its Consequences*, chap. 4.

<sup>1698</sup> Gary Hatfield, “René Descartes,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Summer, 2018, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2018/entries/descartes/>; René Descartes, *A Discourse on the Method of Correctly Conducting One’s Reason and Seeking Truth in the*



rationalist turn toward a purely intellectual, extrasensory engagement with reality, is of far less interest than the process by which Descartes arrives at it: "I came to think that I should ... reject as completely false everything in which I could detect the least doubt, in order to see if anything thereafter remained in my belief that was completely indubitable."<sup>1699</sup> What Descartes seeks to do is to doubt absolutely everything until he arrives at something he cannot doubt, which may then serve as a sure foundation for knowledge. In short, Descartes seeks certainty, and certainty, even more than sincerity, is the hallmark of the indicative. Indeed, the subjunctive, with all of its possibility, desire, opinion, obligation, conjecture, hypothesis, and above all, irreality, is precisely that which makes sensory experience dubitable and thus provokes the anxiety at the bottom of which Descartes seeks certainty. Once found, the project of modernity is then to build a bulwark on its foundation, although the subjunctive seems always to be whispering at the gate.

One of the whisperers of subjunctivity is David Hume (1711 – 1776), whose skepticism arose from his denial of the human rational capacity for

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*Sciences*, ed. Ian Maclean, Oxford World's Classics (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2006).

<sup>1699</sup> Descartes, *A Discourse on the Method of Correctly Conducting One's Reason and Seeking Truth in the Sciences*, 28.

inductive reasoning, and thus knowledge of causation, from the bare impressions and ideas of experience, and thereby banishing them from the domain of knowledge to mere belief.<sup>1700</sup> Reinforcement of the indicative bulwark arrives in the person of Immanuel Kant (1724 – 1804), whose *Critique of Pure Reason* attempts to synthesize rationalism with empiricism.<sup>1701</sup> Kant argues that the *a priori*, analytic categories of time and space ground causality as the *a priori*, synthetic category of the two, and together they provide the basis for all *a posteriori* synthetic empirical knowledge of phenomena.<sup>1702</sup> He thus inaugurated the subjective captivity in modern philosophy, in which things cannot be known as they are in themselves, that is as noumena, which is the goal of metaphysics, but only as they are in sense experience, that is empirically, as phenomena.<sup>1703</sup>

Liberation is only possible once the lingering anxiety of the Cartesian demand for

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<sup>1700</sup> David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. P. F. Millican, Oxford World's Classics (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2007); Galen Strawson, *The Secret Connexion: Causation, Realism, and David Hume: Revised Edition* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2014).

<sup>1701</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*.

<sup>1702</sup> Kant, 41–252; Michael Rohlf, "Immanuel Kant," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Summer, 2018, sec. 2, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2018/entries/kant/>.

<sup>1703</sup> An alternative to this standard interpretation of the implications of the first critique is given in Frederick C. Beiser, *German Idealism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008). Even if the alternative is taken as a more compelling interpretation of Kant, the implications in the development of philosophy and theology clearly derive from the standard interpretation.

certainty is assuaged such that the rejection of the subjunctive by Kant in his explicit denial of hypothetical reasoning<sup>1704</sup> may be concomitantly abandoned. After all, the Kantian project relies upon the same underlying assumption that knowledge is representational, carrying things as they are out there over into the cognitive apparatus, which in turn presumes that things are determinate enough, apart from being known, to be so represented.

While the Cartesian and Kantian projects, and their *relata*, set the agenda for large swaths of the development of modern theological thinking,<sup>1705</sup> the skepticism they engendered to classical conceptions of divinity led to a theological backlash against the influence of philosophical thinking on theological development. The epitome of this revolt is the “Nein!,” “No!,” of Karl Barth (1886 – 1968) to the call by Emil Brunner (1889 – 1966) for a return to natural theology.<sup>1706</sup> Instead, Barth reaffirms the utter transcendence of God with respect to human reason, and thus reconfigures theology as a science of the

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<sup>1704</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 11, 613–20.

<sup>1705</sup> James C. Livingston, ed., *Modern Christian Thought: The Enlightenment and the Nineteenth Century*, vol. 1 (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2006); James C. Livingston and Francis Schüssler Fiorenza, eds., *Modern Christian Thought: The Twentieth Century*, vol. 2 (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2006).

<sup>1706</sup> Emil Brunner and Karl Barth, *Natural Theology: Comprising “Nature and Grace” by Professor Dr. Emil Brunner and the Reply “No!” By Dr. Karl Barth* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2002).

church in which the task of the theologian is to measure what the church says about God against the revelation of God to the church in Jesus Christ. In making this shift, Barth acknowledges that theology “presupposes that the true content of Christian talk about God can be known by man”<sup>1707</sup> and “attests itself in Holy Scripture in the word of the prophets and apostles to whom it was originally and once and for all spoken by God's revelation.”<sup>1708</sup> Whereas the appeal to scriptural authority made by Martin Luther (1483 – 1546) at the outset of the Protestant Reformation sought to supplant ecclesial authority, the appeal to scriptural authority by Barth seeks to supplant both the Cartesian authority of reason and the Kantian authority of experience. The foundation of certainty for Barth is thus a narrative, not only of the person of Jesus of Nazareth as attested in the Gospels, but also of the church constantly measuring itself against that gospel down through history to the present. That narrative is very much in the indicative mood: Jesus was born, lived, taught, died, rose from the dead, ascended to heaven, and lives on in the discipleship of the church. While Barth has certainly

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<sup>1707</sup> Karl Barth, *The Church Dogmatics*, ed. Geoffrey William Bromiley and Thomas Forsyth Torrance, vol. I, 1 (§§ 1-12) (Edinburgh, UK: T&T Clark, 1975), 12.

<sup>1708</sup> Barth, I, 1 (§§ 1-12):88.

supplanted any and all anthropological grounds for certainty, he persists in the anxiety for certainty that he inherits from the likes of Descartes and Kant.

If modernity is characterized by the search for certainty in the indicative mood, then postmodernism, understood as “incredulity toward metanarratives,”<sup>1709</sup> i.e. such indicative assertions of universal grounds for certainty, might be expected to emerge in the subjunctive mood. It does not. Instead, postmodernism launches a panoply of indicative rejoinders to modern attempts to ground epistemological certainty on sure foundations. There is something of a contribution to emerge from this skeptical stance toward modernity in that postmodernism finally rejects the central aim of the Cartesian project: “What postmodernity discovers (or, rather, rediscovers), is that rationality cannot ground itself, and that therefore modernity cannot be grounded. As a result, the idea of modern knowledge turns out to be a self-defeating proposition.”<sup>1710</sup> Clearly, modernity substitutes here for the anxious pursuit of certainty. Unfortunately, the postmodern indicative rejoinders to modernity have less than responsibly appropriated ammunition for their agonistic enterprise from unwitting and unwilling communities of inquiry along

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<sup>1709</sup> Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*.

<sup>1710</sup> Hans Bertens, *The Idea of the Postmodern: A History* (London: Routledge, 1995), 241.

the way.<sup>1711</sup> Moreover, the vehemence with which postmodernism has launched and sustained its attack on modernity results in something of a fog of war from which no alternative is offered, or may even be possible. “That postmodernism is indefinable is a truism. However, it can be described as a set of critical, strategic and rhetorical practices employing concepts such as difference, repetition, the trace, the simulacrum, and hyperreality to destabilize other concepts such as presence, identity, historical progress, epistemic certainty, and the univocity of meaning.”<sup>1712</sup> Postmodernism is thus wholly defined by what it is against, and being so must respond to the indicative mood of modernity with equally indicative retorts and rebuttals. By contrast, the present project aspires to offer an alternative to the anxious pursuit of certainty that characterizes modernity by making the shift from the indicative to the subjunctive mood.

### Subjunctive Realism – Language as Ritual

Having surveyed the idea of the subjunctive as it registers in linguistics, social theory, and logic, and resistance to it in modern philosophy and theology,

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<sup>1711</sup> Alan Sokal and Jean Bricmont, *Fashionable Nonsense: Postmodern Intellectuals' Abuse of Science* (New York, NY: Picador, 1998).

<sup>1712</sup> Gary Aylesworth, “Postmodernism,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Spring, 2015, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2015/entries/postmodernism/>.

it is now possible to elaborate the conception of subjunctivity as it emerges in the theory of language as ritual developed in chapter five. The elaboration begins with consideration of subjunctivity as it emerges from the metaphysical semiotics underlying the theory of language as ritual. It continues with a systematic treatment of the subjunctive from the various aspects and dimensions of the theory of language as ritual. It concludes with an account of the subjunctive as grounding a particular form of critical realism. Subsequent sections will deploy the conception of subjunctivity derived here to show how language engages a range of realities, including infinite or indeterminate realities, and to develop a typology of religious language.

### *Subjunctive and Semiotics*

In the conclusion to his consideration of the virtuality of ritual, Bruce Kapferer provides a rich justification for discussion of the subjunctivity of the metaphysical semiotics that underlies the theory of language as ritual prior to its consideration proper:

The stress I place on ritual as a virtuality is directed to the dynamic technology of ritual. It is intended as a corrective to mimetic and performance perspectives towards ritual. While such perspectives are extremely important... there is an over-use of dramatic and theatrical metaphors in the discussion of much ritual and there is often a reduction to the terms of a semiotic of textual analysis and interpretation... Ritual seen from such perspectives continues the importance of the phenomenon for those anthropologists who engage the events they call "ritual" as a means for gaining access to realities that are not usually their own. But these orientations may reduce an understanding of how rituals

operate on those who routinely have recourse to them. Thus an approach to ritual as a virtuality which concentrates not merely on the surface as a play of representations but on the dynamics of ritual, on the rules and procedures... whereby rituals penetrate beneath the surface to intervene in the very process of personal and reality construction.<sup>1713</sup>

This is all to say that ritual cuts much deeper to the bone, to borrow a metaphor from Ronald Grimes,<sup>1714</sup> than much of the anthropological literature on ritual allows. Since what is being discussed here as subjunctivity, which Kapferer calls virtuality, is the scalpel ritual employs to cut to the bone and then graft elements, aspects, and relations of reality together, its metaphysical semiotics provides the interpretive frame for its surgical practice.

The metaphysical semiotics developed in conversation with Charles Sanders Peirce (1839 – 1914) in the second chapter understands reality itself, and not just human experience of reality as in phenomenological semiotics, to be pervasively perfused by semiosis, or sign processes. To be a thing is to be a sign, which is to say a sign process. A sign involves an object related either iconically, indexically, or symbolically to a sign vehicle, which relation, or reference, results in the generation of an interpretant. The interpretant is then itself a sign vehicle at least for the sign process that generated it, which additional function drives

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<sup>1713</sup> Kapferer, "Virtuality," 684.

<sup>1714</sup> Grimes, *Deeply Into the Bone*.



the ongoing process of semiosis. There is nothing about a sign process as such, however, that necessitates that a sign vehicle referring to an object will necessarily generate an interpretant, or if it does that it will be the same interpretant as the last time. There is also nothing about sign processes that allows sign processes to interact with one another so as to achieve greater degrees of complexity. These codifying, systematizing, and networking functions are fulfilled by ritual understood as “the performance of more or less invariant sequences of formal acts and utterances not entirely encoded by the performers” (Rappaport, 24). Of course, this definition also describes the sign process itself, but ritual exceeds the spontaneous generation of interpretants by sign vehicles referring to objects by adding pattern, harmony, and order to the proceedings.

Given this metaphysical account, what role does subjunctivity play in semiosis? Metaphysical semiotics must be very clear that none of the three components of the sign process – the vehicle, the object, or the interpretant – is reducible to either or both of the others, nor is the sign as a whole reducible to any one or two of the components. One implication of this doctrine is that there is necessarily space between the vehicle, the object, and the interpretant within the sign. This space is what Victor Turner called liminal with respect to ritual

process, a betwixt and between<sup>1715</sup> of as yet indeterminate possibility, which is to say of subjunctivity. The space between the vehicle and the object is subjunctive because the sign treats the vehicle as if it were the object; it is this very relation of vehicle as if object that generates the interpretant. The space between the object and the interpretant is subjunctive because the interpretant is generated as if by the object through the mediation of the vehicle, which relation to the object was just similarly classed subjunctive. The space between the vehicle and the interpretant is subjunctive because the interpretant is generated as if by the vehicle, which is a medium by relation for the object. Indeed, the very notion of reference requires subjunctivity as that which refers is treated as if it were that to which it refers.

One implication of the role of subjunctivity in semiosis is that reality is rendered far less determinate than usually assumed, and that the modern anxiety for certainty would require it be in order to be assuaged. To be a thing is to be a sign, and yet the subjunctive space within and among the sign relations opens up the process of signification to ecological and other contextual influence and admits the probabilistic character of the sign function. Contextual factors may

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<sup>1715</sup> Turner, *The Forest of Symbols*, chap. 4.

interrupt reference from vehicle to object, or may interrupt the generation of the interpretant once reference is achieved. Even apart from external conditions, many signs only signify in a certain proportion of cases, with vehicles referring to one object a certain percentage of the time and possibly to another the rest of the time or not at all, and with interpretants likewise being generated from successful reference probabilistically. The codifying, systematizing, and networking functions of ritual serve to stabilize these inherent and contextual indeterminacies somewhat, and thereby increase the determinateness of the signs they encode, systematize, and network. "To be determinate is, minimally, to have some identity over against or in difference from what is other than that identity,"<sup>1716</sup> to be 'this' rather than 'that.' To be indeterminate, then, is not to be different from something, not to be 'this' rather than 'that.'"<sup>1717</sup> Rather than a simple binary, determinateness is better conceived as a spectrum in which the degree of determinateness is determined by a calculus coupling the probability of a vehicle referring to an object, the probability of reference successfully generating an interpretant, and the extent of the encoded networks and systems in which the resulting sign registers. Signs are thus interpretable as more or less

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<sup>1716</sup> Neville, *God the Creator*, 44.

<sup>1717</sup> Whitney, "Symmetry and Asymmetry: Problems and Prospects for Modeling," 36.

determinate, both in general and with respect to other particular sign processes and ritual encodings. To be fully determinate would require that a sign always refer to one and the same object resulting in the generation of one and the same interpretant and that the resulting sign be encoded in networks and systems with every other sign in the universe. To be fully indeterminate would require that a vehicle never refer to its object, never generate its interpretant, and be relationally encoded with absolutely no other signs in the universe. Needless to say, there are very few things, if any, that are either fully determinate or fully indeterminate. Of course, in the case of indeterminacy, since the vehicle does not refer to the object and so the reference does not generate the interpretant, a completely indeterminate sign is not a sign, and therefore is not a thing, anyway.

These metaphysical considerations regarding subjunctivity in the semiosis of reality lead to concomitant cosmological considerations regarding the subjunctivity among reality, minds, language, and society. First it should be stated that minds, language, and society are themselves encodings of networks and systems of signs, which is to say rituals, in reality. Minds, language, and society are thus part and parcel of reality, themselves real elements, aspects, and relations. Cosmological consideration of subjunctivity is thus consideration of the subjunctivity of ritual. The role of ritual thus far has been described in terms of

encoding networks and systems of signs, which is analogous to the metaphysical description of the sign process in which a vehicle refers to an object and thereby generates an interpretant. This is to say that subjunctivity describes the space among the signs in the ritually constructed network or system, just as it describes the space among the vehicle, the object, and the interpretant at the metaphysical level. The subjunctive space is thus similarly a space of possibility, of becoming, in which signs are related together as if they inherently accord with the ritual form and process. Just as successful semiosis results in an interpretant that is at least determinate enough to be available for ritualization, successful ritualization results in a network or system of signs that is determinate enough for further ritualization. It is important to remember that ritual, like semiosis, is a process. The process operates within the subjunctive space of possibility, of becoming, of as if to render indeterminate things more determinate. This is to say that semiosis and ritual serve to make signs more determinate, and thus indicative with respect to all of the other signs with respect to which they are determinate. That said, the moment a sign becomes determinate, it also becomes available for ritualization, or when a ritual becomes determinate it becomes available for further ritualization, and so enters a new subjunctive space of indeterminacy. The specific rituals of mind, language, and society instantiate these more general

cosmological considerations of the subjunctivity of ritual. The subjunctive space among them and reality is the topic of the next section, and the notion of the subjunctive in language and society was discussed above and will be taken up again in the next section, but mental subjunctivity remains to be addressed.

In *Incomplete Nature: How Mind Emerged from Matter*, Terrence W. Deacon provides an incredibly detailed account of the processes of emergence that organize and constrain chemical and biological elements into the “ententional” phenomena of mind, consciousness, and life.<sup>1718</sup> Crucial in his account of emergence is the concept of constraint, “the property of being restricted or being less variable than possible, all other things being equal, and irrespective of why it is restricted.”<sup>1719</sup> Emergence posits orders or patterns that structure the system organizing component elements such that they exhibit an emergent property, which is to say that emergence is ritual, rendering a determinate property from things related in a previously subjunctive space of indeterminacy. Rather than locating these patterns in some sort of ideal realm, Deacon identifies them as arising from constraint, and as was noted in conversation with Xunzi in chapter three, one of the key functions of ritual is to restrain otherwise ominous, i.e.

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<sup>1718</sup> Deacon, *Incomplete Nature*.

<sup>1719</sup> Deacon, 212.

subjunctive and indeterminate, human nature. Deacon notes that “what exists are processes of change, constraints exhibited by those processes, and the statistical smoothing and the attractors (dynamical regularities that form due to self-organizing processes) that embody the options left by these constraints.”<sup>1720</sup> Moreover, he links constraint to the notion of habit elaborated by Charles Sanders Peirce and which he summarizes as “regularities of behavior arising in both physical and organic contexts.”<sup>1721</sup> All of these descriptions of emergence, particularly with respect to the emergence of mind from matter, fit the cosmological description of ritual as a process by which signs are brought into increasingly determinate relation to one another. Moreover, the initial stage Deacon identifies as “processes of change” seems to indicate the subjunctivity, the possibility and becoming, that characterizes the space among the elements, aspects, and relations to be ritualized together. For Xunzi, Xing 性 as “the root and beginning, the raw material and original constitution,” and as what is “spontaneous from nature,” may have more to do with what we now understand to be the underlying neuro-physiology and anatomy of the human body, and especially the brain. He further describes this raw material as being made up of

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<sup>1720</sup> Deacon, 216.

<sup>1721</sup> Deacon, 202.

competing desires, which might better be schematized in the contemporary context as a chaotic amalgam of neurological elements. It is this brain matter that he then identifies as crude and ominous apart from its going through the process of emergence by constraint or restraint, which is the function he ascribes to ritual. This restraint by ritual is what he calls “conscious activity” and “is the form and principle of order,” which is precisely what Deacon elaborates arising from intrinsic constraint of brain matter such that mind emerges. If mentality and consciousness are taken to be hallmarks of what might be called human nature, then it is likely better to associate the Cheng 誠 sincerity/reality that results from restraining Xing 性 with Li 禮 ritual as human nature for Xunzi.

### *Subjunctive and Language as Ritual*

With the metaphysics of subjunctivity now in hand, an account of the notion of subjunctive language may be given in systematic relation to the theory of language as ritual developed in chapter five. The first order of business is to explore the subjunctivity among reality, minds, language, and society as the space among them serves as the context for the subjunctivity of the language ritual, and thereby more carefully construe the relationships among these four poles. Then it will be possible to give an account of the role of subjunctivity in facilitating the ritual process of language itself, keeping in mind that language is



a species of the ritual genus according to the theory of language as ritual. This will enable an explanation as to the subjunctivity of otherwise apparently indicative, propositional statements.

Within the subjunctive space among reality, minds, language, and society are multiple subdomains of subjunctivity. The first is the space between mind and reality. The act of discriminating reality was identified in chapter five as a central mental function. Mental discrimination has to do with picking up on the determinateness of signs in reality that are then available as objects to be referenced by sign vehicles, including linguistic sign vehicles, such that they generate various interpretants. The subjunctivity between minds and reality does not have to do with this further semiotic process but rather with the mind treating the determinateness it discriminates with respect to itself as if it were the sign itself. Mental discriminations are interpretants of sign vehicles referring to the signified object, which means that they are not representations of the sign because they are themselves elements of the sign process. It is therefore not incorrect to say that discriminations in the mind are a result of the activity of the sign process and not, at least primarily, of the discriminating mind. That said, the interpretant is not the whole of the sign and yet is carried over into the ritualizing processes of mind as if it were. It is important to keep in mind that the

interpretant in mind is necessarily a determinate product of the process of signification with respect to the discriminating mind even as the sign itself may be less determinate with respect to the whole of reality. In spite of this fact, the ritualized interpretant may nevertheless carry the whole sign, including its less determinate elements, over into the ritualizing process, and the parts of the sign that were not party to the discrimination of the sign in mind may nevertheless contribute constitutively to the ritual entailments. All of this is to say that mental discrimination treats the determinateness it discriminates as if it were the whole of the sign, which is to say subjunctively, and in so doing includes the whole of the sign in the process of generating its indicative functions. The subjunctivity of mental discrimination may be stated conditionally as "If the interpretant were the whole sign, then the whole sign would participate in the further processes of mental ritualization." It is the subjunctivity of mental engagement with reality that enables the mereological inclusion of whole signs in ritualization rather than excising the determinate interpretant discriminated.

In addition to the discrimination of reality, mentality itself is a process of ritualizing the discriminated determinations together into a networked harmony, a process frequently referred to as thought. A full ritual account of mentality exceeds the scope of the present project, but understood as a ritual process,

thinking too exhibits subjunctivity. This is because the mental ritual of thinking renders the discriminated elements of reality together into a harmony according to a form that relates them according to a pattern. That pattern, prior to the accomplishment of the harmony, is a subjunctive pattern, which is to say that the pattern expresses relations that could, should, or would harmonize the elements prior to their being so harmonized. Moreover, the pattern of relations is subjunctive because it is a space in which the elements are brought into relation as if the relation were inherent to each element so related. Insofar as logic aspires to formalize mental processes, i.e. thought, which would ideally conform with the processes of reality, logic is a means of encoding this ritual pattern that harmonizes discriminated elements of reality.

Yet another sense in which mentality is subjunctive has to do with the location, so to speak, of the ritual patterns thought employs to produce these harmonies. On one hand, it is entirely correct to say that these patterns are inherent in mind, and insofar as they are themselves the entailments of ritual processes accreting in mind over time. On the other hand, the elements themselves must be so relatable as to be conformable to the pattern, and so the pattern must at least partially inhere in the discriminated elements of reality. This bilocation of the ritual form of mentality would seem to provoke once again

the debate between nominalism and realism, on which the theory of language as ritual has already taken a definitive stand on the realist side. Instead, however, the debate may be subverted by a turn to the subjunctive, invoking the capacity for negotiation inherent in ritual. Prior ritual forms encoded in a given mind must be adjusted to the given circumstances of a particular process harmonizing the elements at hand. Even more important is keeping in mind that the mind in which discriminated elements are harmonized is itself one of the elements of the ritual harmonizing the elements, and so is one of the ritual performers. This is necessarily so because the discriminated elements are determinate precisely with respect to the mind that discriminates them. The definition of ritual requires that the form not be entirely encoded by the performers, and so the process of negotiation is inherent in mentality, although constrained by the further principle that the form be made up of more or less invariant sequences. Thinking is thus subjunctive because of the gap between the form offered by the thinking mind at the start of the process and the form that is in fact enacted by the completed performance of thought at the end in which negotiation inevitably results in some degree of alteration.

Another subjunctive domain constituting the subjunctivity among reality, minds, language, and society is that of society, which has to do with the fact that

society itself is no more and no less than a massive ritual complex made up of ritual processes, ritualizing their entailments. One of the reasons that the very notion of society can feel so diffuse and ephemeral is that the scale of its ritual processes admits of a staggering degree of subjunction. The political, economic, religious, familial, educational, cultural, institutional, and all the rest of the ritual processes that are harmonized together in the ritual of a society are themselves subjunctive because they pattern their elements according to what they could, should or would become. The experience of the subjunction of society also feels very different, and in many respects more obvious, because of the human location within it. Instead of having a solid sense of self and then discovering that it relies on something as soft and malleable as ritual subjunction, as in the case of mind, humans view society up through the haze of rituals that constitute it as relatively minor elements thereof. From within, the social rituals feel as though they address minds as if they were parts of the ritual in question because the indicative entailments of mental rituals are often quite divergent from the further entailments generated from them in social processes. This is to say that self-understanding frequently conflicts with the self as it is expressed as an element of increasingly higher and higher-level social rituals. The entailments of those higher-level rituals do nevertheless impinge on the self,

regardless of whether or not they are individually authorized, and necessitate response through further ritualization.

It is now possible to provide a concise cartography of the subjunctive terrain among reality, minds, language, and society. Language is itself one of the social rituals that harmonize human minds together in and with reality, but it resides at the lowest level of the social hierarchy of rituals, interacting intimately with the other three poles. Language does not refer to reality directly but rather indirectly via the mental discriminations of the determinateness of reality with respect to the mind discriminating it. This statement of the relationship is still somewhat misleading, however, because there is no distinction between the mental discrimination and the interpretant of the sign discriminated. Mental discriminations are not representations, they are the interpretants themselves. Thus, linguistic reference to mental discriminations is reference to reality, and the distinction between direct and indirect reference is lacking in a difference in this instance. Language does not merely refer to discriminations of reality, but patterns them according to its own ritual form, which is largely encoded in its syntax. The syntactic patterns do not necessarily reflect the extant relationships among the linguistic elements patterned but are instead inherent patterns to the particular ritual form of the language in question. That said, misconstruing the

extant relationships among the elements discriminated risks ritual failure, so the matrix of reality does constrain the syntactic pattern book indirectly. This is what it means to say that syntactic patterns correlate but do not correspond to patterns in reality. Neither do syntactic patterns directly arise from nor determine the patterns of mental rituals, although again, there is mutual influence across the mental and linguistic domains via the processes of ritualization. Other social rituals likewise pick up on the entailments of mental and linguistic rituals as elements of their own ritual processes, and offer their own entailments back to minds and language in reality both as elements to be further ritualized and as constraints on ritual forms. The subjunctivity of language, treating reality as if it conformed to its forms and patterns, thereby provides a nexus of interpretive interaction among minds and society in reality that enables their mutual transformation through relatively stable and reliable processes and their encodings.

Each stage of the ritual process of language involves subjunctivity as well. The theory of language as ritual takes speech sounds, i.e. phonology, to be the linguistic locus of reference to reality via discriminations thereof in mind. The subjunctivity between speech sounds and discriminations of reality is the same as the subjunctivity between sign vehicles and objects in semiosis. The speech

sound is treated, by the rest of the language ritual process, as if it were the object to which it refers, in spite of the fact that the object to which it refers, as a thing and thus a sign, is itself the interpretant of another sign vehicle referring to an object. There is also subjunctivity in the way in which reference is phonologically encoded extensionally in the sound system of the language in that the same sound may be used to represent a given characteristic as applied to different things. For example, the “s” sound in English added to the ends of nouns indicates the characteristic of plurality. This has the effect of imposing deontic and logical equivalence, respectively, between pluralities across both metaphysical hierarchies and numerical inequalities. With respect to metaphysical hierarchies, the “twoness” of hydrogens in a water molecule is rendered linguistically and mathematically equivalent to the “twoness” of eyes in my head. With respect to numerical inequalities, the “twoness” of hydrogens in a water molecule is linguistically but not mathematically equivalent to the “myriadness” of atoms in the universe. In both cases, phonological reference implies more similarity between things than they exhibit apart from the intensional reference of the “s” sound in English applied extensionally across speech sounds classed as nouns. Phonological extensionality thus has the capacity to treat elements, aspects, and relations in reality as if they were



equivalent, that is, as subjunctively equivalent, when that equivalence is in fact equivocal.

The subjunctivity of language is at its peak in syntax, the encoded form that language applies to speech sounds referring to mentally discriminated elements of reality. The patterns of syntax are neither inherent in reality nor in mind but are instead proper to the language in question, and so are artificial with respect to reality, accreting over time as the codification of patterns that successfully generate desired entailments. In ordering its elements according to the syntax, language patterns them not as they are, in varying degrees of determination with respect to one another, but as they could be, determinate to each other via the language ritual. In linguistics, the subjunctive is contrasted in a binary way with the indicative, as the realis is with the irrealis, but in the theory of language as ritual, the subjunctive is a space that receives from and gives back to the indicative. This means that syntax, the linguistic pinnacle of subjunctivity, is constrained and thus constituted by the limits of its difference from the indicative, which is to say it is limited by what is possible. What is unreal in the subjunctive space of syntax must nevertheless remain possible. To construe and pattern the speech sounds of phonology in such a way that the elements, aspects, and relations in reality to which they refer could not possibly pertain would

result in ritual failure to generate the entailments of the language process. Reality is never very far from subjunctive spaces ritually carved out within it, and the constraint it induces reflexes the subjunctivity of syntax back toward it. After all, syntax is the form of the language process, and as the form of a process it is constrained in its evolution by that process to be its form such that it generates its entailments. Syntax treats the phonological speech sounds as if they could be patterned according to its form such that when they are so patterned by the linguistic performance they may become indicative. Of course, having become indicative, the resulting linguistic entailments are then immediately handed off for further ritualization and thus thrust right back into subjunctivity, but they nevertheless are so now as an indicative element in a subjunctive space having been rendered so by their own ritual process.

The subjunctivity of pragmatics has to do with the space in which the syntactic form construing the phonological elements according to the inherent pattern of the language is rendered together with the intent of the language producer and the conditions of language use. The subjunctive space of pragmatics is constituted by the tension between the structural pole of the syntactic patterns construing the linguistic elements and the necessity to generate the desired functions of the language producer in the context of its use. It is in

pragmatics that the meaning of language as encoded in the syntactic structure is rendered against the background of other linguistic, mental, and social rituals and their forms, processes, and entailments, in some cases resulting in a reversal of meaning. The subjunctivity of pragmatics has to do with treating the syntactic form as if it has meaning, i.e. is coherent, amidst the contextual conditions of language use. Since pragmatics is at the functional extremity of the subjunctive space of language, it is the locus in which the as if of the language ritual becomes the as is of its entailment. Could, should, and would must either put up or shut up as in pragmatics they make their offering back to the minds discriminating real determinations as interpretants of semiosis amidst the kaleidoscope of social ritual processes in the midst of being performed.

The semantic subjunctive, then, is the space in which phonological reference, syntactic structure, and pragmatic use are all rendered together as if they have a singular, determinate meaning in common. In fact, the mentally discriminated determinate realities to which speech sounds refer are not inherently ordered in anything like the pattern by which syntax orders them, which is what gives rise to the subjunctivity of syntax. They are also unable, on their own, to produce the pragmatic entailments the syntactic form makes possible under the contextual conditions of their use, because if they could there

would be no need for the language ritual at all. The syntactic pattern plays no role in phonological reference, serving only to order the sounds already referred, and may propositionally diverge entirely from what ends up being pragmatically entailed. Furthermore, the pragmatic conditions may construe speech sounds in ways that have little if anything to do with the discriminated determinations they refer to, and may put well-formed syntactic constructions to uses at odds with their structured pattern. Nevertheless, the full performance of a linguistic expression does end up with a singular, determinate meaning that shares in and exceeds the meanings of each level of the language ritual process as the whole meaning together is more than the sum of the parts. It is this subjunctive semantic process that gives rise to the whole of the language ritual and its phonological, syntactic, and pragmatic parts. The semantic subjunctive is the creative context of construction in which reality is taken up, processed, and fed back into in an iterative cycle of transformation. The semantic subjunctive, in which the mechanisms of the linguistic process participate, is like a bubble of possibility in reality, taking the indicative that is, re-rendering it according to what it could, should, or would be, and then paying its wonderment forward in a newly indicative actuality for further ritualization.

One of the features of the theory of language as ritual that may come as a surprise is its rejection of morphology as a proper dimension of linguistic analysis. Instead, some aspects of morphology are subsumed under phonology as pertaining to the reference of speech sounds to reality, and the rest are understood as deriving from graphemics. On one hand, writing systems are parasitic on language proper, as no writing systems could or would exist apart from the languages they codify. On the other hand, writing systems are to be understood as independent rituals in their own right, and thus establish and maintain their own subjunctive spaces with respect to the languages they encode. Generally speaking, graphemics maintains a much stricter structure than language proper, and it serves the function of placing a further constraint on language use in languages that have writing systems by pressing linguistic functions to conform to its strictures. This further restraint has the benefit of making a language understandable among a larger public as it heightens its communicative capacity. Furthermore, graphemics adds a new pragmatic dimension of language use by enabling the separation in time and space of the language producer from the recipient(s). This too contributes to the subjunctivity of graphemics as writing allows producers to speak as if their recipients were present and vice versa. The morphological content of graphemics also

contributes to its subjunctivity by dividing speech sounds into words, as if words are individual as opposed to nested amongst a range of sounds, which both functions to improve the legibility of written language and adds a dimension to linguistic analysis.

Linguistic meaning is subjunctive precisely because it emerges in surplus from the space constituted by the mutually constraining tension among phonological reference, syntactic structure, and pragmatic entailments. To say that meaning emerges is to say that the phenomenon of linguistic expression cannot be reduced to any of the three aspects of its semantic process or even to the cumulative meanings across them. Instead, the meaning of language is carried through the language process and as the object to which its entailments refer as sign vehicles of a subsequent semiosis. It is necessary for a given producer to employ the language ritual in order to achieve the desired intents, and yet the meaning generated along the way by that process far exceeds the intents accomplished. Thus, not only are phonology, syntax, pragmatics, and semantics subjunctive in and amongst themselves, their subjunctivity together provides the context from which meaning emerges as if it were reducible to each and all of their functions in the language ritual. In spite of language being a distinctively human social ritual, its meaning emerges when its process and the

entailments thereof are regarded as if they were a process in and of reality, which they are, and so meaning is the result of the subjunctive as if of the language ritual meeting up with the indicative as is of reality. This leads to an important conclusion regarding truth, which destabilizes standard accounts of truth in predicate and propositional logic. Truth cannot be determined by mapping a linguistic expression to reality as is, but is rather the condition of an indicative result returning in reality from the subjunctive ritual process of linguistic transformation. Measured against reality as it was prior to the linguistic ritual, truth would always appear modal, as reality could, should, or would become, as if its construal of things obtained, that is, truth would be subjunctive. Measured against the results of the linguistic process, however, it is possible to envision something like a truth table for evaluating the potential stability of the entailments amidst the ebb and flow of ongoing ritualization. Of course, that ongoing process means that even this sense of truth is provisional and so subjunctive.

Once meaning is accomplished, there is a first order interpretation in which that meaning is appropriated as an element in other new and ongoing ritualizations, but this level of interpretation is prior to the reflexive, second order interpretation intended in hermeneutics. Indeed, the understanding

achieved through such reflection likewise emerges from the subjunctive space among the producer, the interpreting receiver, and the linguistic expression in question. The understanding of the interpreter does not necessarily include the full meaning of the expression as it emerges from the linguistic process but instead proceeds as if it corresponds with the intent of the producer. The interpreter must treat the speech sounds received as if they refer to the same discriminations in the mind of the producer as they do in their own mind, and that those discriminations are of the same determinations of reality. The correspondence between determinations of reality is particularly unstable as determinateness is always with respect to a relatum, and since the producer and receiver are necessarily different relata, the starting assumption should in fact be that their determinateness with respect to reality is likewise different. The interpreter must also analyze the syntax of the expression to determine its degree of well-formedness as if their standard therefore coincides with that of the producer. Moreover, the interpreter must decide whether variance in well-formedness is accidental, due to a divergence in structural standards, or intentional and thus meaningful. Finally, the interpreter must register the linguistic entailments of the expression as if they register against a shared background of contextual factors and rules of implicature with the producer so



as to discern their intent. In the end, the understanding of the interpreter is subjunctive as it necessarily proceeds as if it coincides with the intent of the producer amidst the surplus of meaning carried through the expression.

It should be of no surprise, given the reliance of linguistic expression on subjunctivity, that translation is likewise a process by which meaning is rendered in subjunctive circumstances. The subjunctivity of translation carries over the subjunctivity of meaning and interpretation in language already considered, but also operates in a subjunctive space between the source and target languages. The target language must be crafted as if it could express one and the same meaning as that expressed in the source language, except that the multifariousness of meaning, itself an emergent property of subjunctive circumstances, restrains the target language from achieving this indicatively. Translators must inevitably pick and choose which aspects of meaning they take as elements in their performance of the translation ritual. Given that the system of speech sounds is ordered differently across languages, as is the structure of syntax, and the pragmatic context of translation is inevitably at variance from that in which the expression was produced, it is impossible that the fullness of meaning in its surplus should be so adopted. This too contributes to the subjunctivity of translation. As a further ritualization of a prior linguistic

expression, translation necessarily reconstrues its source as it could, should, or would become in the target idiom, thereby generating not the same meaning but a new meaning, even should the source and target languages coincide.

If language as ritual is fundamentally subjunctive, as has been elaborated here, then some degree of wonderment is entirely understandable regarding how to interpret the linguistic phenomenon of the indicative mood. Much of the analysis of conditionals and the subjunctive mood generally has attempted to restate subjunctives in ways that enable their interpretation on the terms of indicatives. The indicative itself, and the realis mood it expresses, as the norm against which the subjunctive deviates and is thus interesting, receives passing little attention in the literature except to note that it “portrays situations as actualized, as having occurred or actually occurring, knowable through direct perception.”<sup>1722</sup> Language as ritual reverses the direction of this analysis and instead posits that indicatives are best understood as themselves expressing subjunctivity. Rather than understanding indicatives as describing states of affairs as they are, indicatives should be understood to render states of affairs more determinate with respect to the recipients of the linguistic expression in

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<sup>1722</sup> Mithun, *The Languages of Native North America*, 173.

which they occur, even if the recipient is only the producer her/himself. This is not to say that the statement, "That barn is red," somehow paints the barn red by addressing the barn as if it were red. Rather, the indicative expression changes the relation between the recipient of the expression and the barn by making the redness of the barn more determinate with respect to the recipient. The mind of the language producer discriminates the redness of the barn and correlates this discrimination with the speech sound "red." "Red" and "Barn" are then syntactically related in a well-formed sentence, "The barn is red," which generates the entailment of making the redness of the barn determinate to the recipient. In the indicative mood, the color of the barn is treated as if it were significantly relevant to the recipient, and in expressing its color, the producer makes it so. It is not that the indicative, i.e. that there are states of affairs at any given point in time, does not exist in the theory of language as ritual, but rather that the indicative mood achieves its state of affairs precisely by moving through the same subjunctive space of language as expressions in the subjunctive mood.

This interpretation of the indicative mood as in fact operating in and through the subjunctive space enacted by language rituals impacts the understanding of propositions in propositional and predicate logics as either affirming or denying a predicate of a subject. Under the classical understanding,

propositions are claims about states of affairs that may be adjudicated as either true or false, thus enabling truth-conditional semantics as emerged from the work of Tarski. In language as ritual, however, the function of a proposition is not to make a claim about the relation between the subject and the predicate but rather to establish, maintain, or adjust the relationship between the producer and receiver with respect to the situation addressed in the statement. This is what it means for language as ritual to communicate in the sense not of transmitting information but in the sense of community constitution and the negotiation of the state of affairs of the community rather than the state of affairs of the world. If it turns out that the barn is green and not red, then the entailment of the expression will presumably be a state of disagreement, which is to say increased indeterminacy, in the community, rather than a state of greater determinacy resulting from agreement. Further ritualization may ensue in order to increase the determinateness of the community with respect to the barn, although other members of the community may be willing to let the producer persist in their delusion of redness if the barn is in fact adjudicated unimportant. The important point is that the truth of the proposition in the sense of predicate and propositional logic is secondary to the effect that the proposition has within the community among which it is communicated.

### *Subjunctive Realism*

Language, as a species of the ritual genus, is fundamentally subjunctive as it treats reality as if it could, should, or would be otherwise, and then realizes that possibility by its transformative process. As should be clear from the above discussion, this is a very different way of understanding language than has classically been the case, at least in Western social scientific and philosophical accounts of language. None the least, logical accounts of propositions and the assumption of the indicative as the norm from which the subjunctive must be explained as deviating have been turned on their heads. What remains to be explained in terms of the subjunctivity of language is how all of this conceptualization of possibility, of as if spaces, and of how the world could, should, or would be, may be rendered coherent in a philosophical framework of realism.

The critical realism to which the theory of language as ritual adheres takes reality to be real, singular, and opaque. Reality, inclusive of elements, aspects, and relations, is real because it is what it is independent of what minds know about or what language says about it. That said, the rituals of mind, language, and society are means of harmonizing reality by transforming the elements, aspects, and relations in reality into stable systems and networks that produce

significant and meaningful entailments to be taken up by further processes of ritualization. The subjunctive character of these rituals is crucial, because it is the context of their transformation from what they are in an initial state to what they could, should, or would become in a final state relative to the ritual process in question. Subjunctivity is like a bubble in reality in which things as they are may be rearranged and related so as to become something else; the something else that are improvements over the initial state are then eligible for codification as rituals that guide ongoing transformation. Thus, ritual serves an evolutionary function. Without subjunctivity, reality would be static, which is impossible in a world perfused by semiosis, as the theory of language of ritual takes the world to be according to its metaphysics. Moreover, the singularity of reality in combination with this process metaphysics means that the subjunctive bubbles that transform reality are not other possible worlds but rather the most fundamental dimension of reality from which indicative haecceity is an abstraction. Such a fundamentally subjunctive world, that takes possibility rather than actuality, as if rather than as is, could, should, and would rather than is, was, and will be as its basic premises, is of course opaque because it is fundamentally underdetermined. Nevertheless, subjunctive ritual processes render it more determinate, and thus more habitable in an evolutionary sense.

In *The Construction of Social Reality*,<sup>1723</sup> John Searle presses back against the social constructivism that takes all of reality to be a social construct, which is itself very much at odds with the initial vision of *The Social Construction of Reality* as developed by Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann.<sup>1724</sup> Searle distinguishes between brute reality codified in scientific facts that are independent of the minds and societies that know them, and institutional reality codified in social facts that are constructed by minds in society. Central to his argument is that brute facts are logically prior to constructed institutional facts, and that “institutional facts exist, so to speak, on top of brute physical facts” in a hierarchy.<sup>1725</sup> In spite of a common commitment to realism, the theory of language as ritual rejects this distinction in reality between brute and constructed realities for three reasons. First, the semiotic theory that metaphysically grounds the theory of language as ritual denies as meaningful the distinction between mental and physical interpretants, and so obviates the need for a further distinction on its basis. Second, the theory of language as ritual locates ritual as the common denominator among the systematization of harmonies in the world,

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<sup>1723</sup> Searle, *The Construction of Social Reality*.

<sup>1724</sup> Berger and Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality*.

<sup>1725</sup> Searle, *The Construction of Social Reality*, 34–35.

mentality, and social processes such as language, and its commonality obviates the need for a distinction between the physical and the social. Finally, and positively, rather than a cosmological distinction between the physical and the social, language as ritual makes a logical distinction between elements, aspects, and relations in reality prior to ritualization and as entailments of ritual processes. That said, language as ritual, following the original insights of Berger and Luckmann, recognizes something like the distinction made by Searle in that the entailments of ritual processes become taken for granted as they are treated subjunctively as if they had not been constructed in and through that process. Nevertheless, subjunctivity underlies the notion of critique in the critical realism of the theory of language as ritual, whereas Searle abides in domain of indicative normativity.

The subjunctive spaces that effect transformations of reality likewise underlie the analysis of determinateness as a key aspect of reality defining relations therein in the theory of language as ritual. To be a thing is to be a sign and to be a determinate thing is to be what it is instead of some other thing. In order to be systematized together in rituals, signs must be determinate enough with respect to the other elements of the ritual that they are relatable within the system. Sometimes the elements are so prior to ritualization, and other times it is



the act of being ritualized that renders elements determinate to one another. Nevertheless, given the spectral conception of determinateness, being determinate with respect to other elements of the ritual does not necessarily mean either being fully determinate in that network of relations or determinate with respect to things in the world beyond the ritual frame. All that is necessary is determinateness sufficient for the ritual process to have traction for its patterning to be transformative. In so doing, rituals treat the determinateness of their elements with respect to one another as fully determinative. This is to say that elements are treated within the ritual frame subjunctively, as if they were fully determinate, because determinateness is the characteristic of elements necessary to their ritualization. When that frame is expanded in the process of objectification of the ritual entailments into the taken for granted habitus of each performer, discussed in chapter three, the subjunctively framed determinateness carries over through that process. Thus, the determinateness of ritualized elements is actually overdetermined in the ritual entailments generated, and so the realities rituals produce are rooted in subjunctivity, presenting as if they are determinate when in fact they admit of a relatively high degree of indeterminateness.

This analysis of the subjunctivity of determinateness is crucial for understanding how rituals, including language rituals, cope with indeterminateness, and thus with elements that are wholly or almost wholly indeterminate, such as God. The coping mechanism the ritual process has developed for incorporating indeterminate elements is the same subjunctivity that has already been demonstrated to pervade the rest of its functions. Rituals treat indeterminate elements as if they were determinate. In so doing, they render those elements determinate with respect to the rest of the elements of the ritual. As noted in the above discussion of determinateness, however, rituals overdetermine their elements in generating their entailments, and this is never more the case than with regard to indeterminate elements. The “this” that a ritual takes an element to be, in contrast to the “that” that is some other element, is not so contrastable in the case of an element that is indeterminate in that respect but is being treated as if it were in the ritualization process. This is an exceedingly abstract way of putting the issue, so it is helpful to ground the discussion of ritual subjunctivity and determinateness in a couple of examples and then to contrast the ritual approach with another similar strategy.

Paul Tillich (1886 – 1965) advocates understanding God as “being itself,” “the ground of being,” or “the power of being.”<sup>1726</sup> In this conception God is indeterminate because “God cannot be understood as the existence of a being beside others or above others.”<sup>1727</sup> “As being-itself God is beyond the contrast of essential and existential being.”<sup>1728</sup> The intersection between this indeterminate God and its ritualization in language resides for Tillich in the notion of the symbolic, which he distinguishes from the Saussurean notion of signification as participating “in the reality of that for which it stands.”<sup>1729</sup> The symbol is thus a finite or determinate thing that participates as part of the less finite and less determinate reality and so correlates that reality with the existential situation of a person for whom the symbol refers as revelation.<sup>1730</sup> All language that successfully refers to God, according to Tillich, is necessarily symbolic, except for one: “The statement that God is being-itself is a nonsymbolic statement. It does not point beyond itself. It means what it says directly and properly; if we speak

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<sup>1726</sup> Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, 1951, I:235–36.

<sup>1727</sup> Tillich, I:235.

<sup>1728</sup> Tillich, I:236.

<sup>1729</sup> Tillich, I:239.

<sup>1730</sup> Tillich, vol. I, pt. II.IB.3.b; Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol. II (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1957), 8–10.

of the actuality of God, we first assert that he is not God if he is not being-itself."<sup>1731</sup> Tillich doubles down on the exception by asking and answering, "Can a segment of finite reality become the basis for an assertion about that which is infinite? The answer is that it can, because that which is infinite is being-itself and because everything participates in being-itself."<sup>1732</sup> Translated into the idiom of the present project, Tillich is identifying all religious language as subjunctive except that the identification of God with being-itself is alone granted indicative status. This exception would cause Tillich no end of grief, and so in the second volume he shifts his position to say that the only non-symbolic statement about God is "the statement that everything we say about God is symbolic," and must be so or fall into the fallacy of circularity.<sup>1733</sup> The assertion of God as being-itself is then further reinterpreted as a formulation of that which humanity seeks in its quest for God and so as "a combination of symbolic with non-symbolic elements"<sup>1734</sup> because such formulas "precisely designate the boundary line at

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<sup>1731</sup> Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, 1951, I:238–39.

<sup>1732</sup> Tillich, I:239.

<sup>1733</sup> Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, 1957, II:9.

<sup>1734</sup> Tillich, II:9.

which both the symbolic and the non-symbolic coincide."<sup>1735</sup> This change allows Tillich to decamp from a universal commitment to the ontology of being-itself, opening the door to metaphysical idioms that frame ontology otherwise, while maintaining the capacity of his ontology to function as the stable center of his theological system. The corollary of the claim that the statement "everything we say about God is symbolic" is itself non-symbolic, for the theory of language as ritual, is that the statement that all language is subjunctive is itself indicative. Whereas the claim requires Tillich to justify granting the exception by recourse to its mirroring the human existential situation, language as ritual has already incorporated the indicative as the momentary achievements of stability that result from and then feed back into the otherwise subjunctive ritual process. Meanwhile, the shift of the idiom of being-itself from being non-symbolic to being at the boundary between the symbolic and non-symbolic further insulates Tillich from charges of foundationalism, but still fails to account for the interactions between the two domains, or the possibility of their being mutually dependent. The main problem with respect to the issues at hand is that Tillich wants to preserve the capacity for language and its human employment to at

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<sup>1735</sup> Tillich, II:10.

least approach God rather than acknowledging that linguistic usage is inevitably an act of drawing God into mundane and human affairs.

The way in which Tillich elaborates the identification of God as being-itself or ground of being specifies that God is determinate with respect to everything that exists in precisely one way, namely as ground or power of its being. Robert C. Neville likewise<sup>1736</sup> identifies the determinateness of God as a singular point with respect to reality by deploying the category of determinateness, arguing that God is entirely indeterminate except for the self-determining singular act of creation of the eternal entirety of reality.<sup>1737</sup> Like Tillich, Neville deploys the classical Western ontology of being such that God is being-itself, and in his earliest work he weds himself to this ontological framework as both logically and literally true to the exclusion of all other frameworks.<sup>1738</sup> Also like Tillich, Neville later divorces himself from this commitment, reorienting his perspective on an ontology of being as an index pointing toward a reality toward which alternative ontologies might also point:

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<sup>1736</sup> For his own account of his inheritance from Tillich, see Robert C. Neville, "Tillich's Lovechild," *Bulletin of the North American Paul Tillich Society* 44, no. 2 (Spring 2018): 3–11.

<sup>1737</sup> Neville, *God the Creator*, pt. I.

<sup>1738</sup> Neville, pt. II.

Our argument here develops a dialectical account of ultimate reality through the metaphoric system of being, mainly in order to take advantage of positions and standard moves likely to be familiar with readers of English. In principle, the same dialectic could be developed through the metaphors of non-being and Brahman.<sup>1739</sup>

The metaphor of God as being-itself, which is to say the being that all beings have and are, is pointing to the indeterminate creative act that makes all determinate things and thereby makes itself determinate with respect to those things as their creator.<sup>1740</sup> Given that he says earlier in the volume that “metaphysics is so abstract because it aims to be true across all contexts, not just those in which by metaphor a true indexical engagement is achieved,”<sup>1741</sup> this would seem to imply that the analysis of being is not itself properly metaphysical. “To engage ultimate matters with literal iconicity is the goal within theology that serves to explain the limitations of the metaphors,”<sup>1742</sup> and so it is the creative act by an otherwise indeterminate creator that Neville takes as metaphysically basic. Strangely, he continues to insist on calling this an “ontological creative act,”<sup>1743</sup> even though it is possible to speak of the context of

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<sup>1739</sup> Neville, *Ultimates*, I:174.

<sup>1740</sup> Neville, I:1.

<sup>1741</sup> Neville, I:76.

<sup>1742</sup> Neville, I:76.

<sup>1743</sup> Neville, I:1, 172, 215–25, 253–71.

mutual relevance provided by the creative act as the indeterminate and univocally one for the many without reference to the metaphor of being. In fact, the linking of act with ontology seems contradictory, inhabiting mutually exclusive metaphors, because an act is a doing whereas ontology is all about being. Furthermore, "Apart from creating the world, the ontological creative act is indeterminate, that is, nothing, not something rather than nothing nor something rather than something else. Without creating, the act is not an act."<sup>1744</sup> From the perspective of the wholly indeterminate God, then, the act of creation is a subjunctive act, rendering the determinate world out of sheer indeterminate possibility, which from the standpoint of determinate beings is indistinguishable from nothing. The ultimate reality that is God thus likewise employs a ritual process of treating its indeterminate self as if it were determinate and as if the world created were its determinations in order to create them so. From the perspective of indeterminate divinity, the world subjunctively created is less real than the pleroma and plenitude of possibility precisely because it could be otherwise, even if it could not be otherwise once the conditions of determinacy obtain. The irreality of reality from the divine point of view is nevertheless the

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<sup>1744</sup> Neville, I:1.



reality the theory of language as ritual approaches realistically precisely by taking its subjunctivity as basic and moments of indicative stability as abstractions therefrom.

The characteristic of subjunctivity enables rituals, including linguistic rituals, to engage and transform absolutely any element of reality, including elements that are indeterminate either at all or with respect to the other elements of the ritual and its process. Indeterminate elements may be rendered determinate in part through the process of phonological reference, where an assigned speech sound renders the reality to which it refers determinately with respect to all of the other speech sounds in the language. They may also be rendered determinate syntactically with respect to the other elements being ritualized in the structure of the language in question. The pragmatic entailments of the ritual process are inevitably determinate with respect to the context in which they are generated and to which they are offered. Finally, the semantic surplus of meaning is significantly due to the indeterminacy of the elements ritualized that exceeds their subjunctive determination for the sake of the ritual process. In each case, the aspect of the linguistic ritual that contributes to the determination of elements has the capacity of so determining them because it is

able to treat them as if they are as that aspect takes them to be, regardless of whether they really are so.

This analysis of subjunctive linguistic engagements with variously determinate elements of reality leads to a novel analysis of the issue of effability, and thus also ineffability. Effability, at baseline, is the capacity of language rituals to engage elements, aspects, and relations in reality. Elements of reality that are determinate with respect to all of the other elements of the ritual and to the ritual process itself may be said to be fully effable, and so the semantic surplus of meaning is relatively minimal. Elements of reality that are determinate with respect to some elements of the ritual and some aspects of the ritual process are more or less effable proportionate to the proportion of elements and aspects with respect to which they are determinate, with a proportionally larger surplus of semantic meaning. Elements of reality that are indeterminate with respect to any of the other elements of the ritual or aspects of its process, and so are rendered determinate by the process itself for the sake of their ritualization, are minimally effable, and thus mostly ineffable. The small degree of effability arises from whatever determinateness an element might have with respect to elements of reality beyond the ritual frame but that nevertheless contribute to the pragmatic meaning in which the entailments are generated and to which they are

offered. An element of reality that is indeterminate with respect to any other element of reality is ineffable prior to the process of ritualization, but may nevertheless register in a linguistic ritual as it is rendered determinate by the ritual process itself. Even this minimal degree of effability, however, is at risk due to the ongoing possibility that the indeterminate element may resist being so determined. Likewise, the indeterminacy that contributes to the semantic surplus of meaning also contributes a proportional risk of ritual failure due to its resistance to being so determined by the linguistic ritual process. Effability is thus shot through with subjunctivity as well, as very few language rituals deal entirely in elements that are fully determinate with respect to one another and to the ritual process. Moreover, the only way for any element of reality to remain fully ineffable is never to be engaged in a linguistic ritual process. Thus, the various elements, aspects, and relations in reality register along a spectrum from full effability to utter ineffability, with the latter extreme requiring a prior commitment not to speak of it, or to otherwise ritualize it, in order to ever actually obtain.

### Subjunctive Engagements

The preceding theoretical discussion of subjunctivity per se provides the apparatus for discussing some actual examples of subjunctive engagements by

language rituals with reality. The discussion begins with the relatively simple case of linguistic description of an object in reality, showing how an act usually as taken for granted as linguistic description is in fact deeply subjunctive in its engagement with reality. Another level of complexity arises by adding a second discussant to the conversation and showing how the relationship between the two speakers is constituted by the object of discussion as they simultaneously triangulate reality between their discriminations thereof. Yet further complexity emerges when the object is removed from the presence of the discussants such that community emerges from a shared confidence and trust that discourse is referring to absent objects as if they were present and in spite of their absence. Finally, these discussions enable a return to consideration of what it means for something to be unsayable and strategies for saying what cannot be said.

### *Description*

As was noted above, theories of modality have classically considered the indicative and its attendant function of description as the primary and fundamental mode of discourse from which all other modalities differ and with which they must be reconciled. The theory of language as ritual, by contrast, takes the subjunctive to be normative and requires explanation for the indicative, and so also its descriptive function. Doing so will require showing how

descriptions of states of affairs are actually transformations of the situation in play that rely on subjunctivity to accomplish their changes. Doing so reveals that language is never benign, as it is always bringing about changes from what had been the case, rather than simply representing states of affairs as classical theories of description would have it. Language, it turns out, is serious business, and deserves all of the attention that has been heaped upon it, albeit perhaps not under the interpretations that have thus far prevailed.

Let us consider the description, "That mug is red." The theory of language as ritual begins to analyze this statement by noting that the phoneme "mug" is being used to refer to a discrimination of reality that is an element of reality frequently used to contain hot liquids and enable their being drunk. The phoneme "red" is being used to refer to a discrimination of reality that is an aspect of reality, namely, the color red. The phoneme "is" refers to a discrimination of reality that is a relation in reality between the element "mug" and the aspect "red" that identifies the two as coterminous. The phoneme "that" refers to an aspect of reality in that it serves to modify "mug" to clarify that it is a particular discrimination of reality, likely present at least to the language producer, rather than mugs or mug-ness in general. Syntactically, "mug" and its modifier "that" serve as the subject of the sentence, "is" the verb, and "red" the

predicate, and so this is a well-formed syntactic sentence in the English language. So far, there is a great deal of agreement between the analysis under language as ritual (LR) and contemporary linguistic theories, except for the fact that LR denies the relevance of morphology as a distinct dimension of linguistic analysis.

A major difference emerges between contemporary linguistics and language as ritual (LR) in terms of what uttering the statement "That mug is red" does. Contemporary linguistics would say that the statement predicates redness of the mug, and it might be willing to say that so predicating the quality of redness to the mug object could have further effects depending on the pragmatic circumstances. Alternatively, LR takes the transformation of the situation entailed by the statement "That mug is red" to be part and parcel of the meaning of the statement, encompassing yet exceeding the syntactic meaning that results from predication. Undertaking the rest of the analysis of the statement under LR demonstrates how this is so.

For LR, the utterance and the object described are not the only elements of the language ritual in play, which also includes the language producer and any language receivers. In expressing the statement "That mug is red," the producer is discriminating the mug object and the aspect of redness as a determinate entity and a determinate quality of that entity, respectively. The object described exists

independently of anything discriminated, (i.e. known or thought), or anything said about it, but it exists less determinately before being described than it does after. Prior to being described, the object is a mug, but it is also at least a vessel, a cup, and a container, and without being ritualized as one or the other, which it is remains indeterminate. The identification of “that mug” in the language ritual determines the object as a vessel intended to contain hot liquids, even though it could certainly be used for other liquids, or someone could fill it with marbles or pencils. Saying “that mug” cuts off those other determinations and makes the capacity for containing hot liquids the determinate entailment of the expression. It is so subjunctively, however, because the expression is treating the object as if it were a mug and thus not a vessel, container, or cup, even though it could still function as one. Likewise, identifying the quality of redness as coterminous with the mug object both makes the color of the object determinately red, as opposed to cherry, or crimson, or scarlet, and identifies this quality as relevant to the situation of the ritual participants. Again, this treats the color subjunctively as if it were red and thus not cherry, crimson, or scarlet, and as if the color were in fact important to the participant elements of the language ritual.

Language always overdetermines its objects as if they were more determinate than they in fact are. That said, the determinations language

produces as entailments are the reality of the object as handed on to further processes of ritualization, and so they are very real. This is not to say if the person who came in and said "That mug is red" were to leave and another person came in and said "That mug is tall" that the color and height of the mug would be different for each of them. After all, reality is real independent of what is known or said about it, and it is anything someone could be wrong about. If someone came in and said "That mug is green" when it is in fact red, then the higher order quality of color would be what is identified and the incorrect identification would be handed on as such for ritual correction in a subsequent iteration. Descriptions are thus hardly benign. In describing an object we make it something for us that it may not be necessarily apart from our having described it so. We cannot make any given thing into anything, as reality pushes back on descriptions that exceed the scope of determination. Calling a plate a mug and then pouring hot tea on it is not suddenly going to make the plate a suitable vessel for the hot liquid. That said, if someone were to come in having identified the red mug and asked if you had seen their cup, you might respond that you had seen no cup and then be surprised when they identify the red mug as their cup. Our descriptions treat reality as if it conforms to the determinate pattern of the language ritual, but the pattern of reality inevitably exceeds the pattern of



any given ritual process and so the process must treat reality subjunctively in order to engage it at all, thereby transforming reality along the way.

### *Conversation*

Shifting from a singular description of an object to a conversation between two interlocutors about an object adds complexity to the subjunctive space, broadening it from the space between the language producer, the language, and the object, to also include the language receiver. Of course, in a conversation each interlocutor alternates between the roles of producer and receiver. In so doing, the discussants ritually elaborate a shared reality by constituting themselves, their relationship, the objects in their environs, and their relationships with each out of the subjunctive possibility that results from the indeterminacy of the situation prior to any ritualization. Moreover, objects referred to in conversation may be rendered increasingly determinate through the nested rituals of expressions responding to one another in the ongoing flow of exchange. Throughout, the interlocutors must proceed under the assumption that they have discriminated the objects to which they refer as being determinate in more or less the same respects, and so are operating subjunctively as if the referents and their relations are the same for each of them.

Let us consider a conversation developing from the already analyzed description, "That mug is red." An interlocutor, attending to the vessel in question, might discriminate its nature and color and then advance the conversation by adding, "Yes, and it is tall." Several things have already happened. First, the two discussants have agreed that the object in question is a mug, and so the reference relationship between the object and the word "mug" is now an entailment of the language ritual that may be taken for granted, becoming part of the conventional matrix of the conversation and its participants, at least until it comes into question. For example, if the conversation proceeds for a while and then someone else enters and asks about their "cup," each of the two participants in the conversation will have to perform a further mental ritual of discrimination in order to determine that the cup the interloper is asking about is the mug they had been discussing. Second, the discussants have agreed that the aspect of redness applies to the mug in question, and so this too becomes part of the taken for granted conventions of the conversation and its participants. Furthermore, the mug is further determined, in much the same way as was analyzed above with respect to the aspect of redness, by the addition of the aspect of tallness. Finally, the reality of the relationship between the two interlocutors is now in part constituted, albeit mostly trivially in this case, by

their sharing in relationship with the mug as if the discriminations that go into each of their relationships with it were the same.

The first speaker might then continue the discussion by saying, "Not tall enough. I did not sleep well last night and I need more coffee than that." Now it would appear that the aspect of tallness is not yet a shared discrimination as applicable to the mug, and so cannot yet become part of the taken for granted habitus of the participants and the conversation. The second speaker in the conversation clearly discriminated the mug as tall vis-à-vis other mugs either present or in memory, other objects in the room, and perhaps what might be understood as an average serving size. The speaker who initiated the conversation need not disagree with any of these standards of measure, and yet rejects the appellation of tallness as sufficient for their own needs, much as F.P. Ramsey showed that disputes over conditional statements need not be about the facts of the matter. Furthermore, the additional expression introduces yet another object for discussion into the conversation, namely the state of the first speaker, which may be logically albeit not metaphysically be distinguished from the first speaker qua speaker. Here too an element of subjunctivity comes to the fore as the aspect of tallness is being adjudicated by reference to an aspect of the state of the first speaker that does not in any way pertain to height, as if that standard of

measure were relevant to such an adjudication. The conversation is now negotiating the shared discrimination of the mug with regard to height, determining it as either tall or not, and the negotiation too is subjunctive as it treats the aspect of height as if it were determinative of volume when in fact a fatter mug would also hold more liquid.

At the level of conversation, there is a great deal more going on ritually than merely the individual language rituals of each utterance or their collocation as the conversation as such. In addition to the language rituals, the rituals of conversational implicature also apply as constraints on the entailments that the language rituals might produce, and also as means of facilitating the pivot, for example, that results in height serving as a proxy for volume. Yet deeper layers of ritual govern the process of exchange such that one speaker is allowed to finish before another begins, set the tone and volume of speech as appropriate or not, and accompany speech with hand gestures, facial expressions, and other communicative acts. The language rituals both contribute to and receive from these other rituals, and all of these rituals are elements of the larger ritual of the conversation itself. Both interlocutors are participants in that widest ritual, and probably most of the intervening levels of ritual as well, but there are some rituals at play in the larger ritual of the conversation in which one or the other

may not or cannot participate, such as the mental rituals of each other.

Nevertheless, the ritual processes at play in the conversation serve to further determine each of the interlocutors, the objects and situations they discuss, and all of their relationships with one another individually and all together collectively. Of course, the extent to which the conversation ritual results in entailments that themselves become elements of future ritual processes beyond the conversation depends on their relevance thereto. Moreover, their becoming taken for granted in the habitus of each interlocutor and their relationship depends on their being so taken up in future ritualization. The color and height of the mug may not be relevant beyond the immediate conversation, and indeed the same interlocutors might enter the same room and conclude that the mug is precisely the right height, or even too tall, under other circumstances, without necessarily altering their reality and the mug therein. If the mug and its color and height do become part of their taken for granted habitus, however, then future engagements will require its further transformation. This illustrates once again that realities becoming taken for granted is not the point at which their reality is reduced but rather the point at which they are most real.

## *Community*

Descriptions overdetermine reality because they treat reality as if it were the way the language construes it rather than as transforming reality into what the description says it is. Likewise, conversations constitute the shared reality of participants and discriminated elements by treating them as if they are determinate with respect to one another in precisely the same ways. At yet a more abstract level of analysis, communities are constituted by their shared orientation around a common subset of reality and the ongoing process of ritually negotiating their common store of discriminations determining that subset of reality. Language participates in this negotiation in two directions. First, communities are constituted by a shared conventional storehouse that enables further employment of language on the basis of the taken for granted entailments of prior rituals with confidence that the discriminated determinations of the ritual elements are shared enough to proceed reliably and successfully. Second, communities have the capacity to linguistically address realities that are not present to them, which is to say that communities can linguistically do reflexive work on their conventional storehouse, and in doing so may further determine elements of reality in ways that those elements resist precisely by in fact being indeterminate in those respects. Each and its

subjunctivity should be addressed in turn, but a reprise of the discussion of conventionality provides important framing for both.

One of the important contributions of Confucian ritual theory, especially that of Xunzi as elaborated in chapter four, is the notion of rituals as conventional rather than arising from some sort of physical or natural necessity. The conventionality of ritual has primarily to do with the fact that the establishment of ritual forms is itself a function of higher order ritual processes, and so are active makings rather than the results of innate causality in reality. The conventionality of ritual in the Confucian sense is to be contrasted with the linkage of conventionality with arbitrariness as under the influence of Saussure. While not innately necessary, ritual forms provide benefits to the elements they harmonize together such as evolutionary advantage, adaptive achievement, or aesthetic enhancement. If they did not, the form would not be encoded as a convention to be followed in future iterations of the ritual performance, let alone fall into the taken for granted conventional storehouse of a community. Furthermore, ritual forms are constrained by the reality of their elements, which resist interpretations that determine them inappropriately, and by both lower level and prior ritual performances of similar or the same elements under similar or the same circumstances. Thus, they can hardly be arbitrary given the

constraints placed upon them by the ecology in which they emerge and operate.

As a species of ritual, language too is conventional but not arbitrary as it employs its phonological system and syntactic structure to transform its elements so as to generate its entailments. If it were arbitrary, its phonological system and syntactic structure, which together make up its form, would not be able to reliably or stably effect transformation or generate entailments, either at all or at least consistently enough so as to justify their encoding and becoming taken for granted in repetition.

To be a community is to share in a set of conventionally encoded transformative ritual processes engaging a shared subset of reality. Communities engage in ritual processes of negotiation arising from description and conversation to determine common interpretations of their shared reality. Reality is thus rendered more determinate for the community and its members by the negotiation ritual. This negotiation process begins with incongruent discriminations of reality among the ritual participants, who are members of the community, but the result of the negotiation is a determination of a common understanding of the element of reality in question. This common understanding, the entailment of the negotiation ritual, becomes part of the taken for granted conventional storehouse of the community as a determinate element



available for further ritualization. Communities thus operate subjunctively as if their interpretations of the determinateness of reality are appropriate, stable, and reliable. Of course, when reality proves to be less determinate or otherwise determinate than the rituals transforming it take it to be, ritual renovation must ensue. It is therefore the common orientation around a shared reality and the shared work of harmonizing with each other and the rest of that reality that constitutes a community. One of the characteristics of the modern situation is that individuals participate in multiple communities simultaneously such that communities overlap and the realities around which they are oriented overlap to varying extents. As a result, two different communities that share at least some of the same elements in the subset of reality around which they are oriented may engage in ritual negotiations that result in very different determinations of some of those elements. There are a variety of ways that an individual participant who is a member of both communities might respond, elaboration of which exceed the scope of the present project. For now, it is important to note that it is a hallmark of the modern condition that individuals must find ways to harmonize themselves as members of multiple communities oriented around increasingly shared subsets of reality.

In the more specific ritual realm of language, communities likewise build up a taken for granted conventional storehouse, to be appropriated in the habitus of each member, of phonological references and syntactic relations that determine their shared reality. Returning to the example of the conversation about the red mug, the two people discussing the mug may disagree in their discriminations regarding the height of the mug, but they concur on its color and the appropriateness of the phoneme "mug" for the object in question. However, when another person enters the ritual frame and refers to the same object as a "cup," they must each engage in a further mental ritual of consulting their acquired phonological system of prior references of the phoneme "cup" to other objects to determine whether "cup" and "mug" are relatively equivalent. Since the appropriateness of the phoneme "mug" was never contested between the two initial interlocutors, it may be said to reside in their communal conventional storehouse. This means that the determinate features of mugs need not be deliberated in order to mutually consent to the applicability of the phoneme in this instance. The problem is that both participants are bringing different sets of prior discriminations of mugs to the table in consenting to the appropriateness of the phoneme in this particular case. As a result, the common consent regarding the phoneme between them is in spite of the fact that they are employing the

sound to refer to discriminations of the determinateness of this particular mug that may not in fact entirely coincide. Thus, the communal engagement of reality is just as subjunctive as the individual descriptive and interpersonal conversational engagements, except in this case community is constituted as if all of its members were oriented around its shared reality in precisely the same way. From there, community also proceeds subjunctively as if reality is as determinate as their shared references to it take it to be such that further ritualization will be relatively stable and reliable. Communities thus compound subjunctivity on subjunctivity until their ritual transformations result in a new reality frequently far removed from what they started with, and on occasion actually incommensurate therewith.

One of the functions of the linguistic conventional storehouse cultivated by communities is the ability to employ language rituals to address realities that are not present to the ritual participants, which is to say that language allows for virtual elements to participate in its process. For example, if the two interlocutors were to go on about their business and then reconnoiter elsewhere the next day to set up for a meeting at which they plan to serve tea, one might say to the other, "Go get the red mug." The habitus communally cultivated is portable, enduring beyond and outside the presence of the elements ritualized in the process of its

formation such that its taken for granted elements may be employed to refer to objects in their absence. In and of itself, this is an incredibly useful feature of language, enabling linguistic elements to stand in for physical elements, aspects, and relations in reality. The problem is that this feature also enables further transformations of objects, rendering them more or otherwise determinate, even when they are not available to verify that these transformations adequately discriminate them, i.e. are not available to resist being so determined. For example, assuming that the red mug was one of a set of four mugs the interlocutors discussed the day before, one discussant might say to the other, "Go get the mugs," having mistakenly discriminated their number as five, as would be necessary for their five-person meeting. The other discussant might comply, assuming the first had some plan to provide for a fifth mug. Presumably the first would discern their error upon the return of the second with only four mugs, or might wonder why the other had left one behind or whether one had been taken, resulting in a correction to the determinateness of the set of mugs. That said, in some cases ongoing processes of ritualization may go on for quite a long time apart from the presence of the object to verify its determinateness in the relevant respects. Consider Jesus or Confucius, who continue to be determined in many ways in popular piety and scholarly literature quite apart

from their historically determinate selves. In fact, many of the ways in which these figures have been determined are ways in which neither could have been determinate in their lifetimes, such as Jesus being determined artistically as white, blonde-haired, and blue-eyed. Moreover, some realities simply are not determinate with respect to at least certain other elements of the ritual process or the process itself, and so are ritualized as if they were, leading to the ritual entailments generated being unreliable and unstable. The donuts being eaten in the pew by small children during a celebration of the Eucharist are simply not determinate with respect to the Eucharistic ritual form, and interpretation of them as the body of Christ like the consecrated bread would be quite improper. On one hand, language transforms elements of reality that are not present subjunctively as if they were present. On the other hand, language receives into its communally held conventional storehouse entailments generated by its process subjunctively as if the realities to which they refer were in fact determinate in the respects in which the ritual makes them so. Communities engage reality by ritually rendering it increasingly determinate, as if an element of reality were as determinate as the language ritual treats it, but possibly more determinate or otherwise determinate than a given element is apart from being so ritualized.

One final consideration is necessary regarding the discrepancy between the fullness of the reality of objects and the determinateness of elements as they are ritualized together. The communal storehouse of conventional references of sounds and syntactic patterns of relation engages reality as if it were determinate in precisely the respects in which the language ritual construes it. This is to say that the determinateness of a thing having been ritualized is overdetermined with respect to all of the other ways a thing might have been and even might yet be otherwise. For example, the ongoing communal discussion of the set of mugs and their employment for serving tea determines the mugs as tea mugs and sets aside the possibility of their being used to scoop water out of a leaky boat. The fact that language becomes taken for granted means that reality becomes determinate in the ways the language ritual construes it even though under other circumstances reality could in fact be construed otherwise. To use the mugs to scoop water requires at least a further mental, if not linguistic, ritualization of the mug as a scooping device. This further process is necessitated precisely by the fact that the determination of the object as a mug has become taken for granted as such in the communal conventional storehouse. The full reality of the object is that it is only a mug or a scoop by virtue of having been ritualized as one or the other, and is actually relatively indeterminate as to its usage apart from being so

transformed ritually. The communal conventional storehouse encodes communally negotiated determinations of reality and proceeds to transform reality further as though it were so determinate, thereby making reality more determinate than it is apart from being so ritualized, and apart from the ways other communities might ritually determine it. This point leads naturally to the further consideration of realities that are fully indeterminate.

*On What Cannot Be Said*

In principle, things that cannot be said are ineffable precisely because they are indeterminate with respect to other elements of the language ritual or the language ritual itself. In the case of indeterminate elements, the language ritual loses traction and its process is incapable of transforming the element according to its process such that it generates its entailments. Or at least this incapacity would pertain if the ritual process, its reference, form, process, and functions, were in the indicative mood, transforming elements of reality from being one thing into being another. If anything at all should be clear at this point, however, it is that language as a species of ritual operates not in the indicative mood but rather subjunctively engages the elements of reality under its auspices. One result of this subjunctive modality is that language rituals may always speak an indeterminate element as if it were determinate in the relevant respects. In so

doing, the language ritual renders the indeterminate element more determinate than it is apart from being so ritualized. In this case, the entailments generated from ritualizing an indeterminate element are in fact less stable and reliable than in the case of ritualized elements in which the prior determination of the element and its determination as ritualized are relatively equivalent or verging on identical. Thus, there is in principle nothing that cannot be said in the paradigm of language as ritual, although performing language rituals on indeterminate elements of reality still deserves deeper consideration.

To reiterate, to be indeterminate is not to be one thing rather than another, not to be in a relationship of distinction with respect to some other thing. To be indeterminate is to be indistinguishable, and so phonologic reference fails because a phoneme must refer to something that is distinguishable from another thing that another phoneme refers to, which in turn violates the established relations within the phonological system. Similarly, syntax orders things according to its pattern, but it cannot order two things that are not in some sense distinct from one another such that a relation might pertain; there is no gap between the things that a relation could bridge. Thus, rituals, including language rituals, must treat their indeterminate elements as if they were in fact determinate in order for their process to function. The question then arises as to



what it means to treat something indeterminate as if it were determinate? One way to interpret this is to simply say that when rituals determine their indeterminate elements they get them wrong and fail, but the ritual capacity for building on insecure foundations of less than perfect stability and reliability has already been demonstrated. Moreover, the fact that an indeterminate thing is not at present distinguished from another thing does not necessarily mean that it lacks the potential for being so distinguished, such as through a process of ritualization. Neither does an indeterminate thing necessarily admit of such possibility, in which case the instability and unreliability of resulting entailments comes to the fore, although even then the threat of abject failure is often staved off by the contributions of properly determinate elements. Regardless of the degree to which a given thing admits of the possibility of determination in a particular respect, so determining the thing inevitably artificially circumscribes the fullness of the thing as it is in itself, reducing possibility to actuality, and so only picks up on the thing partially in generating its effects. When such determinations are resisted as impossible by the indeterminate thing, the stability and reliability of entailments generated from them is reduced, but when the determination corresponds to the possibility of the indeterminate thing, the reliability and stability of entailments is maintained. Nevertheless, it would be

possible to determine the indeterminate thing otherwise in some other ritual process and thereby generate incommensurate entailments therefrom.

Indeterminate things are thus fecund resources for ritualization as their subjunctivity correlated with the subjunctivity of the ritual process results in an infinity of meaning.

Language has the capacity to subjunctively engage absolutely anything, including indeterminate things that otherwise could not be said, i.e. are ineffable, except for being ritualized as if they were determinate and so effable.

Nevertheless, a gap, if not a chasm, remains between the language producer and the indeterminate thing ritualized in their language use resulting from the subjunctive distance between the indeterminate thing in itself and the thing as determined by the language ritual process. The problem of religious language arises from the desire for the indeterminate thing in itself that inevitably remains unrequited by the process of determination, which does not bridge the chasm it establishes by the very saying of what cannot be said. Indeterminate things are utterly transcendent with respect to the determinate things with respect to which they are indeterminate by virtue of the very fact that they are in themselves not determinate and so are beyond the grasp of determinateness. At the same time, by virtue of not being something other than that with respect to which they are

indeterminate, they are also utterly immanent to them as part and parcel of their very determinate selves. This immanence grounds the desire for the transcendence that is immanent to that which it transcends, and rituals, including language rituals, are attempts to fulfill that desire by making the indeterminate determinate and thus more concretely immanent. Alas, the price of concrete immanence is the sacrifice of transcendence by transforming the indeterminate into yet another determinate element, which must inevitably disappoint in contrast to the awfulness, i.e. awe-fulness, of the immanently transcendent indeterminate.

It is simultaneously the case that language has the capacity to say absolutely anything and that indeterminates are utterly unsayable, the resolution of which paradox emerges from the transformative work language as ritual carries out on indeterminate things to render them determinate and thus effable. "Any statement of ineffability, 'X is beyond names,' generates the aporia that the subject of the statement must be named (as X) in order for us to affirm that it is beyond names."<sup>1745</sup> The classic nod to the ineffability of the undetermined indeterminate is the rhetorical strategy of apophasis, i.e. negation or unsaying,

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<sup>1745</sup> Michael A. Sells, *Mystical Languages of Unsaying* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 2.

whereby the infinite linguistic regress resulting from the aporia “is harnessed and becomes the guiding semantic force, the *dynamis*, of a new kind of language.”<sup>1746</sup> These are “languages that cancel, interrupt, or undo discourse, languages that operate, paradoxically, by annulling or *unsaying* themselves. They manage to intimate or enact, by stumbling, stuttering, and becoming dumb – sometimes with uncanny eloquence – what they cannot as such say.”<sup>1747</sup> Apophasis is thus a way of humbly acknowledging the subjunctive gap, itself indeterminate, between the indeterminate thing in itself and that thing as it is rendered determinate by the language ritual. Apophatic discourse is a recognition that the desire on the part of the determinate language user for the indeterminate thing in itself is not only unrequited in the language ritual but is inherently unrequitable. This is because the determinate language user, qua its determination, has the capacity for relationship with other things, but the indeterminate thing, qua its indeterminacy, lacks the capacity for relationship because relation requires a determinate difference between the relata to relate. Desire, as a relation, can never apply from indeterminate to determinate, even

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<sup>1746</sup> Sells, 2.

<sup>1747</sup> William P. Franke, *On What Cannot Be Said: Apophatic Discourses in Philosophy, Religion, Literature, and the Arts - Classic Formulations*, vol. 1 (South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), 1.

though it can vice versa but is inherently unrequitable. At the same time that it humbly acknowledges the subjunctive gap, apophasis is an anger-filled, wrenching cry of grief at the loss of the immanently transcendent indeterminate that is the object of desire. Of course, as utterly immanent, the indeterminate thing is hardly lost, which discrepancy with the apophatic performance of grief demonstrates the pervasive inculcation of the ritual form and process in the constitution of the self amidst the ongoing semiosis of the world.

### A Typology of Religious Language

As was discussed above in relation to Neville and Tillich, God is one of the indeterminate things that language users render determinate in and for the sake of the language ritual process of engagement therewith. In fact, according to Tillich and Neville, in distinct but related ways, God is determinate at a singular point with respect to each and every other determinate thing, aside and apart from which God is utterly indeterminate. This singular point of determinacy is important for understanding the metaphysical type of religious language as hewing closely to as literal and precise a rendering of reality as it is prior to ritualization as possible. Metaphysical language seeks to render reality and each of its elements intelligible and systematic in relation to one another, including indeterminate elements, and thus including God. Liturgical language, by

contrast, is the commonly accepted idiom that a community or a tradition employs to express indeterminate things, such as God, and their relation to determinate elements of reality, such as their members. That idiom is encoded in the storehouse of taken for granted ritual forms that make up the conventions of the community, appropriated in the habitus of each member, and is arrived at by a substantial degree of common acceptance among the members of the community or society. Mystical language, in yet another contrast, renders the indeterminate determinate in such a way as to express something important about it that has either been neglected or ignored by metaphysical and liturgical languages so as to make those aspects central or accessible. Mystical language arises from fresh discriminations of the indeterminate that failed to register prior due to being incoherent with the systematic constraints of metaphysical language, or out of step, or even in conflict, with the communal idiom. Together, metaphysical, mystical, and liturgical language form a typology of religious language that gains traction on its indeterminate object(s) by virtue of comparative engagement with one another rather than attempting individual derivations of each therefrom. Notably, the three types correlate with the poles of reality, society, and mind outlined by Putnam and defining the elipse of an adequate theory of language. Mercifully, the rich literature in theology and

literature provide ample examples for analysis, thus enabling a shift from the hypothetical examples that have been employed thus far in this chapter as objects of analysis. Finally, each of the types of religious language may best be characterized as poetic, as opposed to many analyses of religious language that attempt to understand expressions as propositional. The poetic character of religious language, and indeed all language, properly acknowledges the linguistic transformation of God as relevant to human and otherwise mundane affairs.

### *Metaphysical Language*

Metaphysics attempts to put reality into words. This is to say that metaphysical language seeks to reduce the degree and extent of transformation it effects on reality, instead undertaking to correlate the systems, structures, processes, and functions of language to accord with those of reality. In the context of the theory of language as ritual elaborated in chapter five, metaphysical language demurs from the critical dimension and highlights the realist commitment to the independence of reality from knowing minds, speaking tongues, and social constructions. Metaphysics thus aims to be representational, mirroring the reality that is independent of it as closely as possible so as to achieve as literal and precise an icon of reality as possible.

Metaphysical language hews to the pole of reality among the points demarcating the ellipse of an adequate theory of language elaborated by Putnam. The goal of metaphysics is to close the subjunctive gap between the world as it is and its transformation into a new possibility as the result of the language ritual process. The argument made throughout chapter five is that language is one of the rituals, among many others in human life and naturally pervading the world, that harmonize sign processes, i.e. semiosis, so as to generate stable and reliable systems in what would otherwise be a chaotic and entirely spontaneous reality. Metaphysics in this sense, then, seeks to align human language rituals with the ongoing natural and social rituals generating harmonies in reality without itself generating its own distinct patterns of harmonization. The goal is to cultivate a correlation between language and reality.

The problem with the whole metaphysical project, of course, is that in spite of being a ritual, the particularly linguistic species of ritual does not inherently align with any, let alone all, other ritual processes in reality. The subjunctive gap persists. Consider phonological reference. Phonemes do refer to discriminated elements of reality, but they do so according to the phonological system governing the sound pattern of the language, and the mentally discriminated elements to which they refer are inevitably more determinate than



reality itself. Syntax generates even more resistance to achieving the goal.

Syntactic patterns, like the phonological system, are inherent in the language in question, and while they may be adjusted over time to better correspond to reality, their goal is not such correspondence, let alone correlation, but rather harmonization of patterning such that communication is adequately facilitated.

Regardless of how hard the metaphysical impulse strains to force the subjunctive gap closed, it is held immovably ajar at least by the phonological system, syntactic pattern, and the mental pole discriminating the elements to which sounds refer. Moreover, as a species of ritual, language has its own ritual process distinct from the processes of other species of ritual, although related as they all conform to the basic definition of ritual, which is what it means for ritual to be their genus. In order to correlate to the forms of all of the other natural and social ritual processes, language would have to transform itself to become as general as its ritual genus itself, in which case it would still not correlate to each and every other species of ritual specifically. Thus, metaphysics is in fact impossible, at least to achieve, although this need not obviate the value of trying. After all, reality is worth holding onto if it is worth going to all of the trouble of transforming. The metaphysical project is thus best construed as pushing

language to accord with the ritual processes in reality to the greatest extent possible while recognizing that absolute success is impossible.

There is another important reason that metaphysics is impossible, having to do with the ritualization of indeterminate elements. Reality is not fully determinate, and individual elements in reality are not fully determinate. Reality admits of varying degrees of indeterminacy, of elements lacking the capacity to relate to one another for lack of being distinguishable such that a relation might pertain. The language ritual correlates speech sounds with mentally discriminated elements of reality, but mental discriminations of indeterminate things necessarily determine them by the very act of discrimination. It is not possible for language to transform reality without first rendering it determinate, and since reality is not fully determinate in itself, it is impossible to engage it linguistically without some degree of transformation. Since the goal of metaphysics is to close the gap between language and reality by eliminating the transformative effects of the language ritual such that language merely expresses reality as it is, metaphysics is once again impossible to achieve finally. Subjunctivity persists irreducibly. Notably, God is one of the indeterminate things that language must determine in order to engage in its process. It is not quite proper to say that God is “in” reality, because God’s relationship with

reality, and thus sole source of determination apart from subjunctive ritual determination, is as its creator (Neville) or ground (Tillich); to be “in” reality would suggest further spatial determination. Nevertheless, the reality of God is largely indeterminate with respect to the rest of the elements of reality, and so language must render God more determinate in order to engage, just like any other element of reality that is indeterminate in the relevant respects. This is to say that for language to engage God metaphysically is no different than how language engages any other indeterminate thing. Religious language is no different than ordinary language because ordinary things are often indeterminate too.

The inability to ultimately close the subjunctive gap, and the resulting tension between the goal of metaphysical language and its possibility, motivates the deployment of apophatic discourses in metaphysics. Metaphysicians press language as close to reality as they possibly can, but must ultimately yield and confess the inadequacy of their results. Reality is only ever partially effable, yet the metaphysical impulse is toward a perfectly adequate idiom, and so what is said must be unsaid as an inadequate realization of that drive. Tillich made the apophatic turn in decamping from the claim that the only nonsymbolic statement about God is that “God is being itself” to claim that the only nonsymbolic

statement about God is that all statements about God are symbolic. Neville makes the apophatic turn in recognizing ontological discourse, i.e. "being," as a metaphoric rather than literal system. Studies of religious language have often focused primarily on the ways in which God is unique in needing to be unsaid. The understanding of metaphysical language advanced here, however, recognizes the need to unsay the entire metaphysical system, which is far closer to what Neville does in identifying the ontological project as a metaphoric system than to what Tillich does in limiting his discussion to statements about God. Again, God is not different vis-à-vis language than any other indeterminate thing, requiring further determination within the ritual form in order to be engaged by its process. Both God as a mostly, if not entirely, indeterminate element of reality, and the fullness of reality itself as less than fully determined, must be unsaid because language cannot be made to fully accord with indeterminacy.

One way of reading the argument here that metaphysics is impossible is as a submission to the Kantian anti-metaphysical project. Such a reading is entirely misguided. As was outlined above with respect to modern resistance to subjunctivity, Kant delimited knowledge to the domain of phenomena, or things as they are present to the senses and patternable according to the categories of

time, space, and causality, and excluded noumena, or things as they are in themselves.<sup>1748</sup> The first thing to note is that Kant was concerned with knowledge whereas the present project is concerned with language, although with significant implications derived throughout with respect to mind, so the concerns are not entirely distinct. That said, the impossibility of metaphysics for Kant has to do with the mental transformation of sense perception to accord with its categories resulting in a hard distinction between things as they are in themselves and things as they are for us according to the categories of knowledge. Kant is concerned with mental transformation of sense perception, not of reality, whereas the perspective taken here views both mental and linguistic rituals as transforming reality itself. The distinction between things as they are in themselves and things as they are for us is denied on the basis of the semiotic denial of the distinction between mental and physical determinants as meaningful, as was discussed in chapter two. Moreover, mental rituals, language rituals, social rituals, and rituals at play in reality apart from human involvement are all species of one and the same ritual genus that serves to harmonize semiosis so as to render reality relatively stable and reliable, which is advantageous over

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<sup>1748</sup> Kant, *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics (Second Edition)*; Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*.

what would otherwise be chaotic and spontaneous. All of these rituals transform reality, which includes but cannot be reduced to sense perceptions of other elements of reality.

The Kantian distinction between phenomena and noumena results from an overly developed concern with sincerity in the Augustinian form discussed in chapter three and pressed to extremity by Seligman et al in *Ritual and Its Consequences*.<sup>1749</sup> To reiterate, this form of sincerity requires that elements, including participant elements, become sincere prior to the performance of the ritual. In the Kantian imagination, the *a priori* categories of time, space, and causality set the terms of sincerity for knowledge, and since things in themselves cannot be proven, according to Kant, to conform in themselves to these categories, they may not be known in themselves. Any further mental manipulations performed on knowledge are thus performed on the things as they are schematized according to the categories, which is to say performed on the representations of the things in the mind. There is no mental manipulation possible of things in themselves, only of things as they are for a knowing mind. The result is the subjective captivity in which metaphysics is impossible because

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<sup>1749</sup> Seligman et al., *Ritual and Its Consequences*.

it claims to know things in themselves when it really is representing things as they are for us.<sup>1750</sup> Furthermore, reality is reconstrued as the world of things as they are for knowing minds rather as things as they are in themselves, which is why Kant is a transcendental idealist and decidedly not a realist. The realist alternative presented here is that rituals certainly pick up on things by construing them according to their form and process, but in so doing they pick up on the thing itself, not only the thing as it accords to that form and process. Instead of making sincerity a prerequisite to ritualization, rituals engage reality subjunctively and transform it to become sincere according to its form and process. Knowledge is not representational, even though metaphysical language aspires to be. Rituals transform reality, not represent reality; knowledge is the act<sup>1751</sup> of transformation that the ritual process carries out.

The subjective captivity has dominated modern philosophy and theology, all the way down through the present predilection toward postmodernism. For many postmodern thinkers, reality as the world as it is for us is socially constructed and the world as it is in itself does not even bear discussion because it is unknowable anyway. To be sure, postmodern thinkers have abandoned the

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<sup>1750</sup> Kant, *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics (Second Edition)*, para. 57.

<sup>1751</sup> Frisina, *The Unity of Knowledge and Action: Toward a Nonrepresentational Theory of Knowledge*.

quest for certainty that instigated the critical approach Kant developed, let alone physical categories such as time, space, and causality. In spite of having thrown these aspects of the Kantian apparatus overboard, however, they have replaced them with equally categorical “concepts such as difference, repetition, the trace, the simulacrum, and hyperreality,” notably retaining the notion of critique, i.e. “critical,” at the heart of their enterprise.<sup>1752</sup> The turn to ritual as conceptualized throughout this project is a more complete break with the modernist impulse, as represented by Kant, than what postmodern thinking has been able to accomplish. Indeed, it is a “highroad” around both.<sup>1753</sup> The domain of reality is unbridled from things as they are for us in our knowing minds to include anything at all undergoing the pervasive process of ritually harmonizing semiosis. Human ritual masters are liberated from the subjective captivity, able to engage reality and its ongoing transformative processes by performing ritual forms of our own. The Augustinian demand for *a priori* sincerity in the indicative mode is replaced by a Confucian invitation to become sincere to the form and process and of the ritual by its subjunctive performance. While recognizing the

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<sup>1752</sup> Aylesworth, “Postmodernism.”

<sup>1753</sup> Robert C. Neville, *The Highroad Around Modernism* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1992).



impossibility of metaphysics to achieve its goals ultimately, the pursuit of metaphysics is encouraged as a form of faithfulness to reality so as to improve the rituals by which we transform it.

How, then, should metaphysics proceed? The hypothetical approach, as advocated in chapter one and developed systematically by Neville elsewhere,<sup>1754</sup> develops complex hypotheses rendered in language that attempt to represent reality as closely as possible. Moreover, hypotheses are fallible and so subject to correction by further ritualization in an attempt to press them closer to the reality they seek to represent. Hypothetical metaphysics at least implies a properly apophatic approach to reality, recognizing the limits of its capacity to attain its goals, even under the condition of an infinite process of revision. This implication benefits from being rendered explicit, as it has been here. Not only are hypotheses unsaid ultimately, however, they are also constantly being unsaid proximately and iteratively as they fail to properly account for the fullness of reality and so are revised. It is precisely this process of ongoing revision, correlating to the process of ongoing transformation characteristic of reality, that makes hypothetical metaphysics properly faithful to reality whereas both

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<sup>1754</sup> Neville, chap. 6; Neville, *On the Scope and Truth of Theology*, chap. 6.

classical metaphysics, seeking certainty and finality, and anti-metaphysics, constraining reality within the subjective realm, fail to be so. Moreover, rather than being grounded in a categorical scheme, hypothetical metaphysics may proceed creatively out of the tension of its purpose with respect to the purposes of the other types of language. The creativity of this tension will be addressed in the final subsection.

### *Liturgical Language*

Instead of faithfulness to reality, liturgical language is characterized by loyalty to a community as it hews to the social pole of the ellipse Putnam identified demarcating an adequate theory of language. While liturgy is frequently understood as having to do with particularly ordered religious rituals,<sup>1755</sup> the notion of liturgical language employed here harkens back to an etymological understanding of liturgy as “the work of the people.”<sup>1756</sup> All language is always work as an act of transformation of reality, liturgical language is particularly of the people given its loyalty to community, and in fact

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<sup>1755</sup> “Liturgy, n.,” in *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, Def. 1 & 2, accessed February 14, 2019, <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/109293>.

<sup>1756</sup> Naphtali Lewis, “‘Leitourgia’ and Related Terms,” *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies* 3, no. 4 (Fall 1960): 175–84, <https://grbs.library.duke.edu/article/view/12341>.

liturgical language is a form of community service as it serves to constitute the community by managing its conventions. Liturgical language is the way that a community talks about things so as to privilege the communicative function of language, even though doing so may sacrifice literal and precise reference to and construal of reality. Indeed, because of its loyalty to community, liturgical language is willing to transform reality such that it is more amenable to the needs, desires, and advantages of the community and its members. As was noted above, community is constituted by being oriented around a common subset of reality, but being so oriented, communities then also transform that reality to their benefit through a variety of social rituals, including liturgical language rituals. As a type of religious language, then, liturgical language is how a community talks about God. Such liturgical language is not necessarily terribly beholden to either the reality of God or what any individual member of the community thinks about God. Instead, liturgical language generates entailments from prior ritualizations of divinity and continues to render them through its process amongst other elements that primarily have to do with the community itself, its members, and its interests. It is not hard to see, then, how such a process may construe God further and further away from anything to do with the reality of divinity.

A point made back in chapter three regarding the conformity of the ritual elements to its form is quite important for understanding the liturgical language type. The point is derived from Roy Rappaport in *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity*, and deserves recapitulation here for the sake of further consideration:

To perform a liturgical order... is necessarily to conform to it... By performing a liturgical order the participants accept, and indicate to themselves and to others that they accept whatever is encoded in the canon of that order. This act of acceptance is the first of ritual's fundamental offices. The self-referential and the canonical are united in the acceptance of the canon. Acceptance is the self-referential message intrinsic to all liturgical performances, the indexical message without which liturgical orders and the canonical messages they encode would be without consequence, non-existent, or vacuous.<sup>1757</sup>

There is some equivocation between the uses of the terms "liturgy" and "ritual" in Rappaport and the present project, but the point he is making in his own framework holds in this context as well: Language users necessarily accept everything encoded in the language ritual whenever they perform it, from its references to its pattern to its process to its entailments. At the level of the community of all users of the language, this acceptance is somewhat trivial as the cost of communicating via the medium of that language. At the level of subsets of the full linguistic community, however, nuances of vocabulary, grammatical

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<sup>1757</sup> Rappaport, *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity*, 118–19.

formation, rhetoric, style, and discourse may simultaneously impact the transformations that a given usage of the nuanced language effects even as acceptance of and conformity to these norms constitutes the language user as a member of that more circumscribed community. The reality that becomes as a result of the liturgical language ritual process is thus transformed toward the communal pole for the sake of constituting the language users as members of the community of those who accept its canon. At the same time, the canon thereby reaffirms and reinstantiates itself as the meaning of the community oriented around a common reality that is in process of being transformed toward the canonical pattern. Language users must sacrifice their own discriminations of reality and reality itself apart from its ritual transformation by adopting the norms encoded in the canon of the liturgical language of the community in order to gain membership therein.

In and through the process of constituting the community of people who employ a given liturgical language, liturgical language simultaneously establishes, develops, inculcates, and transforms the communal conventional storehouse, i.e. the canon, that reflexively govern its own norms and patterns. Likewise, other social rituals contribute to the overall ritual canon of the community, governing its ritual engagements with all elements, aspects, and

relations in and of reality, including themselves. This ritual storehouse of conventions, including linguistic conventions both generally and particular to the liturgical language of the community, is what individuals appropriate in their habitus and so are that to which they become sincere in and through the ritual performance. Without liturgical language, and other social rituals that function liturgically, the conventional storehouses would wither and become diffuse to the point that the canon would no longer obtain and the community would cease to exist. Communities require their canons to determine them, i.e. render them determinate, as distinct from other communities, and thus relatable thereto. Employment of liturgical language is thus crucial for the maintenance of a community and its transformation in order to preserve the canonical order as much as possible in response to the determining transformations of other communities that might encounter and attempt to ritualize it.

As was mentioned above, one of the characteristics of the modern condition is that most people inhabit more than one community simultaneously, and so must learn to speak more than one liturgical language. This can become quite challenging as many of the communities a given person might inhabit will likely have significant overlap among the subsets of reality around which they are oriented. Moreover, many of those communities may speak the same base

language such that the distinctiveness of each of their canons derives from nuances of vocabulary, grammar, rhetoric, style, and discourse rather than a completely alternative language system. This linguistic pluralism may result in liturgical languages with significantly overlapping memberships shifting to accept the nuances distinctive to each, or it may result in cognitive dissonance within an individual member who must navigate using alternative canons in respectively alternative contexts. In most cases, some combination of the two results likely pertains. Regardless, the canon of each community in a pluralistic context requires heightened frequency, amplitude, and intensity of liturgical rituals, including liturgical language in order to maintain the community qua community. Not only does this increase the likelihood of conflict among the communities that take the redoubled canons to be normative, it also renders them less plausible with respect to metaphysical and mystical language types as it pulls liturgical language ever closer to the social pole of the language theory ellipsis. With respect to individual language users, this means that their habitus will decrease in determinateness as the quantity of valences applicable to each of its elements increases due to the overlapping magisteria of the various canons governing each community in which they are a member.

Unlike metaphysical and mystical language types, liturgical language exhibits a potent allergy to apophasis because it refuses to acknowledge its own subjunctivity. Liturgical language is still subjunctive, to be sure, which is precisely how it is able to proceed as if it were indicative. Insistence on the indicative is a way for liturgical language to reflexively reinforce itself in the habitus of each of the members of the community which conventional storehouse governs it and to which it contributes. The difference between the liturgical language type and either the metaphysical or mystical types is that the canon that governs liturgical language is constitutive of the community to which the type maintains loyalty. Apophasis would thus at least potentially weaken the normativity of the canon and thus the bonds that unite the community. The particularity of a metaphysical system or expression of a mystical vision does not likewise constitute either reality nor the mind of the mystic, respectively, and so apophasis is not threatening but rather preserves the integrity of each.

One excellent example of the liturgical language type is liturgical language in that other sense of language employed in religious services such as the Great Vigil of Easter that served as the empirical example interpreted by the ritual theory as it developed in chapter three. That service is a particularly good example because of its employment of the *Book of Common Prayer* and



supplemental liturgical texts as the canonical language of the community, which is in fact a defining characteristic of Anglican liturgy.<sup>1758</sup> In any worship service, the worshipping community accepts the language of the scripture, prayers, songs, and sermon, which they have limited influence over. As Rappaport notes, “acceptance is not belief,” that is, it “is not a private state, but a public act, visible both to witnesses and to performers themselves” that “can be more profound than conviction or sense of certainty, for it makes it possible for the performer to transcend his or her own doubt by accepting in defiance of it.”<sup>1759</sup> Thus, the liturgical language about God in a given liturgy need not correlate with the discriminations of divinity carried out by any or each of the minds that make up the gathered community at worship. Neither need it feel beholden to express the reality of God, even though the indicative character of liturgical language at least implies that what it says about God aspires to be literally true. Instead, liturgical language holds itself to the standard of expressing God as encoded in the canon of the community, however that may be, which is how the community as a whole has accepted God to be for them collectively.

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<sup>1758</sup> Stephen Sykes, John E. Booty, and Jonathan Knight, eds., *The Study of Anglicanism* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1998), pt. IV, chap. 1 & 6.

<sup>1759</sup> Rappaport, *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity*, 119–20.

Karl Barth clearly locates the work of theology in the domain of liturgical language as he argues that the person of Jesus, the texts of the bible, and the proclamation of the church are held together in the concept of the “Word of God,”<sup>1760</sup> which is what is revealed in revelation.<sup>1761</sup> He acknowledges the pull of liturgical language toward the communal and social pole as he locates knowledge of the Word of God in the church: “Knowledge of the Word of God in this sense is the presupposition of the Church. We may and must also reverse the statement and say that the Church is the presupposition of knowledge of the Word of God.”<sup>1762</sup> Yet, Barth still aspires to the universality of the liturgical community, at least potentially, in a way that fails to recognize the integrity of the canonical orders and idioms of other communities, risking charges of colonialism and imperialism in the context of pluralism. A more amenable approach to liturgical language emerges largely in continuity with Barth in the form of postliberal theology, which adopts the Wittgensteinian notion of language games to articulate the integrity of the liturgical language of each

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<sup>1760</sup> Barth, *The Church Dogmatics*, I, 1 (§§ 1-12):88–124.

<sup>1761</sup> Barth, I, 1 (§§ 1-12):295.

<sup>1762</sup> Barth, I, 1 (§§ 1-12):188.

community.<sup>1763</sup> Barth may also rightly be critiqued for rejecting any recourse to reasoning about the natural world as in any way relevant to interpreting the revelation of the Word of God, which is corrected in the radical orthodoxy movement that is significantly in continuity with Barth: “[Radical Orthodoxy] considers that the world can only be fully understood as a participation in divine being, truth, goodness and unity. Inversely it believes that the world as partially restored through grace gradually discloses to us the nature of the Godhead, without ever allowing us to comprehend it.”<sup>1764</sup> Notably, radical orthodoxy falls afoul of the same aspiration to universality as Barth and rejects the postliberal turn. The substantive trajectory in analytic theology may be classified in this broadly Barthian project of locating theology in the domain of liturgical language as well.<sup>1765</sup> The influence of Barth and his ilk is such that confessional theology

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<sup>1763</sup> George A. Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1984); Ronald T. Michener, *Postliberal Theology: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013).

<sup>1764</sup> John Milbank, “What Is Radical Orthodoxy?” (University of Freiburg, 2015), [http://www.unifr.ch/theo/assets/files/SA2015/Theses\\_EN.pdf](http://www.unifr.ch/theo/assets/files/SA2015/Theses_EN.pdf). The allergy to apophasis in radical orthodoxy is elaborated in William P. Franke, *A Philosophy of the Unsayable* (South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2014), chap. 5.

<sup>1765</sup> William Wood, “Trajectories, Traditions, and Tools in Analytic Theology,” *Journal of Analytic Theology* 4, no. 1 (May 6, 2016): 254–66, <https://doi.org/10.12978/jat.2016-4.220812221403a>; Oliver D Crisp and Michael C Rea, *Analytic Theology: New Essays in the Philosophy of Theology* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2009), chap. 3.

operating in the domain of liturgical language is often presumed normative for the discipline, especially from an etic perspective, but frequently emicly as well. This has made for great institutional difficulty both for philosophers of religion and natural theologians who would locate theology closer to the pole of reality,<sup>1766</sup> and for theopoets and liberation theologians who would locate theology closer to the pole of fresh mental discriminations.

### *Mystical Language*

If metaphysical language is faithful to reality and liturgical language is loyal to community, then mystical language may be said to prophetically advocate for the fresh discriminations of reality that are functions of mental rituals. Thus, mystical language pulls toward the mental pole of the ellipsis demarcating an adequate theory of language. A full analysis of mental rituals exceeds the scope of the present project, as will be discussed below, but for the moment it is enough to note that since mental discriminations are themselves the results of a ritual process, they are far less stable than either the communal canon of linguistic norms or even the pleroma of semiosis constituting reality. With

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<sup>1766</sup> Lawrence A. Whitney, "Institutional Dimensions of the Future of Philosophy of Religion," *Palgrave Communications* 4, no. 1 (June 12, 2018), <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-018-0131-7>.

regard to determinate things, mental rituals may discriminate them either as they are in their determinateness or transform them to some extent such that their determinateness is other than it was prior to being discriminated. With regard to indeterminate things, including God, discrimination rituals must necessarily transform them to be determinate in the appropriate respect, but whether the determinateness discriminated falls within the realm of possible determinations is hardly guaranteed. It is important to remember that mental discriminations of reality are simultaneously mental activities interpreting reality and the interpretants of semiotic process in reality, which is how they avoid falling into their own subjective captivity. It is also important to recall that language is incapable of referring to reality directly, even metaphysical language, but only to reality as discriminated, which discrimination may be encoded and thus shared in the canon of a community guiding its liturgical language. The mystical type of language is thus implicated across all of the types, as in fact each type is in each of the others, but as an ideal type it pulls toward the discriminations of an individual apart from any testing as to its adequacy against a system representing reality.

The subjunctive equivocation inherent in the ritual process, and thus in mental discrimination, results in a language user adopting a high degree of

vulnerability when encoding a discrimination in mystical language. Apophasis of the mystical expression itself is thus an incredibly important discursive strategy for mystical language users to incorporate in order to inoculate themselves against incurring harm invited by the vulnerability they adopt in uttering a mystical expression. Unsayings allow mystical language to say what it has discriminated and then acknowledge the possibility that it might be wrong or otherwise objectionable, and so inappropriate for incorporation in the communal canon. Apophasis becomes a form of apology, inviting forgiveness for any offense even prior to the offense itself being expressed and thus the entailment of disruption entering the communicative arena. This vulnerability inherent in employment of the mystical language type is highlighted by the fact that many mystical expressions transgress ethical norms of the communities in which they are uttered. Mystical language is often also itself an unsaying of at least implicit norms encoded in the communal canon that governs liturgical language or at least one aspect of a metaphysical system striving to represent reality, and sometimes it is both. The examples of mystical language considered below participate in just such transgressions and unsaying.

A comprehensive theory of experience generally or religious experience particularly is far beyond the scope of the present endeavor, but since mystical

language is often presumed to correlate to ecstatic experiences, the category of experience requires some consideration. Experience is best interpreted itself as a ritual form and process harmonizing discriminations together such that the self that experiences the harmony is oriented to all of the things discriminated in reality, their aspects as likewise discriminated, and their relations to one another and the self. Mystical language emerges from the reference of speech sounds and their patterning in syntax with respect to elements, aspects, and relations in reality that differ from how reality is encoded in the communal canon or a given metaphysical system as appropriated in the habitus of the language user. This means that mystical language may or may not contradict the norms of the communal canon or a given metaphysical system. Moreover, experiences referred to in mystical language may be ecstatic if they significantly differ from the harmony of determinations that constituted experience prior to the discrimination of an elements, aspect or relation in reality to be other than that had been understood. Alternatively, mystical language may refer to a novel discrimination of reality that allows for retention of a high degree of continuity with the prior harmonization of discriminations, which is to say that the mystical language refers to lived experience rather than ecstatic experience. Ecstasy and lived experience are thus on a continuum, and mystical language is appropriate

for communicating experiences anywhere on the spectrum as differing from reality as represented in a metaphysical system or encoded in a communal canon.

Like metaphysical language and liturgical language, mystical language may be employed to talk about absolutely anything, not just God, but also not excluding God. When mystical language does seek to express God, it expresses God, who is otherwise almost or entirely indeterminate, as determined for the language user by the mental discrimination ritual. If nothing else, God will inevitably be overdetermined by this process because the movement from indeterminate to determinate is necessarily one of reduction. The question of interest in interpreting mystical language is whether the mental discrimination of God expressed is significant for improving the representation of reality in a metaphysical system or adjusting the canonical code so as to enhance its capacity to constitute its community. The implication if the expression in question is determined to be so significant is that the metaphysical system or communal canon in question has missed something important and should be reformed to accommodate this new datum. The problem is that, since God is either completely or almost completely indeterminate, God is never or almost never either what any expression determines God to be nor not what any expression



determines God to be, and so incorporating new discriminations of divinity is necessarily destabilizing to metaphysical systems and communal canons. Metaphysical systems at least have recourse to apophasis in order to reestablish equilibrium, but as was discussed above, apophasis equally threatens to destabilize communal canons, leaving liturgical language between a rock and hard place vis-à-vis revelations of novel discriminations of God. Thus, the apophatic turn in mystical language is far more important for defanging assaults by liturgical defense mechanisms as metaphysical systems have their own internal coping mechanisms for ameliorating the risks introduced by mystical language.

The stakes are quite high in giving voice to mystical language, including a quite literal stake and the burning of the speaker thereon, such as was the case for Marguerite Porete (also Porette, c. 1260 – June 1, 1310).<sup>1767</sup> Porete was condemned for fifteen articles of heresy, of which three survive:

The annihilated soul sets the virtues free and is no longer in their service, having no further use for them. Rather the virtues obey her will.  
The annihilated soul in love of its founder can and should give to nature whatever it wishes and desires, without blame or remorse of conscience.

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<sup>1767</sup> Sean L. Field, *The Beguine, the Angel, and the Inquisitor: The Trials of Marguerite Porete and Guiard of Cressonessart* (South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2012).

Such a soul has no concern for the consolations of God nor for his gifts, nor should she have such a concern, because she is completely intent on God and her concentrations would be distracted by such concerns.<sup>1768</sup>

Transposed into the terms of determinacy and indeterminacy employed here, Porete is describing a loss of determinacy on the part of the human soul upon sustained encounter with the indeterminacy of divinity. As a result, reason and morality fall away as inapplicable relations for a soul lacking sufficient determinacy therefor in a world otherwise exhibiting far greater determinateness. This indeterminacy would likewise exempt such a soul from the traction of liturgical language such that it could be ritualized together with other elements of the world according to the pattern encoded in the communal canon. In sum, Porete was understood to be threatening the authority of the communal canon on the basis of her discrimination of the indeterminacy of God resulting in a concomitant loss of determinacy on the part of human souls that encounter the divine indeterminacy. Porete was executed to cauterize the resulting wound to the community, i.e. the church, and the transformative capacity of its liturgical language and other rituals. Ironically, her book, the basis of the articles of heresy brought against her and so banned and burned, was

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<sup>1768</sup> Sells, *Mystical Languages of Unsayings*, 117. Translated from Paul Verdeyen, "Le Procès d'inquisition Contre Marguerite Porete et Guiard de Cressonessart (1309-1310)," *Revue d'histoire Ecclésiastique* 81 (1986): 47-94. See also Field, *The Beguine, the Angel, and the Inquisitor*, chap. 6.

identified in 1946<sup>1769</sup> as *The Mirror of Simple Souls*,<sup>1770</sup> which was a “famous and until then anonymous mystical treatise... known for centuries in Latin, Italian, and Middle English translations.”<sup>1771</sup> It “had even been published in 1911 by the Downside Benedictines in a modern English translation with the formal Church approvals of *nihil obstat* and *imprimatur*.”<sup>1772</sup> This irony not only further indicates that the tension was between the mystical language of Porete and the liturgical language of the church, rather than with a metaphysical system, it also demonstrates that mystical language, at least in principle, need not be contradictory of communal canonical norms. The potential for harmony between mystical and liturgical languages is demonstrated by the life and writings of Teresa of Ávila (1515 – 1582), whose ecstatic experiences and theological reflections thereon<sup>1773</sup> were repeatedly tested by clergy and inquisitors

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<sup>1769</sup> Romana Guarnieri, “Lo Specchio Delle Anime Semplici e Margherita Poirette,” *L’Observatore Romano*, June 16, 1946.

<sup>1770</sup> Margaret Porete, *The Mirror of Simple Souls* (South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1999).

<sup>1771</sup> Sells, *Mystical Languages of Unsayings*, 118.

<sup>1772</sup> Sells, 118.

<sup>1773</sup> Saint Teresa of Avila, *The Collected Works of St. Teresa of Avila*, trans. Kieran Kavanaugh and Otilio Rodriguez, vol. 1 (Washington, DC: ICS Publications, 1976); Saint Teresa of Avila, *The Collected Works of St. Teresa of Avila*, trans. Kieran Kavanaugh and Otilio Rodriguez, vol. 2 (Washington, DC: ICS Publications, 1980); Saint Teresa of Avila, *The Collected Works of St. Teresa of Avila*, vol. 3 (Washington, DC: ICS Publications, 1985).

throughout her life. In the end, unlike Porete, Teresa was found to be thoroughly orthodox, going on to canonization forty years after her death and then being declared a Doctor of the Church by Pope Paul VI in 1970.<sup>1774</sup> Nevertheless, intent to conform to the canonical forms prescribed in communal convention is no guarantee of acceptance of mystical insight, as demonstrated by the case of Meister Eckhart (c. 1260 – c. 1328). Eckhart made a solemn declaration on February 13, 1327 in the Dominican church that “If any error in faith or morals should be discovered in anything he had said or written, publicly or privately, this should be considered retracted and not said or written.”<sup>1775</sup> Nevertheless, the Pope issued a bull against him posthumously, *In agro dominico*, “in which twenty-six articles from Eckhart's Latin works were listed, of which the first fifteen were declared heretical and the remaining eleven termed 'dangerous and suspect of heresy,' though just capable of an orthodox interpretation.”<sup>1776</sup>

Rather than the contemplative ecstasies that gave rise to the mystical language employed by Porete and Teresa, Baruch Spinoza (1632 – 1677) arrived

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<sup>1774</sup> Rowan Williams, *Teresa of Avila* (London: Routledge, 2000), chap. Introduction.

<sup>1775</sup> Meister Eckhart, *The Complete Mystical Works of Meister Eckhart*, trans. Maurice O’C Walshe (New York, NY: Crossroad, 2009), 10.

<sup>1776</sup> Eckhart, 11.

at his mystical insights via philosophical reflection leading to a staunch rejection of Cartesian thought in dialogue with medieval, modern, and Jewish philosophy.<sup>1777</sup> The alternate discriminations he advanced to those of Descartes resulted in a thoroughly original, and thoroughly modern, metaphysical system employing metaphysical language in novel ways, largely codified in the first two parts of his *Ethics*.<sup>1778</sup> It is in following through the implications of his metaphysical system that Spinoza ran into trouble with the Portuguese Jewish community in Amsterdam, of which he was a member, on the grounds of his resulting denial of the immortality of the soul.<sup>1779</sup> Indeed, the “Jewish community felt it necessary to ban, with a writ of *cherem* harsher than any that it had ever used before or would ever use again, a remarkably intelligent and promising member of one of its more prominent families.”<sup>1780</sup> The posthumous publication

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<sup>1777</sup> Steven Nadler, *Spinoza: A Life* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Steven Nadler, *Spinoza and Medieval Jewish Philosophy* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

<sup>1778</sup> Baruch Spinoza, “Ethics,” in *Spinoza: Complete Works*, ed. Michael L. Morgan, trans. Samuel Shirley (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 2002), 213–382; Steven Nadler, *Spinoza’s “Ethics”: An Introduction* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Beth Lord, *Spinoza’s Ethics: An Edinburgh Philosophical Guide* (Edinburgh, UK: Edinburgh University Press, 2010).

<sup>1779</sup> Steven Nadler, *Spinoza’s Heresy: Immortality and the Jewish Mind* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon, 2001).

<sup>1780</sup> Nadler, vii.

of his *Theological-Political Treatise*<sup>1781</sup> would result in even greater condemnation<sup>1782</sup> and the inclusion of all of his writings on the Catholic *Index librorum prohibitorum*, “List of Prohibited Books,” right alongside his antagonist, Descartes.<sup>1783</sup> Now viewed as one of the harbingers of modernity and liberalism, the mystical language of Spinoza, as it influenced his metaphysical language, conflicted with the liturgical languages of Christians and Jews and he suffered for it, in life and in death. Mystical language expressing mystical insight is deeply personal, and as the modern feminist and womanist movements have made clear, the personal is political<sup>1784</sup> and therefore constitutes an existential threat to the political status quo as encoded in the communal canon that governs liturgical language.

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<sup>1781</sup> Baruch Spinoza, “Theological-Political Treatise,” in *Spinoza: Complete Works*, ed. Michael L. Morgan, trans. Samuel Shirley (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 2002), 383–583.

<sup>1782</sup> Steven Nadler, *A Book Forged in Hell: Spinoza’s Scandalous Treatise and the Birth of the Secular Age* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013).

<sup>1783</sup> “Censored Publications - Search Result,” Database, Beacon for Freedom of Expression, accessed February 21, 2019, [http://search.beaconforfreedom.org/search/censored\\_publications/result.html?author=Spinoza&author=&title=&country=&language=&censored\\_year=&censortype=&published\\_year=&censorreason=&Search=Search](http://search.beaconforfreedom.org/search/censored_publications/result.html?author=Spinoza&author=&title=&country=&language=&censored_year=&censortype=&published_year=&censorreason=&Search=Search).

<sup>1784</sup> Kerry T. Burch, *Democratic Transformations: Eight Conflicts in the Negotiation of American Identity* (New York, NY: Bloomsbury, 2012), chap. 8.

## *Poetic Language*

The world, like Dionysus, is torn to pieces by pure intellect; but the poet is Zeus; he has swallowed the heart of the world; and he can reproduce it as a living body.<sup>1785</sup>

All meaningful language, situated among the poles of reality, mind, and society, mediates the equally subjunctive tension between determinacy and indeterminacy. Language, as a species of ritual, necessarily determines reality such that elements thereof may be ritualized by its process. Yet, through its process, language seeks to express the indeterminacy of reality as a whole, and at least some elements thereof with respect to at least some other elements, apart from being so ritualized. Reality as it is expressed in language is thus transformed for having been determined and then knit back together so as to be recast in metaphysical, liturgical, and mystical gestures toward indeterminacy. Ray L. Hart notes that “everything living is margined by two nots: the nothing it is *from* and the nothing it is *toward*.”<sup>1786</sup> Life, then, is a process of transformation from indeterminacy through determinacy to indeterminacy, yet a different indeterminacy than the first for having been determined, if such a thing as two indeterminacies, different from one another, might be posited, and indeed they

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<sup>1785</sup> Owen Barfield, *Poetic Diction: A Study in Meaning* (London: Faber & Gwyer, 1952), 74.

<sup>1786</sup> Ray L. Hart, *God Being Nothing: Toward a Theogony* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2016), 145.

may, subjunctively. The transformation of reality from indeterminacy through determinacy to indeterminacy is the divine creative act, and so God is the poet of the world in the etymological sense of the Greek ποιέω, “to make, to create, to produce, to bring about.”<sup>1787</sup> Reality, then, is the heartbeat of God, oscillating between the systole of determination and the diastole of indeterminacy.

Humanity, through its rituals, including language, participates in this divine creativity, and so humans too are poets, rendering language necessarily poetic.

Human creativity is nonetheless derivative and secondary to divine creativity as humans create from what already is whereas God creates what is *ex nihilo*, from nothing. Moreover, while both humans and God engage in ποίησις (poiesis), “activity in which a person brings something into being that did not exist before,”<sup>1788</sup> human creativity is within and continuous with the stream of divine creativity. As such, both humans and God create ritually, whereby determinate sign processes are harmonized into relatively stable and reliable sign systems. In

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<sup>1787</sup> “Ποιέω,” The Online Liddell-Scott-Jones Greek-English Lexicon, accessed February 23, 2019, <http://stephanus.tlg.uci.edu/lsg/#eid=86774&context=lsj&action=hw-list-click>.

<sup>1788</sup> Donald Polkinghorne, *Practice and the Human Sciences: The Case for a Judgment-Based Practice of Care* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2004), 115. See also Alexander Ferrari Di Pippo, “The Concept of Poiesis in Heidegger’s *An Introduction to Metaphysics*,” *Thinking Fundamentals*, IWM Junior Visiting Fellows Conferences, Vienna, 9 (2000): 33, <https://www.iwm.at/wp-content/uploads/jc-09-03.pdf>.



the Aristotelian sense, ritual is a form of τέχνη (techne), “a way of reasoning about doing something; ‘techne’ can also refer to the body of knowledge produced by *techne* reasoning.”<sup>1789</sup> The performance of the ritual τέχνη is its ποίησις, the creation of genuine novelty. Of course, the classic principle that *ex nihilo, nihil fit*, “out of nothing, nothing becomes,”<sup>1790</sup> holds because the indeterminate nothing from which the divine creative act emerges is transformed through these ritual processes in the subjunctive mode of determinacy into a novel indeterminate nothing. Language, like all ritual, is in the flow of determination and process, poetically making creative contributions thereto, and itself undergoing transformation amidst the thick, rich, pervasive matrix of overlapping and interacting ritual performances.

The solution to the problem of religious language may now be stated directly: God is not special. There is nothing about God, regardless of how indeterminate God is understood to be, that exempts God from the applicability of the ritual process of language. Language rituals render God sufficiently determinate to engage in their processes and then harmonize God together with

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<sup>1789</sup> Polkinghorne, *Practice and the Human Sciences*, 114. See also the discussion of ritual as technique in chapter three above.

<sup>1790</sup> Hart, *God Being Nothing*, 68–70.

other elements, aspects, and relations in reality, just as they do anything else. It is inevitable that the indeterminate God will resist such determination, rendering the resulting harmony less reliable and stable than might be hoped, and indeed that might be assumed by the language users, but at least some entailments may yet be generated nonetheless. Regardless, there is no difference in the linguistic process between saying that "God is love" and saying "That mug is red." The mug is not fully determinate as a vessel for containing liquids because a cookie could be laid across its mouth and suddenly it would be a plate, but the language ritual that says "That mug is red" may treat it subjunctively as if it were so determined. The same is true of God. God is barely determinate at all, and yet language may engage God as if divinity were determinate on the terms the language ritual makes God to be. God may be rendered determinate and harmonized together with virtually every other element, aspect, and relation in reality in metaphysical language that attempts to represent the world and its ritualization generally, and so seeks to minimize the extent of its own transformative process. God may be rendered determinate as an element of the communal canon that governs liturgical language, thereby becoming the focal point of a community ritually harmonizing its membership together. God may be freshly discriminated in a mental ritual, rendered determinate by reference to

that discrimination, and then offered in testimony in mystical language as a corrective to the inadequacies of prior determinations. That said, anything and everything else must likewise be determined through metaphysical, liturgical, and mystical language processes, so once again, God is not special. What language does is to subjunctively engage God as if God were determinate according to the terms of the language ritual at play. In doing so, language makes God what the language ritual says God is in the reality of the other elements of the ritual, which is part and parcel of the fullness of reality that exceeds that particular ritualization. God is the poet of the world, and language users are among the poets of God, the tension between which fuels the oscillations of the divine heartbeat.

Liberation theologies provide unique purchase on the ways in which the three types of language, and thus of religious language, interrelate and overlap in a given instance so as to poetically make God. Liberation theologies, which identify God as a partisan actor on the side of the oppressed in any given situation, begin with fresh discriminations of divinity, and so are inevitably initially primarily mystical in their idiom. Some of the fresh discriminations that

liberation theologies make include that “God is black,”<sup>1791</sup> that God has “a preferential option for the poor,”<sup>1792</sup> and that God is not male;<sup>1793</sup> the most sophisticated forms of liberation theology recognize that these insights intersect, and that their intersections are determinative.<sup>1794</sup> What distinguishes the mystical discriminations of liberation theology from the mystical language analyzed in the subsection thereon above is that liberation theologians have, in most cases, immediately moved to identify their insights as already within the communal canon governing liturgical language. The primary tactic for achieving success in this liturgical invasion is to locate the mystical insight not just within the biblical record but as the core teaching to which the biblical record testifies by giving an “interpretation of Jesus as religious subject rather than religious object.”<sup>1795</sup> “The solution which Jesus found for himself and for Israel, as they faced the hostility of the Greco-Roman world, becomes the word and the work of redemption for

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<sup>1791</sup> James H Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2010).

<sup>1792</sup> Gustavo Gutiérrez and Gerhard Ludwig Müller, *On the Side of the Poor: The Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2015); Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1988).

<sup>1793</sup> Mary Daly, *Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women’s Liberation* (Boston, MA: Beacon, 1985).

<sup>1794</sup> Dolores S. Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness: The Challenge of Womanist God-Talk* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2013).

<sup>1795</sup> Howard Thurman, *Jesus and the Disinherited* (New York, NY: Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1949), 15.

all the cast-down people in every generation and in every age."<sup>1796</sup> The fact that the biblical text is so amenable to such an interpretation makes it quite difficult to dislodge these mystical insights from their liturgical beachhead, although this is hardly to say that liberation theologies have had much success in recoding the DNA of the communal canon of religion writ large. Moreover, given the metaphysical skepticism that has predominated throughout the emergence of liberation theologies, it is little surprise that liberative insights have not generally been overly concerned to render themselves in terms of metaphysical systems. One exception to this trend is Martin Luther King, Jr., who located his liberative praxis in the metaphysical milieu of personalism, which takes the person to be the fundamental category of reality, as grounding the value, worth, and dignity of all people.<sup>1797</sup>

Mystical language inevitably overlaps with liturgical and metaphysical languages as the insight being expressed must be rendered together with extant discriminations, unless it is to be expressed in a wholly novel language,<sup>1798</sup> in

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<sup>1796</sup> Thurman, 28–29.

<sup>1797</sup> Rufus Burrow Jr, *God and Human Dignity: The Personalism, Theology, and Ethics of Martin Luther King, Jr.* (South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1987).

<sup>1798</sup> Sarah L. Higley, *Hildegard of Bingen's Unknown Language: An Edition, Translation, and Discussion* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

which case it is no language as the communicative function falls out. Liberation theologies tend to articulate their insights toward the liturgical pole, largely following the move to privilege the liturgical over the mystical and metaphysical made by Emil Brunner (1889 – 1966) in his critique of Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768 – 1834):

First, Brunner saw mysticism as a threat to the theology of the word. Mystical human subjectivism undermined the radically alien and objective divine word of judgment and gospel. Second, mysticism's illegitimate conflation of nature and spirit was due to its unholy alliance with philosophy. Together, mysticism and metaphysics provided grounds for a theology that betrayed the witness of the Bible and the Reformation.<sup>1799</sup>

By identifying its mystical insights at the core of the biblical witness, thereby downplaying their subjectivity, and by largely avoiding metaphysical language, liberation theologies have maintained “a viable connection to the experiential intensity of a determinate mysticism”<sup>1800</sup> on the very terms of what has become the basis of rationality in theology. While important as a strategic means of correcting for prior faults and failures, privileging liturgical language is a deeply unhealthy state for theology in the long term as it puts the growth and sustenance of the community over above its members and connection with

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<sup>1799</sup> Christine Helmer, “Mysticism and Metaphysics: Schleiermacher and a Historical-Theological Trajectory,” *The Journal of Religion* 83, no. 4 (2003): 517, <https://doi.org/10.1086/491397>.

<sup>1800</sup> Helmer, 517–18.

reality. Privileging any of the poles of meaningful language over against the others is unhealthy as language is most meaningful, and thus most true, at the center of the ellipse of meaning. The answer to the problem of religious language advanced here, while acknowledging the important corrections liberation theologies continue to make, seeks a return to this center. This should not be accomplished by sacrificing the advances of liberation and other liturgical paradigms, but by making them answerable beyond their own communities to a broader public, to the individual insights of their own members and those outside the community, and to systematic representations of reality in philosophy and the sciences. Indeed, the contributions of liberative liturgy will only be enhanced and strengthened by the call to a pervasively processive metaphysical semiotics cosmologically regulated by rituals, including language, that subjunctively transform their elements so as to generate reliable and stable harmonies as the basis for meaning and flourishing. Along the way, the theory of language as ritual has jettisoned many of the very faults and failures liberation paradigms have sought to correct. It proclaims release to prisoners of the subjective captivity and recovery of sight to those blinded by representational theories of knowledge. It identifies as idolatry the orthodoxy that the structure of language is the structure of all sign systems. It emancipates ritual from slavery to

religion, and language from servitude to mind. It denies the distinction between the physical and the mental as without a difference. Perhaps most distinctively, language as ritual puts religious language on an even keel and on equal footing with all other uses of language, engaging reality as mentally discriminated so as to transform it to be socially hospitable. These shifts make for a far more amenable metaphysical language for drawing the meaning of the mystical and liturgical languages of liberation theology back to the center of the ellipse.

*On What Has Not Been Said: On Metaphors and Models*

The claim that there is nothing that cannot be said has already been defended, but that does not mean that everything that can be said has been said here despite the perfusion of language across so many pages. Already acknowledged in the above discussion is the need for a more robust, dialectical, and detailed account of the metaphysical semiotics upon which the theory of language as ritual is based, as well as of the theory of mind as ritual that contributes to the theory of language as ritual. Both of these projects must await treatment in further developments of this project. What may be addressed here are two interrelated ways of addressing the problem of religious language that are prevalent in the literature but have not been adopted here, namely the notions of language as metaphor and of language as model. Indeed, use of the



very terms “metaphor” and “model” are excluded in the preceding discussion except as appearing in and employed by other thinkers precisely to avoid association with these prevalent approaches. Brief treatment of each, along with explanation as to why they have not been adopted in the theory of language as ritual, helps to clarify both the contribution and the distinctiveness of what has been elaborated over the course of all of these pages.

Given the extent of the literature on metaphor, a dictionary definition provides helpful orientation to the core of the concept: A metaphor is “a figure of speech in which a name or descriptive word or phrase is transferred to an object or action different from, but analogous to, that to which it is literally applicable... something regarded as representative or suggestive of something else.”<sup>1801</sup> The part of the definition that identifies metaphor as a figure of speech points toward the rhetorical and stylistic conception of metaphor as a linguistic feature of philosophical interest<sup>1802</sup> since Aristotle<sup>1803</sup> and spanning divisions between

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<sup>1801</sup> “Metaphor, n.,” in *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, accessed February 25, 2019, <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/117328>.

<sup>1802</sup> David Hills, “Metaphor,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Fall, 2017, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2017/entries/metaphor/>.

<sup>1803</sup> Aristotle, *The Poetics of Aristotle*; Aristotle, *On Rhetoric*; John T. Kirby, “Aristotle on Metaphor,” *American Journal of Philology* 118 (1997): 517–54, <https://doi.org/10.1353/ajp.1997.0056>; Richard Moran, “Artifice and Persuasion: The Work of Metaphor in the Rhetoric,” in *Essays on Aristotle’s Rhetoric*, ed. Amelie Oskenberg Rorty (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1996), 385–98.

analytic<sup>1804</sup> and Continental<sup>1805</sup> approaches. A more recent approach abstracts the notion of metaphor from its linguistic root and renders it across the domains of language, thought, and action in a way not entirely unlike the abstraction of ritual from religion and its metaphysical rendering in the present project. Such conceptual or cognitive metaphors map the characteristics of and relations in a source domain that is relatively understood to a target domain of which understanding is desired.<sup>1806</sup> For example, the target domain of quantity may be understood by mapping to the source domain of spatiality in saying that “the stock market is up.” Likewise, in religious language, the target domain of the kingdom of God is mapped in the parables Jesus tells in the gospels to domains

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<sup>1804</sup> Max Black, “Metaphor,” *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 55 (1954): 273–94, <https://doi.org/10.1093/aristotelian/55.1.273>; Max Black, *Models and Metaphors: Studies in Language and Philosophy* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1962); Donald Davidson, “What Metaphors Mean,” *Critical Inquiry* 5, no. 1 (1978): 31–47, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1342976>; R. Harré, “Metaphor, Model and Mechanism,” *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 60 (1959): 101–22, <https://doi.org/10.1093/aristotelian/60.1.101>; Andrew Ortony, *Metaphor and Thought* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

<sup>1805</sup> Clive Cazeaux, *Metaphor and Continental Philosophy: From Kant to Derrida* (London: Routledge, 2007); Paul Ricœur, *The Rule of Metaphor: Multi-Disciplinary Studies of the Creation of Meaning in Language* (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 1981).

<sup>1806</sup> George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2008); Kovecses, *Metaphor*; Gibbs, *The Cambridge Handbook of Metaphor and Thought*; Fauconnier and Turner, *The Way We Think*.

of daily life,<sup>1807</sup> salvation is understood in economic terms in the letters of Paul,<sup>1808</sup> and the relationship between God and the world may be understood in terms of quantum entanglement.<sup>1809</sup> Clearly, metaphors operate in the domain of the subjunctive, treating one thing as if it exhibits the same characteristics and internal relations as another thing, which only makes the risk of confusing the theory of language as ritual for a theory of metaphor more acute. In fact, the two theories are starkly different. The theory of metaphor treats two domains as subjunctive with respect to one another moving from the source domain to the target domain, and both domains are represented to mind by language. The theory of language as ritual, by contrast, understands language itself as the source domain related subjunctively to the target domain of reality and transforming the target domain by rendering it more determinate according to its terms and structuring it according to its pattern. Moreover, language as ritual provides an interpretation of metaphor as the transformation of reality by relating domains thereof such that they mutually constrain one another even as

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<sup>1807</sup> McFague, *Metaphorical Theology*, chap. 2; Sallie McFague, *Speaking in Parables: A Study in Metaphor and Theology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1975).

<sup>1808</sup> Jennifer Aileen Quigley, "Divine Accounting: Theo-Economics in the Letter to the Philippians" (ThD diss, Harvard University, 2018).

<sup>1809</sup> Kirk Wegter-McNelly, *The Entangled God: Divine Relationality and Quantum Physics* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2011).

they are simultaneously constrained by the third domain of the language itself. Theories of metaphor do not provide an equivalent interpretation of language as such, but only of language as a medium for representing the mapping of the source and target domains. The answer to the problem of religious language advanced from the theory of language as ritual should therefore not be understood as a form of metaphorical theology.

A second, related approach to that of metaphor is that of model. The relationship between metaphors and models is easily understood as models are precisely models of the source domain subjunctively related to the target domain in a metaphor. Hence, Sally McFague subtitles *Metaphorical Theology: Models of God in Religious Language*. Model construction is a familiar approach in the sciences as “an imagined mechanism or process, postulated by analogy with familiar mechanisms or processes and used to construct a theory to correlate a set of observations.”<sup>1810</sup> For example, a geocentric model in astronomy describes the motions of celestial bodies with respect to the Earth, by contrast with a heliocentric model that describes their motion with respect to the Sun. In addition to the problems identified with the paradigm of metaphor, models are

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<sup>1810</sup> Ian G. Barbour, *Myths, Models and Paradigms* (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1974), 30.

problematic for the theory of language as ritual because they aspire to be explanatory. As Edward Slingerland explains,

Any truly interesting explanation of a given phenomenon is interesting precisely because it involves reduction of some sort – tracing causation from higher to lower levels or uncovering hidden correlations. We are generally not satisfied with explanations unless they answer the “why” question by means of reduction: by linking the *explanandum* to some deeper, hidden, more basic *explanans*.<sup>1811</sup>

Admittedly, language as ritual is reductive in the sense that language overdetermines its objects, which is again why it is likely to be confused for a theory of language as model. The fact that all explanation is reductive, though, does not mean that all reduction is explanatory. The reduction involved in modeling is for the sake of explanation, but the reduction involved in language as ritual is for the sake of transformation. Language is not a model. Language is ritual.

### A Concluding Theopoetic Postscript

[Theopoetics is] an acceptance of cognitive uncertainty regarding the Divine, an unwillingness to attempt to unduly banish that uncertainty, and an emphasis on action and creative articulation regardless. It also suggests that when the dust has settled after things have been said and done in the name of God, the reflection and interpretation to be done ought to be grounded in dialogue and enacted with a hermeneutic of hospitality

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<sup>1811</sup> Edward Slingerland, “Who’s Afraid of Reductionism? The Study of Religion in the Age of Cognitive Science,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 76, no. 2 (June 1, 2008): 384, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jaarel/lfn004>. See also, Whitney, “Symmetry and Asymmetry: Problems and Prospects for Modeling,” 39–40.

and humility, an acceptance of cognitive uncertainty regarding the Divine, an unwillingness to attempt to unduly banish that uncertainty...<sup>1812</sup>

The broad movement that invokes the nomenclature of theopoetics largely identifies itself against the pretension of completeness, finality, and certainty purportedly pedaled, and too frequently aspired to, by systematic philosophy and theology.<sup>1813</sup> The ultimate conclusion to be drawn from the present study, itself an insight worthy of elaboration beyond what is said here, is that all religious language, whether systematic or poetic or otherwise, is theopoetic in the sense that religious language creates God in the human way of transforming what is already given. God is made increasingly determinate with every utterance, but never finally so as the determinacy of God must be open to disruption toward indeterminacy by further discriminations of indeterminacy giving birth to fresh determinations even as they unsay the old. The subjunctive space of linguistic transformation inhabits the subjunctivity of ritual inhabits the subjunctivity of reality as if the indeterminate divinity were the determinate creator of the whole realm of determinateness. In system and in song, God is

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<sup>1812</sup> L. Callid Keefe-Perry, *Way to Water: A Theopoetics Primer* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2014), 131.

<sup>1813</sup> Amos Niven Wilder, *Theopoetic: Theology and the Religious Imagination* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2014); Rubem A. Alves, *The Poet, the Warrior, the Prophet* (London: SCM Press, 2002); Stanley Romaine Hopper and R. Melvin Keiser, *The Way of Transfiguration: Religious Imagination as Theopoiesis* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1992); Keefe-Perry, *Way to Water*.

grasped even as God is missed by the as if facilitating the transformative ritual process of effing God.

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- — —. *Xunzi: A Translation and Study of the Complete Works*. Translated by John Knoblock. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1988.
- — —. *Xunzi: The Complete Text*. Translated by Eric L. Hutton. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014.
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— — —. *Wandering on the Way: Early Taoist Tales and Parables of Chuang Tzu*. Translated by Victor H. Mair. Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press, 1998.

— — —. *Zhuangzi: The Essential Writings with Selections from Traditional Commentaries*. Translated by Brook Ziporyn. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 2009.

Ziff, Paul. *Semantic Analysis*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1960.

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## CURRICULUM VITAE

# Lawrence A. Whitney, LC† (b. 1983)

Home: 23 White Place, Brookline, Massachusetts, 02445

Office: Marsh Chapel, 735 Commonwealth Avenue, Boston, Massachusetts,  
02215

C 857-413-7112 | O 617-358-3392 | lwhitney@bu.edu

handle: BrLawrenceLC – Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Medium, Academia.edu

### **Education**

2009: Master of Divinity - Boston University School of Theology

2008: Certificate in International Mission and Ecumenism – Boston Theological  
Institute

2005: Bachelor of Music – Ithaca College

### **Publications** (\* indicates peer review)

#### Chapters

“Faith Transforms in Times of Crisis” *Kissing in the Chapel, Praying in the Frat House: Wrestling with Faith and College*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, December 2014.

\*“Symmetry and Asymmetry: Problems and Prospects for Modeling” *Models of God and Alternative Ultimate Realities*. Dordrecht, Netherlands: Springer, 2013.

“From the Mainline to the Margins” *Secular Monasticism: A Journey*. Bloomington, IN: Xlibris, 2012.

“Orthodoxy: Continuing Testimony into a Third Millennium” *Tracing Contours: Reflections on World Mission and Christianity*. Newton Centre, MA: Boston Theological Institute, 2010.

#### Articles

“Mentoring for Discernment” *FTE Guide to Discernment Retreats*. (forthcoming)

\*“Institutional Dimensions of the Future of Philosophy of Religion” *Palgrave Communications* 4.1 (12 June 2018).

“Correlating to ‘Nones:’ Tillich’s Method of Correlation and Late Modernity” *Bulletin of the North American Paul Tillich Society*, Summer 2014.



\*"Experience and the Ultimacy of God" *Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 26.1 (2012): 43-60.

"Mission Theology and Interreligious Encounter: 1910-2010" *Bulletin of the North American Paul Tillich Society* 37.2 (Spring 2011): 39-46.

#### Response Articles

"Poor Jesus: No Place to Stand" *Journal of Interreligious Dialogue* 8 (February 2012): 75-77.

#### Books Reviewed

*Verbs, Bones, and Brains: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Human Nature*. ed. Agustín Fuentes, Aku Visala. (University of Notre Dame Press: 2017) in <http://readingreligion.org/books/verbs-bones-and-brains>.

#### Digital Projects

"Boston Confucianism" with Robert Neville and 宋斌 Bin Song, produced by the Confucius Institute U.S. Center, Washington, D.C. 16 October 2019. <https://youtu.be/PadF3S6Mal8>

"Discovering Marsh Chapel" *BU Today*. with David Bergeron-Keefe, Beth Boucher, Janice Checchio, Andy Costello, Charlie Guerrero, Laura Nooney, Bill Politis, Jackie Ricciardi, Cydney Scott, and Alan Wong. 10 October 2017. <http://www.bu.edu/today/2017/discovering-marsh-chapel/>

#### **Fellowships, Grants, and Institutes**

2018: Ruism in America Grant, International Confucian Association.

2017-19: Fellow, Institute for Culture, Religion, and World Affairs, Pardee School of Global Studies, Boston University.

2016-2018: Cultivating Future Leaders Grant, The Forum for Theological Exploration.

2012: Confucian Studies Summer Institute, Nishan Birthplace of the Sage Academy.

2011-2012: Pastoral Internships Grant, The Fund for Theological Education.

2008: Institute for Culture, Religion and World Affairs: Summer Seminar on Religion and Democracy.

2005-2006: Ministry Fellow, The Fund for Theological Education.

2004: Undergraduate Fellow, The Fund for Theological Education.

## Conference Activities

### Papers Presented

- “Ruism Amidst the Prospects and Perils of Protestantization,” Rectifying the Name of Confucianism, Boston University Confucian Association, Boston University, Boston, Massachusetts, 28-30 September 2018.
- “Govern Them with Moral Force by Ritual: The Confucian Prescription for Achieving Peace among the Warring States” at the Sacred Texts and Human Contexts Conference, Hickey Center for Interfaith Studies & Dialogue, Nazareth College, Rochester, New York, July 2018.
- “Human Nature is Ominous” at Theorizing Human Nature: Bridge or Barrier in Contemporary Discourse, Fourth Annual Graduate Conference of the University of Notre Dame and the University of Chicago Divinity School, University of Notre Dame, South Bend, Indiana, February 2018.
- “Protestantization and Confucianism: The Case of Boston Confucianism 2.0” in Transnational Religious Expression: Between Asia and North America Seminar, American Academy of Religion, Boston, Massachusetts, November 2017.
- “Ritual Transformations: Reappropriating Xunzi 荀子 in Ritual Studies” Ritual Studies Group, American Academy of Religion, San Antonio, Texas, November 2016.
- “Rethinking Xunzi in Light of Recent Textual and Historical Scholarship on the Literature of the Warring States” Specific Texts and Their Structures Panel, East Asia Section, American Oriental Society, Boston, Massachusetts, March 2016.
- “The Problem of Religious Language” Global-Critical Philosophy of Religion Seminar, American Academy of Religion, Atlanta, Georgia, November 2015.
- “Semiotics, Ritual, Mind, Language, and Emergence” Semiotic Society of America, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, October 2015.
- “Law, Love, and Life: Conversations Theological and Musicological with Luther, Bach, and Schweitzer” Music and Religion Group and Global Lutheran Traditions Group, American Academy of Religion, with the Marsh Chapel Choir and Bach Collegium San Diego, San Diego, California, November 2014.
- “Effing God: The Paradox of Religious Language” Semiotic Society of America, Seattle, Washington, October 2014.

- “Correlating to ‘Nones:’ Tillich’s Method of Correlation and Late Modernity”  
North American Paul Tillich Society, American Academy of Religion,  
Baltimore, Maryland, November 2013.
- “Martin Luther King, Jr. as Comparative Theologian” Unacknowledged Pioneers  
of Comparative Theology panel, Comparative Theology Group, American  
Academy of Religion, Atlanta, Georgia, November 2010.
- “Mission Theology and Interreligious Encounter: 1910-2010” North American  
Paul Tillich Society, American Academy of Religion, Atlanta, Georgia,  
October 2010.
- “Symmetry and Asymmetry: Problems and Prospects for Modeling” Models of  
God and Other Ultimate Realities annual meeting pre-conference at the  
American Academy of Religion, Atlanta, Georgia, October 2010.
- “Illusions of Managing Church: Reconstruction in Ecumenism” New Challenges  
in Faith and Order, Boston Theological Institute, Holy Cross Greek  
Orthodox School of Theology, Brookline, Massachusetts, 4 April 2009.
- “Leftovers and Side Effects: Problems in Pragmatist Cosmology” Pragmatism  
and Empiricism in American Religious Thought Group, American  
Academy of Religion, Chicago, Illinois, 2 November 2008.
- “Strategic Transition: The Cosmology of Security” Concerned Philosophers for  
Peace Annual Conference, SUNY Cortland, Cortland, New York, 31  
October 2008.
- “Inward Bound: Ecumenical Spirituality Overcoming Violence in a Bounded  
World” Young Adult Ecumenical Forum, Chicago, Illinois, 3-6 August  
2006.

#### Campus Talks

- “The Ethics of Genetic Engineering: From *Frankenstein* to CRISPR,” *panelist*.  
Kilachand Honors College, Boston University, November 2018.
- “Govern Them with Moral Force by Ritual: The Confucian Prescription for  
Achieving Peace among the Warring States,” Colloquium Presentation,  
Institute on Culture, Religion, and World Affairs, Pardee School of Global  
Studies, Boston University, September 2018.
- “The Ultimate Concern of Liberal Modernity: Perils of Conflict and Promise of  
Collaboration” Colloquium Presentation, Institute on Culture, Religion,  
and World Affairs, Pardee School of Global Studies, Boston University,  
February 2018.

“Pluralism and Its Consequences: An Essay on the Limits of Ritual”  
Confucianism and the West lecture series, Boston University Confucian Association, Boston University, Boston, Massachusetts, 20 March 2015.

### Conference Organization

- 16 November 2018: Panel Organizer, Book Review of *Paul Tillich and Asian Religions* and Workshop Facilitator, Fellows of the North American Paul Tillich Society, Annual Meeting of the North American Paul Tillich Society, Denver, Colorado.
- 28-30 September 2018: Co-Organizer, “Rectifying the Name of Confucianism,” Boston University Confucian Association, Marsh Chapel, Boston University, Boston, Massachusetts.
- 17 November 2017: Panel Organizer, “The Influence of Paul Tillich on Robert Neville's Philosophical Theology” North American Paul Tillich Society, American Academy of Religion, Boston, Massachusetts.
- 4-7 November 2010: Registrar, Workshop Coordinator, Technologist, and Conference Co-Coordinator, “2010 Boston Mission Conference: The Changing Contours of World Mission and Christianity,” Boston Theological Institute, Newton Centre, Massachusetts.
- 2007-2010: Co-Organizer, Costas Consultation on Global Mission, Boston Theological Institute.
- 2010 – “An Atlas of Global Christianity” – Boston University
- 2009 – “Mission and Multiple Religious Belonging” – Episcopal Divinity School
- 2008 – “Technology for Mission” – Boston University
- 2007 – “Korea: Reconciliation in Church and Society” – Andover Newton Theological School
- 2007: Conference Planner and Host, “Young Adult Ecumenical Forum,” Boston University.

### **Teaching**

- 2011-present: Instructor, First Year Experience Course.
- 2012: Teaching Assistant, The Church and the Arts, Professor Andrew Shenton, Boston University School of Theology.
- 2013: Teaching Assistant, Advanced Systematic Theology III, Professor Robert Cummings Neville, Boston University School of Theology.

## **Languages**

Modern Spanish – Excellent

Modern German – Reading: Good

Mandarin Chinese – Elementary, Reading: Good

Koine Greek – Reading: Good

Ecclesiastical Latin – Reading: Good.

## **Service to the Profession**

2018-2019: President Elect, North American Paul Tillich Society

2017-2018: Vice President, North American Paul Tillich Society

2015-Present: Board Member, North American Paul Tillich Society

2006-2011: Coordinator, International Mission and Ecumenism Committee,  
Boston Theological Institute.

## **Professional Memberships**

2014-Present: North American Paul Tillich Society

2013-Present: Institute for American Religious and Philosophical Thought

2005-Present: American Academy of Religion

## **Ministry and Ecclesiastical Standing**

### Ministry Positions

2007-Present: University Chaplain for Community Life, Marsh Chapel, Boston University.

2007: Chapel Associate for First-Year Students, Marsh Chapel, Boston University.

2005-2006: Boston Citywide Coordinator for Interfaith Youth Work, Consultant,  
Interfaith Youth Core.

2004: Intern, Women's Interfaith Institute in the Finger Lakes.

### Ecclesiastical Certification in the Lindisfarne Community

2009: Ordained to the Priesthood

2006: Ordained to the Diaconate

2004: Professed

2003: Novitiate

### Ministry Service

2019-Present: Free Speech Operations Committee, Boston University

2013-2016: Board of Advisors, The Forum for Theological Exploration (FTE;  
formerly The Fund for Theological Education)

2007-Present: Religious Life Council, Boston University.

2007-Present: Board of Advisors, Marsh Chapel, Boston University.

Professional Ministry Memberships

2009-Present: Association of College and University Religious Affairs.

2009-Present: National Association of College and University Chaplains.

Selected Sermons (\* indicates a comparative sermon)

\*"Rectifying the Name of Christianity" Marsh Chapel, Boston University, 27 May 2018.

\*"The Discipleship of the Lost" Marsh Chapel, Boston University, 2 July 2017.

\*"Development" Marsh Chapel, Boston University, 28 May 2017.

\*"Making Our Way Ritually" Marsh Chapel, Boston University, 3 July 2016.

\*"Forming a Trinity" Marsh Chapel, Boston University, 29 May, 2016.

"The Bach Experience" Marsh Chapel, Boston University, 9 November, 2014.

"Re-Membering" Marsh Chapel, Boston University, 26 May 2013.

"Time, Eternity and End Times" Hughes United Methodist Church, Wheaton, Maryland, 16 August 2009.

"Called to Transfigured Life" Alumni Weekend, Ithaca College Protestant Community, Ithaca College, 22 February 2009.

"Feast of the Epiphany" All Saints Episcopal Church, Ashmont, Massachusetts, 6 January 2009.