Chapter 1 : Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice by Catherine Bell (, Paperback) | eBay

Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice, Catherine Bell's sweeping and seminal work on the subject, helped legitimize the field. In this volume, Bell re-examines the issues, methods, and ramifications of our interest in ritual by concentrating on anthropology, sociology, and the history of religions.

The Griqua were assumed to represent a population of "half- breed descendants of Europeans and Hottentot women. The archaeologists of the s accepted their legends too easily, and Morris has set the record straight. Someday his findings too will be tested; that is science. Meanwhile, the history of the populations of this small part of Africa is on a surer footing; the Khoi and the Griqua including Basters know a bit more about their history. The morphological position of the group implies a fairly constant input of the children of such unions. I wonder, though, if the analysis could not have been taken farther. A study of the non-metric traits of the skull could have enhanced this work. Cavalli-Sforza and Bodmer, in The Genetics of Human Populations which, strangely, is not cited , discuss gene flow as the slow diffusion of genes from one race to another and warn against the use of anthropometric characters for compar- ative observations between races because of the possibil- ity of unsuspected environmental effects. Characters for which a simple Mendelian basis has been ascertained are the obvious ones to use. It is also rather self-contained both in terms of the area it covers and in terms of previous work on the races concerned. The analyses could be taken beyond the rather limited examination of the re- spective roles of genetics and environment in influenc- ing the presentation of characteristics as Angel did for immigrant Europeans to the United States of America-but using the concepts of homoplasy and sy- napomorphy available today-or as Brown did for Northern Irish families. This is not in any way intended as a criticism of a very thorough piece of work. American Iournal of Physical Anthropology A cephalometric radiographic study. American Iournal of Physi- cal Anthropology Thegenetics of human populations. The ecology of mating systems in hy- pergynous dowry societies. Social Science Information New Yorlz and Oxford: Oxford University Press, The first section of the boolz, "The Practice of Ritual Theory," deals with the development and the na- ture of that discourse in anthropology. The second sec- tion, "The Sense of Ritual," develops a theory of practice as the basis for the study of ritual or, rather, ritualiza- tion, and the third section, "Ritual and Power," exam- ines ritual as a strategic device in power relations. Bell argues that discourse on ritual, mainly developed by Durkheim and the Annde Sociologique school, tends to view ritual as a crucial mechanism of social integra- tion. In this discourse a basic distinction is made be- tween thought and action, ritual being defined as action. Because ritual is meaningful, however, it can be consid- ered as a fusion of thought and action, a resolution of the basic contradiction between the two. The construc- tion of this relationship implies a fusion of the thought of the anthropologist and the action of the participants. Both generate meaning-the first for the ritual actor and the second for the theorist" p. Turner , the repression thesis Burkert, Girard , and the definition-of-reality thesis Geertz, T. She considers the last of these the most subtle but finds that even it tends to view ritual as "a nearly magical mechanism of social al- chemy" p. Her boolz offers interesting perspectives on the study of ritual, but in many respects her model calls for further clarification. According to Bell, the traditional discourse on ritual, implying "a subordination of action to thought, actors to thinkers" p. Turner and Grimes, aware of this imbalance, attempted to change this relationship by creating new forms of cultural knowledge, but because they did not escape the thought-action dichotomy they could not transcend the relation of domination that it implied P Bell attempts to overcome this dichotomy with a the- ory of practice inspired by Bourdieu. Notably, his meta- phor of orchestration is often used to describe the de- velopment of a structured and structuring ritual environment. Bell rejects the idea of a satisfactory defi- nition of ritual and focuses on the notion of ritualization "as a way to distinguish and privilege what is being done in comparison to other, usually more quotidian, activi- ties" p. Thus the intention of the actor seems to play a central role. This shift from ritual to ritualization allows her to consider ritual in terms of practice, "a term that is designed to represent the synthetic unity of con- sciousness and social being within human activity, to be a powerful tool with which to embrace or transcend all analogous dichotomies" p. Practice is character- ized by four features of human activity necessarily shared by ritual: Features 3 and 4 are

of particular importance: Following Althusser, Bourdieu, and Foucault, Bell fo- cuses on the relations between practice and the body, identified with the social person. The concept of the social body leads to that of the ritual body, "a body invested with a sense of ritual" p. Elaborating on Bourdieu, Bell develops the notion of "the natural logic of ritual, a logic embod- ied in the physical movements of the body and thereby lodged beyond the grasp of consciousness and articula- tion" p. Practice takes precedence over knowledge since knowledge is a form of practice , but must we resort to a form of reasoning in which each discourse is itself embedded in a practice which transcends the domain of knowledge? Is it obvious that we should use categories derived from the practice of our own society to describe the practices of other societies? These questions remain unanswered. More attention might have been devoted to the relation between the "cultivated dispositions" of the body and the high degree of reflection on ritual, in most societies, by the participants themselves. Bell stresses that ritualization always takes place in a "socio- cultural situation" p. IOO , but she pays insufficient at- tention to way in which research on the ritual environ- ment is to be conducted. Instead she concentrates on interaction and, more particularly, on the manipulation of the ritual environment in the process of ritualiza- tion-the construction and hierarchization of schemes of binary oppositions, involving asymmetrical relations of dominance and subordination, to generate a semantic system which has the feeling of a universal totality. The concepts of dominance, subordination, and hier- archy deserve further reflection. Dumont Kap- ferer and others have suggested that a concern with power may reflect the individualistic ideology characteristic of Western society. A hierarchical order may establish specific social contexts which allow for competition and rivalry. The nature of that rivalry can be understood only in the wider context of a specific cultural system. According to Bell, rituals do not so much solve social problems as translate immediate con- cerns into the dominant terms of the ritual. Ritualiza- tion is a play of power, and it is most effective as a strategy "first, when the relationships of power being negotiated are not based on direct claims but on indirect claims conferred; and second, when the power is claimed to be from God, not from military might or eco- nomic superiority" p. The binary oppositions that Bell sees as determining the organization of ritual systems include I superior-inferior, 2 here-there or us-them which generates rela- tively egalitarian relationships , and 3 central-local which frequently incorporates and dominates the pre- ceding opposition p. This seems a caricature of the results of structural anthropology. She emphasizes that ritual systems do not regulate or control systems of social relations but are such systems p. The ulti- mate purpose of ritualization is the production of ritual- ized agents-persons who have an instinctive knowl- edge of the schemes embedded in their bodies, in their sense of reality, and in their understanding of how to act in ways that both maintain and qualify the complex microrelations of power p. In an effort to do justice to the relation between the freedom of the individual to structure and manipulate the environment and the organization of the environ- ment, Bell employs a theoretical discourse based on key concepts in our own societies, notably the notion of power. She does not ask what the key concepts of other societies might be, and she neglects the relation between the discourse of the participants and that of the observer. The shift from thought to action, from mind to body, seems to privilege the Western conceptualization of the body, making it the unchallenged discourse for the ex- amination of ritual in other societies. Barnes considers power the capacity for action-a capacity that exists only when it is acknowledged by others. Arens and Karp consider it "an artefact of the creative faculty of the moral imagination" p. That power is a concept applicable to all societies may well be an illusion. Legends of people, myths of state: Vio- lence, intolerance, and political culture in Sri Lanka and Aus- tralia. Even a neutral and comprehensive bibliography will not be free from controversy, and my own reservation is that Barnard could have given more emphasis to the contribution of Richard Elphick, whose Kraal and Cas- tle: Khoikhoi and the Founding of White South Africa includes probably the first clear description of a long-term oscillation between foraging and pastoral ad- aptations among Khoisan peoples which Elphick called "the ecological cycle of hunting and herding". Khoikhoi and the founding of white South Africa. Oxen or on- ions? The search for trade [and truth in the Kalahari. Forag- ers, genuine or spurious? Situating the Kalahari San in history. Para- digmatic history of San-speaking peoples and current attempts at revision. La vie quotidienne au Parlement euro- peen. African- American religion in the twentieth century: Varieties of pro- test and accommodation. University of Tennessee Press. Organizing Jainism in India and En- gland. Making and

meaning in cultural contexts. Terrestrial ecosystems through time: Evolutionary paleoecology of terrestrial plants and animals. University of Chicago Press. Gossip, meetings, and power in a Papua New Guinea village. University of Cali- fornia Press. A biocultural ap- proach to the study of pastoral foodways. New perspectives on federal In- dian policy. University of Arizona Press. Social order and political change: Constitutional governments among the Cherokee, the Choc- taw, the Chickasaw, and the Creek. Stanford Univer- sity Press. Thehuman evolution source book. Space, time, and man: New York and Cambridge: The end s of ethnogra phy: From realism to social criticism. Anthropology, art, and aesthetics.

Chapter 2 : Theories, Concepts, and Measurements | Ritual

Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice is a thesis which proposes methods for overcoming the divide between thought and action present in the descriptions of ritual.

Alan Sheridan New York: Pantheon, , and The Archeology of Knowledge, trans. University of Chicago Press, ; and Fabian. Cambridge University Press, ; and Michael T. University of North Carolina Press, To mention some of the more obvious titles in this vein, see Edmund Leach, Rethinking Anthropology London: Athlone Press, ; Dell Hymes, ed. Cambridge University Press, ; Miriam Levering, ed. Thomas Lawson and Robert N. Connecting Cognition and Culture Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, The stage of application does not necessarily imply a holistic structure of understanding of the type that has been criticized as a matter of "totalizing" explanations reaching for "absolutism. Cornell University Press, , pp. These three features of a critical theory are based in part on Geuss, pp. Jameson, The Political Unconscious, p. Whether ritual is depicted as a universal phenomenon or merely an applied theoretical construct, the concept of ritual both exemplifies and supports the discourse within which it is elaborated. Yet it has become increasingly obvious that a tighter hold on the term does not seem to prevent such "slippage" or maintain the clarity of the boundary between theory and data. In the last quarter of a century scholars have discovered that theoretical categories are more than mere tools that can be wielded with control or carelessness. Subsequent attempts to relegitimate knowledge have made even more apparent the dynamics involved in the production of particular bodies of knowledge based on particular relationships between subject and object. They will not stay neutral. Rather, they will conform to whatever subtle purposes the larger analysis serves. We have learned that such categories are merely the most visible of those pieces put into play within discourses whose boundaries, objectives, and rules retreat from our conscious grasp. To challenge the adequacy of our categories today, scholars must attempt to track the dynamics of the discourse in which they operate and the discursive logic by which they function. The term expressed, therefore, the beginnings of a major shift in the way European culture compared itself to other cultures and religions. Since then many other definitions of ritual have been developed linked to a wide variety of scholarly endeavors. Robertson Smith to Clifford Geertz, the notion of ritual has been meaningful precisely because it functioned as much more than a simple analytical tool. Rather, it has been integral to the mutual construction of both an object for and method of analysis. In debates about the relationship of myths or beliefs and rites, ritual was used to elucidate the social existence and influence of religious ideas. James, among others, all stressed the primacy of religious ideas, born of pseudoscientific explanations or emotional experiences, as the basis of religion. Ritual, as exemplary religious behavior, was the necessary but secondary expression of these mental orientations. Henri Hubert and Marcel Mauss, who demonstrated how ritual activities effectively sacralize things, people, or events, inverted earlier perspectives by tracing how religious phenomena and ideas derived from social activities. This perspective coincides with the emergence of culture as a category of analysis. The analysis of culture, as opposed to society and religion per se, gave a particularly critical place to ritual. The prominence of ritual in the work of cultural anthropologists such as Victor Turner, Clifford Geertz, Edmund Leach, and Marshall Sahlins fueled the emergence of a focus on ritual itself in the cross-disciplinary endeavor of ritual studies. The prominence of ritual in cultural theories has also occasioned some speculation. George Marcus and Michael Fisher note that description and analysis of ritual have been a popular device for organizing ethnographic texts. A recent consensus has emerged that ritual, aside from its role in illuminating religion, society, or culture, should be studied in itself and for itself. Moreover, despite the variety of avowed methodological perspectives and ramifications, there is a surprising degree of consistency in the descriptions of ritual: Examples include the ritual integration of belief and behavior, tradition and change, order and chaos, the individual and the group, subjectivity and objectivity, nature and culture, the real and the imaginative ideal. Given the variety of theoretical objectives and methods, such consistency is surprising and interesting. The following chapters analyze this consistency in the theoretical depiction of ritual. I will show theoretical discourse on ritual to be highly structured by the differentiation and subsequent reintegration of two particular categories of human

experience: That is, the problems we face in analyzing ritual, as well as the impetus for engaging these particular problems, The Practice of Ritual Theory 17 have less to do with interpreting the raw data and more to do with the manner in which we theoretically constitute ritual as the object of a cultural method of interpretation. The implicit structure of ritual theory, while effective in identifying a distinctive phenomenon for cultural analysis, has imposed a powerful limit on our theoretical flexibility, our divisions of human experience, and our ability to perceive the logical relations inscribed within these divisions. This page intentionally left blank 1 Constructing Ritual Theoretical descriptions of ritual generally regard it as action and thus automatically distinguish it from the conceptual aspects of religion, such as beliefs, symbols, and myths. In some cases added qualifications may soften the distinction, but rarely do such descriptions question this immediate differentiation or the usefulness of distinguishing what is thought from what is done. Likewise, beliefs, creeds, symbols, and myths emerge as forms of mental content or conceptual blueprints: Sometimes the push for typological clarity will drive such differentiations to the extreme. Ritual is then described as particularly thoughtless actionâ€"routinized, habitual, obsessive, or mimeticâ€" and therefore the purely formal, secondary, and mere physical expression of logically prior ideas. Just as the differentiation of ritual and belief in terms of thought and action is usually taken for granted, so too is the priority this differentiation accords to thought. For example, Edward Shils argues that ritual and belief are intertwined and yet separable, since it is conceivable that one might accept beliefs but not the ritual activities associated with them. He concludes that logically, therefore, "beliefs could exist without rituals; rituals, however, could not exist without beliefs. This second pattern describes ritual as a type of functional or structural mechanism to reintegrate the thoughtaction dichotomy, which may appear in the guise of a distinction between belief and behavior or any number of other homologous pairs. Both of these structural patternsâ€"the differentiation of ritual as action from thought and the portrayal of ritual as a mechanism for integrating thought and actionâ€"can be demonstrated in several representative approaches to ritual. Durkheim argued that religion is composed of beliefs and rites: Hence, ritual is the means by which individual perception and behavior are socially appropriated or conditioned. There ritual is provisionally distinguished as the synchronic, continuous, traditional, or ontological in opposition to the diachronic, changing, historical, or social. However, ritual is also subsequently portrayed as the arena in which such pairs of forces interact. It is the mediating process by which the synchronic comes to be reexpressed in terms of the diachronic and vice versa. Turner, also portrays these two patterns. Turner initially described ritual as the affirmation of communal unity in contrast to the frictions, constraints, and competitiveness of social life and organiza- Constructing Ritual 2. However, when subsequently portrayed as embodying aspects of both structure and antistructure, he describes rituals as those special, paradigmatic activities that mediate or orchestrate the necessary and opposing demands of both communitas and the formalized social order. Each of these examples employs the two structural patterns described previously: These two structural patterns are rarely explicit and the first, in particular, in which ritual is differentiated from conceptual categories, is routinely taken for granted. However, the relationship that develops between these two patterns when they are simultaneously operative in a theoretical description of ritual is even less acknowledged and much more powerful. In effect, the dichotomy that isolates ritual on the one hand and the dichotomy that is mediated by ritual on the other become loosely homologized with each other. Essentially, as I will demonstrate, the underlying dichotomy between thought and action continues to push for a loose systemization of several levels of homologized dichotomies, including the relations between the ritual observer and the ritual actor. Dichotomies and Dialectics Jameson analyzes a type of logical structure within linguistical theory that is similar to the two patterns sketched out earlier for ritual theory. Jameson points to a logical structure in which an initial differentiation, originally proposed to enable the theorist to concentrate on just one of the differentiated terms, surfaces again and again within subsequent analysis of that 2. In reaction against historicism in linguistics, Jameson explains, Saussure attempted to talk about the nonhistorical aspects of language. On a primary level, he distinguished between diachrony and synchrony, thereby providing himself a clear focus on the synchronic side of linguistics as opposed to the other side, where, he argued, everyone else was working. On a second level, and therefore within the synchronic system itself, Saussure also distinguished between langue and parole in order to further

differentiate synchronic language from speech. He therein had his first internal replication of the original opposition. On yet a third level, Saussure took langue as a system and within it distinguished two ways in which signs are related, the syntagmatic and the associative or paradigmatic , replicating his original dichotomy for a second time within the system as a whole. Z4 The original differentiation between diachrony and synchrony was applied, through various pairs of categories, to three levels of analysis. In other words, the continual application of the dichotomy between synchrony and diachrony systematically generated successive and homologous levels of analysis. At this point, Jameson suggests that it becomes quite "problematical to what degree the object of study is the thought pattern of the linguist himself, rather than that of the language. This is the first structural pattern noted previously. Ritual, however, becomes in turn a new starting point at which to differentiate once again between conceptual and behavioral components. This is the second structural pattern described earlier. However, ritual theory goes on to do something that Saussure, in the rigor of his focus and logic, according to Jameson, failed to do, namely, provide a stage of synthetic integration. Differentiated from belief in the first structural pattern, ritual becomes a second point at which to distinguish thought and action. Yet at this second stage ritual is seen as synthetic, as the very mechanism or medium through which thought and action are integrated. The elaboration of ritual as a mechanism for the fusion of opposing categories simultaneously serves both to differentiate and unite a set of terms. That is, the second structural pattern in ritual theory, in which ritual mediates thought and action, posits a dialectical relation between the differentiated entities instead of replicating an unmediated dichotomy. Ritual emerges as the means for a provisional synthesis of some form of the original opposition. Saussure generated his linguistic system by positing an initial distinction, the successive and systematic replication of which rendered the distinction an ahistorical, nondialectical, or pure opposition. The three representative theories of ritual briefly described clearly present ritual as just such a medium of integration or synthesis for opposing sociocultural forces. These are not isolated examples. There is a strong impetus within theoretical studies of religion and culture for this type of dialectic. Some argue that his notion of ritual contains a dialectical mediation of the social and the individual; others argue that its fundamental weakness is precisely that his notion of ritual lacks such a dialectic. Rather, as idealized representations of social values and structures, they merely act upon subjective states to mold them. Those representations whose flow constitutes our interior life are of two different species which are irreducible one into another. Some concern themselves with the external and material world; others, with an ideal world to which we attribute a moral superiority over the first. Such is the profound meaning of the antithesis which all men have more or less clearly conceived Constructing Ritual 2. Indeed, given any initial avowal or assumption of such differentiated processes, a theoretician would have to come up with some phenomenon structured to mediate them if it did not already exist. Hence, I am suggesting that descriptions of how rituals work have been constructed according to a logic rooted in the dynamics of theoretical speculation and the unconscious manipulation of the thoughtâ€"action dichotomy is intrinsic to this construction. Saussure could not see how his initial distinctions radically limited the descriptive power of his system. Likewise, we do not see how such dichotomies as continuity and change, individual experience and social forms, and beliefs and behavior invoke an assumption about thought and action that runs particularly deep in the intellectual traditions of Western culture.

Chapter 3 : Catherine Bell (religious studies scholar) - Wikipedia

Ritual studies today figures as a central element of religious discourse for many scholars around the world. Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice, Catherine Bell's sweeping and seminal work on the subject, helped legitimize the field.

The book analyzes the work that has been done with ritual as a category to get to where the scholarship is and suggests other places to take the category of ritual 4. The starting point of the study is consideration of what causes certain acts to be called ritual, how the category affects knowledge about other cultures, and what the assumptions are that limit how we think of ritual 4. To do so, need to consider historical development of issues, engagement with our cultural categories, extend this to real examples 5. The book is organized into 3 parts: Despite the differences among historians of religion, sociologists, and anthropologists, their theories of ritual all similarly function to resolve the complex problems posed by an initial bifurcation of thought and action. Indeed, theoretical discourse about ritual is organized as a coherent whole by virtue of a logic based on the opposition of thought and action. Bell argues against Goody, who proposes to throw out the term ritual, which carries with it associations of universality. Bell proposes to retain but modify the term: Namely, she questions the universality 7. When analyzed as ritualization, acting ritually emerges as a particular cultural strategy of differentiation linked to particular social effects and rooted in a distinctive interplay of a socialized body and the environment it structures. This is not a relationship in which one social group has absolute control over another, but one that simultaneously involves both consent and resistance, misunderstanding and appropriation. Her argument relies on analysis of how language is used 8. The Practice of Ritual Theory Introduction to the section: Ritual theories are embedded in larger discourses, and how ritual is conceived reflects and supports the discourse that is its frame. This makes including ritual as objective data instead of analytic tool problematic, and it is hard to prevent a slippage from the latter to the former 13 ; after Kuhn and Foucault it is problematic to simply suggest ritual is a neutral category by recourse to claims that ritual is merely an analytic tool Bell then goes on to outline a brief genealogy of ritual as an analytic term, starting in the 19th century when it emerges as a universal category to the more recent transformation of ritual into both an object of and a method of analysis Ritual has been paired with belief as the component of religion by a range of theorists: Durkheim and others analyzed religion as a combination of belief and rites, where the former is primary; Hubert and Mauss inverted this, suggesting rites are primary. Moving beyond religion after Mauss, ritual came to be associated not just with religion but with the more basic structures of symbolization and social communication, as well as the emerging category of culture key to Geertz and Turner among others Ritual studies has emerged which studies ritual in its own right as both universal experience and analytic tool; in it, ritual has come to be a site where opposed social forces are brought back together again She then lays out her argument for the section: This happens for a number of homologous pairs besides thought and action, like synchrony and diachrony, communitas and formalized social order Turner , or ritual observer and actor Geertz. One pattern in theory of ritual: Ritual theory generally distinguishes action from conceptual parts of religion like belief, symbol, and myth. The latter may promote the former, but they are distinct. Sometimes ritual is described as action which is done without thought, an extreme bifurcation Bell uses these three patterns to show how prevalent the bifurcation and then reunification at the site of ritual is: Essentially, as I will demonstrate, the underlying dichotomy between thought and action continues to push for a loose systemization of several levels of homologized dichotomies, including the relations between the ritual observer and the ritual actor. Bell draws on Jameson to note parallel in linguistic theory of differentiation of two terms that come up in subsequent levels of analysis. A similar thing happens in ritual, though unlike Saussure, in ritual, there is a reintegration not just serial differentiations The example is given of those analyzing Durkheim and Durkheim himself, there is a tendency to see two sociocultural processes and then try to find a theory that reintegrates them Theorists speculating on ritual have tended to manipulate the thought-action dichotomy in constructing theories of ritual Geertz, who is focused on meaning, polarizes ethos and worldview, which is parallel to the analogous to the split between action and belief, respectively. A third pattern, too, emerges in Geertz, in addition to the dichotomy and synthesis pattern. He brings in the

relationship between observer and participant of ritual: That is, ritual participants act, whereas those observing them think. In ritual activity, conceptions and dispositions are fused for the participants, which yields meaning. Meaning for the outside theorist comes differently: By recognizing the ritual mechanism of meaningfulness for participants, the theorist in turn can grasp its meaningfulness as a cultural phenomenon. Ritual activity can then become meaningful to the theorist. In this chapter, Bell argues that a circular logic arises when theorists base their theories of ritual on depictions of a social order that is derived from assumptions brought in by the theorist. The basic assumption is the differentiation of thought and action, and layers of homologous pairs are built on that. The theory of ritual that results is built on these introduced assumptions. Bell opens with examples from Milton Singer and Geertz which she uses to argue that the theorist imposes his thought pattern on ritual She lays out the main argument up front: The opposition of the theorist and the ritual object becomes homologized with two other oppositions, namely, the opposition that differentiates ritual beliefs versus activities and the opposition of two fundamental sociocultural forces that is resolved by ritual conceptual versus dispositional forces. This homology is achieved by a hidden appeal to a type of common denominator, the opposition of thought and action. In the end, a model of ritual that integrates opposing sociocultural forces becomes homologized to a mode of theoretical discourse that reintegrates the dichotomy underlying the identification of a thinking theorist and an acting object. This type of expedient logic carries another inevitable corollary, however. Bell goes on to show the circular logic that results from theories that start by differentiating thought and action and build layers of homologies 32 Geertz is a primary example: Geertz distinguishes between cultural and social system, where the former is symbolic and the latter is action-based After he sets up these separate categories, he suggests that ritual that fails is ritual in which culture and social system are discontinuous. Bell argues his reasoning is circular: He fails to do better than the functionalists he critiques for not being able to explain change A second set of examples of circularity from homologized patterns within ritual theory is drawn from the group of theorists who describe ritual as an arena where social conflicts are worked out Max Gluckman and Victor Turner. These arguments lead to circularity, too, because the conclusions seem to result from what the theorist has imposed on the system: Another example of the same circularity of explaining the fundamentals of culture such that the theoretical tool solves puzzles that the theorist tries to explain is the Marxian and Hegelian idea of contradiction. Bell claims that performance theory is guilty of presenting activity as dramatizing prior conceptual entities in order to affirm them. A system for how society works is presumed and then ritual is seen to play out in that way, i. Grimes suggest that the human body is primary to ritual but explains this because the body can enact social roles and cultural meanings. Performance theory fails to break out of the dichotomy pattern. It also relies on the theorist-observer to be a participant because a performance needs an audience In her overall critique of performance theory, Bell criticizes how it rests on a slippery extended metaphor, which leads to naturalization of observer, the slippage from performance as metaphor to idea that that is the actual nature of the activity, there is no way to distinguish between different types of performance Geertz looks at ritual by other metaphors, including game, drama, or text Some of the problems with text as a metaphor for ritual: Though there are some merits to performance theory, it is problematic because it easily slips from tool to feature of reality After a thorough summary of what she has covered so farâ€"the homologized oppositions between thought and action, the thinking subject and non-thinking subject, theorist and actor, as well as the way that ritual serves a function of reintegrating these oppositionsâ€"Bell emphasizes how the discourse of ritual has been overdetermined by the initial dichotomy and rejects the thought-action dichotomy as a basis for understanding ritual. She suggests that the subordination of actors to thinkers is more damaging than the bifurcation itself. The activity of separating categories is used to imply an inequality between two things black and white, male and female , and such an activity is harmful, but she also suggests that to understand differentiation as an activity is to understand the basis of theory-making. There are two parts to generating a theoretical discourse: The two are co-constructed, each implying the naturalness of the other. She suggests that within this discourse of cultural knowledge, there may be attempts to deal with the traditional relationship between subject and theorist which needs to be reevaluated within this new context. Yet, domination has not disappeared, and is in fact maintained in the thought-action dichotomy. Naturally, as many others have argued

before, the differentiation tends to distort not only the nature of so-called physical activities, but the nature of mental ones as well. Yet the more subtle and far-reaching distortion is not the obvious bifurcation of a single, complex reality into dichotomous aspects that can exist in theory only. This object will act as the natural object of the specified mode of analysis, although the object so identified is not independent of this analysis; it is constituted and depicted as such in terms of the specified mode of analysis. That is, the object and the method are actually intrinsic to each other, one demonstrating the naturalness and validity of the other. Yet the domination of the theoretical subject is neither abrogated nor transcended. Bell first sets up the problem with ritual theories that have been created thus far. Most attempts to define ritual do so by setting up a universal, and therefore incomplete, definition of ritual. Such definitions define what can be called ritual and what cannot and lead to categories of ritual. While taxonomy of ritual has been important for organizing the study of ritual, it has led to several problems: Theories of ritual have tended to fall into one of two categories: The distinction between symbolic and instrumental has a tendency to collapse into emotional versus logical, which itself often leads to ritual described as cathartic and dealing with anxiety. She also notes that the symbolic vs practical distinction is not a native, but an imposed one. In this group are theories that see ritual as a type of routinization or communication. This group runs the risk of analyzing all parts of human life as ritual. She then introduces her approach, based on the idea of ritualization, which involves analyzing how certain social actions differentiate themselves from others. The former deals with human nature and activity, responding to problems from Hegel and Feuerbach I will not detail them, but see page 75 if you are interested. The latter deals with how to use theory. Bell then outlines how later people follow or diverge from Marx in the use of practice, followed by a list of problems with how practice has been used sometimes encourages slippage between levels of the argument, privileges terms afforded by positing fundamental oppositions which leads terms to become derivative, mediating role of practice can lead to synthesis of categories to be unstable and therefore not effective at mediation. Bell then gives the examples of Jameson, Bourdieu, and Ortner on practice, pointing out their limitations. Situational refers to the fact that context is key, and an activity is not the same if taken out of or abstracted from the context. Misrecognition is misrecognition of what a practice is doing: It is a strategic and practical orientation for acting, a framework possible only insofar as it is embedded in the act itself. As such, of course, the redemptive hegemony of practice does not reflect reality more or less effectively; it creates it more or less effectively. In the last section, Bell returns directly to ritualization. Two key concepts are relationality and differentiation. The sacred and profane are also key categories: There are common features to ritualization like fixity and repetition but there are no necessary, intrinsic features of ritualization.

Chapter 4 : Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice by Catherine Bell

One pattern in theory of ritual: Ritual theory generally distinguishes action from conceptual parts of religion like belief, symbol, and myth. The latter may promote the former, but they are distinct. Sometimes ritual is described as action which is done without thought, an extreme bifurcation (19).

Oxford University Press, Bell is extremely hand-wavy throughout the book. While her mastery of the literature is clear, her approach offers little evidence that she has studied any actual, specific societies to which these theories might apply, or from which these generalizing statements might derive. How is one to understand actual, living or historical societies, and the function of ritual within them, only by reading theorists, and not studying actual societies? Even if we were to take it on faith that Bell has studied actual societies â€" we are led to understand that she is an expert on Chinese religion, though one would never know it from the text â€" Bell offers no evidence to indicate that her theoretical concepts are true or applicable, nor to indicate to which cultures, in which periods, in which ways, these might be applicable. Specific examples taken from a wide range of cultures would help to suggest how these theoretical concepts might be applied to societies across space and time, but instead we are left completely to fend for ourselves as to whether these ideas make sense for our particular object of study. And, we are left to fend for ourselves more generally. Bell operates almost entirely in an aetherial, conceptual realm of Theory, providing very little concrete evidence to explain, or support, her theoretical assertions and those of the scholars she is quoting. One can open to almost any page and find a statement like â€¦ ritualization [is described] as a means of preserving strained social relations by simultaneously escalating and orchestrating conflict in such a way that it has to be and can be resolved Bell offers no concrete examples whatsoever to support this assertion, nor to help explain to the reader what is meant by this, or how it might function. The reader then is left to attempt to make sense of the theoretical assertion by considering her own examples. Does a royal entry preserve strained social relations? Does it escalate and orchestrate conflict? How about a religious ritual, such as calling a Bar Mitzvah boy or Bat Mitzvah girl up to read from the Torah for the first time as an adult member of the community? Where are the strained relations, or conflict, in that? Without any explanatory examples provided by Bell, it is difficult to understand the theoretical assertion, and therefore difficult as well to be convinced, i. Further, Bell explicitly refuses to acknowledge that her theoretical frameworks derive from, or apply particularly applicably to, any particular culture. And yet, still, she goes on to speak only in vague, generalizing statements that are connected to no particular time or place, no particular people or culture, and no particular type or category of ritual e. Bell writes that discussing specific cultures is not the point of this study, and that the application of these ideas to particular cases is left for future works by other scholars, perhaps drawing upon the ideas presented in this volume. She thus leaves us completely ungrounded, and lost. What kind of rituals is Bell imagining as she writes this? What kinds of rituals are we meant to imagine as we read it, in order for the various theoretical ideas being presented to make sense? Bell refuses to say so, instead leaving the reader with a vague sense that everything in the book applies variously to everything and nothing in the broad world of ritual activity. The theory presented in this book is so far disconnected from any specific cases, specific cultural or historical contexts, or categories political ritual? It is a wonder to me that anyone manages to make use of this book at all, and that it remains so prominent, so oft-cited. I would never have come across the book myself, or thought to add it to my reading lists, if not for how widely cited it is. It is so widely cited, in fact, that I had had the impression it was a must-read. Well, I suppose I am glad to have read it now, to know for myself just what it is, rather than having that continue to linger out there, not knowing whether it might have been useful for me, for my own research. And now I know, and the answer is, not in the slightest. How bodies move in space. How hierarchy is constructed through ritual action. How differences in cultural attitudes or assumptions about ritual can result in problems. Edward Muir , who I have not yet posted about, along with Tom Pettitt and numerous others, analyze specific parades, processions, or other events in medieval and Renaissance Europe, using these as generalize-able examples, to point to how banners and music are used in parades, how processions might function â€" in terms of meaning-making, or emotional, social-political or psychological

impact â€" both from the point of view of participants and observers. How the members of a parade might be arranged before, after, or around the figure or object of the greatest importance, whether that be a king, ambassador, or relic. I know I am being quite vague and general here, but I promise you, even in this I am being far more concrete than Bell; and scholars such as Muir and Pettitt are more concrete still. Even the theorists, such as Victor Turner, provide specific examples to show what they are talking about. Hell, even Foucault does this, as he speaks of incarceration, schooling, specific episodes in the history of science, as examples to illustrate far broader, more abstract and conceptual topics.

Chapter 5 : Ritual - Wikipedia

In Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice, Catherine Bell is pri- marily concerned with theoretical discourse on ritual in anthropology rather than with particular theories of ritual. The first section of the boolz, "The Practice of Ritual Theory," deals with the development and the na- ture of that discourse in anthropology.

Many things which have been labeled magic in antiquity are later discovered to be a form of technology. Dewey B Larson analyzed physics and science, noticing a great deal of conceptual errors, finally developing a complete and verified theory; Reciprocal Systems Theory. All of this was done using the same basic laws of nature and is conceptually in harmony with Hermetic Philosophy and Alchemy. Fundamentals of Magic All magical arts or practices are based on the principle of Mentalism â€" that the universe is a mental construct and as such, a human being can manipulate or co-create with it via their mind. The magician performs rituals with items which affect consciousness, creating a geometry or configuration which allows the manifested result to come forth. The same concept is used everywhere on earth, but is thought of differently. A process of manifestation involves a relationship which can be understood in a contractual framework. Anything which has been created, any object, event or being â€" is the product or result of a relationship between two or more beings; everything is alive , including objects. This is the essential premise which all forms of creation employ, including what the goal of magical practices are; to bring a focused intention into manifested form. The formula, first in a magical terms, second in a business terms and finally in contractual terms: Then this is all combined and directed into action, a ritual. This is because psy or metaphysical effects on matter are a direct result of mental image fractality or correspondence. Remote Viewing , for example, is the ability to receive or create mental images of an actual place, with enough clarity, to verify the images against the place in question. The Stargate Program is one example of the validity of this process, and reveals the fundamental principle of correspondence at work. The Remote Viewer holds a photograph of the location they wish to view. This photograph is an exact image of a certain point of view of the location, which the Remote Viewer reflects in their mind and holds via concentration techniques. The mental image in their mind, due to the photograph, corresponds with the real location, creating a cascade in the mental plane, allowing data to be transferred via entrainment. Entrainment is the ability of moving systems to share information via resonance; exactly like metronomes synchronizing. This is why a wand made by the magician who intends on using it, is more powerful than a fancy one made by another. As such, if the magician has not charged the object or the ritual with the correct meanings, the ritual or working will not be effective. Much like cooking recipes, the plan of action is provided but no framework of understanding conveyed to the practitioner. Given the essential component of creating the correct meanings to objects and rituals, this is a major problem for many. Although it may be possible to affect some degree of success without understanding the essential principles behind why wands, symbols and rituals are needed, it leaves the magician at a severe disadvantage. For Example, magical workings often need to be set against the 4 cardinal directions or done at specific times of day or points in the calendar. This is to allow for maximum entrainment of celestial influences on the working in question. Much like how the Earth, Sun and Planetary alignments increase the likelihood of earthquakes , these same celestial bodies affect consciousness and the magical working. Magic in this sense is nothing more than an ancient technology which uses the inherent properties of the universe itself to manifest a desired result. No Laws of Nature are broken, no intervention from other intelligences takes place, which was not already present and operating. The term magic is used mainly to refer to things we do not understand and ascribe supernatural qualities to as a result of our failure to comprehend. Therefore, Magic and Technology are actually two ends of the same scale 2 sides of the same coin , the key definer being our understanding. In other words, magic is what we call technology which we do not understand. A cell phone to an 18th century woman seems like magic, but to a child of the 21st century is just a piece of technology. And if we extend this premise to the whole of creation, with Source, Spirit or God as the inventor, then the whole of the universe is a piece of technology that is specifically designed to allow for higher orders of intelligence to use. As we master ourselves and life more , our ability to work with it increases. In this respect, de-mystification or developing a

complete body of understanding, not only empowers the practitioner, but accurately reflects the reality of what is taking place within their mind; moving from novice to master. Honor and Dishonor â€" Black and White Magic The goal or desire of the magician, and how they choose to manifest it, are what determine if it is black or white magic. Honorable practices are honest, fair and acknowledge most importantly free will choice. Dishonorable practices are dishonest, unfair and ignore the free will of others; the ends justify the means. Wizards employ white magic: Sorcerers employ black magic: For example, if a ritual for romantic love attempts to force someone to fall in love with them, abrogating their free will, then it is black magic. The following article provides a testimonial of the principles described above with many clarifying insights which reflect the empowering affect of gaining knowledge of the mechanics of magic and ritual. Power was raised, channelled in a certain direction, and then the ritual was closed. The only negative result was a comment I got back on a feedback sheet from a participant, who said she was shocked that I did not begin the ritual by invoking the holy archangels of the four directions usually given as Michael, Gabriel, Raphael, and Uriel. The person who complained was both right and wrong. In fact there are many ways to do it. Invoking the archangels is part of the Western tradition of high magic, particularly as handed down by the extremely influential Victorian occult society known as the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn. We started a fire in the fire pit and formed a circle around it, warming ourselves in the chilly weather. RT pulled out a pouch of Five Brothers Tobacco, pure tobacco with no artificial ingredients. He passed the pouch around, each of us taking a little bit of tobacco in our hands. The version I used in the ritual in New York was simpler still; at the outset I simply asked the participants to visualise a pillar of light in each corner of the room. This anecdote illustrates two basic concepts of ritual magic: No one knows what power is used in this sense , and at the same time everyone knows what it is. But all of us have experienced its effects, and, moreover, all of us have raised it ourselves, usually without knowing what we are doing. Remember the last time you entered a room in which an argument was about to break out. Although probably nothing was different about the air or the lighting or any of the physical aspects of the room, you undoubtedly noticed a feeling of tension and perhaps danger in the atmosphere. This tension becomes even more palpable if the room is silent, and the pressure that you feel to dispel it becomes extremely intense. One way of dispelling it is to express it somehow, and if the tension is not too strong, it can be broken when someone simply speaks. At other times, it erupts in an argument or even a physical fight. Another example is the classic situation of the teenage dance. At the outset the boys are ranged at one end of the hall, the girls at the other. Everybody is too shy to begin dancing, and again an extreme amount of tension accumulates in the room. Finally one courageous couple breaks the tension and begins to dance. The energy starts to flow. It is expressed through dancing and perhaps later on, sexually. Most of the time this raising of power is completely unintentional and undesired. But he or she chooses to do it only in certain circumstances and for specific results. The raising of power partially explains another feature we have seen in ritual magic â€" the creation of a sacred space of some kind. It can be done, as we have seen, by marking out the four directions; traditional magicians have also done it by drawing a geometric figure, such as a circle or a pentagram, with the point of a wand or a sword in the space around them. The actual shape does not matter as much as building an invisible sanctuary where certain forces are kept in and stray influences are kept out. It can be used for good or evil or for that matter mixed ends. These terms are well-known; a less familiar one is grey magic, which is done for mixed motives. In all likelihood few magicians probably practice grey magic intentionally, although most have probably done so without entirely realising it. I personally would characterise doing a magical ritual to find a lover as grey magic; doing a ritual to make a specific person fall in love with you would be closer to black magic, since it intentionally interferes with the free will of another person. All these reflections lead to some questions: Does ritual magic work? And since practicing magic for selfish ends is at best morally ambiguous, why do it at all? Esotericism regards this image as a specific and accurate picture of reality. This light pervades the universe; there is nowhere and nothing it is not, but it is modified, its purity and intensity are filtered and diluted, as it proceeds through various levels of manifestation. Esoteric theory holds that this light reaches us on earth only after passing through the zones of the stars and planets, whose influences it absorbs; hence its name. Astral light must not be confused with physical starlight. It is a subtle matter, imperceptible to the five senses and to the implements

of science. Neurochemical responses, a scientist may say. In this latter form, they can be said to be made up of astral light. A more topical analogy comes from the world of computers. Hardware, software, and networks together form cyberspace, a dimension that, while in no way separate from the workings of computers, seems to obey its own laws and possess its own reality. This resemblance between the apparently outmoded world of the occult and the sophisticated ideas of cutting-edge science has not gone unnoticed: But then so are dreams and mental images. This is not to say that the astral light is itself a frail substance; occultists consider it indestructible. But this subtle matter does not hold shapes well. Dream figures constantly shift form, and even before our waking eyes mental images rise and fall like waves. Hence, the central aspects of occult magic has to do with forming, holding, and energising a shape composed of astral light. If enough power and skill are used in its creation, the image will sooner or later manifest in the physical world. Manifestation In theory the process sounds simple enough, and in a way it is, but it is not so easy to accomplish. This may be partly due to a lack of mental discipline, but it also reflects the nature of the astral light itself. Much of magical practice consists of moulding this elusive substance. Hence magical training emphasises, above all else, mental concentration and will. Look at some object near you. Now close your eyes and try to visualise it.

Chapter 6 : Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice - Catherine Bell - Google Books

In recent years the notion of ritual has emerged as an important focus for new forms of cultural analysis. Arguing that the concept of ritual is overdue for critical rethinking, Bell here offers a close theoretical analysis of the recent developments in ritual studies, concentrating on anthropology.

Structural functionalism Nineteenth century " armchair anthropologists " were concerned with the basic question of how religion originated in human history. In the twentieth century their conjectural histories were replaced with new concerns around the question of what these beliefs and practices did for societies, regardless of their origin. In this view, religion was a universal, and while its content might vary enormously, it served certain basic functions such as the provision of prescribed solutions to basic human psychological and social problems, as well as expressing the central values of a society. Bronislaw Malinowski used the concept of function to address questions of individual psychological needs; A. Radcliffe-Brown , in contrast, looked for the function purpose of the institution or custom in preserving or maintaining society as a whole. They thus disagreed about the relationship of anxiety to ritual. Homans sought to resolve these opposing theories by differentiating between "primary anxieties" felt by people who lack the techniques to secure results, and "secondary or displaced anxiety" felt by those who have not performed the rites meant to allay primary anxiety correctly. Homans argued that purification rituals may then be conducted to dispel secondary anxiety. Radcliffe-Brown argued that ritual should be distinguished from technical action, viewing it as a structured event: At one extreme we have actions which are entirely profane, entirely functional, technique pure and simple; at the other we have actions which are entirely sacred, strictly aesthetic, technically non-functional. Between these two extremes we have the great majority of social actions which partake partly of the one sphere and partly of the other. From this point of view technique and ritual, profane and sacred, do not denote types of action but aspects of almost any kind of action. Although the functionalist model was soon superseded, later "neofunctional" theorists adopted its approach by examining the ways that ritual regulated larger ecological systems. Roy Rappaport , for example, examined the way gift exchanges of pigs between tribal groups in Papua New Guinea maintained environmental balance between humans, available food with pigs sharing the same foodstuffs as humans and resource base. Rappaport concluded that ritual, " Stephen Lansing traced how the intricate calendar of Hindu Balinese rituals served to regulate the vast irrigation systems of Bali, ensuring the optimum distribution of water over the system while limiting disputes. Gluckman argued that the ritual was an expression of underlying social tensions an idea taken up by Victor Turner , and that it functioned as an institutional pressure valve, relieving those tensions through these cyclical performances. The rites ultimately functioned to reinforce social order, insofar as they allowed those tensions to be expressed without leading to actual rebellion. Carnival is viewed in the same light. He observed, for example, how the first-fruits festival incwala of the South African Bantu kingdom of Swaziland symbolically inverted the normal social order, so that the king was publicly insulted, women asserted their domination over men, and the established authority of elders over the young was turned upside down. He therefore argued that the symbol systems are not reflections of social structure as the Functionalists believed, but are imposed on social relations to organize them. Running counter to this emphasis on structured symbolic oppositions within a ritual was his exploration of the liminal phase of rites of passage, a phase in which "anti-structure" appears. In this phase, opposed states such as birth and death may be encompassed by a single act, object or phrase. The dynamic nature of symbols experienced in ritual provides a compelling personal experience; ritual is a "mechanism that periodically converts the obligatory into the desirable". Grid is a scale referring to the degree to which a symbolic system is a shared frame of reference. Group refers to the degree people are tied into a tightly knit community. When graphed on two intersecting axes, four quadrants are possible: Douglas argued that societies with strong group or strong grid were marked by more ritual activity than those weak in either group or grid see also, section "Ritual as a Methodological Measure of Religiosity" below. Turner analyzed the ritual events in 4 stages: Like Gluckman, he argued these rituals maintain social order while facilitating disordered inversions, thereby moving people to a new status, just as in an initiation rite. Geertz argued that

religious symbol systems provided both a "model of" reality showing how to interpret the world as is as well as a "model for" reality clarifying its ideal state. The role of ritual, according to Geertz, is to bring these two aspects - the "model of" and the "model for" - together: Geertz rejected Functionalist arguments that ritual describes social order, arguing instead that ritual actively shapes that social order and imposes meaning on disordered experience. As a result, ritual utterances become very predictable, and the speaker is made anonymous in that they have little choice in what to say. The restrictive syntax reduces the ability of the speaker to make propositional arguments, and they are left, instead, with utterances that cannot be contradicted such as "I do thee wed" in a wedding. These kinds of utterances, known as performatives , prevent speakers from making political arguments through logical argument, and are typical of what Weber called traditional authority instead. Thomas Csordas, in contrast, analyzes how ritual language can be used to innovate. Csordas looks at groups of rituals that share performative elements "genres" of ritual with a shared "poetics". These rituals may fall along the spectrum of formality, with some less, others more formal and restrictive. Csordas argues that innovations may be introduced in less formalized rituals. As these innovations become more accepted and standardized, they are slowly adopted in more formal rituals. In this way, even the most formal of rituals are potential avenues for creative expression. There are no articles on the subject thereafter until , when a new, lengthy article appeared that redefines ritual as " The shift in definitions from script to behavior, which is likened to a text, is matched by a semantic distinction between ritual as an outward sign i. The point of monastic discipline was to learn skills and appropriate emotions. Asad contrasts his approach by concluding "Symbols call for interpretation, and even as interpretive 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. Catherine Bell has extended this idea by shifting attention from ritual as a category, to the processes of "ritualization" by which ritual is created as a cultural form in a society. Ritualization is "a way of acting that is designed and orchestrated to distinguish and privilege what is being done in comparison to other, usually more quotidian, activities".

Chapter 7 : Ritual Magic in Theory & Practice | Humans Are Free

Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice, reissued here more than 17 years after its initial publication, changed the framework for understanding the nature and function of ritual. Catherine M. Bell's profound insight was that ritual, long understood as thoughtless action stripped of context, is more interestingly understood as strategy: a culturally.

Emile Durkheim posited a relationship between ritual behavior and the adherence to social order, putting collective veneration of the sacred at the heart of his theory of social solidarity. Durkheim argued that every religious group had three features: Rituals provide a focal point for emotional processes and generate symbols of group membership. They help people to experience a shared sense of exaltation and group transcendence. This feeling, which is only experienced through ritual veneration, is collective effervescence. The unique condition of ritual participation is that people systematically misunderstand the emotional energy they experience in the ritual process as having a supernatural origin. This misunderstanding thus confirms their religious beliefs and the exhilaration they experience leads them to return to their community to re-experience it through sacred rites. His theory of rituals provides a powerful social mechanism that reinforces group coherence and produces social solidarity, but he does not explain how social groups originate or how they change, dissolve, fracture, and so on. From a functionalist perspective, social and cultural innovations, however rare, are quickly normalized and institutionalized through ritual practices. Stark and Finke jettison the functionalism of Durkheim and focus exclusively on religious rituals, rather than all repeated social interactions, arguing that confidence in religious explanations increases with ritual participation. Rational-choice accounts argue that rituals are ubiquitous features of social life because they provide the common focal points and common cultural knowledge that provide actors with information about how others will act. This makes mutual assurance possible and helps actors solve the coordination problems that usually bedevil and obstruct effective collective action. Armed with common knowledge, actors can more credibly make commitments to one another and mutually orient their actions to one another, often without the need for organization Chwe Cultural practices â€" such as rituals â€" that facilitate coordination develop and persist because they are, ultimately, efficient and enhance the productivity of social action. Not surprisingly, rituals are foundational to voluntary collective action, as is especially evident in religious groups. They fulfill the need which the believer feels of strengthening and affirming, at regular intervals of time, the bond which unites him to the sacred beings upon which he depends. The cult helps to constitute moral boundaries, exclude strangers, provide access to goods and privileges, and define a sacred citizenship that operates across social distinctions status Maus, Hubert, and Hertz Yet this need not imply that integration occurs without conflict, as struggles frequently occur among the adherents of the cult for their position in it, their rival interpretations of the core beliefs and myths, and its relevance and importance to the challenges they face. Neo-Durkheimian theorists of the ritual process insist that the theory of rituals must endogenize change e. In Interaction Ritual Chains , Collins contends that rituals are powerful because they instigate social interaction based on bodily co-presence and mutual emotional attunement. When engaged in rituals, individuals feel solidarity with one another and imagine themselves to be members of a common undertaking; they become infused with emotional energy and exhilaration; they establish and reinforce collective symbols, moral representations of the group that ought to be defended and reinforced; and they react angrily to insults toward or the profanation of these symbols. Yet this is not a functional account of social order; drawing on Goffman, Collins shows how actors are obliged to perform in chains of ritual encounters which they can attempt to manipulate but which may also fail to produce emotional energy and attachment. Ritual participation does not always perpetuate social order. For instance, growing self-consciousness is deadly to ritual participation and its fundamentally spontaneous, emotional character Giessen Varying theoretical formulations focus on solidarity and integration, on the confidence in beliefs, and the generation of common knowledge that facilitates collective action. Each is the foundation of a contemporary research program in the sociology of religion.

Chapter 8 : Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice : Catherine Bell :

Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice. The work was published in two editions, the original Oxford University Press edition in , and an edition also from Oxford University Press in with a new prologue, which is also available in electronic versions. Both editions share the same pagination.

Biography[edit] Born in New York City , Bell undertook her undergraduate studies at Manhattanville College , gaining a double-major BA in philosophy and religion in Assuming Universality, Describing Particularity in the Study of Religion, funded by another fellowship from the National Endowment for the Humanities, but it was left unfinished at the time of her death. Having known her personally, Aslan also commented on her "razor sharp wit, her boundless compassion, and refusal to accept anything but the best from her students. Both editions share the same pagination. The book is organized into three major sections: Chapter 1, Constructing Ritual[edit] Catherine Bell introduces the study of ritual theory in chapter 1. Ritual is seen as a performance of conceptual orientations. Ritual is understood as a structural mechanism that reintegrates the two opposing dichotomies of thought and action, which is equivalent to the belief and behavior dichotomy. In an ever changing society, ritual is the bridge between tradition and constant social change. Bell reestablishes the different dichotomies that are at play against one another: Ritual actors integrate worldview and the ethos conceptual and dispositional while the theorist integrates these conceptual categories. Ritual may be understood as communication among people, rather than individuals with the divine. After a debate of what meaning is, from the views of Clifford Geertz and Stanley Jeyaraja Tambiah , the next dichotic lens in which to view ritual is drama vs. Through text analogy one may see ritual as a text. The saying " fake it till you make it " is a good way to sum up the thoughts of Bell because as children are younger they learn so many rituals in our respective faiths but it is not until later in life that they give those rituals meaning and practice them as more than mere action. It is necessary to explore the actual contexts of ritualization by looking at a more accurate actions for ritualization, and the history behind the traditions practiced. The intended belief behind ritual may be misunderstood by the participants, indicating that their participation in the ritual may not necessarily support or understand the initial institutional belief. Although Bell describes two views, she discusses ideology implemented within a society as a way for the dominant class to maintain power and control. Thus sacred kingships throughout the past centuries used ritual as a tool to install hierarchy and fulfill political agendas. She invites the readers to question ritual as no longer a self-fulfilling tool but also a power tool for mass governance. Ritual constructs an argument, all while maintaining social order. The purpose of ritualization might be to incite a controversy or to create certain impressions. While ritualization may be an effective strategy of power in some certain conditions, it has specific limits and may even be counterproductive in other scenarios. The first dimension is the dynamics of the social body and its projection of a structured environment, where ritualization produces and objectifies the constructions of power. She maintains that there are three forms of empowerment for those in charge of ritualization: She intended it to be "a more holistic and pragmatic orientation to multiple dimensions of the phenomenon of ritual" [10].

Chapter 9 : Catherine Bell â€" Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice | ä¸Šã‚Šå•£èª¬ Nubui Kuduchi

A ritual is a sequence of activities involving gestures, words, and objects, performed in a sequestered place, and performed according to set sequence. Rituals may be prescribed by the traditions of a community, including a religious community.

Power was raised, channelled in a certain direction, and then the ritual was closed. The only negative result was a comment I got back on a feedback sheet from a participant, who said she was shocked that I did not begin the ritual by invoking the holy archangels of the four directions usually given as Michael, Gabriel, Raphael, and Uriel. The person who complained was both right and wrong. In ritual magic, it is essential to create a sacred space to work in. But it is not essential to do this by invoking the four archangels specifically. In fact there are many ways to do it. Invoking the archangels is part of the Western tradition of high magic, particularly as handed down by the extremely influential Victorian occult society known as the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn. We started a fire in the fire pit and formed a circle around it, warming ourselves in the chilly weather. RT pulled out a pouch of Five Brothers Tobacco, pure tobacco with no artificial ingredients. He passed the pouch around, each of us taking a little bit of tobacco in our hands. The version I used in the ritual in New York was simpler still; at the outset I simply asked the participants to visualise a pillar of light in each corner of the room. This anecdote illustrates two basic concepts of ritual magic: In my brief description of the New York ritual, I mentioned another important part about ritual magic â€" raising power. No one knows what power is used in this sense , and at the same time everyone knows what it is. We cannot say whether it is a form of electromagnetic energy, the life force known as chi, or something quite different from either of these. But all of us have experienced its effects, and, moreover, all of us have raised it ourselves, usually without knowing what we are doing. Remember the last time you entered a room in which an argument was about to break out. Although probably nothing was different about the air or the lighting or any of the physical aspects of the room, you undoubtedly noticed a feeling of tension and perhaps danger in the atmosphere. This tension becomes even more palpable if the room is silent, and the pressure that you feel to dispel it becomes extremely intense. One way of dispelling it is to express it somehow, and if the tension is not too strong, it can be broken when someone simply speaks. At other times, it erupts in an argument or even a physical fight. Another example is the classic situation of the teenage dance. At the outset the boys are ranged at one end of the hall, the girls at the other. Everybody is too shy to begin dancing, and again an extreme amount of tension accumulates in the room. Finally one courageous couple breaks the tension and begins to dance. The energy starts to flow. It is expressed through dancing and perhaps later on, sexually. Most of the time this raising of power is completely unintentional and undesired. The magician, by contrast, wants to raise this power. But he or she chooses to do it only in certain circumstances and for specific results. The raising of power partially explains another feature we have seen in ritual magic â€" the creation of a sacred space of some kind. It can be done, as we have seen, by marking out the four directions; traditional magicians have also done it by drawing a geometric figure, such as a circle or a pentagram, with the point of a wand or a sword in the space around them. The actual shape does not matter as much as building an invisible sanctuary where certain forces are kept in and stray influences are kept out. It can be used for good or evil or for that matter mixed ends. Using it for good purposes â€" such as healing or blessing or cleansing â€" is known as white magic. Using it for harmful purposes, such as cursing or coercion, is black magic. These terms are well-known; a less familiar one is grey magic, which is done for mixed motives. In all likelihood few magicians probably practice grey magic intentionally, although most have probably done so without entirely realising it. I personally would characterise doing a magical ritual to find a lover as grey magic; doing a ritual to make a specific person fall in love with you would be closer to black magic, since it intentionally interferes with the free will of another person. All these reflections lead to some questions: Does ritual magic work? And since practicing magic for selfish ends is at best morally ambiguous, why do it at all? Illuminati Satanists Rule the World, Not Politicians, Bankers or Military Heads Black magic is the force that rules the world, so it is the Satanic black magicians which constitute the true controllers of the world. Esotericism regards this image as a

specific and accurate picture of reality. This light pervades the universe; there is nowhere and nothing it is not, but it is modified, its purity and intensity are filtered and diluted, as it proceeds through various levels of manifestation. Esoteric theory holds that this light reaches us on earth only after passing through the zones of the stars and planets, whose influences it absorbs; hence its name. Astral light must not be confused with physical starlight. It is a subtle matter, imperceptible to the five senses and to the implements of science. Neurochemical responses, a scientist may say. In this latter form, they can be said to be made up of astral light. A more topical analogy comes from the world of computers. Hardware, software, and networks together form cyberspace, a dimension that, while in no way separate from the workings of computers, seems to obey its own laws and possess its own reality. This resemblance between the apparently outmoded world of the occult and the sophisticated ideas of cutting-edge science has not gone unnoticed: Silicon Valley is a hotbed of interest in the esoteric, and computer aficionados sometimes speak of cyberspace as a kind of bardo â€" a term used in The Tibetan Book of the Dead to designate the astral plane. But then so are dreams and mental images. This is not to say that the astral light is itself a frail substance; occultists consider it indestructible. But this subtle matter does not hold shapes well. Dream figures constantly shift form, and even before our waking eyes mental images rise and fall like waves. Hence, the central aspects of occult magic has to do with forming, holding, and energising a shape composed of astral light. If enough power and skill are used in its creation, the image will sooner or later manifest in the physical world. Manifestation In theory the process sounds simple enough, and in a way it is, but it is not so easy to accomplish. This may be partly due to a lack of mental discipline, but it also reflects the nature of the astral light itself. Much of magical practice consists of moulding this elusive substance. Hence magical training emphasises, above all else, mental concentration and will. Look at some object near you. Now close your eyes and try to visualise it. Then open your eyes again, and compare your mental picture of the object with the object itself. You may find that you were able to imagine some parts of it better than others, or that you could imagine it as seen from one angle but not from another. One part of magical training is intended to hone the skill of visualisation. The magician may begin by taking extremely simple objects or forms â€" geometric shapes, for example, like triangles and circles â€" and attempting to visualise them. Later on, the aspirant may be able to proceed to more complicated things like three-dimensional objects. A piece of fruit, an orange, for example, is a good thing to use, since one can imagine not only its appearance, but also its taste, smell, and texture. Visualisation and imagination form only one aspect of the discipline. The second and equally important part is the conditioning of the will. The mind is not likely to enjoy concentrated imagination at first; it will probably rebel and drift on to its ordinary worries and fantasies. The only way to train it is to constantly bring it back to the object. Such work is often tedious, and the beginner may be able to practice for only a few minutes a day before concentration gives out. Gradually, however, these practices will achieve their end. The act of constantly bringing the mind back to the object, despite boredom or frustration, begins to form a small core around which the will can constellate. Nothing more may be needed: But often the enterprise requires some sacrifice: This brings us back to the need to raise power. For a process of ritual magic to be complete, it must have a clear and specific form in the mind of the practitioner â€" and enough power must be directed toward it to ensure it manifests. This does not always happen. To cite another personal experience, about fifteen years ago I was on a retreat with a group holed up in a country house in Derbyshire, England, learning to practice magical techniques. One of the chief things taught was raising power, which was done by having the group of about a dozen people channel mental energy in a certain direction. Throughout most of the retreat this power was directed to an actual sink â€" a drain in the floor of one of the utility rooms. The reason for doing this was quite clear. We were learning to raise power, but this power could not be allowed to float around in the atmosphere. It would create enormous tension and there was tension enough anyway ; given enough momentum, it would start to cause mayhem. We all took turns: When it came to be my turn, I decided to channel this power toward realising a particular project I had in mind at the time. But it was no good. I could not focus the power in the direction I wanted; it felt as if it kept slipping and sliding away from me. I tried to recoup my efforts more than once, but soon the time was up. The whole experience had the depressing quality of a premature ejaculation. Where did the failure lie? I certainly felt power being sent in my direction; that was not the problem. And the project I was

developing was clear enough in purpose and intent.