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Indice

Antropologia e religione
Anthropology and religion
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Introduzione. Su Dio e i suoi uomini e i nostri sacrifici
Introduction. On God and His Men and Our Sacrifices

Abstract
Anthropology has maybe too often confined itself in an analysis of liturgies and rituals – ideal or actual behaviours which are acknowledged by the social actor as addressed to supernatural beings or agents –, providing extraordinarily precise descriptions but renouncing to comprehend and relate the discourse on Man about himself -and implicitly about God- which is nevertheless traceable in all societies. Anthropology has avoided confrontation with the theologies, although present in all societies and inscribed in cosmogonies, theogonies, anthropogonies, ethnogonies, of which amazingly rich mythologies bear much more than plain traces. Anthropology has done so because it has given way to tekhne which is rampant nowadays. It has surrendered to tekhne because tekhne allows the elision of doubt.
And yet, no matter how much one technifies it, anthropology does only exist as complementary to theology and vice versa, at least since the beginning of history. This relation was very clear to scholars such as Bronislaw Malinowski, Maurice Leenhard, Marcel Mauss or Meyer Fortes. After all, has there ever been a liturgy without a theology, a ritual without a cosmology? A sacrifice without a God, no matter how small? Sacrifice is a ritual par excellence.

Keywords: sacrifice, ritual, liturgy, anthropology of religion, Meyer Fortes

Il fuoco delle passioni: Fuoco di un amore assoluto per l’Assoluto.
Un percorso dall’ascesi filosofica greca al primo monachesimo cristiano

Abstract
Excursus on the idea of passion from the ancient philosophy to Christianity. Since Heraclitus’ day, freedom from passions has been seen as a prerequisite condition in order to get wisdom. Passions come from natural energies, or powers, put inside us by God, which per se are neuter, and when put in good use trigger our spiritual evolution; nevertheless, when they are perverted and instead of striving for the divine are directed towards material objects, they become passions. Their thick, dark quality dims our subtle body, from which our physical body issues, preventing him from delivering its natural brilliance.
In order to emend passions, an ascetic effort of purification is needed, that leads to an inner stillness.
The control on passions is at the base of Hesychasm: the *nous*, our subllest essence that has its seat in the heart and consists of pure light, has to be cleared of layers and layers of darkness, sublimating our passions and our attachments in the sacred fire of love for God.

**Keywords**: Passions, Body of light, Spiritual freedom (spiritual liberation), Divinization, Spiritual heart

### Segni e carismi nella tradizione dei Magi. Religione e filosofia tra olismo e dualismo

Teodoro Brescia

**Signs and Charisms in Magi’s Tradition. Religion and Philosophy between Holism and Dualism**

Abstract

Holism and dualism can be considered the two top models of thought (paradigms). By applying either the former or the latter to the study of philosophic, religious and also scientific cultures, two different categories of questions and method seem to arise. In the light of the latest results reached by applying the holistic paradigm to the study of the enigma of the Magi’s Star, we redefine here a few methodological lines and suggest a different reading of the origins of philosophy, with reference to religion and science.

The ancient philosophy would be born as wisdom, understood as *sacred science* linked to the Magi’s tradition. Came from the East, this tradition would then rooted in many cultures, also in the Greek-Roman and the Judeo-Christian. Within the methodology proposed here is the introduction of instruments such as the reading of these paradigms (which also reopens the debate on the relationship between philosophy of religion and theology), archaeoastronomy (combining archeology, religious art and astronomy), cryptology (essential in the study of sacred and esoteric traditions), etc.

**Keywords**: holism, religion, tradition, gnosis, esotericism, archaeoastronomy, Magi

### Riflessioni antropologiche sulla religione

Antonino Colajanni

**Some anthropological reflections on religion**

Abstract

A series of general, theoretical and methodological reflections on the different forms of religious ideas and practices diffused among all human cultures is here proposed from an anthropological point of view. The first step is based on the consideration that the most diffused idea within very different social contexts is that of the existence of spiritual not-human invisible beings, capable of influencing the lives of the humans, if addressed in certain forms and in certain times. A common character of the religious ideas (in particular within the religious systems of the three monotheisms) is that they do not accept a normal and ordinary way of refutation and critical discussion about the principles and central ideas. They show a case of undisputable statements on reality and are founded on a trust in certain ideas and beliefs received from others, respected person or sacred texts, without a particular sensibility to accept the recourse to empirical evidences. Their principal concern is about some “elementary aspects of human life”, normally impossible to be controlled by the humans in a technical and operational way.

The fundamental methodological aspect to be taken into consideration is that the religious ideas and practices have to be studied historically, because they are connected with concrete and historical problems of the human societies that produced them, and that they change continually in time, owing to different circumstances. The *comparative method* is another indispensable instrument for the study of the religious phenomena; every religious system has to be examined in the context of the numerous analogies and differences existing between the various societies of men living in the same and in different times, which have been continually in contact among them, which generated influences and reciprocal loans.
On a more general level, it appears necessary, for the theoretical and comparative study of religious phenomena, to criticize and put on discussion the same religious system existing within the culture of the student of religious ideas and actions. A sort of “religious relativism” appears then to be necessary. In the case of Christianity in particular, it appears necessary to reconstruct carefully the ancient and recent history of Christian religion, with all its transformations, in order to get a sufficient distance from the implicit influences of that very complex cultural-religious system, which could produce a sort of deformation in the process of understanding and interpretation of the religious ideas of the others. The last part of the essay is dedicated to a presentation of an extended text on religious ideas and shamanism, collected among the Shuar Indians of Ecuadorean Amazon, to which the general and methodological suggestions and the reflections presented above have been applied. 

Keywords: Religious ideas and practices; historicity of religious ideas; comparative method; religious relativism; shamanism among the Shuar (Ecuador)

Spirito/spiriti, rinascita/tradizione
Rinnegamenti e continuità nella salvezza pentecostale

Silvia Cristofori

Spirit/Spirits, Rebirth/Tradition: Denials and Continuities in the Pentecostal Salvation

Abstract

This article investigates the Pentecostal rebirth experience on the basis of fieldwork conducted in Rwanda. The aim is to show how, in this experience, salvation and tradition are bound in a complex relationship, liable to different interpretations, whose investigation concerns some critical points of the anthropological debate on Christian movements in Africa. To this purpose the article illustrates a particular form of Pentecostal ritual in which the deliverance from the evil forces is connected to the examination of the individual past. Consequently, the article analyzes the accounts of their personal experience of the salvation and evil forces offered by different social actors. It will be shown how these accounts are different but complementary: whereas some Reborns point out the need to refuse the legacy of the past generations as a curse, the Pentecostal pastors highlight how this rejection is a spiritual war to deliver the mission context from its past. However, it is in particular the prophets who warn that in this war the enemy can be never defeated once and for all, and that salvation needs the permanent threat of the past. In this regard, the article inserts the Pentecostal experience of salvation in the debate on African appropriations of Christianity as forms of cultural resistance.

Keywords: African Christianity, Cultural resistance, healing ritual, prophetism, salvation

Guardia Sanframondi 2010
Note etnografiche sui riti settennali per l’Assunta

Vincenzo Esposito

Guardia Sanframondi 2010. Ethnographic Notes on the Septennial Rites in honour of Our Lady of Assumption

Abstract

Every seven years, the septennial rites in honour of Our Lady of the Assumption are held in Guardia Sanframondi (BN). More than 80% of the local population participates in the ritual. They live in four districts: Croce, Portella, Fontanella and Piazza. During the ritual week, each district celebrates two processions separately in which only local residents participate. Only on the last day all the inhabitants of all the districts come together in one great procession through all the streets of the center. Each district participates in the event with a series of “living pictures” depicting episodes of the Holy Scriptures and stories of saints. The actors of “living pictures” are actually the inhabitants of the four districts. At the general procession the "battenti" also
attend: 900 hooded men who beat their breasts with "sponge", a piece of cork from which 33 pins sprout, whose blood drips on the road. The ritual takes place in absolute anonymity.

There are three important moments that mark the general procession: the exit of “battenti” from the sanctuary, the exit of the statue of Our Lady of the Assumption, the meeting of the “battenti” and the statue. The ritual, in its complexity, can be defined as "archaic" according to Victor Turner because it highlights the relationship, in Guardia Sanframondi, between communitas and societas or, in other words, the social relations existing in the whole context of the city, made of various and divergent needs, that only through ritual become consistent. The ritual of 2010 was filmed and photographed by legions of cameramen of local, national and international television networks, including Al Jazeera network. In addition, they counted about 150,000 tourists and spectators admissions.

**Keywords**: Blood Rituals, Structure/Communitas, battenti, Southern Italy

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**Il battesimo nel nome di Gesú**

Giuseppe Garro  

**Interpreting the norm: the practice of the baptism from John to Jesus**

**Abstract**

In this essay the author analyzes the rise of baptismal practices starting from the dialectic between the “charismatic movements” and the institution of Jerusalem’s temple on the dawn of the first century AD. In particular, he examines John the Baptist’s ritual, its scope, the importance it had for Jesus and tradition, and how it was received by the first communities of Christianity. The author explores first of all the rise of baptismal ritual and its relationship with the main priestly institutions. Secondly, he focuses on the way in which the ritual was interpreted as “ritual-input” by early Christian communities. It is only with the “cultural conceptions” of medium-Judaism that we can understand the evolution of this amazing initiation ritual, and the way in which Jesus and his disciples relate to it renewing it according to aims and perspectives that start from John the Baptist’s ideal.

**Keywords**: Baptism, Jesus, John the Baptist, Judaism, Ritual

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**La persona e il sacro. Per un possibile punto d’incontro tra filosofia e antropologia**

Giuseppe Pulina  

**The person and the holy: a convergence between philosophy and anthropology**

**Abstract**

In this essay I will examine how philosophy and social sciences conceptualise the term ‘person’. This is not a simple word. We all frequently use this term, but this is not at all a common concept. The word ‘person’, although ordinary, conveys a concept that is at the center of philosophical discussions. The Latin authors maintained that “Sumptum est nomen personae a personate eo quod in tragoediae et comediis recitatores sibi ponebant quandam larvam ad repraesentandum illum, cuius gesta narrabant decantando” (“The term person comes from personate because in the tragedies and comedies the actors used to wear a mask to represent the person whose deeds they were reporting”). How do we represent and interpret this fundamental concept? It is necessary to note the centrality of the human person in Christian anthropology. According to the theories of Possenti, Cassirer, Simone Weil and Max Scheler, a concrete idea of person can materialize. The ‘person’ will be a moral as well as an ontological subject and its sign will be the possible link between philosophy and anthropology, as far as spirituality is concerned.

**Keywords**: person, holy, spiritual, personalism, empathy
An Ecumenical theological anthropology: Hans Küng and the Dialogue with Karl Barth

Abstract
This paper examines Hans Küng’s (1928-) dissertation Justification: The Doctrine of Karl Barth and a Catholic Reflection (1957). In his first work Küng compared the doctrine of justification, as understood by the Protestant theologian Karl Barth (1886-1968) to the classic Catholic theology affirmed by the Council of Trent (1545-1563), which remained the Church's doctrine for the next four hundred years. Küng expressed the idea that there is a fundamental agreement between Trent and Barth's doctrine and that the divergent viewpoints "would not warrant a division in the Church". The book has become a classic work and «marked the dawn of a new era of positive ecumenical discussion of a doctrine which had hitherto been seen largely as an insuperable obstacle to such dialogue" (A. E. McGrath).

The main purpose of this essay is to clarify the anthropological-theological structure of Küng’s book. It is intended as a critical analysis and a contribution to our current discussions.

Keywords: Hans Küng, Karl Barth, Theological Anthropology, Ecumenical Dialogue, Justification

There in the background and in the mirror. George Simmel's religious anthropology

Abstract
The aim of this article is to highlight some shadowed perspectives contained in the Collected Essays on the Sociology of Religion, which include the works published by Georg Simmel from 1898 to 1918, year of the philosopher’s death. Other writings of the Author are used for comparison, or to explain the evolution of the Simmelean thought, or its unravelling in expositive analyses in which the role of religion, or spirituality, is not as decisive as in the essays published in 1906, and later in 1912 (Die Religion). Here religion and spirituality complement a worldview whose connections between art/religion/spiritualism, or those of a symbolism between goods/subjects/individual and society, merge also into unexpected religious manifestations, which are not, however, oriented towards an image that can be defined or centred by means of a strictly religious order or frame. An analysis of Simmel’s texts reveals that religion is also composed of an inventory with unlimited non-catalogued possibilities: human and religious representations do not dismantle the sentiment/impulse that stirs them; rather they arrest it in one of the many ‘forms’ of the possible reality, which is always re-combinable and always knowable.

Keywords: Religion, spiritualism, goods, religious representations

Kulturmorphologie und Neopaganismus. Der Glaube des Leo Frobenius

Abstract
Anthropologists are used to describing the religions of others, nut not their own beliefs. In the human sciences we rarely find information about the religious beliefs of researchers. But carefully examining published and unpublished writings, we can still find some indications regarding the authors’ values, which they may not have always intended to disclose to the public. This is in spite of the fact or perhaps, more correctly, because they are closely related to the theory and practice of their science. To
illustrate this rather apocryphal relationship between an author’s basic convictions and his published opinions, in this essay we take the example of Leo Frobenius (1873-1938), a researcher who remained on the fringes of the academic world. As an autodidact ethnologist he was already very enthusiastic about the mythologies of the world at a very young age, but instead of a “global myth” he published a catalogue of mythological themes or “mythologems”, which he considered as universal (Die Weltanschauung der Naturvölker – “the worldview of primitive peoples”, 1898; Das Zeitalter des Sonnengottes – “In the era of the Sun God”, 1904).

Unlike the mythologies written much later (1964-1971) by Claude Lévi-Strauss (1908-2009), they do not deal with formal structures of thought, but rather with an archaic cosmology similar to the archetypes we find in the later works of Carl Gustav Jung (1875-1961) or Mircea Eliade (1907-1986). In search of these archetypal images of cosmic evolution, Frobenius collected folk tales and later rock paintings, which he copied by hand during his field research (12 expeditions to Africa between 1904 and 1935).

The birth in death, the ritual murder of the Holy King or High Priest, the complementarity of the sexes (for example the numbers 3 and 4 in the sum 7), the law that a culture's rise must inevitably be followed by its decline – these all are ideas that have determined the work of this researcher, so that one wonders if they are based solely on his ethnographic observations or if they are rather related to influences received before his training as a researcher and could be explained from his biography.

As the faithful son of the Prussian lieutenant colonel and military architect Herman Theodor Frobenius (1841-1916), Leo Frobenius grew up with an ideology sometimes called “military religiosity”, which was widespread in Germany since the Napoleonic wars and may find its first literary expression in the war song of Ernst Moritz Arndt Der Gott, der Eisen wachsen ließ ... (“The God who let the iron grow, did not want any serfs...”). Christian faith is more or less reduced to an almost blind belief in a fatalistically accepted destiny, which rather recalls pagan patterns than the gospel of faith, love, hope. For Frobenius, the idea of service lies at the heart of his opinions and demands sacrifice or self-sacrifice of the king as well as of the subject. Culture is a strategic plan. In the eyes of militarists and nationalists (only German ones?), acts of homicide committed against others as well as those committed against oneself, carry the seeds of renewal. Prussian reformers saw the defeat of Jena in 1806 as an opportunity to change and renew armaments. Later, even an expressionist painter like Franz Marc (1880-1916) expected a “purification” from the First World War.

**Keywords:** Kulturmorphologie, neopaganism, German ethnography, Frobenius, anthropology of religion

**Al-qarāfa, la Città dei Morti del Cairo. Il circuito delle sette tombe sacre**

Anna Tozzi Di Marco  p. 251

**Al-Qarāfa: the pilgrimage to the holy seven tombs in Cairene Muslim cemetery**

**Abstract**

A key aspect of al-Qarāfa, the Muslim inhabited cemetery in Cairo is the devotion to seven ancient sacred tombs and its relative pilgrimage. The Cairene graveyard was renowned for the local and inter-regional pilgrimages because of its high concentration of awliyā’s graves (literally friends of God), as holders of baraka, the divine grace. In particular, in the XIII century the famous circuit of the Seven tombs was formalized by the shaykh al- Fārsī who, according to the scholar El Kadi, also called it “pilgrimage of the seven sleepers”. Hence the multitude of Muslim pilgrims who spent the night on the holy spot without taking into account the social code about the separation between sexes. Nowadays some mausoleums of the circuit have disappeared and local people have no memories of them, whereas the most renowned holy men’ tombs are still venerated by a large crowd of devotees, even if the nightly practice of incubation is missing. The author, in considering the scholars’ studies on this issue, explores the current veneration and the contemporary pilgrims’ pattern of habits, comparing it with the Medieval ones.

**Keywords:** al-Qarāfa, Cairo, pilgrimage, awliyā’, seven sleepers