Title
Self and culture: mastery of the self in ritual healing among !: Kung and Charismatic Christians

Permalink
https://escholarship.org/uc/item/77p8p7vh

Author
McClure, Jedidiah

Publication Date
2008

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation
Self and Culture: Mastery of the Self in Ritual Healing among !Kung and Charismatic Christians

A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

in

Anthropology

by

Jedidiah McClure

Committee in charge:

Professor Steven M. Parish, chair
Professor Janis H. Jenkins
Professor Joel Robbins

2008
The Thesis of Jedidiah McClure is approved and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication on microfilm:

Chair

University of California, San Diego

2008
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Signature Page........................................................................................................ iii

Table of Contents.................................................................................................... iv

Acknowledgements.................................................................................................. v

Abstract................................................................................................................... vi

I. Introduction............................................................................................................ 1

II. The Cultured Self................................................................................................. 3
   A. Some Definitions............................................................................................. 3
   B. Culture and Power......................................................................................... 5
   C. Power and Problem....................................................................................... 9
   D. Self............................................................................................................... 12
   E. A Note about the Argument Concerning Self and Culture....................... 15

III. Mastery in Ritual Healing................................................................................. 18
   A. Mastery of the Self in Ritual Healing......................................................... 18
   B. Mastery in !Kung Ritual Healing................................................................. 22
   C. Mastery in Charismatic Christian Ritual Healing...................................... 31

IV. Conclusions....................................................................................................... 39

References.............................................................................................................. 42
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would first like to thank Professors Vincent E. Gil and Craig D. Rusch of Vanguard University of Southern California, who were my first mentors in anthropology and encouraged me to develop my intellect. I would also like to thank Professor Carole Browner at UCLA for her faith in my abilities and investment in my development. All three of my committee members, professors Steven M. Parish, Janis H. Jenkins and Joel Robbins, have humored me and offered wise guidance in the development of my ideas and in prudent thinking more generally. Lastly I would like to thank my parents for having the bravery to encourage me as I tested and transcended the ideas of my youth.
ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Self and Culture: Mastery of the Self in Ritual Healing among !Kung and Charismatic Christians

by

Jedidiah McClure

Masters of Arts in Anthropology

University of California, San Diego, 2008

Professor Steven M. Parish, Chair

The human self is a cultural object. It never exists outside of culture or in the form of a phenomenon which is unshaped by culture. Anthropologists have variously taken up culture itself or the self-in-culture as their object of study, theorizing the manner in which the two phenomena articulate one another. I argue that the two objects, these two phenomena which we call culture and self, are incorrectly imagined as separate objects; they are in fact substantially one and the same phenomenon; culture exists only vaguely in forms other than human selves. This argument returns us to being as the centerpiece of being, and thus the argument has an innately existential feel. Secondly, I assert that we can see in the ritual lives of both !Kung and Charismatic Christians a “technology of the self,” here used in a
modified sense which diverges from Foucault’s meaning, in which the self utilizes
cultural material in an attempt to transform toward a greater mastery of itself. This
would seem to indicate that the imagined “causal” deterministic relationship
between culture and self – a relationship where culture is seen as the predominant
shaping force between the two phenomena, and which has long stood at the center
of anthropological assumptions – is incorrect in two senses. The first is that the two
phenomena are hardly distinct; the second is that the self can be seen to utilize
culture like a tool, acting as the author of culture in just the same way that it has
been seen as its subject.
I. Introduction

The first part of this paper is an argument about the nature of (and several features of) the cultural self; the second section puts this argument to work in an analysis of the pursuit of self mastery in ritual healing. This paper utilizes a phenomenological approach in order to build a theoretical self which is a totality of intentional creativity and cultural shaping. Recognizing recently voiced dissatisfaction with the lack of intention given to subjects in current social theory, I suggest that anthropological theories of self would benefit from bluntly perceiving the phenomenological interpenetration of humans and culture. I then offer an analysis, using several ethnographies, of the ritual pursuit of mastery of the self among both !Kung foragers and Charismatic Christians.

It is asserted that culture as a phenomenon is for the most part the same phenomenon as humans being - that regarding culture as its own object leads us into thinking about “individuals in culture” and the “agency and structure” debate rather than seeing that the human is a cultured being. There are implications and advantages of seeing culture and self as a fused phenomenon. An anthropological analysis can precede which is less burdened with mechanical questions as to either how culture works or how the self is situated within culture, an analysis which is capable of simultaneously wielding both intrapsychic and socio-structural theoretical tools. I attempt to demonstrate these advantages through an analysis of the ritual pursuit of self mastery.

This analysis is phenomenological in two respects. The first is that I am recognizing intentionality as a basic feature of experience. Human beings are seen
as willful creatures whose intentions are shaped and constrained but not dictated. This attitude of stressing intentionality as a key feature of human experience runs broadly throughout phenomenological thought and has even been characterized as the central attitude of phenomenology (Smith 2005:1). Second, my use of phenomenology follows Heidegger’s, “to let that which shows itself be seen from itself in the very way in which it shows itself from itself” (1962:58). This means that the phenomenological method is to look at some given phenomenon and blankly see it, proceeding forth from the raw manifestation in which the phenomenon appears. My argument about the noteworthiness of the interpenetration of two phenomena, culture and self, emerges from this approach.
II. The Cultured Self

A. Some Definitions

Theorizing the self now has a long history in anthropology. Structural accounts (e.g. Radcliffe-Brown 1952, Levy-Strauss 1966) did not concern themselves with the self, but as psychological works began to appear in anthropology (Hallowell 1955, Levy 1973) interest in the self as an anthropological object slowly gained momentum. The profile of psychological anthropology continued to rise and in the 1980s there began a flurry of interest in the self. This continued into the 1990s. During that decade it appears that a preference for the notion of subjectivity began to challenge self as the key theoretical construct to be advanced and explored. I choose to see subjectivity as a newer and improved way of talking about the self, a concept that is aware of the self practicing within symbolizing fields of power. Both terms have been used to talk about the interior experiences and processes of human beings being, and either is useful.

My own analysis utilizes self, seeing that subjectivity is not something different than the self, but that subjectivity refers to the ways and means, the practices and processes of the self. The self is the being of human. Subjectivities are those many variations of this kind of being. I choose self instead of subjectivity because I wish to talk about the totality of the human being and not merely the experience and process of that being.

There are other terms available as well that are about self. Personality, person, identity and individual have also been used to talk about self. Often their
meanings have overlapped and their usages have been unclear (Harris 1989). A key problem is that theorists have often not been clear about whether they were speaking about cultural models of self, or the self itself (Hollan 1992, Spiro 1993). Cultural models of the self are ideas about self, ways in which people imagine the self, think the self. These ideas or models are not the same phenomenon as the self. The self can think itself with a cultural model, but its actual being of itself is not that model and may correspond or not correspond to that model in myriad configurations, especially when we consider that these models of self vary quite widely cross-culturally.

It is worth noting that cultural models of self have been found to be multiplicitous and fragmentary. Often multiple models exist within a cultural area and individuals can be found utilizing (thinking of themselves with) various models at different times (Spiro 1993, Hollan 1992, Strauss 1997, Hollos and Leis 2002). There also has been a movement away from a simple division between the “western” and “non-western” self famously advanced by Markus and Kitayama (1991).

I will use the term self to refer to the interior locus of experience as well as all self-representations which may be at play in that interior, and the body – which we now know is an object which is not distinct from mind and hence not distinct from interiority. This usage follows both the rise of embodiment theory (Jackson 1983, Csordas 1993, Scheper-Hughes and Lock 1987) and a recent article by Naomi Quinn advocating an “extensive definition of self” explicitly intended to carry the
definition beyond self-representations (2006:362-384). Because the definition extends to the total self, the term human being is considered a synonym.

I will follow a usage advanced by Grace Harris (1989) for the terms individual, where individual refers to a single human organism in the simplest sense, “a member of human kind.” The term people will be used as a synonym for individuals.

Person will not mean social role or identity. It will be a synonym for self or human being. This is because my usage of the term self breaks down the distinction between the self and the self in its social roles. The reason will be clear momentarily. But let us return now to the division between structural and psychological thinking in anthropology.

**B. Culture and Self**

One of the most obvious tensions in social theory has to do with thinking about causation, or primacy, between the self and culture. Early cultural anthropologies placed overwhelming causal primacy upon culture, seeing the self as a shaped, passive entity. In the most extreme forms human beings almost ceased to exist as their own object on account of their not causing anything. Levi-Straus said that the goal of anthropology was “not to constitute but to dissolve man” – in a book that was dedicated, ironically, to the memory of Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1966:247).
Psychological works in anthropology regard some intentionality and freedom of will as endemic to the human being. In these works selves have a choosing, directing life for themselves and to some degree for culture. This repositions some causation and primacy toward the human being. Many of these theorists naturally affine for and utilize the existential/phenomenological tradition, exemplified by Heidegger and Sarte, a tradition that stresses intention and freedom as primordial structures of human being.

I want to point something out. What I want to point out is that the two phenomena, self and culture, are in one respect the same phenomena. Culture inside the self, culture as it is internalized in configurations of behavior, desire, self-representation and narrative, has the actual being of the self itself. These patterns and meanings in the self are exactly that particular self being itself. And for that reason culture in one aspect is one and the same as the self being. Culture also exists in the form of all other selves being themselves as well as interacting with one another, which perhaps constitutes the chief “site” of culture. Lastly it has an existence in material objects, including landscapes, which are modified or created by humans.

I want to notice that culture only has two kinds of locations. Firstly it is located in material objects which have meaning for human beings and secondly it is located in human beings. Sometimes anthropologists say that culture is “between and amongst” us. But it is not. Human interactions are cultural in that they consists of shared patterns of symbol, information and posture, understanding of roles, etc. These interactions have the blunt form, when we look at them, of humans being.
Their being together, their interface, is itself their acting out of what we call *culture*. They act the culture. They be culture.

Culture’s locations are two. It is either inside us, or more appropriately, from the skin inward, or it is in objects in our surrounding world. Culture is not located in outer space, for example, even though the planet Mars has various meanings for us. The meaning is located in selves, not the planet. All the objects have this existence for us. They are signs and symbols, yes, but they don’t mean anything until and unless we do the meaning. And those meanings are always in the self, not in the objects.

This causes me to notice that the bulk of what we think is interesting and significant about culture, its meanings and texts, patterns of behavior, social roles and positions, are not only located in human selves but also take the form of those selves being themselves.

This means that culture to a not quite total extent is exactly the same phenomenological object as *humans being*. A good definition of culture would be “humans being and as well their cultured environments and objects.” To say it a different way, everything that anthropologists have thought of as important about culture, its shared meanings and behaviors, exist only in the form of humans meaning and behaving and never exists in any other form.

And so *culture* is an abstraction. What actually exists are humans being and all their stuff in their altered environment. But I don’t care to try and kill the culture concept. We use abstractions because they help us make meaning. *Self* is also an abstraction; it has exactly the same existence as *human being*. Regarded as
phenomena, self and culture enter into one another. So should the two concepts.  
The meaning of culture is “humans being” The culture concept is for the most part a 
human concept. We can use abstractions of this phenomena in any way that we find 
useful.  

Each individual is a locus of culture in that their self is a configuration of 
meaning and meaning making. If we notice, and fully notice, that seeing patterns, 
describing enduring structures of behaved meanings, are themselves a meaning 
making activity – we see that each self is a configured cultural world in a cultural 
world that has the existence “people.”  

It is highly appropriate to regard each self as a totality, a complex whole, 
and a highly appropriate unit of analysis. It also means that it is the totality of what 
that self is that is the object. The self is not experience; it is not mind or affect; it is 
not the body; it is not identity or self-representations; it is not social roles. The self 
is all of these things at once, always appearing as a momentary arrangement of its 
totality, never in a moment configured as all that it is but at all moments emerging 
as a shifting relationship of its own aspects.  

Thus a self can appear as a trembling body, distraught, unable to articulate 
words, shocked and unfeeling, taking on the role of emergency room patient. Or it 
can appear as a graceful body, dancing effortlessly in rhythm, utterly relaxed, 
singing with a voice that carries strong affect, in the role of performer.  

I aim to talk about the self in a way that is both psychological and cultural 
and explicitly assumes that the individual in culture is a constrained freedom which 
orients against and with its being orientated. I also aim to talk about the self and
culture in a manner that indicates that the phenomenological existence of the two is fused in the form of the person. Person is the phenomenological unity of self and culture. It is the cultured self. Because the self is always cultured, person is not different from self.

C. Power and Problem

The self flows through time within fields of power. Anthropology since the 1970s has made this undeniably clear. Where power had once been overlooked as a key component of culture we now know that it operates ubiquitously through both explicit and veiled techniques. The explicit techniques are easy to find. The hidden manners of power are not, and have now warranted significant anthropological attention.

Because culture has the form of humans being and their material arrangements of the world, the shaping effects of culture have as their form the ways and manners of those humans being. These ways and manners both guide and enforce. Learning happens through appropriation and teaching, and teaching happens through assisting and sanctioning. Patterns of meaning and behavior are both available and imposed.

For example, a city with large walls and a moat, soldiers that patrol and police, and the ways of humans being as they live in that city, cannot fail to shape the being of any person present in such a context. The lifeways of the residents are both available and imposed, and other lifeways are not available and not imposed.
This doesn’t mean that culture shapes this lifeway. It means that other humans being and their arrangements of the world shape this lifeway. If we want to talk about how these humans be and arrange their world we use *culture*.

People arrange themselves into hierarchies with social positions which they then occupy. They both teach and enforce the continuity of these hierarchies. Power has no life other than humans being, but this hardly reduces its significance. Humans being as power constrain and molds human ways of being in radical ways.

Foucault’s *technologies of the self* gives us a pointed tool with which to understand the nature of a self which is in many ways “given to us” (1994:262). Foucault said that his project was always a history of subjectivity, and technologies of the self, also called techniques of the self (1994:254) are methods of self-regulation by which the self controls and shapes itself ethically. These techniques are “self forming activities” (1994: 255). This is ethical work, the active attempt to transform oneself into an appropriate ethical subject (1985:27).

Technologies of the self refer to “the government of the self by oneself” (1994:88). This means that the self executes its relationship with itself in a manner that conforms that self to the requirements and prejudices of other people, which are framed as ethically or morally pertinent. These other people always occupy various positions in structures of power and are themselves products of ethereal social power.

Bourdieu’s *habitus* is also about unseen power. Its “structured, structuring dispositions” (1980:52) circumscribe the total field of options which are thinkable and bodily actable for the subject, thereby herding selves into a contained,
controlled mass which, if somewhat ornery, behaves in accordance with local
scheme of social power.

The particularly important role played by the habitus and its
strategies in setting up and perpetuating durable relations of
domination is once again an effect of the structure of the field
(1980:130).

These two concepts are key for this discussion because they explicate the manner in
which the self becomes cultured in an environment of power. Where self and
culture are one, the person, there is an unreflexive acting out, the habits and self-
relations that are ethicized and sanctioned by power. The self is being this power,
and being power and within larger enforced arrangements of power can make life
difficult.

It should be obvious that the self is problematized. The self suffers in
various ways. Philosophers used to call this “the problem of suffering.” People are
problematized in two obvious ways, by problems of existence and power. The self
suffers under the immense weight of being a meaning-maker in a world where it
finds no certainty about, and perhaps little comfort in, its meanings. It also suffers
prejudice and injustice in the machinery of social systems that exploit and
dehumanize, violate and isolate. I feel that the reality of the self-in-difficulty is
obvious enough to assert without copious references, but Robert Edgerton’s Sick
Societies (1992) provides a generous ethnographic catalogue of human suffering.

Self is an indeterminate unity of being which orients itself into various
configurations through a dialogic authoring capacity. It is problematized with
struggles of both existence and power.
D. Self

Tom Csordas used the phrase “Cultural Phenomenology” in his 1994 The Sacred Self to indicate that he was doing ethnography which would be concerned simultaneously with self and culture. In order to convey this sense one might also speak of a “psychological cultural anthropology,” or use Michael Jackson’s term “existential anthropology” (2005). All are meant to convey the need to cease with the agent vs. structure or subject vs. culture divide and proceed with anthropologies that gracefully and insightfully analyze not the articulation of subject and culture but the interpenetration of the two.

In the later part of this paper I intend to show how it is that selves sometimes orient toward mastery of the self through ritual. But before I launch into the ethnographic section of the paper I wish to complete my discussion of self by highlighting a few features of self that I believe reflect actual people. To do this I’ll draw on some recent theoretical works and borrow a few useful tools.

Dorothy Holland et. al. (1998) emphasize that the self is “dialogic,” meaning that it speaks with itself. The generation of this dialogue is called “authoring” (169-173). This concept is excellent not only because people seem to talk to themselves in their minds, but because it contains the notion of reflexivity or self-consciousness.

The self is a position from which meaning is made, a position that is ‘addressed’ by and ‘answers’ others and the ‘world.’ In answering, the self ‘authors’ the world – including itself and others [173].
This authoring is an intentional activity of self, but takes place in a context that restricts and frustrates.

…the author works within, or at least against, a set of constraints that are also a set of possibilities for utterances [171].

This concept usefully captures the sense in which the self has an ongoing and inescapable relationship with itself. I would only add that the self can dialogue with more than just the internal voice. I consider that bodily and affective movements in self can also be ways of communicating to the self, such as when a small child folds its arms tightly and plants its feet in firm refusal. This can be a way of establishing with self first, and other secondly, that self will not be moved.

Hollan et. al. point out, just as Anthony Giddens (1979, 1984) has noticed, that culture as a set of symbols, texts, social roles and other material is a set of available material which the self can utilize to author, to self-relate. This is the same culture stuff that is constraining and makes up the strictures that smother one’s subjectivity.

Katherine Ewing’s 1990 article in Ethos, “The Illusion of Wholeness,” argued that “in all cultures people can be observed to project multiple, inconsistent self-representations that are context dependent and may shift rapidly (251).” This observation gained traction in anthropology, and Claudia Strauss answered in 1997 that her own research subjects were “partly fragmented” and also “partly integrated” (Cultural Anthropology 12(3)).

While this article does participate in the recent and widespread anthropological habit of talking about self as self-representations only, as only
semiotic self, it was crucial because it broke up the notion of a self whose
description, however thorough, could be both singular and accurate.

My own usage of *self* differs in that it contains the semiotic self as well as self as locus of experience both within a whole that is a unity but not integrated. Ewing sounded out on the fact that people understand themselves in varied, shifting configurations of semiotic self. I want to assert that they additionally *are* themselves in varied, shifting configurations of experiential and intentional self. So fragmented means to me shifting configurations of self aspects. All aspects cannot emerge simultaneously, so in any moment self is always configured as partial while retaining its wholeness. For this reason I will use *configuration* and *appearance* to speak about this feature of self, with *configure* capturing a sense of arrangement and *appear* capturing the sense of both emergence and image.

It is important to see that the self is neither completely self-determining nor determined. This point has been made of late by a number of anthropologists (Luhrman 2006, Ortner 2005, Frank 2006, Throop and Murphy 2002). This lack of a single locus of causal self-directing is one reason why we cannot fully predict the behaviors of any self. This is the meaning of *indeterminate* in Merleau-Ponty’s language (1962); the self may emerge in configurations that seem novel or at odds with its own previous behavior, and its future cannot be determined from the present.

For my purposes indeterminacy means two things. It means that the self has a range of possibilities for future becoming. It also means that its intentionality, its effort, mirrors the planes and features of cultural models, texts, and so forth as often
as that same intentionality utilizes available symbolic material to diverge into new ways of being that are at odds with dominant models – what anthropologists often call “resistance” and what psychologists call “independence.”

Building on Merleau-Ponty, Csordas defined self as “an indeterminate capacity to engage or become oriented in the world, characterized by effort and reflexivity (1994: 5).” I will utilize the notion of orientation as a capacity of the self. To orient means something like “to posture.” This concept is particularly important because it contains within it the creating and choosing capability that that has been long neglected but is indispensable to culture theory. Self is an indeterminate orienting unity of intention, experience and body that is cultured, dialogic, fragmented and struggling. *Culture* means humans being. *Cultured* means that self ineffably and at all moments emerges with other selves and world and configures as those selves in all of its aspects. Self is at times aware of this process but is generally oblivious.

**E. A Note about the Argument concerning Self and Culture**

This argument should not be taken to mean that culture is an aspect of the self or that as a phenomenon culture is somehow subsidiary to self. What I am arguing is that the two are for the most part the same object. If we are to speak about it in the language of process then I would say that the two are for the most part the same process. Their phenomenological being, by which I mean - when we look at the object itself - is virtually the same. Therefore both culture and selves are
anthropological objects which when we look at them appear to us as only mildly differentiated objects. Their unity is conceptually important because it is phenomenologically apparent.

It might be objected that culture happens in social interaction, as when we say that culture is “between and amongst us.” My argument invalidates this assertion because the phenomenological objects involved in social interactions are the same as those involved in culture; humans being and their object worlds. Social interactions are not made up of objects or processes other than humans being. Humans be themselves and interact. That itself is the substance of social interaction and therefore social interaction is neither a separate site nor a separate phenomenon.

This argument should also not be taken as an assertion that the self is free, a return to the liberal subject. Pointing out that culture has the existence humans being does nothing to change the fact that humans are profoundly constrained by both each other and current configurations of self. It only shifts our viewpoint so that we see that it is the way that humans be themselves and act upon one another that produces power. Power is no less ubiquitous or controlling when seen in this light, it is only seen to have its actual form.

Most importantly, where does this all get us? What is the use of conceptually co-joining humans being and culture? Doesn’t such a maneuver disrupt cultural analysis or at least make it seem less useful?

The utility lies in moving us further away from concerns with the mechanics of how the two phenomena interact and toward the integration of two mostly
indistinct objects and as well the theoretical tools that have been used to decipher each. Speaking of the need for such analyses Sherry Ortner said,

> The anthropological project in the fullest sense, as I see it, must always compromise both kinds of work [1996:2].

> The debates tend to be posed in such a way that one appears to have to choose between total constructivism and total voluntarism, between the Foucauldian discursively constructed (and subjected) subject, or the free agent of Western fantasy [ibid:10.]

Another advantage stems from recognizing that teasing-out the relationship between self and culture may not be possible. This naturally de-emphasizes our desire to figure out how the world works and may point us toward a concern with wisdom - a concern not with how the world works but with how it might work better.

Anthropology’s humanistic impulse is well served by a view which directs some of our efforts toward the ways and means of well being. The descriptive and empirical virtues of ethnography, when applied to investigations of wisdom rather than mere mechanics, can serve the needs of applied anthropologists and also yield valuable consulting products.

For this reason it is sensible that this paper takes up as its analysis the envisioning and pursuit of self-mastery in ritual healing. Both !Kung and Charismatics are attempting to solve a very real-world problem, and that is how to gain well-being in a world where they experience themselves as troubled.
III. Mastery in Ritual Healing

A. Mastery of the Self in Ritual Healing

Mastery is a concept that has received very little attention in anthropology. There is a large literature in social psychology that attends to “self-efficacy,” but this deals primarily with notions and valuations of late modernity such as achievement and performance. This literature is also focused on our own society and so is of little utility to anthropologists.

I will not attempt to define mastery in universal terms. I do not propose a theory of mastery. Rather I aim to show that both !Kung and Charismatic Christians envision their own kind of mastery and that among both groups this kind of mastery is pursued in the context of ritual healing. Working with these ethnographic examples, I put the “cultured self” developed above to work in order to demonstrate that it can be effectively put to use in theorizing both the intrapsychic and cultural/structural aspects of being human.

In both traditions a kind of mastery is understood as increasing control over one’s total self toward a configuration of self which a) is considered helpful to self and others and b) is recognized in only a small minority of people.

The !Kung and Charismatic Christians are useful for this analysis for three reasons. The first is that a similar pursuit of mastery can be described in the ritual behavior of both traditions, making for an interesting and useful comparison of selves involved in similar activities. The second is that the two ritual traditions exist
in very different kinds of societies. The !Kung are an egalitarian foraging group located only in the Kalahari desert. Charismatic Christians are found worldwide in societies of vastly different character and degrees of stratification. This choice of examples puts stress on the application of the theoretical self I’ve sketched above. It will have to prove viable in two contexts, one of which – the charismatics – is highly diffuse; the examples I use come from New England and Papua New Guinea. The third is that this ritual pursuit of mastery is understood as a struggle. It involves difficulty and failure and therefore offers a good site at which to examine struggling and constrained selves.

My analysis deals with the work of mastery in contexts where that work happens in ritual. Both of the cultural systems that I use for this analysis regard their rituals of healing as rituals of mastery work as well. A copious and strong literature already exists dealing with ritual healing. It is not healing that I am interested in but rather the concepts and work of mastery that coexist in these rituals.

There is the well developed notion that ritual constitutes a kind of performance and that these performances communicate social meanings and order, doing this both explicitly and tacitly (Bourguignon 1976, Carlson 1996). Rappaport said that it is because we find language untrustworthy (due to lies and ambiguity) that we use ritual to communicate important order and meanings (1999). In performance theory rituals do their work through communication, establishing social fact through the performance or saying of that fact. In this sense rituals are empty. They perform social realities, acting upon the symbolic system, precisely
because they don’t actually move anything in the world beyond that system of symbols. For this reason they have often been thought of as producing orthodoxy and domination, as reestablishing social structure – and also as critical commentaries or acts of resistance (Bourguignon 1976, Lewis 2003:29, Otero 2003:253).

Victor Turner observed that the ritual life of his Ndembu informants contained elements of both structure and anti-structure (1960). Today we have begun to talk about continuity and discontinuity (Robbins 2003). It is clear that rituals do more than reproduce social order, they also challenge or outright break it. Charismatic Christians worldwide are so vehemently involved in discontinuity ritual that they narrate their ritual life as “warfare” against existing socio-spiritual orders (DeBernardi 1999, Stritecky 2001). Robbin’s Urapmin informants thoroughly unwove many of their own social and religious social structures in just a few years.

In theories of ritual we find the same divide that affects social theory more broadly. Do rituals act upon people and the world? Or do they only act upon systems of symbol that drive those people and construct that world? I have already rejected the dichotomy methodologically and conceptually. I take it that rituals act both upon and through the substance of self and symbol. Thus both the self and the culture system in their strange Siamese living-together are the appropriate object or ritual study.

Ritual comes in many forms and I regard it as method rather than agenda. I take ritual to be a vehicle which people use to reestablish or transform their world.
Ritual may be utilized to act upon any object in that world; self, ancestor spirits, heaven, God, crops and the weather, etc. For example, a Christian marriage ceremony transforms two people into one, while a renewal of those vows reestablishes that union. The first ritual is literally meant to join two people together, the later literally meant to keep them from breaking apart.

I am concerned herein with rituals of transformation, because I am interested in the self’s transformation toward mastery. Rituals of transformation are designed to move individuals from one kind of being to another. Sometimes these transformations are social transitions, as when one graduates from high school or has a retirement ceremony. These rituals of social transformation or “rites of passage” were the object of Van Gennep’s influential work (1960). At other times transformative rituals do work that is directed at modifying the self rather than moving it into a new social position.

During the rise of modernity ritual took on pejorative connotations as Europeans increasingly viewed Christian rituals as empty and meaningless (Douglas 1996). This disaffection with Christian ritual was actually a major spur for the Pentecostal movement and so helped create the ritual complex that I analyze herein (Synan 1997).

Today westerners routinely talk about what rituals and ritual elements “symbolize.” I agree with the pre-moderns that ritual does something. Ritual moves the world. It may be directed at the self or at the social role that the self is trading (which as I understand partly partake of the same substance, the self).
For the !Kung and for charismatic Christians ritual is a vehicle of efficacy. It is neither meaningless nor intended to symbolize. It is intended as a vehicle to alter the self and to do so in powerful ways.

**B. Mastery in !Kung Ritual Healing**

The !Kung are a Khoisan people living in Botswana and neighboring Namibia. This is the Kalahari Desert, a high desert at about three thousand feet of altitude, sparsely populated and remote. The !Kung are well known in anthropology due to the lengthy research prerogative of the Harvard Kalahari Research Group and as well the frequency of their ethnographic inclusion in introductory courses. They were foragers, some until very recently, and are additionally famous in anthropology for having been thought of as a prototypical foraging group, though this now seems less sensible. Their society is as egalitarian as any in the ethnographic record and the !Kung are generally portrayed as gentle. There are neither formal leadership roles nor the accumulation of wealth. Most !Kung move camp periodically throughout the year, though Richard Katz’ ethnography, a major source for my analysis, was conducted at a larger permanent camp.

The !Kung have long had sustained contact with neighboring Bantu peoples, namely the Tswana and Herero. From the 1960s forward !Kung contacts and involvement with the nation-state of Botswana have increased steadily. Today few forage full-time or live in the bush. I will limit my own analysis to the !Kung as observed by anthropologists from the 1960s until the 1980s, when all of the ethnographic material that informs this discussion was collected and published. I
will not deal with the present day situation of the !Kung and its issues of power related to the state, because I want to analyze their ritual experiences when they remained at complexity level of a foraging group.

The healing ritual is a central feature of social life and appears to constitute the largest social gathering and cooperative activity seen in this context (Katz 1980). Members of a camp and sometimes neighboring camps come together to sing, dance and heal. The women sit in a circle around a fire where they sing, clap and generally assist with and support the healing. Men dance to the rhythm in a moving line, shuffling their feet and dancing in a circle outside of the women’s seated ring. Approximately half of !Kung men are healers and about 10% of women (Katz 1980). When women are healers they dance as well. A few of the healers are called “geiha,” which refers to their being experienced, mature healers (ibid:239). Even fewer are called “geiha ama ama” which indicates the highest level of mastery and evokes great respect (ibid:239).

Healers dance until they enter an altered state of consciousness (ASC) which they call “kia” which is considered to be a kind of death. First a spiritual substance called “n/um,” which is felt as an intense burning sensation, arises within the body of the healer (Marshal 1969:350). Richard Katz translates n/um as both “medicine” and “energy” (1980:93). In this state they report experiencing a different kind of vision, can see spirits and sickness-causing objects inside of people, experience clairvoyance, and also have other kinds of extraordinary capabilities such as soul flight (ibid:42-43).
In this state healers experience intense emotional arousal, great energy, focus and drama. They “float” in and out of this kia state, alternately smoking tobacco and chatting about mundane camp life, then performing great dramatic battles with spirits, screaming in pain and vigorously rubbing upon and pulling n/um up through the bodies of others; these dances often last all night (ibid:95-100).

The !Kung say that n/um is a “death thing” and a “fight” by which they mean that it is dangerous (94). The healer can control, arouse, defuse, and move this energy. He can also insert the n/um into or extract it from another person (93-94). Healers will at times tramp in the fire or eat live coals in order to increase the strength of their n/um (121-122). The !Kung fear n/um and consider it to be extremely painful (40). It is the arousal and crescendo of n/um that brings on the kia state.

If the fear is met and overcome, if healers transcend the fear by dying, then they can accept these painful changes rather than being dominated by fear of them [Katz 1980, 97].

Many young adults and adults will seek n/um, but most of these will only enter the beginning stages and then cease to pursue it for fear and pain.

They do not transcend their fears, nor transcend themselves. They do not become owners of n/um, and they cannot heal [ibid, 97].

Others complete the journey and become “n/um kausi,” which Katz translates as “owners/masters of n/um.” A healer named Dau describes it thus:

You can tell a person who is fearing n/um by the expression of pain at his gebesi [roughly lower abdomen]. You see a person grimacing with stomach pain. Now look at me for example. The pain sometimes gets too strong for me and I have to sit down, and when it subsides, I can get up and dance again [98].
The !Kung regard all people as having a sickness, and those with symptoms as suffering from an additional manifestation of this sickness. Thus most or all who are present at a dance will be healed whether or not they are feeling sick (53). They will be worked upon by the healers, who rub the individual’s body to arouse n/um within that body. The healer then moves this energy to the location where he can see the illness (recall the special sight) and proceeds to pull the n/um out of the other’s body into his hands, from which he discards it by shaking their hands vigorously and throwing the energy out into the bush. This is the cure. To endure the pain and control the n/um is considered awesome by the !Kung.

A !Kung self’s participation in the healing dance can be readily understood in terms of habitus. These dances are highly regular (approximately weekly but often more frequent) occurrences which involve every present member of society. Small children sleep or play at dancing during the rites. Bodily practices such as the shuffling dance steps, clapping, singing, the rubbing of hands upon a sick individual’s body, the shimmy of legs adorned with rattles, even the grimaces of healers and patients in pain are fully normative and expected experiences whose meanings are understood from earliest childhood. The !Kung self would not generate the idea to exclude oneself from singing, dancing, and being healed. The assembly and initiation of these dances happens with the “conductorless orchestration” that characterizes habitus (Bourdieu 1980:59) and almost never forethought or planning. One or more !Kung selves are simply singing by a fire and a few more join…in an hour they are all singing, and another hour later a healer is in kia.
Foucault’s technologies-of-the-self are also at work here. For a !Kung self it is imperative to fully participate in group life and to continually reestablish that one is equal with and not superior to others (ibid:25-27). This safeguards their informal egalitarian political truce. Thus for a woman to sing vigorously throughout the night and ask for healing at some point is an assertion of her intimacy with the group as well as her normal human status as a sick person. As such, !Kung technologies-of-the-self may include enduring the burning pain of being healed as well as fighting off sleep in the early hours of the morning, all predicated upon asserting one’s participation in

The !Kung conceptualize healing as both relief from sickness and a reengagement with true self. Toma Zho, a strong healer, said, “I want to have a dance again soon so that I can really become myself again” (Katz 1980:43).

My concern is both with the cultural model and the alterations of self which happen during this mastery pursuit. An individual who expresses interest in learning to heal will apprentice under the masters who are with his band or camp. Instruction is, as all other activities, informal.

The various geiha or geiha ama ama will converse with the neophyte and impart instructions and knowledge. Then when dances are held and she is in kia, the master will “shoot” arrows of n/um into her body. This is a time of fear and pain for the new healer. A healer named Wi said the following to Katz:

The young ones fear num and cry out. They cry tears. They cry out, ‘it’s painful. It hurts.’ [1980: 143]
Over time the learner will come to experience stronger and stronger n/um, until they are on the edge of kia. Entering kia for the first time is considered especially dangerous and frightening on account of its association with death. Beginning healers are afraid that they will not be able to come back from death; others fear for them as well. The healer in training will have to enter into and return from kia numerous times until they are capable of taking care of themselves throughout the process. Then they are ready to heal during kia and will begin to work on others, rubbing their bodies with their hands, controlling n/um in the body of another. Even then they are not yet called “masters of n/um.” Wi also said:

Look at the young ones. At the beginning they shriek and shudder, but they don’t have any pulling power. It hurts them, but they can’t pull well. Also, they don’t see properly. They do the ‘tricks’ but they don’t have any pulling power [144].

Katz gives the impression that a number of years may pass between one’s expression of interest in learning to heal and the development of the actual capacity to heal.

All !Kung selves participate in healing ritual, but not all attempt to become healers. Many who begin the training back off and cease to pursue it. The self in habitus, already proficient in those techniques of self which regulate !Kung society, experiences some kind of additional impetus to pursue n/um and become a healer. This desire may arise “springing from free will” (Bourdieu 1980:55) within the !Kung habitus or may come as a emergent affective longing to help others that is then cultured within self into the available role of healer.
Then comes fear and hesitation. Some wait years before they are courageous enough to try n/um. These conflicting intentions, the intention to “drink n/um” and the intention to avoid pain and anxiety, wrestle within the !kung self in the form of alternating and competitive feelings about the training, self-representations imagined for the future as a respected healer or one who never pursued their longing. Over weeks and months, in various hours and moods the self will configure in fragments, feeling different blends of affect and speaking to itself with available, well known narratives about the training, experimenting within the self, trying on images of self and playing fantasy scenarios to test the strength of its desire. One day the desire will seem assured and powerful. Another day it will be gone. The !Kung self notices this and wonders about that too.

This self is indeterminate in that neither itself nor any other self in camp can predict exactly what the outcome will be. It attempts to orient itself toward trying n/um, toward the role of healer, but in other moments it orients itself into configurations of feeling and attention that avoid this.

This self cannot escape the kind of subjectivity it experiences. It does not know that its struggle with the possibility of itself as healer is a peculiarly !Kung problem. It does not think about becoming wealthy or that its shying from n/um will be looked upon as shameful, for these are not !Kung ways. The habitus prevents the formation of such thoughts. The self in its totality is many things and never all of them at once. It is in dialogue with itself via emotions that compete for full arousal, images that play like movies in consciousness, words and phrases like tools to steer
its own intentions. In the passage below a healer named Gau talks about this process.

Now if I tell them that it’s very painful, they say, ‘Oh, you’re just fooling me. I still want to do n/um!’ But then when they start, they see how painful it is, and then they stop because they fear it. This is how it was with me. I thought they were kidding me when they told me how painful n/um was. I tried n/um, and it was so painful that I stopped. And I even stopped going to dances for years because I feared n/um. Only after I got married did I try n/um again. This time it again came up in me, but I passed through it, and then n/um came to me. Now I have n/um [119].

Katz stresses that healers do not lead social, economic, or politic lives which are any different than those of non-healers. He does indicate differences, however.

Using projective testing methods and a rating scale upon which individuals were asked to rate others, Katz determined that healers “have distinctive psychological attributes” (230). The Thematic Apperception Test (TAT) and Draw-a-Person test were the two projective methods and were analyzed by an expert in the United States. Katz recognizes the problems involved in using such tests cross-culturally and considers the empirics of such methods to be “suggestive and not comprehensive” (233).

His study revealed three dimensions in which healers “manifest different psychological attributes from !Kung who do not heal.” These differences correspond with the way that the !Kung describe the state of kia. Healers are judged by others to be more “emotionally labile;” they are more “expressive” or “passionate” (235). The Draw-a-Person test indicated that the self-representations of !Kung healers is determined more by their inner states and violate ordinary images of anatomy…“lines become fluid, body parts become separated (235.)”
Lastly, the TAT indicated that !Kung healers have a richer and easily accessed fantasy life. Katz himself considered !Kung healers to be personally different from other !Kung.

They themselves are personally awesome and stimulate respect. The power of their n/um and the charisma of their personalities seem to have fused [243].

I understand Katz’ data as a rich body of evidence about both the self and mastery work. Those !Kung who do become masters of n/um do so through years of work. We can see several important and explicit themes in this process. Enduring pain, emotional self-control and lability, bodily self-control, dying and being reborn and as well a return to what Katz calls one’s “essential” self are features of this mastery process.

It appears that a self in !Kung ritual training repeatedly enters into an ASC which is frightening and painful to achieve. Once he or she has become capable of entering and returning from this ASC repeatedly without help, this self must then learn to control the experience of burning hot n/um within both their own and another’s body at the same time. Lastly, one outcome of both healing and being healed was talked about by Katz’ informants as returning to one’s true self. “When I dance, I am myself,” says Wi (247). A woman named Tsaa told Katz, “I don’t know myself today because I have no n/um (247).”

But let us turn to the charismatics.
C. Mastery in Charismatic Christian Ritual Healing

Charismatic Christianity has often been called Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity on account of the Pentecostal movement’s initializing role in the globalization of this form of Christianity. Charisma as a sometimes feature of Christian ritual life, however, predates the Pentecostal movement and reaches back into the earliest days of Christianity (Synan 1997). I will use the term charismatic Christianity or just charismatics to encompass the movement most broadly, because I wish to speak about the ritual culture of charismatic Christianity in a broad sense.

This form of Christianity is that in which believers receive the gifts of the Holy Spirit (Robbins 2004b). It has become a global phenomenon with adherents, well over 500 million of them, on all continents (ibid:117). Despite the wide geographical and contextual distribution of this movement it makes sense to talk about the movement as a culture on account of the “radical similarity of practice” which characterizes its transplanting into varied cultural environments (118). I am therefore speaking of the culture of charismatic Christianity despite the fact that this culture resides in many different cultures.

Anthropological studies of these populations have recently gained a lot of momentum, but studies of charismatic ritual are scarce (126). Rituals are often ad hoc and very frequently take place outside of church or formal ritual gatherings. Believers also practice spontaneous individual rituals such as prayer and worship which must be considered as a part of charismatic ritual practice (Robbins 2004a:253). Csordas puts it this way, “the comprehensive ritualization I am
outlining eventually leaves no room for distinction between sacred and secular action even in everyday life (1997:108).

I will rely primarily on ethnographic research done among catholic charismatics in New England (Csordas 1994, 1997) and in the highlands of Papua New Guinea (Robbins 2004a). Each of these ethnographies has a specific focus on ritual. They come from dramatically different settings, which helps to highlights the continuity of these ritual forms in divergent contexts. I will also use the Bible to demonstrate some key charismatic themes of self, as this text holds a crucial and unchallenged authority among charismatics.

Charismatics go to church a lot. They participate regularly in ritual behavior that is explicitly or peripherally about healing. What is important for this analysis is that the healing aspects are thought of in part as a transformation toward mastery.

Csordas puts it this way:

Charismatic ritual healing presumes two closely interrelated capacities of self: the capacity to be ‘wounded’ or ‘broken’ and subsequently healed by divine power in a way that roughly corresponds to the professional medical system’s notion of cure; and the capacity to achieve spiritual ‘growth’ and ‘maturity’ in a way that roughly corresponds to the aspirations of contemporary holistic and New Age Healing [26].

Charismatics often lay their hands upon an individual and ask that the individual be healed by the power of God. Among charismatics in New England, the self is imagined as a three-part entity divided into body, mind and spirit (Csordas 1994:39). Healing is sometimes directed toward somatic problems such as cancer. At other times attempts are made to heal “psychological” or “emotional” problems. This is called “inner healing” and corresponds closely to the aim of clinical
psychologies (ibid:40). “Spiritual healing” has to do with gaining freedom from afflictions of sin that make the soul itself sick. One may be soul sick due to sins such as sexual transgression or afflicted with what is thought of as a generational spirit of alcoholism (ibid:42-43).

Studying the “Toronto Blessing,” a charismatic revival and healing movement that broke out in 1993, Poloma and Hoelter stress the holistic nature of the Toronto cultural model of healing (Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, 1998). This article actually used measures of spiritual, mental, emotional and physical health to test the efficacy of ritual healing, concluding that all measures of health were positively related at statistical levels to affirmative reports of ritual healing (269). Concerning inner healing, Poloma and Hoelter write,

Inner healing is understood to involve healing of distorted self-perceptions, the forgiving of wrongs inflicted by others, and experiencing a release from the bondage of hurtful memories of personal injury [269].

Joel Robbin’s ethnography of the Urapmin focuses heavily on their individual and collective ritual behaviors. The Urapmin converted to Christianity en masse in the late 1970s (2004a:1). Robbins emphasizes their preoccupation with sin and willfulness (2004a:215). The Urapmin understand Christianity as a powerful condemnation of the human will (246) The theme of dangerous willfulness predates the Christian era (222).

They reflect upon their feelings and actions in order to identify sins (232). They also confess these sins to one another, and are prayed for concerning these sins during church services (232). In prayer and worship they “give up” their own
will and ask God to instate his own will in their person, that his will might be done
instead of their own (258-260). Intense prayer is directed toward healing physical
sickness and as well toward the remission of the will which causes sin, understood
as spiritual sickness (266-267). Following worship and prayers the Urapmin say
that they feel “light” by which they mean free from sin (267). There are also
specific rites used to remove anger, rites which “share features both with healing
and with confession rituals (269).”

There are ecstatic ritual dances called “spirit disco” in which the Urapmin
invite possession by the Holy Spirit, just as charismatics in North America do
(mostly without dancing). During the possession dances the Holy Spirit is thought
to be at work in the inner self, healing and transforming one into the image of God.

What is happening to selves in charismatic healing, and, not a different
question, what are they doing with themselves? We see here a daily skirmish of
interiority as the Urapmin self wrestles with its own desires, some or almost all of
which are thought of as sinful and injurious to self and others. It tries to produce
new configurations of self, a new habitus of body, feeling and relationship with
others. Charismatics pray for assistance, running a pleading inner monologue which
is aimed at gaining the power of God to enable new configurations of emotion,
desire and self-control. This is a self that is effortfully reorienting its whole being in
relation to self, other people, and God. Csordas sees this effortful reorientation as a
rhetorical process, where the self utilizes the repertoire of Christian narratives and
techniques to alter both self and habitus, making a bodily emotive argument for a
new kind of self (1997:100)
This is the self dialogic, relating to itself, talking to itself, attempting to convince itself to try out and grow accustomed to new behaviors and new contents of consciousness. It has many emotions and learned narratives. It knows of characters from Bible stories whom it can emulate or whose words it can appropriate. It has resources.

These can be called forth, aroused intentionally as in ‘trying to recall’, or they may appear spontaneously into consciousness or body and there be utilized creatively or passed over for another configuration of experience. It is body conscious with trembling or collapsing, moaning or crying. At times it fails in its attempts to use words and relies on facial expressions or postures to tell itself and others how it feels. Any given moment and minute finds the self experiencing one or a mix of emotions, talking to itself or inwardly quiet, acting out one self-representation or another and watching its social world for cues as to how successfully it is configuring and conveying the self it wants to be.

At times the charismatic self doesn’t have much control. It spasms on the ground in joy or remorse. It may seek this experience and understand it as surrender and release. It may avoid this experience for fear of that same surrender.

At other times it speaks with great force and eloquence, boldly speaking prophecies that are understood to direct the entire community. Here below is an example of spontaneous prophetic utterance (Csordas 1997:209-210).

Other seeds have been windbroke at that first sprouting of the hedge, And there they too have germinated and taken root and grown up, And the hedge has grown, And more seeds have been brought to it by the wind of my Spirit. It continues to flourish, to rise in strength;
And I prune it vigorously.

The charismatic self is attempting a substantial transformation. It is no wonder that charismatics often experience powerful feelings of guilt concerning repeated failures to actualize this change, and it is also no wonder that they ask God for help.

The charismatic mastery concept is everywhere about mastering sin. For the Urapmin sin is equated with the will. Sin is thought of primarily in terms of a sickness of soul for charismatic Catholics in New England and protestants in Toronto. In the apostle Paul’s writing, as is well known, sin resides primarily in the body and its fleshly desires. Whatever the variations on this model, what we see in each of these accounts is a model of healing which engages all aspects of self, though that self is not conceptualized in exactly the same way in each context.

And what about technologies-of-the-self? Foucault’s development of the very concept was in relation to Christianity with its searching of the soul, its confessions, renunciations, self-flagellations, etc. These techniques are methods of reining in and taking control of the self. They are ways of orienting the self into ethical configurations. The ethics are always a construct, ideas about what constitutes goodness and propriety.

Robbins highlights the Urapmin’s constant application of these techniques. We can see the same practices among Csordas’ Catholics and charismatics more broadly. The point I want to make is that if self is a totality, and it is, and that totality contains both all previous learning and habitus as well as intention then the
application of technologies of the self to the self will at times include intention that orients the self away from its habitus and the popular ethics of its local situation.

To see intention and habitus as cojoined in various configurations which can either accord with or resist one’s self’s current configurations allows the concept of self to be a theoretical self which has both agency and structure. It is both cultured and free but neither fully either. In some moments its configurations will include intentions that break with norms. This neatly explains both conversion and the rupturing discontinuous behaviors that we see in revolutions, revivals, and new social movements. Therefore the agency is located both within cultural meanings, roles and habitus and the self itself, both of which meld into a single object in the form of and at the location of person.

In all three contexts the self is in a life-long struggle with sinfulness and seeks to master that sin. It does this in part because it has learned to from other people, and in part because it wants to. The concept has a huge time-depth in the Judeo-Christian tradition.

Then the Lord said to Cain, ‘Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it [Genesis 4:6-7 NIV].’

Another theme I want to touch on is death and rebirth. The death and rebirth ritual theme and structure is far more widespread than the few ethnographic examples used in this paper and has sometimes been thought of as the essential structure of ritual (Eliade 1960). Charismatics explicitly attempt to kill off or “die to” their sinful self. In baptism an individual is submerged in water to spiritually kill
the old sin self, and brought forth from that water to bring into life the new, cleansed and healed self. Further, charismatic Christians speak openly and frequently about “dying to” themselves.

For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God” [Rom 8:13-15 NIV].

To summarize, one can find in the charismatic self a unity of intention, desire and willfulness with those configurations of self which function as constraints upon the possible configurations that the self can take. The self is struggling against its own current configurations of self while also against the social pressures of a community
IV. Conclusions

Anthropologists working all over the world write about a great many of the same features and themes of societies and people. They speak in the same sentences of symbols, patterns, hierarchies and power as well as desires, needs, purposes and strategies. As one reads into their analyses they then often theorize these realities as if they were theorizing only culture; these accounts thus rely on implicit psychologies (Frank 2006:281). Or if the anthropologist is a psychological anthropologist or a feminist or is working in activist political anthropology they will try to find ways to speak about human beings who have some creativity, some intention, some agentive will – theorizing the manner in which these selves articulate with culture in its shaping and constraining capacities. If I’m not mistaken the above two sentences describe virtually all cultural anthropology.

The problem stems from trying to image that there are two distinct objects to be analyzed. The two objects are in fact substantially cojoined. To either discount the reality of one of them as a causing entity or attempt to describe the manner of interaction between the two. One solution is to see that they are already largely the same object, humans being. This does not destroy the notion of culture, it only shifts our understanding of culture away from shared patterns to the humans being those shared patterns; the ways and manners of humans being and their object world, which includes the landscapes they build for themselves.

The dichotomizing tendency is an outcome of the enlightenment mind, when Euro and other western selves began to consider that the universe was composed of
discrete entities like “matter” and “energy,” “reality” and “thoughts,” that it was wise to accurately state the mechanical relationships between these, and that these statements, when honed to perfect accuracy, are an important kind of “Truth.”

The more that we look at the situation the more we see that the objects of our dichotomies condense toward one another, that entities collapse inward and become one another, while still both appearing distinct and emerging in aspects which behave as if they are distinct while being part of a whole which is a unity. If we look at the situation in honesty we conclude that this is the nature of being. This is what being is like. And it is a paradox; a paradox which is not a contradiction but rather that which is. We are now beyond the enlightenment and keep finding out that older categories collapse into one another. As the enlightenment fades we find ourselves looking for new ways to talk about reality, ways of talk that are explicit about the interconnectivity of what we casually think of as discrete phenomena.

My intention in this paper has been to assert the utility of first looking bluntly in the face of the phenomenon we call culture and seeing that it has in most of its manifestations the form of humans being. Being is not an easy place to begin an analysis, but it has in this case the advantage of breaking down the conceptual duality of self and culture, which leaves us with theoretical tools that can also be thought of as interpenetrating one another. Thus technologies of self, for example, become fused with intention, and habitus is unreflexive and given to the self while also being a configuration of self which the self struggles with some success to reorient.
This is helpful for anthropology, and I hope I have demonstrated so, because it allows for theoretical tools that describe the agentive intrapsychic life of individuals – such as intention – to be used seamlessly with theoretical tools that describe the constructivist position which has long dominated in anthropology – such as technologies of the self and habitus. In this figuring these tools do not have to be regarded as parts of different toolboxes and the longstanding tension in social theory between psychological anthropologies and cultural anthropologies is relaxed.
References

Barnard, Alan
1979 Nharo Bushman Medicine and Medicine Men *Africa* 49(1)

Bourdieu, Pierre

Csordas, Thomas J.

Csordas, Thomas J.

Csordas, Thomas J.

DeBernardi, Jean

Edgerton, Robert

Eliade, Mircea

Ewing, Katherine
1990 The Illusion of Wholeness: Culture, Self, and the Experience of Inconsistency. *Ethos* 18(3) 251 – 278

Foucault, Michel

Foucault, Michel

Foucault, Michel
Foucault, Michel

Foucault, Michel

Frank, Katherine
2006 Agency *Anthropological Theory* 6(3) 281-302

Giddens, Anthony

Giddens, Anthony

Hallowell, A. Irving
1955 *Culture and Experience* London and Bombay: Oxford University Press

Harris, Grace Gredys
1989 Concepts of Individual, Self, and Person in Description and Analysis *American Anthropologist* 91(3):599-612

Heidegger, Martin

Hollan, Douglas
1992 Cross-Cultural Differences in the Self *Journal of Anthropological Research* 48(4) 283-300

Holland, Dorothy, Skinner, Debra, Lachicotte, William, Cain, Carole

Hollos, Marida and Leis, Philip E.
2002 Remodeling Concepts of the Self: An Ijo Example *Ethos* 29(3) 371-387

Jackson, Michael
2005 *Existential Anthropology: Events, Exigencies and Effects* New York, Oxford: Berghahn

Katz, Richard
1982 *Boiling Energy: Community Healing Among the Kalahari Kung* Cambridge: Harvard University Press
Levy, Robert I.  

Lévy-Strauss, Claude  

Lewis, I.M.  
2003 Trance, Possession, Shamanism and Sex *Anthropology of Consciousness*  
14(1):20-39

Lindholm, Charles  

Luhrmann, T.M.  
2006 Subjectivity *Anthropological Theory* 6(3) 345-361

Marshall, Lorna  

Markus, Hazel Rose and Kitayama, Shinobu  

Merleau-Ponty, Maurice  

Muir, Edward  
1997 *Ritual in Early Modern Europe* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Murray, D.W.  
1993 What is the Western Concept of Self? On Forgetting David Hume *Ethos* 21(1) 3-23

Ortner, Sherry B.  

Ortner, Sherry B.  
2005 Subjectivity and Cultural Critique *Anthropological Theory* 5(1) 31-52
Otero, Rodolfo A.

Poloma, Margaret M., Hoelter Lynette F.

Quinn, Naomi
2006 The Self Anthropological Theory 6(3):362-384

Radcliffe-Brown, A.R.
1952 Structure and Function in Primitive Society London: Cohen & West

Rappaport, Roy A.

Robbins, Joel

Robbins, Joel

Schep-R Hughes, Nancy, and Margaret Lock
1987 The Mindful Body: A Prolegomenon to Future Work in Medical Anthropology. Medical Anthropology Quarterly 1:6-41


Spiro, Melford E.

Spiro, Melford E.
1993 Is the Western Conception of the Self Peculiar within the Context of the World Cultures? Ethos 21(2) 107-153

Stephen, Michele
Strauss, Claudia
1997 Partly Fragmented, Partly Integrated: An Anthropological Examination of “Postmodern Fragmented Subjects” Cultural Anthropology 12(3) 362-404

Stritecky, Jolene Marie

Synan, Vinson
1997 The Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition Grand Rapids: Eerdmans

Throop, C. Jason and Murphy, Keith
2002 Bourdieu and Phenomenology Anthropological Theory 2(2) 185-207

Turner, Victor

Van Gennep, Arnold
1960 The Rites of Passage Chicago: Chicago University Press

Whittaker, Elvi