The Social Character of Belief

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Preface

The work that follows was inspired by linguistic fieldwork I conducted in northern Paraguay with the Ishir/Chamacoco people. The Ishir are a small indigenous people comprising roughly four main villages and a language community of about 1,800 people in the harsh Chaco region (Ethnologue). The object of my fieldwork was to contribute to a talking dictionary of the language, with the broader goal of supporting the life of the language. Before I ended up in the communities, I had read *The Curse of Nemur*, which detailed some important parts of the traditional mythology and declared that traditional practices and beliefs were undergoing a profound period of resurgence (Escobar 2001). After reading this, I anticipated a rigorous common life among the Ishir communities that would help me to understand this resurgence, and in turn, to help explain why they were interested (at least I thought) in the work of language preservation and recording culturally important histories. What I encountered was very different: the indigenous communities were fractured socially by the processes of modernization, where young and old are all but forced to leave the indigenous communities in order to get work, education, and medical care. The traditional practices I had anticipated were hard to find, the lone holdout among the Ebytoso ethnic group I found in Karcha Balut, otherwise known as Puerto 14 de Mayo. This village is remote, and their particular form of the traditional teaching is fundamentally different to the one that preceded it: For reasons of education,

since children must leave the communities to attend all but primary school, the age of inductees into the social order are far younger than they were in earlier days. This had the effect of changing the type and rigor of the teaching, in addition to depriving young adults who have to leave the communities of the cultural contact they need to assimilate the complex, extensive mythology, set of social rules, clan relationships, complex paints and systems of divine representation, and traditional lifestyle skills of the Ishir.

What I found was in some sense what I expected from a language community assessed as "Endangered": the denaturing of traditional practices and increasing social distance between members of the language community, resulting in differential processes of learning that create substantial divergences and gaps in the use of the language. The mechanism for why this change in the traditional society occurred, however, was unclear. I wondered *why* so many had decided, in all but this last small community, to abandon the systems of thought that organized their traditional social life, and adopted, at least as it appeared to me, a profoundly Christian set of preoccupations and orientations toward action. It became clear to me that their new orientation caused them to regard their cultural history with a sort of dismissal. The traditional practices that at one time were believed to prevent the destruction of their world were recast as wild folk beliefs or evil preoccupations with forces that, if even real at all, had almost no weight in the questions of what an Ishir should do with his life. The constant

battle to teach these mythologies and practices in rigorous, exacting detail has stopped in the majority of Ishir communities, with only the few who take it upon themselves to carry the torch actively working toward preservation and dissemination of these old truths.

In my limited exposure to the communities, I felt that the causes making traditional practices difficult or impossible were mostly structural: education sending children away, growing ignorance of family clan names and shrinking participatory groups in the tradition (both absolutely essential for the completion of traditional rites), and the withering environment and shrinking legally proscribed territory of the Ishir (which made traditional hunting and nomadic practices impossible), to name a few. It seemed to me, however, that there was another, more internal cause hindering this cultural push to reestablish the traditional practices, something that was inherent to the way that the beliefs themselves were arranged. The spark for this idea was lit by Clemente Lopez, a tremendously knowledgeable and respected shaman from Karcha Balut, when he declared that he was taught that their most important deity *Ashnuwerta* mandated they pass on what they were taught exactly as they were taught it. He confided that he rarely participated in the current form of the Ebytoso cultural instruction and training because he believed that it was more harmful to teach it wrongly than to not perform it at all.

This fact led me, in roundabout ways, to the argument that will be put

forward here. In this work I make no claims about the Ishir, as I do not trust my data or other work on the topic to give me the basis in social practice I need to evaluate whether or not I can responsibly make those claims. As a result of my feeling that the religion itself seemed to challenge religious adaptation to current social conditions, I turned to look to see if I could find the basis for belief, to explain how a form of Protestant Christianity, in whatever form it takes there, had come to be believed and meaningfully used in social life. While I believe that the economic, political, and environmental conditions that all but legally barred practice of their traditional life was almost certainly the primary cause of the religious change, I did not believe that it was possible to make the claim that they came to believe and become committed to something else because it was somehow more "instrumentally" apt for their modernizing surroundings, or because it was simply forced upon them. Aside from the tremendous implausibility and contrary evidence to the last common explanation of these things, a quick survey of their history proves that some Ishir people resisted these forces with great fervor. The Tomaraho, a Ishir/Chamacoco ethnic group considered by Escobar to hold almost identical religious beliefs (in addition to speaking the same language), dwindled to approximately 87 people after struggling together and continuing to practice their beliefs in the face of dire needs: "Once a priest came and promised medicine; but we know that he will only give it to us if we go to the mission. And there they will not allow us to

perform our rites. They will prohibit the *debylyby* [The male indoctrination, teaching of the mythology and social practices *-NS*] just as they prohibited it among the Ebytoso" (Escobar 2001, 272).

In this work I will look past the facile explanation that reduces belief to power, and into the social heart of belief. This work is an attempt to explain what belief is, how it happens, and what it makes us do.

Introduction

A society is, by definition, something held in common. In *The Division of Labor in Society*, Durkheim's definition of "collective consciousness" does not go much further than this toward explaining the subjective foundations of social existence. Using *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, however, we can develop this notion toward a more elementary definition of society. "There is no religion that is not both a cosmology and a speculation about the divine. Further, and less often noted, religion has not merely enriched a human intellect already formed but in fact has helped to form it. Men owe to religion not only the content of their knowledge, in significant part, but also the form in which that knowledge is elaborated" (1912, 8). Durkheim, though empirically focused on religion, actually made an argument about knowledge. We can take what he said about religion and refocus it to a discussion of collective action and collective representations. These representations are built from fundamental "categories of understanding" (ibid., 8), that derive from the socially experienced world. Collective representations, stitched from a network of collectively experienced and validated concepts, and the derived motives for social action, which come out of social positions within these collective representations, define what will be here called systems of thought. A given society is exactly these systems of thought held in common by its members; it can be more than that only insofar as humans require food, weapons require materials, travel requires resources, etc.

For example: What is membership in a geographical nation without a belief in the conferred authority of geographically limited space? These systems of thought, within Durkheim, are defined by two functions regarding the content of the socially revealed objective world. "One is turned toward action, which it elicits and regulates; the other toward thought, which it enriches and organizes," (1912, 430). These two functions are the basis of the systems of thought that are all but materially constitutive of the societies that they describe.

As may be clear from the tentative definition of "society", this work focuses on the genesis and maintenance of "society". The definition of society I will use is, in some way, circular, and is based on insight taken from *The Division of Labor in Society* by Emile Durkheim. Within that work, Durkheim uses two forms of cooperation to illustrate the types of solidarity that may exist among individuals. The first, called mechanical solidarity, is essentially an unconscious similarity, one derived from an essentially similar experience and systematization of activity. In the strongest formalization of mechanical solidarity, individuals act in cooperation toward the same goal because they *are* the same. The second mode of solidarity, however, arises in cases of difference, and involves a mediation of that difference through reference *to* a collaboratively negotiated point of similarity. In my interpretation of Durkheim, organic solidarity is a form of negotiation rather than a latent similarity like mechanical solidarity. Through this negotiation, organic solidarity comes to realize a bond or bonds of mechanical solidarity;

realization is brought about either from extant systems of mechanical solidarity,

or generated newly through some sort of social integration. This effect, over time,

serves to abstract the bonds of mechanical solidarity – resulting in the

"increasing preponderance of organic solidarity" – because extant commonalities

are being extended and respecified to diverse situations, or new ones

necessarily forged that acquire their own generality in time. In turn this

abstraction of mechanical solidarity facilitates the function of organic solidarity

since it results in and can be brought from the expanding bonds of mechanical

solidarity[1]. Since mechanical solidarity is functionally equivalent to the "collective

consciousness", we can think of this as a similarity in thought and commitments

averaged from the subjective viewpoints of individuals.

    While this analysis appears to reduce society solely to the subjective

conditions of its constitution, the near omission of material conditions is a

conscious decision. I will avoid the material problems that thought systems face

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1 While it might look like generality and expansion are inevitable from this account, it is possible and entirely well attested for thought systems to be principally against such expansion and diverse applicability. The reality expounded in this section, however, is the articulation of a principle general to thought system application. We will see that this principle derives primarily from the abstract basis of human communication and, consequently, experience.

    If this generality and expansion are checked inherently from within the thought system in question (as one of its normative functions), we will see that they do not remain static, for the world and situations they encounter are never the same, but rather their changes remain insular, their application strained, and much effort goes into the maintenance and attempted monitoring of them. We will also see that these systems, by their nature, apply less broadly, and thus elicit less profound and sweeping social effects. When great social effect is produced by such a system, my defense would be that the system itself relies on forces beyond the persuasiveness or facilitation of cooperation of the thought system itself. Examples of terrorism are the clearest illustration of this.

until later, and will ultimately be forced to confront them in an attempt to evaluate the grounds for the comparative effectiveness or applicability of different thought systems. I will also avoid much possible discussion about these material constraints, for the simple fact that elaboration of these is an altogether new project, and one requiring a focus on altogether different data. Distribution of say, teaching in modern science in developing nations, for example, would require elaborate accounts of the specific conditions required in producing this social perspective, an evaluation of its relationship with the local thought systems dealing with this topic, and the necessary materials and conditions for the addition of this system of thought to those in the region, as well as finding data capable of indicating the success of these programs. Discussion of only the mostly material concerns laid out in just this example would far outstrip my ability to cover them here, and falls outside the grounds necessary for illustrating my argument about the subjective foundations of thought systems. It will be challenging enough to provide sufficiently convincing epistemological basis for the comparative arguments I will make about thought systems. If this argument proves fruitful, integrating the material bases for thought systems would be an excellent point of entree for future work and elaboration.

      I start with a discussion of the structure, genesis, and progression of elaborative thought systems. This will be the work of the first chapter. In the second chapter, I explain the relationship between these systems and the actions

they elicit, regulate, and evaluate. The final chapter is devoted to the specification and application of the theoretical perspective laid out in the first two. That chapter focuses on competitive and/or disjunctive episodes in the history of thought systems, referring specifically to the Jamaa movement in the Katanga province of the Congo. This section is essentially illustrative of moments of crisis in systems of thought, as Kuhn describes in the case of scientific revolutions. Moments of crisis are characterized by a proliferation of alternative systems of thought, along with the subsequent weakening of the traditional system. In this introduction I briefly outline the arguments of the individual chapters in anticipation of what is to come.

There are two important modes in the social life of thought systems. The first mode is the one of genesis, which results in the establishment of what Thomas Kuhn broadly refers to as a "paradigm". Thought system genesis results from the coalescence of experienced distinctions, and a logic that makes those distinctions sensible. It is important to note that these two categories are not independent, both are concurrently involved in experience: a logic makes distinctions available, and distinctions in use can cause the reevaluation of that logic; each is capable of transforming the other. This possibility will be detailed in the first chapter, though it may clarify at this point to suggest that this possibility springs from communication, the central anchor of social life. The second mode of thought system existence is a form of elaboration and enrichment, that builds

on the first mode, as the quotation from Durkheim describes; this is essentially

parallel to what Thomas Kuhn called "normal science". This second mode is less

remarkable in that it has a relatively concretized social foundation and because

many of the practices that come to be routinized in the second mode are strongly

foreshadowed by the form and expression of the first mode. The members of the

society in question elaborating a system of thought necessarily have come to

share that system of thought through mechanisms that make their experiences of

the world similar. Kuhn's choice of science and his discussion of exemplars in the

postscript is the perfect example: Textbooks have example problems, with keys

to describe acceptable answers. The scientific community is most overtly a set of

elaborating thought systems, with a set of reflexive action systems oriented

toward incessant, open-ended elaboration within defined limits of science. Thus,

the membership and progression of individuals in each scientific community is

highly structured and enables a very similar set of experiences at all but the very

highest levels of disciplinary divisions.

  While these two modes of system formation express the variability in

states of systems of thought, they do not even begin to address the important

relation of function that Durkheim expresses. To refresh: "One is turned toward

action, which it elicits and regulates; the other toward thought, which it enriches

and organizes," (1912, 430). All thought systems must contain the two functions

that Durkheim describes, though their interrelationship is not one of equivalence.

In this work I will refer to them distinctly as the elaborative system of thought and the action system. We will begin with the religious "turning towards thought" that Durkheim describes of religion.

The function of this "turning towards thought" is to make objects in the world available to our perception and use. The availability of any conceptual object is necessarily predicated on its separation from and distinction against another concept or concepts. As Hegel describes in *The Phenomenology of Mind*, the existence of a single concept belies its participation in a totality. The existence of one is always *vis a vis* another, and as such their difference is encompassed in their mutual reliance on the fact that they both have the quality of being distinguished from each other. Without articulated divisions between perceived objects, the world is not "revealed" by the abstract qualities we would ordinarily develop in the course of social life. While the laws of gravity may operate objectively "without our awareness", they do not do so in a way that is intelligible or useful to us without our ability to differentiate and ascribe qualities: A description of the effect of gravity on the arc of a cannon shot, for example, depends on the conceptual separability of what we would observe as the shot itself, the cannon ball and its position in moments in time, from other conceptually understood parts of the environment, such as the air around the ball as it passes, which are also affected by gravity. The notion of the event itself is similarly limited within a conceptually understood period of time, though the effect of the forces

involved is supposed to apply after the shot is completed and in all moments leading to its initiation. Without socially anchored notions of these independent qualities, gravity, color, temperature, taste, touch, etc., they impinge only unconsciously on our experience, because they cannot be intelligible: Without embedding the concept in a system of thought that confines and explains its relationality to other concepts, perception of that concept regresses to a corrupt version of the Hegelian totality, expressing all possible individualizable moments and qualities of a given perceptual experience individually while simultaneously containing them all and being utterly incapable of making distinctions within it. Without representability or usefulness, it is without "conscious" existence. In making no distinction in perception, perception must become physiological, not conscious. Consciousness, in Hegel's analysis, and here too, is thus the constant movement from the abstraction, which embraces the whole of experience, to specificity, which expresses the relations of definite qualities to the whole and to other definite qualities. This movement is the essential component of what I have termed the elaborative system of thought.

     The action function of the system of thought, however, is derived from the elaborative system. Action relies on the distinctions that our social thought system imparts to us. It is impossible to imagine, for example, that a person would understand how to communicate via cell phone if that person did not have an idea of what a cell phone *was* and the qualities and manner of its use. Buttons

like "power" and the numbers needed to successfully dial a call are concepts within a system of order and meaning, and the evaluation of their effect on each other and instrumentalization of that effect is the key to the action system. The action function, therefore, is concerned with the effect of concepts *on* each other, while the elaborative function is concerned with the relation of concepts *to* each other. The subtle difference can be elicited with an extended example. Consider the classic Geertz example of building a dam, meant to contrast between his idea of models "of" reality, and models "for" reality. When a person is reflecting on what it means to build a dam, the material components necessary (though this still involves some of the action function), what a finished dam looks like and the components involved or whatever, they are using the elaborative system of thought. When a person is acting to build a dam, however, that person is using the concept of water and considering how its flow is obstructed or not by certain materials, how those materials will change when brought into contact with water or when left in place for a long period of time, the effect of the water stoppage or flow on certain observable facts about the river, etc. To put it more formally in the terms I've laid out here, when a person thinks about the effect of a dam, that person is anticipating certain conceptual features of the world to present themselves as a result of that action. It would be foolish to say that a person is capable of anticipating reactions that he has no conceptual basis for seeing. To illustrate this, we need only look at the early history of "radiation" in the western

world. Once a conceptual framework was established that made important, harmful effects noticeable, people's actions toward radiation anticipated much different outcomes. This is not to say that there is a strict division between elaborative and action systems of thought. A quick allusion to the scientific method itself should clearly dispel that conclusion. We may safely say that science is a perfect example of the action function helping to evaluate the concepts brought out by the elaborative function. The evaluation of effects is only the precursor – or retroactive reflection on – action. The realization of effect, then, is the true moment of action.

But the action system does not simply proliferate the individual's understanding of "cause and effect" relations; effects of action are manifest conceptually through and in the elaborative system. Action and interaction, if they are to be meaningful or systematic at all, must be grounded in a social commonality, derived from social experience. While an individual's passive discovery of the effects of things on each other may seem to a plausible starting point in the development of human understanding, it is necessary for concepts to become systematized and utilized in social action for them to be communicable at all. Communication inherently involves abstraction, at bare minimum from one individual's perception to another's perception of the same thing. To communicate any qualities of these specific individual states, language depends on collectively held signs and systems of expression that correspond to a common agreement

of what experience those signs call out. This social need for the limitation and routinization of concept use (primarily accomplished through routinization of induction into the social order, schools, rites of passage, etc.) demonstrates that as learning and action progress, the accretion of socially revealed facts of order must take on a normative character, with certain uses or perceptions of order being rejected as falling outside what is commonly understood as right. Communication depends upon this systematization; individually developed conceptual frameworks, imagining that this were even possible, would be impossible to share without developing methods of producing relevantly analogous experience of each articulated concept, in each utterance, in each interlocutor, at each point of communication.[2] Given this demand for normativity from communication itself, we can safely conclude that normative structures inherently develop within thought systems[3]. The normative component necessarily falls within the action system of thought as I have constructed it, because this normativity is concerned with the evaluation and instrumentalization of the effects of conceptually mediated reality on other conceptually mediated

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2 This second demand for normativity, while logically plausible, cannot arise except in a case of stubborn non-integration of an already cognitively developed individual articulating from within a incompatible thought system. It has been demonstrated repeatedly within the field of linguistics that communication is absolutely foundational for fully "human" cognition in the first place (Hauser, et al. 2002).

3 Mark Gould has previously raised the objection that I am conflating two types of normative order, one of sense and nonsense, essentially non-moral normativity, and good and bad, an essentially moral and emotionally committed normativity. I concede that this is an important substantive distinction, but I will elaborate in my chapter on the action system of thought exactly why I feel that can be analytically accounted for without requiring two distinctly articulated normative structures.

objects within that reality. This even includes the elaborative system and the action system itself as subjects for its normativity, since these are, at least in one way or another, also manifest conceptually as rules or articulations of logical relationships, etc. The scientific ethic of "no conclusions, only theories" demonstrates one normative statement expressing a typical regulation of scientific inquiry.

While these systemic concerns seem to leave much to agency, risking a dangerous relativism that makes prediction worthless or impossible, when we begin to examine the constraining relationship of the concept-independent experienced world with the conceptually mediated social world that reveals it we will see that this fear of relativism can be held back. That relativism also begins to disappear when we look at broader social phenomena; the individual's agency becomes subsumed within the thought systems of the society, and the relationality of individuals to the larger social structure results in a directionality of social life capable of dominating or deflecting individual wills. When talking about these issues abstractly it is necessary to demonstrate their variability, but in applying them to empirical materials I will contextualize their specificity, and we can begin to talk more cogently about limiting conditions in the life of a thought system.

With the skeleton of this argument in hand, we can now begin to speculate as to the perfect empirical case for its application, and subsequently,

its evaluation. I am aware that the relationality between the systems I have

proposed so far seems reified from any evaluability. This problem arises from two

concerns, one epistemological, the other political. The primary concern is one

that appears in most accounts of the change of thought systems, but its passing

is often accompanied with frenzied hand-waving and assurance that a solution is

at least possible. This concern is the result of an argument that in Kuhn's

descriptive terms does not allow thought systems to be evaluated by some sort

of omniscient or true-judging neutral language. The argument from Durkheim,

McDowell, Kuhn, and others, is essentially that humans' conceptual frameworks

reach all the way out to the empirical world, and as such the only forms of

evaluation of the successfulness of these frameworks rely on similarly human

concepts particular to certain social realities themselves. To restate, this

epistemological concern comes from the fact that if two completely different

logics come to an internally coherent account for some problem, only a sort of

divine intervention seems to be capable of establishing one as true or more

"successful". This leads many to avoid the problem; Bordieu, Foucault and other

theorists who focus on power do so through a veiled symbolic materialism: the

thought systems that come to dominate are not necessarily more "successful" or

more "truthful", but rather achieve their success by their ability to enforce their

accounts of the "true order". It is important to note the value of these

contributions, and to avoid like the plague attributing thought system change to

some sort of inherent "value" when it in reality has occurred due to this symbolic materialist domination.

This avoidance of the epistemological assessment of thought systems leads into the political concern mentioned before: even if we *could* find a basis for such a claim that would allow us to evaluate the "successfulness" of a system of thought, the implementation of such could result in the suppression and dismissal of a diverse array of thought systems, creating exactly the symbolic materialist domination that a responsible work about systems of thought would attempt to responsibly prevent. Such an academic conclusion makes possible the application of a theory that could result in devaluation or outright abandonment of certain thought systems. Premature or wishful conclusions in this vein have caused some of the greatest oversights and atrocities in human history, and a theory that claims possible the absolute divination of value or assessment of a thought system is a precursor to terrible misuse.

That said, if this work is to attempt an explanation of thought system evolution and change at all, there are two principle ways of grounding that explanation. One was alluded to in the case of Foucault and Bordieu, who in some cases make arguments that externalize the cause of these changes to certain material conditions that make possible the symbolic collective representations necessary for the instilment of particular thought systems. The other, and one that I think is relatively unexplored other than elliptically in *The*

Structure of Scientific Revolutions, works at the basis of thought systems and the distinctions and actions they generate, and asks if socialization into separate thought systems or if divergence within socialization of thought systems themselves is capable of generating spontaneous change and producing distinctions that demand systemic reorganization. The majority of my work here is dedicated to exploring this second form of explanatory grounding.

The ground for this type of evaluability is, again, hinted at in *The Elementary Forms*. "There can be no society that does not experience the need at regular intervals to maintain and strengthen the collective feelings and ideas that provide its coherence and its distinct individuality. This moral remaking can be achieved only through meetings, assemblies, and congregations in which the individuals, pressing close to one another, reaffirm in common their common sentiments," (1912, 429). While the social proximity that Durkheim alludes to is now facilitated through ever expanding technology, the sentiment remains. In order to evaluate systems of thought and their integration, maintenance, and spread, we must look at collective actions that contribute to that social system, and we must examine the ways in which those actions contribute to its makeup. Though it initially seems trivial as an indicator of what we should examine (e.g. "What, you mean look at any social interaction in history?" or "Why not just evaluate this paper itself and the relation it attempts to articulate with a social history and its reader?"), it points to the value of collective action in the genesis

mode of thought systems. If what Durkheim said is true, genesis of a thought system capable of reproducing itself in new individuals must occur socially. This genesis would be marked by certain collective action that routinizes, popularizes, and makes normative its implementation. In this vein, we must evaluate two types of attempted conceptual genesis: successful indoctrination of a system of thought, and unsuccessful indoctrination. The ideal case, then, is one where identical collective action succeeds in one case and fails in others. The dream scenario would differ only in the minimal amount required for the two results to be manifest, but it can only be a dream. This test case assumes that thought systems are assimilated whole cloth, however, and it is just as likely that an ideal case would demonstrate that certain elements of thought systems are assimilated differently by different people. Religious syncretisms are perfect examples of this phenomenon.

Also, considering that I have left out relations of truth or comparative "value" of thought systems so far, integration of a thought system seems to depend only on social use and proximity. This has heavy bearing, especially on the acquisition of the first thought systems, since it would seem from where we are now in the argument that it would be impossible for them to fail. We will have to return to this point later with Jean Piaget's help, especially as it applies to learning at early stages of social development. A derivative issue with the argument thus far is that the resolution of competition between thought systems

is essentially impossible to predict. Durkheim writes about this that, "It is impossible for me to make a sensation pass from my consciousness into someone else's...All I can do is invite another person to set himself before the same subject as I and open himself to its influence. By contrast, conversation and intellectual dealings among men consist in an exchange of concepts. The concept is, in essence, an impersonal representation" (435). Durkheim's quotation captures the difficulties of specific applicability of thought systems, though he seems to have forgotten something he said earlier: "To be sure, collective ideals tend to become individualized as they become incarnate in individuals. Each person understands them in his own way and gives them an individual imprint, some elements being taken out and others being added" (425). As Durkheim realizes here, each concept, if it is acquired in experienced social life, must differ for each member of the social order, even if the only difference between their observation of a particular phenomenon is one of location. Thus, communication is, in some sense, impersonal representation. It is only as impersonal in the degree that its use differs from the experiential history of the communicating interlocutors differ; it is as impersonal as the mechanical solidarity that links the thought systems involved in communication. If two people have very similar experiences of the same event, their communication about such event is necessarily less impersonal in its experiential basis than an account of the experienced phenomena would be to someone at great distance

from the event. This captures the insight Durkheim had when he spoke of society's need to press together and reaffirm collective representations.

The reality of this basis in mechanical solidarity, as it relates to thought system comparison, conversion, or intelligibility is borne out in Kuhn: "Having isolated such areas of difficulty in scientific communication, they can next resort to their shared everyday vocabulary in an effort to further elucidate their troubles. [this is, essentially, using an alternate, mutually held system of thought -*N.S.*] Each may, that is, try to discover what the other might see and say when presented with a stimulus to which his own verbal response would be different" (1962, 202). The conclusion that results from this line of argument is exactly the one Kuhn and Durkheim recognize. Argument reduces to the need to communicate the logical relationships necessary within the particular system of thought and then the need to place the recipient of the argument in front of particular objective cases that seem to demonstrate the validity of that argument. It is exactly the idiom "talking past each other".

Chapter I – Language and the Elaborative System of Thought

"...one may readily conclude that animals and plants are not known as a result of their usefulness; they are deemed to be useful or interesting because they are known" (Lévi-Strauss 1962, 21).

"Concept" is used here to describe the nexus point of a confluence of cognitively separated parts of diverse experiences. Concept can be used to refer to an individual's experience, or a collectively bounded experience and use of a concept, though both cases in practice necessarily result in a Weberian ideal-type reduction to what experiences and elements of the system of thought seem relevant to the analysis at hand. Concepts must be built up from experience; what would the content of speech be if it is not based on experience? An argument for *a priori* human concepts would make the sudden awareness of historically unknown concepts appear to be a form of providential biology anticipating the world[4]. This is not to say that language is unintelligible if experience hasn't grounded the terms used; we have created technologies for rendering or creating relevant or analogous experience: dictionaries, thesauruses, textbooks, instructional videos, audio tapes, etc.. Language gives us the capacity for producing new concepts, new nexuses, initially based on the

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4   This is an statement about conceptual content, not structure. There is an argument within linguistics that the structure of language that children assimilate is limited biologically; this argument arises from the fact that the possible syntactic structures for the limited experience of speech for children vastly overpredicts acceptable use, whereas children do not approach this level of overprediction. Children can assimilate "proper" language use at a rate that is impossible if there is no *a priori* cognitive structure limiting the variations constraining that assimilation. (Hauser, et. al. 2002)

experienced distinctions built up through language. "A common language connects the members of a community into an information sharing network with formidable collective powers. Anyone can benefit from the strokes of genius, lucky accidents, and trial-and-error wisdom accumulated by anyone else, present or past" (Pinker 1994, 3).

But where does this experiential basis for language come from? It cannot develop in an individual, socially isolated human mind[5], nor does it appear without experience (Americans cannot understand Chinese without training in the language, for example). Here we depend on a synthesis of Bourdieu and Piaget. No human child who develops language is born into an empty, inhuman world. The child is born into a social world, surrounded by social action, and implicated in it as a co-conspirator from the day the child is born.

It is true, as Piaget notes, that there is a form of physical development that precedes the capacity for socialization. This type of physical and non-subjective limitation persists in different forms throughout the course of human life; no person is capable of hearing things that escape the range of the human ear, nor see things that escape the ability of the eye to pick up. This form of physical and perceptual limitation constrains the development of individuals' and societies'

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5 Though it has been demonstrated that it is biologically impossible to develop language without social intervention and that it is impossible to develop it after a certain point in human development, my argument does not rely on this: it is enough to say that individual's producing conceptual worlds in this way would be in any way intelligible to others only through the greatest efforts in translation.

thought systems in a profound way. We will discuss this limitation alongside another form of limitation: social limitation through forms of collective representation and social power.

To use a distinction found in Bourdieu, these forms of conceptual order take on concrete powers in social life[6]. The act of declaring a road "open", for example, manifests the power of the symbolic system as an objective constraint, and makes a noticeable change in the environment; one can thereafter look at the road and see cars moving down it. In the cases where this change is not perceptible to an outsider, these changes are manifest specifically to the thought system, the collective representation of reality, common to the members within the society enacting it. A ritual of change of title, if not substantiated through any sort of visible change (documentation, vestment, etc.), must have its life in the social responses to it (Ms. → Mrs., etc.). This form of symbolic definition serves to create or reinforce distinctions that form the basis for actions within a particular type of social order. An illustration of this phenomenon appears in *Gender*

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6   "If...there are utterances whose role is...'to execute an action', this is because the power of words reside in the fact that...the authorized spokesperson is only able to use words to act on other agents, and through their action, on things themselves" (Bourdieu 1991, 111).
        "Symbolic power – as a power of constituting the given through utterances, of making people see and believe, of confirming or transforming the vision of the world and, thereby, action on the world and thus the world itself, an almost magical power which enables one to obtain the equivalent of what is obtained through force (whether physical or economic), by virtue of the specific effect of mobilization – is a power that can be exercised only if it is *recognized,* that is, misrecognized as arbitrary" (ibid., 170). Finally, "What Nietzsche is suggesting is that in order [for the Catholic minister] to consecrate himself as a necessary interpreter, the intermediary must produce the need for his own product. And in order to do that, he must produce the difficulty that he alone can solve" (ibid. 210). These all refer to the social complicity in certain types of interactions. This is what we will later call social constraints or socially manifest phenomena.

Advertisements: "Display seems to be concentrated at the beginning and endings of purposeful undertakings, that is, at junctures, so that, in effect, the activity itself is not to be interfered with. (Thus the small courtesies sometimes performed in our society by men to women when the latter must undergo what can be defined as a slight change in physical state, as in getting up, sitting down, entering a room or leaving it...)..." (Goffman 1979, 2). This form of display is a collective form of definition; it is capable of reaffirming latent distinctions within the elaborative system held in common, or causing powerful transformations from one social state to another (Presidential Inauguration, for example). These acts depend on society to make them meaningful; they also depend on society to make that meaning real. The *Gender Advertisements* passage alludes to the display of gender at the initiation of minor interactions. This gender display, in failing to be practiced, does not destroy or undermine gender outright. It does contribute to a change in the bounding and experiential use of the gendered concepts. This change need not be profound. Language uses the same words thousands of times. Meaning comes to be codified in a range of experiences of what words mean socially, and this form of experience is difficult to invalidate through one correction[7].

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7   Indeed, concepts cannot be openly dismissed if we take what Durkheim has said seriously. What would it mean to "negate" a nexus of experience? Meaningful distinctions that were made cannot be "unmade", causing those distinctions in experience to disappear; a similar, "more important" nexus must be incorporated into a recharacterization of the relationship of those experiences.

The development of concepts takes two forms: 1) genesis of new concepts, nexuses of experiences or 2) extension and incorporation of new experience into existing nexuses. To explain the first form of development, I look to Jean Piaget. The genesis and incorporation of these nexuses of experience into a thought system would initially seem very problematic from the profoundly subjective, relativistic perspective I seem to have taken here. I can deflect this accusation by noting that, through language, symbolic gestures can be used to connect common abstract qualities across diverse moments and experiences through the abstract representation made possible in language. That is to say, when a father says to his child "Truck" in a variety of circumstances to describe a variety of phenomena that the father indicates by that rubric, he makes that abstraction a part of the phenomenological world through social action, giving an objectively (insofar as language can be perceived) common element across situations. The assimilation of these concepts and systems of thought, presented essentially whole cloth by the social system the child is born into, at first takes on a character we would anticipate if these socially relative concepts actually first seemed simply to be features of the natural environment. Piaget writes: "This [egocentric] stage begins at the moment when the child receives from outside the example of codified rules, that is to say, some time between the ages of two and five. But though the child imitates this example, he continues to play either by himself without bothering to find play-fellows, or with others, but without trying to

win, and therefore without attempting to unify the different ways of playing"

(1997, 27). Later, when through action it becomes clear that certain concepts are

socially relative, rules and systems of order taking such malleability into account

can develop through cooperation. The first symptoms of an awareness of this

malleability are described in Piaget:

> For the habit of repeating a given gesture ritually, gradually leads to the consciousness of 'pretending.' The ritual of going to bed, for instance...is sooner or later utilized 'in the void' and the smile of the child as it shuts its eyes in carrying out this rite is enough to show that it is perfectly conscious of 'pretending' to go to sleep. Here already we have a symbol, but a 'played' symbol. Finally, when language and imagery come to be added to motor intelligence, the symbol becomes an object of thought. The child who pushes a box along saying "tuff-tuff" is assimilating in imagination the box's movement to that of a motor-car: the play symbol has definitely come into being. (ibid., 32)

The social malleability of certain components of systems of thought[8] is

discovered through experience; this malleability derives from the experiential

basis of human action and communication. This is a necessary outcome if you

accept my contention that the content of experience informs concepts: Since

experience is never homogenous, concepts are inherently differently constructed

for all individuals. This heterogeneity in concepts across the social network

entails a type of negotiation that attempts to bring abstractly analogous

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8 Systems of thought may themselves be conceptual objects of larger systems. Reflection on "method" is always of this character, Reflection, as a system, takes methods and orienting principles of methods, as its object. This realization itself subsumes the act of reflection as a conceptual object within a statement. This recursion is not malicious; it is human cognition.

experiences into line in an attempt to make things interpretable[9].

Turning back to my earlier point, certain forms of abstract order take on a life that seems independent of the observable, physical constraints of the world. To use Piaget again, notions like "the rules of the game", or "the spirit of the game" are not necessarily qualities that describe or detail qualities of the marbles themselves, they describe a socially variable set of institutions that the child has some effect in recreating and constructing. This speaks to the earlier analytical distinction between types of limitation. Systems of thought are confronted by objective things, autonomous features of the universe that exist "asocially". Systems of thought are also constrained by things like socially variable symbolically "objective" facts, like socially acceptable language use, manners of expression, etc.. This distinction is absolutely crucial in a comparative analysis of modern religion and modern science[10]. The awareness of socially constituted

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9   This is what Durkheim had in mind when he wrote about Organic Solidarity in *The Division of Labor in Society*. If he didn't have this in mind, a charitable reading can put it there for my use.

10 While this is an ancillary point for my actual argument, Mark Gould is concerned that my work is close to effacing important differences between religion and science. To this I write this digression on the nature of science and the reason that we should not be worried about effacing that difference by acknowledging that science, too, depends on the use and evaluation of socially constructed distinctions.

Natural science is concerned with the evaluation of the "asocial" elements of reality; it is dedicated to systematically reconstituting the social normativity that constrains the development and implementation of concepts. If we take seriously the idea that experience is mediated by human thought, it is impossible for science to escape that human condition of thinking socially to articulate some sort of greater, asocial truth. The character of science is most essentially one of logics and derived concepts assimilated to an overarching logic that is willing and ready to discard them or incorporate them into a systemic change if they seem to produce "incongruities". Kuhn's fundamental mistake in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* is that the field of science is actually articulated at two levels: paradigmatic variations, the

concepts like "charisma" or "femininity" escapes, in a profound way, the objective asocial "facts" of the objective world. This capacity for escape, however, does not call into doubt the ability of concepts to genuinely elicit qualities of experience (such as pain, edibility, experiences of color) that can be "useful" in a socially independent, cross-cultural way. In this way, the use of concepts as I have put it does not efface the "asocially" effective power of systems of thought. The

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focus of Kuhn's work, were subsumed in a larger action system ethic that believed simply that explanations must have socially independent effects. This action system principle guided the work of scientists when they encountered increasing "crises" at the boundaries of normal explanation when they articulated new solutions that escaped previous orders; religion often does not permit such innovation and deviation. This systematic flexibility is the social thread that connects the paradigms of science where Kuhn sees little commonality. Science, in this social-historical account, is defined by a form that evaluates form and content within it. Re situating the argument in this way does not discount or even call into question the commonsensical conclusion that science continues to proliferate conceptual distinctions and courses of action that have profound, noticeable effects on a world that seems to be ultimately independent of the concepts we use to describe it.

There is an important question about the origin of resources for science to transcend old practices; this question will be worked on as Chapter 1 continues.

The other important point to make here is that this willingness to reevaluate the conceptual system that orients it speaks to the reason John McDowell found his philosophy to be a satisfactory explanation for why knowledge progresses. Lévi-Strauss captured this when he wrote

"It is therefore better, instead of contrasting magic and science, to compare them as two parallel modes of acquiring knowledge. Their theoretical and practical results differ in value, for it is true that science is more successful than magic from this point of view, although magic foreshadows science in that it is sometimes also successful. Both science and magic however require the same sort of mental operations and they differ not so much in kind as in the different types of phenomena to which they are applied." (Lévi-Strauss 1962, 13)

If the inhuman world is truly concept independent, but we allow that concepts can reveal content of the world that we evaluate through action and experience, then by evaluating these concepts and their relationships to each other we converge toward a greater understanding. It is the functional equivalent of stumbling around a room with the lights off: eventually, you will have tripped over enough things to know approximately what is there and the features of it that you can observe with your limited faculties of stumbling. There are more systematic ways than stumbling, of course. To extend the analogy, modern science is directed towards the content of the room, and religion is increasingly directed to the unobservable, unverifiable content of the room. The reasoning for this and for religion's conflicts with science are fruitful subjects for this work, but the scope is beyond us at this point.

avoidance of a destructive relativism relies on this fact: systems of thought may change, but asocial realities of the world that systems of thought can sometimes elicit do not. If experience can in any way grasp objectively significant qualities through its conceptual work, then we need not fear the profound relativism that sacrifices progress.

Systems of thought are capable, then of expressing empirically, cross-culturally effective properties of the objective world. They are also capable of expressing socially relative qualities of the "objective", enforced social-symbolic world. The differences between the two were historically much less defined, and the division less concerning, than they seem to be now. Beliefs in magic powers' capacity to affect those beyond the culture that took them to be real were much more widespread, though they persist to this day. An anecdote may help to reveal the particularization of the effect of magic in an unconscious effort to preserve its explanatory power and use as a system of thought: when I was talking to Rudolfo, an indigenous man from Papua New Guinea, he explained to me that the decline in the knowledge and use of his language was directly related to the dwindling power of shamanic magic. Because people were forgetting the language, they were unable to communicate with their particular community's spirits who were capable of empowering them and debilitating their enemies. He told me that the different community's languages had powers that were derived directly from their particular language and related particularly to their own spirits.

These powers derived from the capacity to name and describe things to the spirits; he referred to the development of new weapons, such as firearms, as giving a tactical advantage on the opposition because they did not have the words that would empower them to affect these weapons through communication with the spirits (Shelton Fieldnotes, NM, Conversation with Rudolfo).   This anecdote is a perfect example of the resilience of thought systems in general, and elaborative distinctions resilience in particular. Instead of giving up seemingly powerful and meaningful explanatory systems in the face of declining applicability, Rudolfo seems to have adapted them to his changing experience to explain a reality of things that are happening to his community.

      This brings to the fore two central points in my argument. Firstly, the greatest weakness of what I have laid out here is implicated in Rudolfo's adaptation. How can a nexus-of-experience, a concept, or a thought system in aggregate integrate experience that necessitates its transformation or adaptation? This point is resolved by adapting a Hegelian mechanism.

      Let us consider that individual thought systems and concepts are profoundly colored by individual experience, and that that experience is effaced and recharacterized by its collaboration with society and other, relatively common experiences. The society, in a Hegelian way, is made up of the heterogeneous, profoundly individualized subjective experiences that constitute it. But society, in totality, is a shifting network of negotiating these subjectivities, through

interactions, into a representation of the whole that effaces certain qualities of individuals' experiences. This effacing is required to unite some qualities of experience into a reductionist uniformity and is the key for cooperation[11]. This uniformity undergoes constant revision, as individuals in society are always experiencing and using concepts according to their individual relation to society and their own experience. The individual, also, is constantly reevaluating these nexuses and systems of thought in relation to the society that he relates to. This heterogeneity of concept use, and variability in anchor points for conceptual nexuses, results in a fundamental imprecision of language.

This fundamental imprecision means that a society's account and use of a word, a proxy for concepts, differs from the individual's experience of it. This imprecision enforces and elicits distinctions made on the part of society that evade the contingent understanding and experience of the individual. Just as society fails to perfectly match the individual in concept use, individuals' concepts are also not perfectly consonant with the society's understanding; their action presses back against society's use of concepts not congruent with their understanding. When these individualized distinctions and deviations become systematic, innovation, social differentiation, and re-systematization of seemingly "old" distinctions occurs. This systematization was alluded to in the introduction; it is necessary in the case of language in order to communicate. Through the

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11 See Introduction and discussion of Mechanical vs. Organic Solidarity in Durkheim.

inherently imperfect mapping of social concepts onto individuals' experiences, divergences in experience become differentiations in the meanings and actions that constitute systems of thought themselves.

We haven't yet begun to talk about the content or direction of these divergences, though their systematicity can be anticipated given adequate data. In presuming imperfection of communication, it looks like I have destroyed the basis for its commonality. Here the way out is through the idea of effective truth. *The Division of Labor in Society* and *Mind, Self, & Society* are the foundations for the idea of effective truth.

Mead's three part structure of "meaning" and Durkheim's structures of solidarity have pragmatic definitions, both essentially defined as a cooperative relationship. "If the individual can [put himself in the place of the other person and say, in effect, 'He will act in such a way and I will act in this way,] and the attitude which he calls out in himself can become stimulus to him for another act, we have meaningful conduct," (Mead 1962, 73). I treat Durkheim's notion of mechanical solidarity similarly as the unconsciously understood basis for communication; mechanical solidarity is necessary insofar as it can engender cooperation, beyond that is a superfluous (for the given moment of cooperation) commonality. Thus, I define "effective truth" as a sufficient conceptual overlap for the anticipation of future conceptual extension. To restate, in order to communicate, individuals rely on previously utilized experiential nexuses that

anticipate extension into new experience. The degree to which this future convergence and similar labeling of experience is anticipated on the part of the individuals involved is the degree of "effective truth" in the particular concepts that are used. This reproduces Durkheim's notion of Mechanical Solidarity and combines it with Mead's structure of meaningful action.

Effective truth thus consists of the collective representation that effaces difference across cases but preserves functionality. By calling animals by a particular species, we efface differences among the individuals while engendering an abstract commonality. This form of reduction occurs in communication between individuals just as it does in individuals' relationship with conceptually mediated empirical world. Effective truth is the effective overlap of nexuses of experiences, or of experience's relative consistency with past experience in the same vein. Just as no experience may perfectly duplicate a previous experience, no human utterance can express perfect consonance with a listener's interpretation. This presents us with an idea of effective truth based in collective action.

To sum up what I have laid out so far: the elaborative system of thought is made up of concepts; the function of the elaborative system is that these concepts segment experience into usable parts. A concept is an abstract commonality, simultaneously engendered by and serving as the nexus that connects the diverse parts of individual experiences that limit its content: "truck"

in the earlier example comes to signify, through its commonality, an abstract

quality that is common across cases. These nexuses are often represented

linguistically through signs or symbols, but the precise cognitive basis for these

nexuses cannot be arrived at in this work. These nexuses form the basis for the

future segmentation of experience into the conceptual categories already

constructed (earlier referred to as conceptual extension)[12]. Since experience of

these nexuses is heterogeneous across society (that is, individualized),

conceptual nexuses are renegotiated, reevaluated, and limited by

interrelationship among individuals. These concepts are reinforced, and are

meaningful in interaction, as a result of effective truth. Effective truth is the

likelihood that future experience will be segmented into existing nexuses.

Effective truth, though operative, cannot overcome imperfections in

communication and the ambiguity of language. This ambiguity makes space for

the continued renegotiation of concepts. The renegotiation of concepts has two

effects: if concepts can be taken to elicit objectively useful, culturally

"independent" properties of the objective world, this renegotiation has the

capacity to create an ever growing divide between socially constituted conceptual

distinctions that manifest socially independent effects (properties like heat, or

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12 "Concepts thus appear like operators *opening up* the set being worked with and signification like the operator of its reorganization..." (Lévi-Strauss 1962). If we interpret "signification" here to mean the final structure of a given "utterance" of culture, then the categories he uses here can be laid into what I have said here. Concepts segment experience into workable pieces, while the ultimate arrangement of those concepts into some sort of represented order (the signification) reinforces or extends existing understandings of order.

electricity), and socially constituted conceptual distinctions that manifest effects that are not cross-culturally manifest (properties like style of dress, moral codes). Individual experience produces exigencies for the social system of thought and demands renegotiation of socially held understandings; these exigencies provide the basis for different systematization, reorganization, and integration of conceptual distinctions never before seen, this is the second effect of negotiation. The systematization and reorganization of systems of thought derives from the action system of thought, which will be detailed in the next chapter; reorganization relies, however, on the experiential segmentation provided by the elaborative system, and derives ultimately from the imperfection in communication of human experiential nexuses.

Levi-Strauss writes in an illustration of this phenomenon: "The characteristic feature of mythical thought is that it expresses itself by means of a heterogeneous repertoire which, even if extensive, is nevertheless limited. It has to use this repertoire, however...because it has nothing else at its disposal" (17). "Once it materializes the project will therefore inevitably be at a remove from the initial aim..." (21).

As more segments of experience are brought under a nexus, the nexus itself increasingly refers less to their specific content, forming an abstract representation that unites the content of the segmented experience under it through abstract commonalities.

It is fundamental here to understand that abstractions, a unity of conceptually segmented and diverse moments of experiences, thus must be capable of themselves constitute a concept that may be "experienced". We would not be able to reflect on something like "morality" if it was not itself a nexus uniting many different components of experience into a system. We experience word "morality", though it expresses a system of concepts and relationships, in the same way that we experience the word "truck", though the specific content of experience and syntactic relationship of concepts within each are profoundly different. In this way, there is only one form that experience can take: the conceptual nexus. Systematization of concepts themselves constitutes an argued field of relations between syntactically "lower" elements, united as constituents of an overarching category. Just as words form phrases, phrases form sentences, and sentences form clauses and embedded, recursive sentences, so do conceptual nexuses exist in a hierarchical relationship of complexity and relation of dependency. An investigation of this dependency is conducted in Chapter 2.

The reduction inherent in abstraction creates space that admits alternate specificity and variation to integrate under experience segmented and organized by the abstraction. This process allows new specific content to be introduced into segmented experience through conceptual nexuses. This is essentially the benefit of the routinization of science talked about in Kuhn:

It suggested which experiments would be worth performing and which,

because directed to secondary or to overly complex manifestations of electricity would not. Only the paradigm did the job far more effectively, partly because the end of interschool debate ended the constant reiteration of fundamentals and partly because the confidence that they were on the right track encouraged scientists to undertake more precise, esoteric, and consuming sorts of work. Freed from the concern with any and all electrical phenomena, the united group of electricians could pursue selected phenomena in far more detail, designing much special equipment for the task and employing it more stubbornly and systematically than electricians had ever done before. Both fact collection and theory articulation became highly directed activities. The effectiveness and efficiency of electrical research increased accordingly, providing evidence for a societal version of Francis Bacon's acute methodological dictum: 'Truth emerges more readily from error than confusion.' (1996, 18)

In conclusion, we see that the conceptual nexus expresses a limitation, organization, and selection within the field of experience. This is the foundational form of experience. With regards to content, I argue that the content of experience is limited in two senses: the objectively, socially independent limitation that constrains human action and perception, and the socially dependent, human modes of limitation like law, morality, language use, codes of dress, etc.. With these tools in hand, we can look away from the elaborative system, which reveals and unites diverse experience into unified patterns, giving content to our experience. We can then turn towards the action system, which is concerned with the manipulation, manifestation, and destruction of these revealed patterns as revealed through that content.

Chapter II: Response and the Action System of Thought

A tree is, as it were, strongly motivated so far as its lower parts are concerned: it must have a trunk and the trunk must be nearly vertical. The lower branches already allow more arbitrariness: their number, although it may be expected to be limited, is never fixed in advance, nor is the orientation of each and its angle in relation to the trunk. But these aspects nevertheless remain bound by reciprocal relations, since the larger branches, given their own weight and the foliage-laden branches they hold up, must balance the pressures which they apply at the common point of support. The part played by motivation, however, diminishes, and that of arbitrariness increases progressively as we turn our attention higher: the terminal branches can no longer compromise the tree's stability nor alter its characteristic shape [though a poorly constituted terminal branch could technically do this -NS] . Their multiplicity and insignificance has freed them from the initial constraints and their general distribution can be explained either as a series of repetitions, on an ever-diminishing scale, of a plan which is also written into the genes in their cells or as a result of statistical fluctuations. The structure, intelligible at the start, in branching out reaches a sort of inertia or logical indifference. Without contradicting its primary nature, it can thereafter undergo the effect of multiple and varied instances which occur too late to prevent an attentive observer from identifying it and classifying it as a genus. (Lévi-Strauss 1962, 160)

When Lévi-Strauss writes about motivation and arbitrariness in the quotation that leads this section, he takes this distinction from Saussure about language and applies it to culture: "'The two extremes [arbitrariness and motivation] are like poles between which the whole system moves, two opposing currents which share the movement of language: the tendency to use the lexicological instrument (the unmotivated sign) and the preference given to the grammatical instrument (structural rules)' (Saussure, pp. 133-4)" (Lévi-Strauss 1962, 156). Lévi-Strauss describes, through Saussure, the analytical thread that connects the elaborative and action system of thought. The quotation that begins

Chapter 1, "...one may readily conclude that animals and plants are not known as a result of their usefulness; they are deemed to be useful or interesting because they are known" (Lévi-Strauss 1962, 21), refers to this property of arbitrariness; usefulness refers to the outcomes of the action system. A useful argument we can take from Lévi-Strauss in *The Savage Mind*[13] states essentially that arbitrary distinctions are foundational to action itself. Inherent in the always social application of these distinctions is a transformation of the organizing nexuses. I will argue here that in the course of their use in segmenting experience, initially arbitrary concepts can transform into motivated concepts, participating in a structure that implicates them more broadly. The consequence of this motivation is that certain concepts, like the trunk of the tree in the example, become indispensable to the functioning of a social world that operates on the basis of these concepts.

For my analysis, motivation takes two forms. Extended motivation is the degree to which further conceptual nexuses rely on the concept (sign). This is what Saussure referred to in the use of "structural rules" in language; productive functional words or grammatical elements (like the suffixation of -able to turn a

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13 This idea is even found elliptically in Kuhn "What makes the integrity of perception worth emphasizing is, of course, that so much past experience is embodied in the neural apparatus that transforms stimuli to sensations. An appropriately programmed perceptual mechanism has survival value. To say that the members of different groups may have different perceptions when confronted with the same stimuli is not to imply that they may have just any perceptions at all. In many environments a group that could not tell wolves from dogs could not endure" (1979, 195).

noun into an adjective) are implicated strongly in that many conceptual divisions stem from the use of this functional element[14]. Foundational motivation, the second form, is the degree to which the concept in question depends on extant concepts. To restate, foundational motivation is the degree to which the nexus of experience in question is derived from other nexuses within the system of thought.

The tree metaphor is a beautiful example of this process. The trunk, is, as it were, a profoundly motivated element of the total tree. It operates primarily on extended motivation, since the trunk powerfully affects the rest of the tree's visible structure, which builds upon it. Foundational motivation, however, comes to the trunk only from its basis in the roots. The highest branches have extended motivation only insofar as leaves attach to them. The metaphor here begins to break down; the upper branches would appear to have the highest degree of foundational motivation if we include all the preceding parts of the tree that make possible their growth. If motivation were a sort of zero-sum system, then it would appear that as we increased in distance from foundational concepts that derive motivation from extension, we gain foundational motivation in equal proportion

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14 This raises problems in that my analysis may avoid "functional" elements of systems of thought in favor of a system constructed purely of hierarchies of conceptual nexuses. We will attempt to avoid this omission, and to introduce "functional" operators in an understanding of what the action system does to elaborated concepts. To attempt to characterize this problem: if, for instance, there was an "and" operator at a conceptual level that conjoined concepts in a structured way, and the framework I put forward destroyed this important feature, we would have suffered a significant loss.

that motivation by extension was lost. This would mean no concept is motivated any more than any other. This cannot be true, if we are to depend on motivation to lend a structure or inflexibility to parts of the system of thought.

Foundational motivation therefore must derive from the immediately preceding conceptual nexuses, not including the motivation of those nexuses as well. The upper branches would thus gain foundational motivation if preceding branches converged to make the upper branch, like the case of the roots. It is difficult, if not ultimately impossible, to predetermine a quantified level of "motivation" based on these connections. To this end, and joining me in my substantive vagueness, Lévi-Strauss himself says "All the levels of classification in fact have a common characteristic: whatever, in the society under consideration, is put first it must authorize – or even imply – possible recourse to other levels, formally analogous to the favoured one and differing from it only in their relative position within a whole system of reference which operates by means of a pair of contrasts: between general and particular on the one hand, and nature and culture on the other" (Lévi-Strauss 1962, 135).

Motivation is a measure of the relative dependence of concepts on one another. As systems of thought develop, there is a tendency for these divisions to become interrelated, and, as such, for them to become derivative from a fewer number of propositions (or conceptual systems and orders themselves).

Not only do theoretical propositions stand in logical interrelations to

each other so that they may be said to constitute "systems" but it is in the nature of the case that theoretical systems should attempt to become "logically closed." That is, a system starts with a group of interrelated propositions which involve reference to empirical observations within the logical framework of the propositions in question. Each of these propositions has logical implications. The system becomes logically closed when each of the logical implications which can be derived from any one within the system finds its statement in another proposition in the same system. It may be repeated that this does not mean that all the other propositions must be logically derivable from any one – on the contrary, if this were true scientific theory would be sheer tautology. (Parsons 1937, 9)

To use our previous example in consonance with Chapter I, it is as if the tree grows to express its trunk through the evolution and interconnection of the branches. This is, in at least one way, the process of abstraction discussed previously[15]. Because this form of abstraction depends on the integration of new experience, it is fundamentally caught up in the process of social action. The directedness, effective truth, and organization of systems of thought are borne out in the actions that bring out or fail to bring out the experience that they segment and, in part, anticipate.

Lévi-Strauss uses his classic story of the "bricoleur" to talk about the structuredness and structuring of the system of thought through action.

[Mythical thought] works by analogies and comparisons even

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15 In reducing logical relationships among concepts that segment experience to a concept that can express them in shorthand, I am aware that I am again leaving out important "functional" elements of thought, analogous to things like classifiers, conjugations, prepositions, etc. in language. At this stage it is difficult for me to guess about the exact content, and if they are ultimately expressible in a single concept that orders experience of them, it may suffice to leave it at this level of indeterminacy for now.

though its creations, like those of the 'bricoleur' always really consist of a new arrangement of elements, the nature of which is unaffected by whether they figure in the instrumental set or in the final arrangement (these being the same, apart from the internal disposition of their parts): 'it would seem that mythological worlds have been built up, only to be shattered again, and that new worlds were built from the fragments' (Boas I, p. 18). Penetrating as this comment is, it nevertheless fails to take into account that in the continual reconstruction from the same materials, it is always earlier ends which are called upon to play the part of means: the signified changes into the signifying and vice versa. (Lévi-Strauss 1962, 21)

It is important that this bricolage is inherently a mode of social expression. The efficacy and power of this bricolage derives ultimately from the social order and history ("the signified changes into the signifying") in which it takes place: its negotiation and codification into a communicable system occurs through repeated interaction. Subsequent acts depend on a historically continuous, but evolving, structure. Piaget writes about children and the codification of rules in marbles that

A third stage appears between [ages] 7 and 8, which we shall call the stage of incipient *cooperation.* Each player now tries to win, and all, therefore, begin to concern themselves with the question of mutual control and of unification of the rules. But while a certain agreement may be reached in the course of one game, ideas about the rules in general are still rather vague. In other words, children of 7-8, who belong to the same class at school and are therefore constantly playing with each other, give, when they are questioned separately, disparate and often entirely contradictory accounts of the rules observed in playing marbles. Finally, between the years of 11 and 12, appears a fourth stage, which is that of the *codification of rules*. Not only is every detail of procedure in the game fixed, but the actual code of rules to be observed is known to the whole society. There is remarkable concordance in the information given by children of 10-12 belonging to

the same class at school, when they are questions on the rules of the
game and their possible variations. (1997, 27)

This form of codification may derive ultimately from the need for facile
communication. If systematic concerns like "morality" or "due process" are to be
portable across situations and easily taught, then it is sensible that we observe
the tendency for systems of thought to become logically closed. If, as Parsons
argued, the logic of systems that are more logically closed can be derived from a
fewer number of propositions, then it is clear that these systems require a
narrower experiential base to impart all the necessary knowledge for their
application.

There is an important digression that should be mentioned here. There are
many examples where systems of thought are treated as a diffuse,
heterogeneous repertoire. These systems exist instrumentally for the structuring
and use of the individual to fit whatever situation at hand (Swidler 2003). Lévi-
Strauss' example of the bricoleur seems to fit this characterization, though with
some subtlety he avoids the problem of cultural atomism. For this, he turns to the
notion of a socially constituted repertoire. To return to the previously used
quotation, "The characteristic feature of mythical thought is that it expresses itself
by means of a heterogeneous repertoire which, even if extensive, is nevertheless
limited. It has to use this repertoire, however...because it has nothing else at its
disposal" (Lévi-Strauss 1962, 17). These understandings of what it means to

make sense (impose cognitive order) on experience illustrate something that my

argument, up to here, has avoided for the sake of simplicity. I had been treating

systems of thought as ideal-types (Weber 1991). I had been relying on the idea

of concepts that do not overlap in terms of experienced content. When we

incorporate heterogeneity, which is presumed based on the differences in the

experience that informs concepts, into the model of systems of thought, we begin

to see systematic overlaps and different systems of thought vying to segment

and use experience.

In Kuhn's example of arguing scientists, we saw that Kuhn realized the

capacity of a "common language" to communicate some sort of experience about

the situation.

> Briefly put, what the participants in a communication breakdown can do is
> recognize each other as members of different language communities and then
> become translators. Taking the differences between their own intra- and inter-
> group discourse as itself a subject for study, they can first attempt to discover
> the terms and locutions that, used unproblematically within each community,
> are nevertheless foci of trouble for inter-group discussions...Having isolated
> such areas of difficulty in scientific communication, they can next resort to their
> shared everyday vocabularies in an effort further to elucidate their troubles.
> Each may, that is, try to discover what the other would see and say when
> presented with a stimulus to which his own verbal response would be different.
> (Kuhn 1979, 202)

If his example is accurate then it means that there is a sort of cross-referentiality

across systems of thought with regard to thought objects. That is to say, if we

truly can at least partly describe scientific phenomena in plain-clothes

terminology as his example suggests, then it is clear that there is some sort of thought-system "autonomy" to the concept, the nexus of experience, as articulated here.

The solution to this problem lies in the alternative segmentation provided by multiple systems of thought. Speaking of units of measure of distance, for instance, shows us that a measure of what we call "distance" is fundamentally arbitrary. Inches, miles, meters, kilometers, are all related to each other in some sort of way in that they form units that can constitute a segmented understanding of experience. But in being segmented by these units, an experience of "distance" is not drawn away from the conceptual world. On the contrary, in using comparative, arbitrary measurements, we gain the sense that "distance" as a quality may be arbitrarily segmented in a different way that preserves, in some part, similar qualities of its character and usefulness (effective truth). This transformation is an abstraction itself; the idea of phenomena as distinct from the concepts we use arises conceptually out of the conceptually mediated recognition that arbitrary measures may elicit analogously effectively true experiences. This homology occurs similarly with socially limited elements of experience as well.

This notion of multiple systems of thought coexisting in the mind of an individual or on a social-typical level creates much complexity for the analytically ideal model I have put together here. We will see empirically in Chapter III that

these systems can be profoundly affected by the elicitation of effective truth by other systems, at times driving these interrelated systems to transform, integrate, decompose, or denature. But to understand the basis for this affect, we must dive into the idea of effective truth, this time from the perspective of social action.

"In religious belief and practice a group's ethos is rendered intellectually reasonable by being shown to represent a way of life ideally adapted to the actual state of affairs the world view describes," (Geertz 1973, 90). In this quotation, Geertz realizes the fundamentally self-referential way in which religious orientations operate. They operate by taking distinctions that are made by the elaborative system, articulating an expected relationship of those qualities to be born out in action, and then evaluating them through action and further experience to see if such predictions were accurate. This amounts to a different type of effective truth, one that, instead of a conversation with another individual, is a conversation with one's past expectations. Kuhn's discussion of exemplars shows this process in action.

> After the student has done many problems, he may gain only added facility by solving more. But at the start and for some time after, doing problems is learning consequential things about nature. In the absence of such exemplars, the laws and theories he has previously learned would have little empirical content. ...One...example is Newton's Second Law of Motion...The sociologist, say, or the linguist who discovers that the corresponding expression is unproblematically uttered and received by the members of a given community will not, without much additional investigation, have learned a great deal about what either the expression or the terms in it mean, about how the scientists of the community attach the expression to nature...Of course they do agree to a considerable extent, or the fact would

rapidly emerge from their subsequent conversation. But one may well ask at what point and by what means they have come to do so. How have they learned, faced with a given experimental situation, to pick out the relevant forces, masses, and accelerations? (Kuhn 1979, 188)

The works I have referred to repeatedly all substantively realize that systems of thought, in actualization, reach for a response. It is through certain ritual forms that a person becomes more sacred, or through certain methods by which one draws water from a well and certain theories by which one synthesizes particular compounds. These applications of systems of thought find their response in the forms of limitation earlier discussed, and in the social case, can contribute to their transformation. As Durkheim noted, failure to enforce a norm causes decay in the "life" of that norm (1997).

These myriad examples point to the source of belief that engenders commitment to systems of thought[16]. What, in Geertz, seemed circular, we must attempt to structure and explain in a way that makes the two processes he refers to independent. We have already attempted to get at "the actual state of affairs the world view describes". This is Durkheim's "turning towards thought". We now look to the action system as that which elicits the representations of the world view described in the elaborative system. Effective truth, while built from a social perspective, can be equally applied to the individual himself if we separate past

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16 I will talk about emotional commitment to systems of thought if possible at a later point. For now I will say that the mechanism for emotional commitment depends both on social conventions of emotion, the degree of motivation, and effective truth.

and present experiences into a constructed conversation that negotiates between the two. To return, reiterate, and enforce the idea of effective truth, effective truth is an overlap of prediction in segmentation. That is to say, what is segmented in experience must be relatively homogenous from position to position, whether historical or social, in order to constitute effective truth. A belief that it rains when one raises his right hand will not hold if in action that raising does not make available experience that is segmentable into the concepts set up by that belief.

Emotional commitment to systems of thought takes two forms. The first, and the one that structures and limits the expression of emotion, can lie within the system of thought itself. This is essentially the way in which the system of thought characterizes emotion in experience, and the way in which this emotion is dealt with through action. A related form, analogous to a thought-systemic "unconscious", depends on the prior notion of thought systemic limitation. If emotion arises that is not systemically interpretable (possible in light of the imperfection in communication, and due to the second form of commitment to be laid out below), these unconsciously felt forces must take the form of a objective, asocial constraint on action even if they cannot be integrated or effectively used in experience because they are not manifest elaboratively.

The second form in which emotional commitment enters is in response to the motivation of the thought system itself. The motivation of the concept in question, and the effective truths that derive from the system that feels that

motivation, affects the commitment to its existence. The first form of emotional commitment, the socially intelligible form of emotion management, is essentially derived from this as a system-preservational mechanism that generally must arise in order to keep systems reproducing stably. It is important to note, here again, that the dual types of limitation affect strongly the types of threats that can evoke emotional response. There is very little a human can do to destroy our ability to perceive the effective truths that units of measure give us. There is, however, a lot humankind can do to destroy or denature our idea of ethical behavior. As such, there are much stronger conditioned responses that have evolved in society to fend off and to account for these threats. This is the internal development of emotion management and structuring that was referred to as the first form. The second form takes its weight in the primary fact that if we allowed people to act immorally, moral action would cease to make sense for certain modes of thought and behavior. This constitutes the greatest threat to the system.

Thus we can see that action rises to use the elaborative system; together they provide effective truths that are borne out in experience. These effective truths constitute the usefulness of the system of thought in its own terms, and as such, and indexed with the level of motivation of essential concepts articulate a level of commitment to the defense and maintenance of those concepts themselves.

Chapter III: The Jamaa Movement as Illustration

"The impact of the Jamaa on its Congolese members is multifaceted, stretching into every sector of their social life. Their attitudes and behavior in their familial, economic, political, and educational roles, as well as their religious roles, are significantly influenced by the values, beliefs, rites, social structure, and organization of the movement." (De Craemer 1977, 105)

To comprehensively trace the development of a heterogeneous, fluid, infinitely individualized network of concepts through the minute, ceaseless interactions of everyday social life would require data of a caliber never before seen. With this challenge in mind, we will instead turn to a finite moment, a moment where the life of that network of concepts takes on a qualitatively different structure. That moment, when concepts' effective truth shifts on a societal level, will help to illustrate the analysis that precedes this section and provide insight into the ways in which social life and the socially mediated objective world structure belief and action itself.

Empirically, we turn to the Jamaa movement. Jamaa was a Catholic movement that began around 1953 in the Katanga region of what is currently the Democratic Republic of Congo (De Craemer 1977, Fabian 1971). The Jamaa arose from the ideology and teaching of a Belgian, Franciscan priest named Placide Tempels. Jamaa found its greatest successes in the ethnically diverse indigenous mining camps of Union Minière, itself governed by massive Belgian

"holding company" Société Générale de Belgique (ibid.).

      The political situation of this mining company gave them great control over the region in which they worked. This policy was not atypical for the Congo after Belgian King Leopold II's death and subsequent transference of rule to the Belgian Parliament. Partly due to the small size of the Belgian state, and partly due to his desire for control, Leopold II had originally relied on foreign companies for the development and economic exploitation of the region (Hochschild 1998, Birmingham & Martin, et. al. 1983, 12, 97). These companies were given free reign over vast regions. Leopold, in the interest of profit, covertly authorized those working in the Congo to do whatever necessary to turn profits in the ivory and rubber trades and to construct infrastructure. This horrific period of Leopold's development of the country was stylized famously in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness.*

      Development of the country relied on forced labor, brutal punishment for dissent, and scorched earth responses to any resistance (Hochschild 1998). In this time, Leopold II nationalized all "vacant land", (including land left fallow to restore minerals for future harvest)(ibid., 117), had the Congo State declare itself "owner of all natural products of the forest" (Birmingham & Martin, et. al. 1983, 96), and for many years managed to dupe the world into praising him for his humanitarian work against "Arab slavery" and for his Congo development efforts (Hochschild 1998). Despite a global humanitarian effort aimed at exposing what

was truly happening in the Congo, and much international condemnation, the transition from Leopold II's rule to Belgium did not entirely stop these human rights abuses within the territory, and, like Leopold, left the companies with much freedom (ibid.).

Katanga was distinct geographically and economically from the rest of the Congo as well. It was set apart from the rest of the Congo by its climate, agriculture, and mineral wealth. These factors led to large economic and social differences between Katanga and the rest of the Congo by the time that the Jamaa movement began to take hold. "The climate is not favourable to agriculture; the soil is so poor that trees and crops do not thrive on it...The fecundity of Katanga lies below the surface." (De Craemer 1977, 38) "Katanga's agriculture represented only 10 per cent of the total agricultural output of the country, [but] 75 percept of the mining production of the Congo originated in Katanga" (39). "South Katanga, then, is characterized by a high degree of industrialization, which surpasses that of other regions in the Congo and in Central Africa, and is second only to the Johannesburg area of the Republic of South Africa... the work at Union Minière is almost futuristic in the degree to which it is mechanized and computerized," (40) (Comparative development also attested in Birmingham & Martin, et. al. 1983).

UM was an economic force in the country, and essentially a country in itself.

Right from its inception in 1906, [UM] was the chief employer in all Katanga. On 31 December 1960, for example, it had on its payroll 1,755 management personnel (of whom 86 were Africans) and 20,876 manual workers (all of whom were Africans)...By the end of 1954, it had been instrumental in launching no less than 2,600 firms in the area...its portfolio included participation in 17 Congolese, 10 Belgian, and 5 other foreign companies...the location of...the three principal mining centres of [UM] in the heart of Central Africa necessitated the building and maintenance of a vast network of railways for the transportation of the ore and the metals...

The [UM] complex also needed vast amounts of electric power...Between 1930 and 1960...a subsidiary of U.M. built four power stations...

It is not an exaggeration to say that virtually everything in South Katanga other than its mineral ore and its ant-hills was imported, built, or manufactured by [UM]. Even the African population is largely and immigrant labour force... (De Craemer 1977, 39-40)

It is a safe assumption, then, that the mostly foreign Africans who began working in the mines and the related industries under Union Minière's (UM) control encountered social roles and rules for behavior that they had never encountered at home. This was typical for Africa between the late 19th century and mid-20th. In the course of industrialization, and increasingly in the years after WWII, poor agricultural policies and costly exploitation of the crops, land, and farmers caused mass emigration to urban centers. (Birmingham & Martin, et. al. 1983). Those employed by UM in Katanga were from heterogeneous backgrounds: "Before the arrival of Europeans... the area had the lowest population density in the Congo. Two local tribes predominated, the Alunda and the BaYeke. The first wave of workers that [UM] brought to South Katanga in the early 1900s came from Northern Rhodesia. During the 1920s and 1930s,

workers were recruited in North Katanga, Lomami, and South Kasai" (De Craemer 1977, 41).

This heterogeneity was ultimately not unconscious. UM eventually "based its camp organization on ethnic mixing. The company wanted to breed a new 'tribe' of workers, the Thsanga-Thsanga, with the idea of mixing people of different ethnic origins" (Birmingham & Martin, et. al. 1983, 161). This practice of instrumentally displacing or mixing African social systems was not uncommon. "Stanley, the American [actually Welsh, see Hochschild 1998 -NS] explorer, *en route* from Europe to the Zaire estuary, went by way of Zanzibar to contract with the Sultan for 620 porters. Such an arrangement had the double advantage that foreign Africans were less likely to collude with local peoples and had more difficulties in deserting since the territory was unknown" (Birmingham & Martin, et. al., 20). Leopold II also utilized the diverse African social groups to his advantage by recruiting and conscripting distant Africans to his mercenary cum state army, Force Publique, and through the army's manipulation of indigenous rivalries to subdue other ethnic groups more easily (Hochschild 1998, 124-125).

While our focus on the Jamaa takes that movement as a particular "shift" in the effective truths and social circumstances of heterogeneous groups, we can also look on it as a unification and reapplication of extant systems. This need for reunification and reapplication derives from this rapid destruction of the social orders that used to structure and guide action, and from the relationship to a new

field of activity and socially, symbolically objective constraints that must be accounted for within a system of thought[17]. The adequacy of traditional systems of thought in stable, or mostly stable, areas of their own domain, and the sanctity of these stable domains in the history of Central Africa, is illustrated by the relative failure of a William Sheppard, the first "Westerner" to contact the Kuba people of Central Africa and the subsequent destruction and dispersal of the Kuba empire:

> Not surprisingly, the Kuba were happy with their existing way of life, and, despite their friendliness toward Sheppard, showed little interest in Christianity. The mission station Sheppard ran among them made few converts. But Sheppard had become so well known back home for his discoveries that the Presbyterians were afraid of an adverse public reaction if they closed his mission to the Kuba and stationed him elsewhere...Some eight years after Sheppard's historic visit, Leopold's forces finally reached and looted the Kuba capital (Hochschild 1998, 158).

UM's workforce in the time of Tempels teaching and ministry was assembled mostly after UM had begun its attempt to breed a separate, reproducing ethnic group to staff their mines. The reason for this, at first, was due to the relatively underpopulated Katanga province. "This made it necessary to recruit workers from distant regions. Such recruitment...was very costly for its employer, since it was subject to considerable losses (desertion, death during

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17 One minor example of this form of change in symbolically objective constraints in Central Africa is that in the Belgian Congo, urban town-dwellers' housing permits "required employment and a monogamous marriage. Polygynous men were refused residence even though accompanied by one wife...." (Birmingham & Martin 1983, 18) and that in Northern Rhodesia, "Officials from the Lozi area went periodically to Livingstone to remove 'unauthorized' women back to the villages by force" (ibid.)

transport)" (Fabian 1971, 57). The company thus embarked on a policy called "stabilization", detailed in a manual given to administrators of various camps around UM mining operations. Important directives[18] of the manual are, quoting Fabian's assumed paraphrases, "duration of the contract should be at least three years so that the links between the workers and their traditional environment can grow weaker, while at the same time their adaptation to the new world and their performance are likely to increase", "as many workers as possible should be married; at the same time, concubinage and polygamy should be discouraged, 'but without force'" (ibid., 58). One recruited, "Camp administration hardly ever considers tribal affiliation in allocating homes. The worker who joins the [UM] has to put up with the neighbors he meets...open conflict would result in considerable difficulties for him and his family" (ibid., 54).

Despite the diverse origins of African immigrants to South Katanga, a high percentage of people in UM company towns were called Luba, a smaller ethnic group falling under the label Bantu, in surveys (De Craemer 1977). There has been much disagreement about the ethnic groupings assigned to Central Africans, especially with the broader category "Bantu". "In a text dating from around 1901 the Nouveau Larousse Illustre had defined 'bantou' as 'he or she

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18 The manual includes an assertion to not use "abnormal pressure" to recruit workers. This is an interesting development given the history of the Congo preceding that point, but it is not relevant to our aim here. Rather than deal with the form of recruiting itself, I am interested exclusively in its practice and effect in the camps where Jamaa took hold (or failed to).

who belongs to a cluster of populations that includes almost all the human populations of sub-equatorial Africa' and went on to explain that it was not an ethnic or racial term." (Vansina 1979, 319). There has been much work and little consensus on exactly how the various ethnic groups under the Bantu label fit together in linguistic, cultural, economic, and genealogical terms, and little work of merit has been done on a broader cultural level (Ehret 2001; Kuper & Leynseele 1978; Oliver 1966; Vansina 1979). There is a uniform agreement that, in a period basically coinciding with the Iron Age, the Bantu language family dispersed at a tremendous rate and came to be essentially ubiquitous in Central Africa, forming trade routes of loosely interacting, loosely structured lineage groups, up the eastern coast and to the Indian ocean (Ehret 2001; Kuper & Leynseele 1978; Oliver 1966; Vansina 1979). These trade routes, often transacting slaves destined for Arab countries (Hochschild 1998) or for other, economically transacting Bantu groups, made demands for more complex systems of kinship as proximity to traders and increased transaction and integration of slaves occurred, and this demand is attested in the relative complexity of kinship systems (MacGaffey 1983, 185). If this assertion is accurate, we may take the need to integrate these new members into the kinship structure and social order as illustrative of important principles in the system of thought, which is especially important in a discussion of the Jamaa.

It has been asserted that the Luba specifically, a group now under the

broader heading Bantu, is identified "as a preeminent Proto-Bantu population of central Africa –that is, as the nucleus for expansion by peoples now inhabiting much of Central Africa." (Roberts & Roberts 1996, 24). De Craemer notes that the Luba were overwhelmingly the most fertile ground for the start of the Jamaa movement, and Fabian asserts that Luba thought was principally involved in the philosophy that Tempels described in *Bantu Philosophy*, and upon which Tempels based the principles of the Jamaa movement. With this ambiguity in mind I use the Luba simply as an illustration of plausibility, not perfect determinism.

"Bantu thought" as Tempels defined it in his *Bantu Philosophy* was the basis for his articulation of the Jamaa as a Catholic appeal to Bantu people in Bantu terminology (De Craemer 1977; Fabian 1971). In that work, one can feel Tempels' attempt to find the inspiration and workings of his personal belief system in the mythologies of those he is attempting to convert, unconsciously filtering that which he saw through the conceptual frameworks he brought to segment his experience[19]. De Craemer goes into a relatively complex narrative

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19 "Man is not the ultimate judge of his deeds. He does not find the justification of his acts and omissions in himself. Transcending the free will of man is a higher force that knows, assesses and judges human acts. Against the decisions and acts of the supreme human power, appeal can always be made to the transcendental power, from whom man has received his power of judgment, with the obligation to give account of his use of it." (Tempels 1959, p. 53 or [p. 75])

"A Bantu one day explained to one of my colleagues that the 'muntu' is rather what you call in English the 'person' and not what you connote by 'the man'. 'Muntu' signifies, then, vital force, endowed with intelligence and will. This interpretation gives a logical meaning to the statement which I one day received from a Bantu: 'God is a great muntu' ('Vidye i muntu mukatampe'). This meant 'God is the great Person' ; that is to say, the great, powerful and reasonable living force." (Tempels 1959, p. 27 or [p. 37])

of just how Tempels' personal history influenced the development of his Catholic

Jamaa theology, from the Belgian and Franciscan Catholic traditions, through his

education and teaching history, to his formative contacts and personal

development as the movement progressed. From this discussion we can take

several general points: 1) Temples religious and educational ideals were marked

by a Franciscan preoccupation with humanity, sociability, and worldly

experience[20] 2) Tempels experience as an agent of the church in extension of the

company had left him disillusioned from his education and from the wisdom and

legitimate authority of the church[21] 3) Tempels himself was profoundly changed

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"The language of the Bantu would cause one to think that they identify the founders of the clan with God himself. It so happens that they call both by the same name. There is, however, no identification, but a simple comparison, a practice analogous to that in which a Chief's deputy is treated as the Chief himself, since he is his sensory manifestation and his speech is often the word of him who sent him" (ibid. 30 [or 42]).

Tempels tenacious characterization of God as transcendent and unreachable by humans seems to underlie all these passages, especially insofar as it implicitly divorces man from the earthly divine lineage. It seems to be possible, from these articulations alone, that God and man are of the same substance for "Bantu Philosophy". We will see that this notion of God's transcendence is called into question by certain deviations that occurred within the Jamaa, whereby individuals actively attempted to make themselves part of a divine lineage and assumed properties of divinity.

20 Tempels was highly influenced before priesthood by a clergy member and teacher at his secondary school who "broke through some of the puritanical religious norms that dominated the school in his era, by encouraging students to learn how to be 'social': how to meet and relate to girls of their own age, how to go out and enjoy a drink with the boys, etc." (De Craemer 1977, 13) "There is a striking similarity between Tempels's relationship to his students and the one he experienced... in Abbé H.'s class" (ibid.). Tempels wrote "all of us...have not reached their 'soul'...because we have not understood the Bantu 'soul', we have not made a methodical effort for them to have a more pure and intense life" (24). On Tempels tradition: "Franciscan theology is christocentric. It not only accords a greater primacy to Christ than other schools of Christian theology, but it also emphasizes his human nature and humanity" (81).

21 "'For ten years...my eyes fixed always on my manual, I tried all the methods, all the possible

by the experience of his ministry, due in part to the assimilation of his so called

"Bantu Philosophy" in consort with his own understandings[22].

      Jamaa began in Ruwe, a suburb of Kolwezi. Tempels had returned to the

Congo, after a period several years in Belgium, to be named head pastor of the

Ruwe parish. He was "also appointed a professor of religion at the teacher

training-school" (De Craemer 1997, 36). Kolwezi was one of the three mining

centers of UM, the other two were Élisabethville (Lubumbashi) and Jadotville

(Likasi) (ibid. 39). The Jamaa started out of a small gathering of families that met

with Tempels informally on a regular basis. Since the word "Jamaa" means family

in Swahili, it was a fitting ascription to the informal group of couples that met with

Tempels to talk openly about their lives and beliefs (Fabian 1971 37-38).

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clichés to make the Christian religion understood, accepted, and practised. I scrupulously followed all the directives and, in spite of everything, the engine didn't start up.' Tempels reports that he was 'overcome by despair, because [he] felt that [he] had failed and that nothing had taken root'. This retrospectively self-denunciatory account of Tempels's first decade in the Congo has to be seen against the larger social and historical background of Belgian colonial policy of the era. The ideology on which it was based hinged on two major conceptions: the idea of 'civilizing' the Congolese and the principle of 'Dominer pour Servir' ('Dominate in order to serve')" (De Craemer 1977, 15).

22 Tempels went through a period of deep communication and openness with a woman referred to as Sister X. His spiritual openness with this woman and the ontological changes it wrought in him may be somewhat attributable to the fact that these encounters took place after his first attempts to fully understand the system of thought of the Congolese he worked with in Africa. This encounter with Sister X gave him "a new vision on the whole of Christianity, a new discovery of Christ, or perhaps, a first discovery of Christianity... [Tempels] became conscious that man is created for the other, that man came only to self-realization, to really being man, in encounter with the other." (De Craemer 1977, 34) This form of encounter deepened the syncretism and cross pollination of ideas that Tempels himself was pushing for in his ministry. After his return to the Congo and the beginning of his teaching at Ruwe (which later became the beginning families of the Jamaa), Tempels wrote: "I am beginning to discover the same things, the same aspirations, the same thoughts, the same desire for full, total, intense life; for fecundity, paternity; for union with others. Yes, it seems to me that I am discovering in myself the same sentiments that you have!" (ibid. 36).

I will not examine the particular networks and chance connections that determined the spread of the Jamaa from a few couples to thousands of people. The spread of the Jamaa did, however, depend on principles inherent in the Jamaa itself. One might raise the objection that, given my earlier analysis, I now seem to be reifying the notion of "Jamaa" out of the contingent, historical situations that made it individually meaningful for all the early participants who disseminated it, and as such, here begin to make an argument I expressly countered earlier. In the following, I will demonstrate that the idea of "Jamaa" fit well into certain systems of order that seem to be latent in much of Bantu and Luba society, and that these systems, while different from the Jamaa, paved the way for the integration of these new understandings and practices in light of Tempels early teaching and continued instruction. My ability to construct an "ideal type" in this sense relies on a level of abstraction: I am attempting, through my own extremely secondhand exposure to the systems of thought in question, to reconstruct, at a minimum level of effective truth, fundamental ideas that would make sense of actions and patterns within the Jamaa.

We will begin with the Baluba[23] myth of origin. The myth begins with the consolidation of an empire under a king, Nkongolo. This king is associated with

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23 I have been challenged to discern in all this research whether or not the Baluba and Luba are distinct or if the prefix "ba" is something grammatical, perhaps like "the". Kongo and BaKongo has caused me similar problems and may point to a general prefix. A later footnote will point to the fact that ba- pluralizes at least two words in the language. I have come, via that insight and as a result of my difficulties finding out, to think that there is no distinction between Luba and Baluba.

the transition from an incestuous, "pre-historic" time period, where the land was initially populated by the repeated duplication of brother-sister twins giving birth to more brother-sister pairs, to the "historic" period (Booth 1976, 61). Nkongolo encounters a mysterious hunter; his arrival follows a warning by the king's "prophet-diviner" that a man would come from the east to establish kingship in that area. While the Nnkongolo plotted to take action after the diviner positively identified the stranger from the prophecy, the stranger Mbidi Kiluwe slipped away, leaving his pregnant wives (Nkongolo's sisters) behind. One of the children of Kiluwe's wives turned out to be a great warrior and helped Nkongolo greatly expand his kingdom. Nkongolo plotted to kill his nephew, Kilala Ilunga, due to his growing popularity, but Ilunga caught word, killed Nkongolo, and assumed the throne.

All subsequent leaders of the Luba people have in principle belonged to this sacred lineage, the unity of Nkongolo's and Kiluwe's blood through Ilunga. There is an "abstract noun" (*bulopwe*), related to the word for king (*mulopwe*), meaning: "a sacred quality, vested in the blood...which gives chiefs the right and supernatural means to rule" (ibid. 62). Those who assume the position of king observe many rites in keeping with these traditions.

> "He is the symbol and repository of communal health and vigor and must therefore never flee from his enemies and cannot be sick. It is said that traditionally a *mulopwe* who was sick more than four days was supposed to be strangled by his sisters. When a *mulopwe* approaches death such symbols of authority...must be removed. The individual...dies but *bulopwe*, the power on

which the community is founded, continues. Kingship is not simply an individual matter; it is "collectively owned" by the living and the dead...the death of a ruler threatens the existence of the community" (ibid. 62-63).[24]

One important practice referred specifically to the incestuous mythical period. Installing a new king required that that king enter the "house of misfortune" and have sexual relations with a close female relative, usually prohibited. After a short period he would emerge, be cleansed, and joined once more by his wife, resuming the normal prohibition again. This presumably reestablishes or reaffirms the transition of mankind from a time of incestuous past and "misfortune" to a time of human order and expansion.

Certain features of this mythology are said to be general to many Katanga groups: "A more or less remote 'high God' and creator is known throughout the area; sometimes he was conceived of as the first ancestor, sometimes he was associated with cosmic or meteorological phenomena. Ancestors...were venerated. They were regarded as the proprietors of the land and as the source of life (and sometimes death) for the living" (Fabian 1971, 14). In terms of the sacred lineage referred to in the Luba example: "Most important among [kinship structures] is an emphasis on the vertical aspect of kinship relationships...*Generation/filiation*... was always deemed more important than collateral links, and this to such an extent that political or magicoreligious ties

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24 Booth mentions several social practices that treat this threat as real: people traveling in groups, protecting their children, arriving armed to the palace of the dead.

were expressed in terms of parent-child relationships" (ibid.).

Using Tempels *Bantu Philosophy* as a lens, we can illuminate the Luba example and some of the vague commonalities described by Fabian, into an understanding of certain principles of the system of thought and its maintenance.

We must begin with what Tempels believes to be the most central of Bantu ideas, that which Tempels has termed "vital force". Vital force is at times equated with being: "It is the extent, more or less, to which a thing is vital force that constitutes for them the "being" of the thing" (Tempels 1959, 25 [or 36]) This being, or fullness of life, is, at its greatest, called god itself. "God is Force, possessing energy in himself, the mover of all other forces. He knows all forces...he knows therefore the cause of every event." (ibid. 34 [or 47]).

God, being force, is simultaneously the extent of being of things and also the relationship that affects the extent of being of other things. For the Bantu, in Tempels characterization, god is the perfect order of things and simultaneously the most powerful mover of things. "This world order is the essential condition of wholeness in human beings. The Bantu add that this order comes from God and that it must be reverenced. Life belongs to God. It is he who summons it into being, strengthens and preserves it. His great and holy gift to men is the gift of life" (ibid. 56 [or 79]). Thus, the maintenance and strengthening of force is good and consonant with divinity and being itself, and the destruction and weakening of it is evil and associated with nothingness, the capacity to affect no other's vital

force (ibid.).

Tempels argues that this vital force is embedded within a hierarchy that derives ultimately from god, who is the only being capable of engendering force where there is none. Mankind, because it has been given consciousness of how force relates to other vital force, is the sole entity capable of causing changes in the amount of force in the world around him. All other things in the universe, though they too possess vital force, do not have the knowledge that allows their manipulation to cause changes in vital force. This faculty belongs exclusively to the continuum of beings termed *muntu*, loosely translatable as the empowered, knowledgeable, being part of "person". Muntu includes from god, to the dead, to man. The hierarchy of empowerment among muntu trickles down from god, who is perfectly knowledgeable about all vital force, to the ancestors, who are closer to god (ibid.). Tempels shows us a striking illustration of the socially real understanding of these categories:

> In fact, just as the vital human force (its being) does not exist by itself, but is and remains essentially dependent upon its elders, so the power to know is, like being itself, essentially dependent upon the wisdom of the elders. How often in a village, when one wishes to question Bantu about some happening- a law suit or a custom, or even some geographical or geological data-does not one provoke the reply: "We younger ones do not know: it is the elders who know." That happens even when the matter in question is, as we think, something which they know all about. Nevertheless, as they think, they do not know, because they are young, because they do not know of or by themselves. Ontologically and juridically the elders who hold the ascendancy are the only ones to know fully, in the last resort. Their wisdom exceeds that of

other men. It is in this sense that the old say: "The young cannot know without the elders." "If it were not for the elders," the Bantu say again, "if the young were left to themselves, the village would get nowhere. The young would no longer know how to live: they would have neither customs, laws, nor wisdom any longer. They would stray into disaster." Study and the personal search for knowledge does not give wisdom. One can learn to read, to write, to count: to manage a motor car, or learn a trade; but all that has nothing in common with "wisdom". It gives no ontological knowledge of the nature of beings. (Tempels 1959, 35 [or 48-49])

We can see a trace of the Luba veneration of their King, and subsequent feelings of near community death upon his passing, in Tempels' description of this hierarchy. Knowledge, not only hierarchical as in Tempels' description, arises and lives on through a vital lineage. It seems that the older are not only wiser but also foundational; remove them and the thread of knowledge revered in the passage above dies. The hierarchy, responsible for transmission and protection of vital force and knowledge, and proceeds, ultimately, directly from the Bantu supreme being, appears to be a highly motivated concept to the Bantu. Destroy the hierarchy, and the society based upon its distinctions collapses. We can see the action system of thought in their capacity to understand (and action in response to understanding) how other features of the system of thought may interact with this notion of hierarchy to affect its existence. Tempels lists three sections, referring to different responses required depending on types of offense against the order, the three types corresponding to individuals' locations within the hierarchy and understandings of those roles as maintenance of it: "wrongs

done to superior vital forces", "evil done to inferiors", "faults committed in respect of equals" (ibid. 66-69 [97-101]. These hierarchical responses to understood threats are shot through with the Bantu idea of vital force's interdependence among all beings. Anything that threatens the force of something bound into this order is threatening the network binding the lowest on the hierarchy to the transcendent authority that passes through the eldest and even the dead on the way to the supreme being and perfect realization of order among all things, god (ibid.).

Vital force, for Tempels, is at times conceptualized as effected, sometimes as affect, sometimes as a relationality. If vital force is a capacity to affect other vital forces, which can be understood to be a fullness and ideal variety of being, then this capacity cuts in two directions. As mentioned earlier, things that threaten the vital force of others are viewed as perpetrating evil. In practice, threats to vital force are not always "objective"; one's ill will, jealousy, or anger towards another is enough to cause the other's vital force serious harm (ibid.).

There are two types of evil, differing in origin. These types are relevant in discussing the redress and maintenance of order from the "Bantu" perspective we find in Tempels. One arises from an inherent evil. The *muntu* (and indeed, rational beings, alive or dead, may commit evil acts until their vital force is destroyed) that commits acts of evil and refuses to attempt to restore the fractured network of vital force is classed as something we would call

pathological. "'They think that a man may have a 'life giving will', or a 'destroying will'. A man's will may be determined in the same sense that, in respect of life and the hierarchy of forces, he wills in accordance with that ordering of forces that has been willed by God" (ibid. 50 [or 69]). The *muntu* falling under the label of "destroying will" is subject to many ritual acts that endeavor to destroy his vital force permanently, to prevent such a permanent, incurable threat to the community from hurting anyone any further. Here again, we can see that the elaborative system segments experience into an understanding of what "destroying will" looks like. As something that threatens orienting principles of the system of thought, the action system seeks to affect a socially objective change by removing that specific threat from future experience.

The other type of evil is differentiated by an individual that is willing to restore the natural order he has threatened. This threat to the natural order, if not from an inherently ill will, can either come from unconscious, accidental injuries to it, or from provocations. "The Bantu accept this unconscious influence, not only between inanimate beings, plants, or animals, but also from "muntu" to "muntu". They are convinced, as it seems to me, that the man animated with the best of feelings, the best vital intentions, may nevertheless exercise a pernicious influence" (ibid., 61 [86-87]). As long as the individual is willing to redress these wrongs, he is accepted as not having a "destroying will"; there is a general belief in Bantu that good overcomes evil (ibid.).

This struggle of good and order against evil and disorder is not an idle fancy, but a living attempt to engage with those features in the world. Tempels argues that the Bantu find their beliefs convincing due to the experienced validity of their concepts. "Thus Mgr. Leroy says in "La Religion des Primitifs" that the Bantu sees himself engaged in a constant struggle with the forces of nature which surround him; and he emerges from this struggle, now as victor, now as vanquished. He establishes every day the existence of hidden forces in plants and herbs." (ibid., 36 [or 50]). There is a built in account for the occasional failure of this system of thought as well: "To see that natural forces are sometimes potent and sometimes ineffective is enough to justify to him the inference that a being, that is to say a force, can now strengthen and now weaken, that a being's force can become inoperative, that the bwanga can "depart", "grow cold", or be "trampled under foot", as they put it." (ibid., 36 [or 50-51])

We cannot say how representative Tempels experience is, nor evaluate the accuracy of his characterization of whatever abstraction we take "Bantu Philosophy" to signify. We can, however, note that Tempels spent many years living and teaching among the Africans in South Katanga. Relying on characterizations of Tempels as an involved, sociable, empathetic person, growingly disillusioned with the Catholic-colonial collusion and educational methods, accounts of his frequent informal meetings with Africans, and the fact that he was an eager collector of traditional African music and art (De Craemer

1977; Fabian 1971), we have strong support for the idea that his work and observations arose from a strong, general acquaintance with many Katangese ethnic groups and systems of thought that were articulated in the mostly urbanizing, decentralized, heterogeneous zones he encountered.

If Tempels observed this principle and socially felt idea of vital force where he lived, there are many important social-structural problems that would arise from that idea in an ethnically heterogeneous zone. If lineages and systems of thought were diverse in application, but fundamentally similar in understanding of the power of vital force, we can understand the effects of a broad Bantu idea that

> the universe also throbs with malevolent forces and presences that fall outside the natural order. All that is evil is caused by them, through the [conscious and intentional, or unconscious and unintentional] malignant thoughts and feelings of significant other persons. ...Evil may come from any place, at any time, through the medium of many different categories of people. ..."Behind the smiling face may lurk the hating heart." This is particularly true of relatives, whose very closeness may generate the kind of...pride, envy, malice, hostility...rancor...[that] have the capacity to cause harm...through harnessing the power of one of the...shades of the ancestors [or the] numerous kinds of spirits...present in the cosmos. Illness, sterility, failure, impoverishment, dissension, corruption, destruction, death-all the negative, disappointing, tragic experiences of life are caused [in this way] by witchcraft and sorcery (De Craemer, Vansina, and Fox 1976, 461)(found in De Craemer 1983, 25).

It would seem, according to this Bantu idea, that a heterogeneous cluster of lineages, heterogeneous understandings of "natural order", would result in massive distress, feelings of ontological threat, and uncertainty in appropriate action. In traditional societies, lineages were relatively static, and understandings

of order well negotiated. In an area of relatively fluid social roles, job function, and peer groups, it is unlikely that these heterogeneous systems of thought would come to a quick or easy agreement, or that someone who held his lineage to be so central would feel a comfortable space for himself in the social order.

Enter Tempels and the Jamaa. Tempels articulation of the Jamaa movement took this essential principle of vital force, one understood by experience he accumulated through his constant contact and engagement with Africans in his ministry, and applied it to certain Catholic Christian principles. "The core concept and central religious experiences of the Jamaa turn on 'encounter', 'vital union', and the state of being ONE. Its essence lies in when, in marriage, a man and a woman open their thoughts and feelings to each other in a mutual search for a deep understanding of Christian love, and for the ability individually and collectively to actualize it in all aspects of their lives. In Jamaa terms, such a relationship is 'fecund'" (De Craemer 1977, 58-59). Here we see that the Jamaa is capitalizing on the notion of vital force articulated in *Bantu Philosophy*. A fecund relationship conforms to the ideal order of things; it extends and strengthens the vital force of all things dependent upon it, both up and down the hierarchy. Jamaa preserves the action of the Bantu thusly:

> From [the relationship] new spiritual children are engendered. These children are not the biological offspring of the couple but adult persons who, through intensive spiritual contact with a Jamaa baba [male parent] and mama [female parent], are 'born' into the vital state of Christianity that the movement represents. Conversion to the Jamaa and initiation into it are effected [sic] by a

chain of encounters and births of this kind. Each couple constitutes a fertile micro-Jamaa, contributing to the development of an ever-growing, larger spiritual family... (ibid. 59)

We can see here, based on the heterogeneity mentioned earlier, that this notion of family provided a new lineage, extending an already held concept into new experience. The idea of this as a true "lineage" may have been underpinned by the reality that only Catholic couples could be initiated fully into the Jamaa. Despite Jamaa being at its highest sacred level a couples-and-priests-only religion, the idea of a common spiritual, raceless lineage clearly mitigated the inter-tribal differences that had created the antagonism characteristic of life draining ill-will, and gave Africans a method of feeling united with the whites they interacted with[25]. That the Jamaa had massive success in destroying tribal barriers is without a doubt (ibid.)[26].

This newly established spiritual hierarchy had, like the Bantu, its ultimate basis in an understanding of a perfect, divine order.

Jamaa adherents believe that the first and most ideal Jamaa, the one from which all others developed and to which all ultimately refer, is the 'union of love', the encounter between Christ and the Virgin Mary. They are assumed

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25 A powerful example of this: "One day, in the course of a long conversation about his work and about the relations between whites and Congolese, he came up with a surprising statement: the [UM] is really like the Jamaa. People of many [tribes] are together for a common purpose, as is the case with Jamaa groups. And it is [love] that keeps them together. In any case, he told me, this is what unites me with 'my white man'[a locally significant term denoting reciprocal relationship -NS]. If a white man had an accident in the mine, I would carry him in my arms and not be afraid of him because he is a white man." (Fabian 1971, 51)
26 "Several directors went so far as to testify that, 'Thanks to the Jamaa, in our city [Kolwezi] we have never had any serious disturbances, disorders or conflicts" (De Craemer 1971, 109).

to have given themselves to each other in such a perfect and total way that they became transcendently ONE. 'Christ did not wish to belong to God the Father all alone, in the isolation of His soul without allowing anyone to be in communion with Him...He wished to give himself to God, together with Myriam.' Christ is the 'new Adam', Mary the 'new Eve', free from the original sin of the first couple....Through their union, Christ and Mary repaired this original sin. (De Creamer 1971, 59)

This notion of Christ and Mary being the "parents" to a family of growing spiritual children has an important parallel in the Luba myth telling of the incestuous relations that populated the world, and to the Luba ritual practice of union with a close female relative to establish one's place in the divine lineage. This distinction, the separation of spiritual and physical love, took on a pattern of consistent misinterpretation within the Jamaa[27], leading to the development of deviant sects (pun intended)(ibid.). These misinterpretations were a function of the Bantu principles by which people understood the Jamaa and their appearance is partly a structural consequence of Tempels reliance on encounter as the only legitimate means of reaching Jamaa.

There is a ubiquitous anecdote in studies of the Jamaa that illustrates how central encounter is. Upon being asked about Jamaa, or when confronted with a tape recorder, the Jamist responds by indicating that it is impossible to simply

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27 "Tempel's disclaimers notwithstanding...numerous Jamists received the message that fundamental 'unity', 'being-one-thing'...achieved its full realization only when baba and mama became one through sexual intercourse, as they were convinced Christ and Mary had done. Uniting through physical relations made 'totally pure by the Love of God' is viewed by such Jamaa members as a sign of the highest, most spiritual form of love. Furthermore, they have taken this belief and applied it to figures and events in the Old and New Testaments of special importance in Jamaa teaching" (De Craemer 1977, 77).

say what Jamaa is, or to distill it in any way that does not destroy its sense

entirely. It must be understood through encounter only (De Craemer 1977,

Fabian 1971)[28]. Encounter as the only legitimate means to entering the spiritual

family takes a on strong anti-intellectualist character, at times engendering the

Jamaa ideas of superiority to the Catholic Church's normal authority structure.

> Some Jamists develop an in-group conception that leads them to make invidious distinctions between their spiritual family and all those who do not belong to it. To a degree, this makes certain baba and mama [men and women in the initiated couple, respectively] more intolerant and less receptive towards non-Catholics than they otherwise might be...However, the super-Jamaa orientation is even more conducive to baba and mama feeling religiously superior to Catholics who do not belong to their movement. 'In their eyes, we are no longer Christians,' exclaim indignant Catholics who are not Jamists. (De Craemer 1977, 118)

An extreme manifestation of this superiority supports my earlier

suggestion that Tempels was engaging in wishful thinking when he repeatedly

found the idea that divinity was ultimately separated from humanity's ability to

realize it in *Bantu Philosophy*. "Some individuals and groups in the Jamaa are

indeed convinced that through their participation in the movement they have

achieved such a state of purity and clairvoyance that they are no longer capable

of sin or in need of sacramental confession" (ibid.). This individual progression to

a divine state is perfectly consistent with the Bantu idea of divinity as a

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28 This challenge is also compounded by "a traditional Bantu tendency...to feel that the more a thing is kept secret, the more it is valued" and the fact that "secrecy is the hallmark of the traditional Bantu associations that have initiation rites" (De Craemer 1977, 66).

continuum.

This progression to greater divinity was symbolically enacted by the Jamaa in three stages of initiation. These initiations codified in loose practice the ideas of the Jamaa doctrine, ensuring, as described in previous practices, that the understandings and use of particular understandings were consistent across the Jamaa society. Initiation requires that individuals be baptized Catholics. The pre-initiation phase is open to all people, who attend open meetings where *mafundisho*, essentially sermons of Jamaa doctrine, are delivered. De Craemer indicates two types of mafundisho, one public, given to all who are interested or members in the movement, and the other private, given by the baba, mama, or priest instructing only the initiates in the ways of the Jamaa.

Eventually, individuals are selected by couples within the movement to progress to the "first way". "The goal of the first way...is to achieve personal knowledge of Christ and the Virgin Mary, and to experience a living encounter with them" (De Craemer 1977, 68). This encounter generally occurs through contact in a dream. The first stage is significant because it is the only stage which a person may enter without the full cooperation of his or her partner. The preparation for the entrance into the first way "typically takes from one to two years" (ibid.) Considering that, in one case, the Jamaa were said to meet at least twice a week officially, not including numerous informal meetings said to be quite frequent (Fabian 1971), this figure indicates that those who progressed in the

Jamaa spent a huge amount of time in contact with each other and hearing the *mafundisho*, which could be delivered by a priest, baba, or mama of the Jamaa.

"The goal of the second way... is the total union, affective and spiritual, between the husband and wife being initiated...This state of being one comes to pass through the couple's mutual encounter with Christ and Mary" (ibid. 69). Fabian describes this total union as "now taking the roles of *Yezu Kristo* [Jesus Christ] and *Birika Maria* [The Virgin Mary]", then goes on to claim that despite the lack of documentation of this fact, "it is obvious that the logic of the rite calls for ritual intercourse between husband and wife...which elevates their everyday marriage to the level of *Jamaa*" (1971, 170). This is, in many ways, a logical progression from the first phase, which is knowledge of a divine type of individual, to the second, which is knowledge of a divine form of relationship.

"After a baba and mama have made individual contact with Christ and Mary [the first way -NS], and have met each other in depth [the second way -NS], they are ready to offer these two sorts of encounter to God. This offering, mediated by a Jamaa priest who knows them intimately, constitutes the third way" (De Craemer 1977, 71-72). Fabian again takes a more suggestive tack in his description: "Husband and wife, now in the roles of Mary and Joseph, are to give birth to Jesus Christ, represented by the priest" (1971, 170). Tempels explanation of the third way follows:

so the baba, in order to commune more intimately with his priest, wishes

to give him by the force of the spirit his mama, in order that he and the priest be ONE, in love for the Virgin and in love for *their* mama. The mama will wish to be able to commune with the Blessed Virgin in her love for Christ, through her love for her baba, and equally, through her love for the priest who receives her. By the grace of God, priest and baba and mama will become ONE. And that is the third way, the third degree, or the third thought.. (De Craemer 1977, 72).

This practice changed slightly depending on the priest administering it. One verbatim account of what was said during an initiation states: "But we still have something more to accomplish...As [Christ] was ONE with all of you, with Mary, with the people, so you must go and be ONE with them...In the same manner Christ wishes that from now on I myself as a priest be ONE with you" (ibid. 73). This is indicative of Fabian's point.

These stages of initiation thus correspond to patterns of social action and shifts in orientation. The types of action expected should flow relatively commonsensically from these stages. It is important to note just how intensive and long in duration the transformation to a fully initiated Jamaa couple is. Another salient feature, based upon my argument, is that Jamaa's existence as a couple's religion forces a paired type of interaction, causing the development of the Jamaa system of thought at least in all spheres of life where the husband and wife interact.

Given these hierarchical progressions, and the intimate contact required for the notion of encounter, the structural form that the religion took in its spread

should follow commonsensically as well. "In the early stages...Tempels...personally initiated candidates into all the ways, and determined when and if they were ready for each passage. However, as the Jamaa grew in numbers, and became more geographically dispersed, it was more difficult for Tempels to be solely responsible for the initiation process" (ibid. 71). When Tempels left the Congo permanently, he conceded that initiated baba and mama could initiate others into the first and second ways. Because the priest was integral to the third, only priests could administer this initiation (ibid.).

The increased social distance, in the sense of mechanical solidarity and effective truth overlap, from those familiar with the Catholic church's teachings, and their empowerment to determine and guide initiation through the first two levels of Jamaa would have profound effects on the persistent "aberrations" that arose, especially when encounter, a tremendously variable practice, constitutes such a central point in the ideology. The emphasis on encounter as the only means to Jamaa also had the effect of excising European superiority in knowledge of Christianity, and seemingly revealing in Bantu thought a latent expression of Catholicism that was consonant with what the Church found to be valuable. This sometimes had the effect of divorcing the need for church intervention in spiritual affairs, as alluded to earlier in the idea of the super-Jamaa (De Craemer 1977).

This understanding of revelation and latent spiritual worth in the Africans

themselves is apparent in a mythologization of the origin of Jamaa. Fabian offers

a "generalized version":

> In [the 1950s] a group of seven bababa and seven bamama[29] (i.e. seven
> married couples) got together at Ruwe and began to unite their thoughts about
> the essence of their Christian faith and their marriage. They came to an
> understanding and thus "rediscovered" the thought of the Jamaa, which had
> been lost among men. ...At the same time there happened to be a priest at
> Ruwe who was not like other missionaries: baba Placide. He was received by
> the...fathers and mothers of the beginning; they exchanged their thoughts,
> their deepest feelings, and were united in love. This was the beginning of the
> Jamaa (Fabian 1971, 46).

Using the idea that this rediscovery of latent knowledge can reveal truths

capable of bringing people closer to god-ness, we can make intelligible the

observed tendency for the Jamaa to look beyond the final stage of initiation for

another stage that will bring greater "vital force". M. Ndala, a leader of the

Lubumbashi Jamaa, told Fabian

> that most of the so-called Jamaa people do not understand that only one thing
> counts: to have Christ in the heart...most look for some secret knowledge in
> the Jamaa. They are eager to climb the ladder of initiation. Once they have
> reached the third stage, they do not know where to go from there. Many lose
> interest; others try to...transcend, surpass Christianity (1971, 98).

This need to "move on" is, again, intelligible if in "Bantu thought" there is

no ultimate separation between humankind and the potential for divinity. The

transcendence of god in Christianity that places divinity out of human reach thus

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29 Thankfully this illustrates that the ba- prefix is probably plural in Swahili. Thus Baluba and
   Luba have been treated appropriately as belonging to one lineage here.

looks like a premature stop. The final stage of initiation, instead of constituting a humanly attainable ideal, seems to be an abandonment of Divinity and a compromise between the true divine ordering and something with inferior vital force.

The unique expression of Catholicism found in Jamaa was not, however, simply an expression of latent Bantu beliefs; if it were, the Church would not have felt compelled to teach them anything. It was instead a meaningful synthesis of Bantu principles and Catholic principles, extending the effective truth of certain components of both systems far enough for them to overlap in experience. This extension was not always well received by the church, as any reader familiar with Christianity would expect, but, as consonant with my model, the extension and use of these concepts in a socially different way provoked much discussion within the Church over the principles and systematization of the Catholic belief system (De Craemer 1971).

I will restate what I have said so far in terms of the theoretical argument laid out in the first two chapters. "Bantu thought", a surely diverse set of systems of thought connected loosely by trading networks across Central Africa, was being systematically destabilized for years through economic development, exploitation, ethnic mixing, and increasing urbanization. This destabilization occurred through the disruption of what I termed in the first chapter to be socially objective constraints. The social behavior that made specific Bantu systems of

thought applicable and socially real was undermined by changing conditions of their world. This disruption was achieved through the imposition of both asocial limitation, like murder and destruction of villages, and social limitation, like the prohibitions against polygamy. As attested in *Bantu Philosophy*, this disruption was not sufficient to create what the European powers vainly hoped: *a tabula rasa* capable of assimilating the Western modes of thought and action. Instead, these systems of thought, lacking or severely deprived of the social forms that could ensure their reproduction for future generations, lived on, and continued to adapt. These surviving systems of thought were grasped to a great a degree of effective truth by an observant priest, Placide Tempels, who later used these effective truths in adapting a system of thought to the particular social circumstances of UM's mining camps. This adaptation took advantage of both the greatest aspirations and fears of the African laborers, thus coming to resolve many felt problems and stresses caused by their heterogeneous systems of thought in a way that brought them peace and direction.

Those problems most generally stemmed from the idea that particular affiliations and lineages were essential to an individual's vital force, an individual's being. Their experience of work and life at UM camps contributed to the change of their individual systems of thought, engendering significant divergences from their traditional societies and causing them to feel disconnected from their vital force. The Jamaa movement thus appeared to

provide those individuals in a position of profound ontological crisis with something they could understand, albeit in a slightly different form. It gave them a set of affiliations and hierarchies that made sense of their social role by transcending the particular lineages of diverse groups, and integrating them into an ethnically neutral, spiritual lineage. This integrated not only their African neighbors but also the participating whites into a larger lineage structure, and provided a potentially meaningful place in the social order to all human individuals.

The focus on encounter and the fact that the Jamaa is a religion primarily of couples means that the social interactions that produce the distinctions it reveals and uses are ensured to be both frequent and wide ranging. Because this religion reduced intertribal conflict and provoked behavior mostly in line with Catholicism, it was not only accepted, but encouraged by the UM authorities[30]. Thus, the social base and freedom for practice of the religion was extremely strong. The fact that the religion relied so heavy on the "encounter" also ensured that it would be more individualized, allowing a greater flexibility that facilitated its expansion at the same time that it facilitated its deviation.

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30 Members of the Jamaa were even "imported" to troublesome regions in an attempt to reduce conflict. "..the end of colonial rule brought the mission to the edge of catastrophe. In this situation, in which Christianity was in danger of being discarded as the white man's religion, the emergence of a genuinely 'African' movement, such as the Jamaa...was greeted with great enthusiasm. Two Congolese priests...visited Jamaa groups in Katanga. As a result, several families were literally imported to Kinshasa in the hope that they would become the core of a similar Africanization of Christianity" (Fabian 1971, 100)

The Jamaa was so successful not because it was something new, but because it arose from something old. Tempels, through his priestly ethnographic work and teaching, was brought close to the effective truths of the Bantu people that he communicated with. This familiarity allowed him to use terms of Bantu thought in a way that facilitated him articulating ideas consonant with both his understanding of Christianity and the Bantu understanding of the way of things. This does not mean that Bantu thought in the Jamaa did not change; the practice of Jamaa actively transformed certain traditions (polygamy) and promoted pluralism. The mechanisms that facilitated this change were "the three ways" of initiation into the order, the mafundisho, and the informal interactions among members in terms of the *mafundisho* and whatever else they had learned.

The Jamaa, as the coalescence of a heterogeneous repertoire of concepts and normative, action system relationships can serve as a good illustration of the argument I have laid out here. When we trace the narrative, following interaction from the relatively homogeneous, traditional situation of the Luba to their position in an ethnically heterogeneous urban environment with totally foreign socially objective constraints, that narrative takes us through the destabilization of and subsequent reorientation of their understandings. This reorientation took form in the Jamaa, and subsequent patterned "deviations" from the Jamaa teaching illustrate that the effective truth between what Tempels taught and what the Africans heard was not always enough to guarantee action that the church

proper found acceptable.

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