

## Interior Dialogues

### The Co-Voicing of Ritual in Solitude

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Two of the outstanding qualities of ritual are its contribution to the impersonal construction of social authority (Du Bois 1986; Durkheim 1915) and its mediation of the individual's unfolding subjective experience (Briggs 1993; James 1902). Yet ritual's paradox remains: How do the social and the individual, the impersonal and the subjective, connect? Can we construct a vision of ritual to unify what has been sundered?

In our quest to come to terms with the nature and significance of ritual, we may come to notice, without at first attaching any great significance to it, that perfectly ordinary occasions arise in the course of everyday life in which ritual finds a voice—or rather, is given a voice by its practitioners. On such occasions the ritual practitioner turns out to be, often enough, an ordinary layperson like ourselves, and the voice we hear is characteristically tinged with the personal tones of its author. Taking the opportunity to observe the mundane rituals that surround us, we contemplate the subtle yet potentially unsettling character of what happens when the ritual text meets the voice of the individual who would enact it. The encounter of a seemingly timeless text with the uniquely personal voice of its present performer calls into question some of our most basic assumptions about the separation between the worlds of ritual and ordinary discourse. At stake, too, is something larger: the accompanying ontological assumptions regarding the nature of the social actions and entities, including ritual signs, that populate our life-world, and of the lived experience of the individual who works to find meaning by way of ritually mediated discourse.

The variety of ritual to be analyzed in this chapter is apparently sufficiently innocuous that it has remained largely unnoticed, undocumented, and untheorized, even as it represents a recurring reality in the daily lives of millions of believers worldwide. The genre mixes layers of scriptural citation leavened with pious commentary, presented in small portions suitable for daily reading. In the single instance examined here, we meet a solitary layman, entirely alone in a room, who is speaking aloud. No others are present to hear him perform, as he habitually does each morning, a ritual reading of a short religious text specified for that day. The following excerpt comes from the middle portion of the text:

- (1) 94 *A child of the light confesses instantly and stands bared before God,*  
 95 *a child of darkness says oh I can explain that away.*

The reading unfolds routinely, largely in accordance with the expected pattern for the practice. But at least one feature sets this instance apart. The present speaker, unlike most, talks back. Departing from the script before him, he responds to the preceding lines, after a pause of 3.7 seconds' duration, in his own words:<sup>1</sup>

- (2) 96 (3.7)  
 97 (TSK) (H) That is the difference.  
 98 (1.6)  
 99 The light,  
 100 and the dark.  
 101 (0.7)  
 102 (H) Confession,  
 103 (0.7)  
 104 and self-explanation,  
 105 (0.5)  
 106 Self-explanation is (0.2) ego.  
 107 (1.0)  
 108 (H) .. Id.  
 109 (0.4)

The dialectic between the text and the speaker's response to it is explored in detail in what follows, but a few preliminary comments are in order here. Although printed for mass circulation and destined to be part of a massively shared, synchronized performance realized by dispersed members of a common religious orientation, the text in its moment of distributed reading is locally enacted, embodied, situated,

and, ultimately, appropriated and personalized. By responding in his own voice, the speaker introduces a new layer of dialogic imbrication to the already complex strata of embedded metadiscursivity (Silverstein 1993, 2005) entextualized in this ritual genre. Yet belying its apparent authority, the ritual text's vital dependence on processes of personal performance render it vulnerable to confrontation by alternative discourses, opening ritual up to the unfinalizability of polyphony and heteroglossia (Bakhtin 1981 [1934]; Voloshinov 1973). Crucially, the contingency of the dialogic response allows it to veer between the poles of affirmation and contestation.

One way to think of the tension between institutionalization and personalization of ritual is in terms of what Foucault characterized as "the mode of action that an individual exercises upon himself by means of the technologies of the self" (1988: 225). Technologies of the self can be understood as the structures that subtend practices of ethical self-formation, involving "forms of subjectivation" through which the individual constructs at once a "relation to oneself" and a relation to generalized moral codes of behavior (Foucault 1988: 225). The idea naturally lends itself to anthropological analyses of practices in which the individual deploys some cultural resource (such as a ritual text) to reshape aspects of her own subjectivity (cf. Hirschkind 2006; Mahmood 2001; Robbins 2004) in the construction of moral personhood (Shoaps 2004). (The ritual text to be analyzed in what follows seems to present a paradigm case.) Disenchantment with the totalizing tendencies of the Durkheimian perspective has long since motivated a turn from monolithic interpretations of society-level functions of ritual to more nuanced views of the heterogeneous meanings ascribed by individual participants to their own ritual practice, including subjective experience. Whether a shift in this direction reflects a change in the world or only in our preoccupations with it, there is value in probing the individual's personal participation in, and response to, ritual.

The traditional anthropological concern with ritual faces uncertainty today, in part because its object of study is no longer what it once was. Arguably, a worldwide trend is under way that threatens the living continuity of certain forms of ritual, especially large-scale public rituals linked to traditional religions under pressure. Such trends may be compared to the catastrophic loss of endangered languages worldwide, although the analogy, and the analysis, remains controversial (Hill 2002). At the same time, other ritual forms are on the rise, especially those associated with the global expansion of some varieties of Christianity and Islam (Hirschkind 2006; Keane 1997c, 2002; Mahmood 2001;

Robbins 2005). Whether the cultural consequences of globalization are blamed or simply noted, the effect on the observer class has at times been to motivate an escape to safer fields of inquiry. But this is hardly the time for anthropologists to give up on ritual. What is called for instead is a renewal of the terms of engagement. Subtle shifts in theoretical perspective can reform expectations regarding what we hope to receive from ritual in pursuit of the anthropological enterprise.

In pursuing a dialogic approach to ritual, the present line of research seeks to renew and extend anthropology's long-standing exploration of the centrality and power of ritual in social life while probing as well the more intimate dimensions of human subjectivity. In examining the individual's exploitation of received ritual forms for processes of self-formation in daily life, the need arises to address the contingent aspects of ritual's locally situated realization. To frame the problem, my analysis draws on an array of conceptual tools including participation (Goffman 1981b), voice (Agha 2005b; Keane 1999), indexicality (Ochs 1996; Silverstein 1976, 2003), and the technology of self (Foucault 1988; Mahmood 2001; Robbins 2004). These issues are situated within an overall dialogic perspective (Bakhtin 1981 [1934]; Voloshinov 1973), within which Bakhtin's ideas on "interior dialogicization" (Bakhtin 1973 [1929]; cf. Cohn 1978) and "internally persuasive discourse" (Bakhtin 1981 [1934]; cf. Rampton 2006) are especially relevant to the rhetorical efficacy of "voices from without ... which can speak in the language of a voice within" (Burke 1950; cf. Du Bois forthcoming). In addition, given that the act of reading is centrally at issue, the observations of literary theories of "interior monologue" (Bickerton 1967; Chafe 1994; Cohn 1978; Humphrey 1954), hermeneutics (Ricoeur 1976), and reader response criticism (Iser 1978) become relevant. The whole is organized under the general rubric of stance (Du Bois 2007), as developed further in what follows.

In the rest of this essay I present a dialogic approach to the analysis of ritual discourse in its personal dimensions, exploring the nexus between text, voice, and subjectivity as a matter of the structure of participation in ritual. Methodologically the work is grounded in observable aspects of ritual practice, analyzed in terms of stance (Du Bois 2007). The first section briefly delineates a contrast between the visible exterior and the subjective interior as they relate to ritual. In the next section I undertake an extended analysis of the event that provides the main focus of the chapter: a solitary performance of a ritual discourse in which a dialogic back-and-forth develops between reader and text. The penultimate section moves to a more generalized theoretical characterization of

the role of voice in ritual, depicting what I call co-voicing as a form of participatory engagement with the ritual text, as framed within stance theory. Finally, the conclusion highlights some of the broader implications of the dialogic perspective for understanding ritual in social life.

### **Ritual: Exterior or Interior?**

In any attempt to define ritual, one immediately encounters a question that has generated debate over the ages: Where does ritual reside? Is it external, such that it can be taken as sufficiently defined by its procedure? On such a view, ritual is constituted by a behavioral surface, a configuration of acts, signs, bodies, and objects accessible to the external gaze, amenable to imitative reproduction by its observers. By this token the realization of ritual is objective (Rappaport 1974, 1999), occurring appropriately under conditions of effective enactment regardless of the subjectivity of those who do the enacting. Or is ritual rather internal, a process that penetrates into the individual psyche (James 1902; cf. Briggs 1993; Lienhardt 1961; Rampton 2006)? Among the many variants of this position, one version holds that ritual demands a certain subjective involvement by the actor in the act, presupposing a configuration of intentionality to be located variously within the soul, psyche, or consciousness of the ritual participant (Bauman 1983; Hanks 2000; Keane 1997b, 2002; Shoaps 2002).

That there are deep and long-standing divisions concerning the proper answers to these questions, fueled in part by divergence of religious doctrine, is well known. The philosophical and sociological dimensions of the problem are no less daunting than the theological, evoking such fraught issues as objective and subjective dimensions of experience and of sociality. Although it is tempting to sidestep such issues entirely, if only to avoid raising problems we are unlikely to be able to resolve, the question of ritual's external and internal aspects—obvious and opaque, objective and subjective (Rappaport 1974; Turner 1975)—refuses to be entirely set aside. The ritual participants, who feel themselves to be doing something more than merely producing patterns of behavior to be analyzed, annotated, or reproduced, are not to be ignored. Ritual participants not only weave but inhabit and indeed embody the fabric of social life. Even as ritual life is conducted in public spaces, it reveals an interior as well as an exterior dimension, whether we speak of spiritually potent ritual located in religious practice (Abu-Lughod 1986; Bauman 1983; James 1902; Shoaps 2002) or interaction ritual found in daily

encounters (Basso 2007; Goffman 1967). The realization of the ritual act must encompass not only the events of the visible exterior but also those that penetrate to the affective interior. In ritual, the subjective animates the objective as much as the objective mediates the subjective.

In taking account of the personal involvement of the individual in ritual, it is important to avoid falling into a merely psychologizing account (Rampton 2006). It proves useful to attend closely to specific details of the individual's dialogic practice, in order to appreciate how the situated actions indexically mediate relations between the ritual text and the subjectivity of its performer. Such an analytic methodology can yield more secure results, with far-reaching implications for the way the realization of ritual contributes to its own force and significance in social life. It is to this kind of close analysis of ritual practice that I turn in the next section.

### **Ritual in Solitude**

The initiating complication that drives the present inquiry arises in an encounter with a specific form of ritual, briefly exemplified earlier. Although drawn entirely from a recording of one man talking, the discourse can hardly be described as a monologue. Paradoxically, it presents a challenge not only to reified notions of the ritual text but also to certain interactional approaches to discourse (a.k.a. talk in interaction) that sometimes insist on the need for two bodies to make an interaction (Schegloff 1999: 408).

The circumstances bear some clarification. The recording was made under my direction using a portable digital tape-recorder I had set up in advance to record for four hours continuously. The speaker, who lives alone, took the recorder home and turned it on in the morning when he awoke. He wore the recorder and microphone on his person as he moved freely about the house. Because no outsider was present, the resulting recording appears reasonably natural, in the sense that the speaker seems to behave more or less as he would have without the tape-recorder present.

In the common parlance, solitary speaking is sometimes referenced as "talking to oneself." Such a pat formulation is at best incomplete and at worst prey to unspoken prejudicial assumptions, but in any case it is too crude to capture the significance of what happens on occasions like the present one. More productively, the phenomenon of self-talk has recently been receiving serious, theoretically motivated attention from psychology (Baars 1997; Morin 1993) and other cognitive sciences (Fields 2002), updating an interest that can be traced back to the

work of Vygotsky and others. Although most discussion of self-talk is framed almost exclusively in psychological terms, a notable exception appears in the brilliant sociological speculations of Goffman (1978), who acutely discerned a dimension of sociality in the unaccompanied individual's use of "response cries" to manage the presentation of self even when ostensibly "alone." The present work continues along these lines, addressing the social rather than the psychological dimensions of self-talk, but I depart from Goffman in attending closely to extended, transcribed samples of naturally occurring discourse.

Despite the solitary conditions of its production, the event at issue here unexpectedly reveals itself as dialogically constituted, in an almost literal sense. The recording begins with Daniel, as I will call him, waking and going about his morning activities. During the course of these events he often speaks aloud, providing a running sotto voce commentary on the activities he is engaged in. His comments often seem to derive from associations triggered in some way by his present circumstances. We may speculate that, living alone, the widower Daniel tends to speak aloud when others might only think the words to themselves.

Turning to the event itself, we observe a context that is in some respects familiar. It is morning. A man sits holding a book in the compact form of a daily devotional reader, *My Utmost for His Highest* by Oswald Chambers (1935), a best-seller among Christian religious tracts. Daniel's first task is to ascertain which page-long text he should read, from among the many in the book. Following the conventions of daily devotional practice, he makes the selection via a calendrical procedure (in effect a minor divination; Du Bois 1993, forthcoming). The book specifies a text for each day of the year, so the day's date becomes consequential for the unfolding ritual reading:

- (3) 1 (1.8)  
 2 DANIEL; Today is March the,  
 3 (0.8)  
 4 (Hx) twenty- .. what -f:ourth:. (Hx)

Daniel somewhat hesitantly decides that the current date is March 24. But after a few moments of uncertainty (omitted here), he revises his estimate:

- (4) 12 DANIEL; (TSK) (H): Or twenty-third.  
 13 I guess.  
 14 .. Yeah.  
 15 (0.3)

What Daniel accomplishes in this sequence may seem trivial, but it turns out to be important for grounding the ritual character of what happens next. What is established is not merely a fact about a date but the calendrical authority that motivates the selection of a particular text for the day's reading. Daniel then proceeds to the ritual reading proper:

- (5) 16 DANIEL; (TSK) (H) *Am I carnally minded.*  
 17 (H) (TSK) (H)  
 18 (0.6)  
 19 *Whereas there is among you .. jealousy and strife,*  
 20 *are ye not carnal.*  
 21 (2.3)

Italics here indicate passages of reading, as opposed to speaking in one's own voice.<sup>2</sup> It bears pointing out that the status of this utterance as read speech is indexed not so much by the use of a special vocal quality per se as by its rhythmic regularity, moderation of intonational variability, and, especially, the absence of disfluencies and word-search pauses within the boundaries of a single sentence.

Daniel starts his reading with the title at the top of the printed page: "Am I Carnally Minded?" (line 16). He takes a breath, then another, then pauses (lines 17–18). Although we cannot know what is going on in any particular pause, certain observations and speculations are possible. Pauses and vocalisms such as in-breath are abundant in the vicinity of the read passages; more precisely, they seem to occur more often at discourse boundaries, especially between sentences. Although the presence of a scripted text, mapping out fully which words are to be spoken next, should obviate the need to pause for word searches, some sentences nevertheless trigger a following pause. These often seem to be those calling for some contemplation, if not a response. Thus, pause distribution may reflect moments of cognitive activity by the reader (Chafe 1994), an index of dialogic reader response (Iser 1978; Riffaterre 1990) to the "assimilation point" associated with the completion of a sentence.<sup>3</sup>

Be that as it may, Daniel goes on to read the opening biblical epigraph (lines 19–20). Chambers's source was evidently the English Revised Version of the Bible (1881): "For whereas there is among you jealousy and strife, are ye not carnal?" (1 Corinthians 3:3). In reading aloud, Daniel deploys a voice that cannot be considered exclusively his own, if only because he has yet to invest it fully with his own stance (Basso 2007; Du Bois 2007). Partly cued by details of the manner of speaking,

the reading voice subtly restructures the participation frame for the utterance at hand. For Daniel the reading voice is a provisional one, creating a kind of temporary buffer for ritual propositions. This leaves open the question of whether we are to interpret the stance that would normally be implicit in an active voicing of the read proposition as present—whether it counts as the speaker’s current committed stance or not.

Daniel goes on, reading now from words evidently originating not with the Bible but with the devotional pamphlet’s author, Oswald Chambers:

- (6) 22 DANIEL; (TSK) (H) *No natural man knows anything about carnality.*  
 23 (0.4)  
 24 (H) (TSK) *The flesh lusting against the spirit,*  
 25 *that came in at regeneration,*  
 26 *the spirit lusting against the flesh,*  
 27 *produces carnality.*  
 28 (2.4)

After a substantial pause (line 28), Daniel continues with a passage from the apostle Paul, which elicits additional layers of voicing and revoicing. On the printed page, what appears in *My Utmost for His Highest* for the date March 23 is the following (Chambers 1935: 83):

- (7) “Walk in the Spirit,” says Paul, “and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh”; and carnality will disappear.

Although Chambers does not cite his source, the portion in quotation marks is from Paul’s letter to the Galatians (Galatians 5:16, King James Version). In Daniel’s reading this is realized as follows:

- (8) 29 DANIEL; (TSK) (H) (0.2) *Walk in the Spirit,*  
 30 *says Paul.*  
 31 (0.2)  
 32 (H) *#and ye shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh,*  
 33 (0.2)  
 34 (H) (TSK) (H) *and carnality will disappear.* (Hx)

Up to this point (excerpts [5]–[8], lines 16–34), the reading has proceeded uneventfully as a faithful reproduction of the printed text,

augmented only by the bodily behaviors that commonly accompany human vocal production, such as breath and pause. What determines the course of events, it seems, is the script laid down by the devotional pamphlet. Cast in the role of a mere animator of the unhindered words of the text, Daniel seems ordained to transmit a mix of propositions formulated variously by Oswald Chambers, the apostle Paul, and the biblical author. But in the next increment of the discourse, cracks begin to appear in the seamless voicing, amid indications that Daniel will now deploy his own voice to engage dialogically with Paul's. (The previous excerpt is repeated here for context.)

- (9) 29 DANIEL; (TSK) (H) (0.2) *Walk in the Spirit,*  
 30 *says Paul.*  
 31 (0.2)  
 32 (H) #*and ye shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh,*  
 33 (0.2)  
 34 (H) (TSK) (H) *and carnality will disappear.* (Hx)  
 35 (H) (TSK) *Walk in the Spirit,*  
 36 *yeah.*  
 37 (0.4)  
 38 #(H) (TSK) #*n\_Kay.*  
 39 (0.5)  
 40 (H) *Okay.*

A superficial analysis might hold that Daniel “repeats” (Norrick 1987; Tannen 1987) the same words twice, a few moments apart (in lines 29 and 35). But once the question of stance is considered for these two utterances, it becomes problematic to maintain that, when Daniel speaks the words “Walk in the Spirit” a second time in line 35, he is merely “repeating” the same stance action he has already achieved in line 29. And whereas the words may in some sense be the same—though surely not their precise prosody and pronunciation—the voice is another matter altogether. The difference becomes clear if we distinguish the specific vocal quality (phonation style, etc.) employed on a given occasion of speech production from the voice as a mark of identity. Identity as applied to voice is a complex and subtle matter, but we can provisionally define it as involving a recognizable index of a social being or socially constituted positionality capable of constancy across renewable occasions of participation in dialogic engagements. Voice in this sense, which we may characterize in stance terms as the voice-position, is not reducible to voice quality in the phonetic sense.

Although Daniel's vocal quality does not change systematically between his two acts of voicing, we may still recognize a shift in voice qua voice-position. To be sure, because multiple voices can be laminated together in one polyphonus utterance (Günthner 1999), sorting them out can be challenging, to the extent that it draws on cues across multiple orders of indexicality (Silverstein 2003), among other things.

It should not need to be said, but perhaps it does, that the fact that speakers sometimes manipulate multiple voices need have nothing to do with "hearing voices," another folk characterization of a pathology sometimes associated with self-talk. According to the scholarly literature on such issues, in the healthy version the multiple voices are managed as an internal matter under the control of a coherent self; in the unhealthy version they may seem to be controlled by an external source.

One easily overlooked cue to relations between stances (and the voices they imply) is sequence (Schegloff 2007). When Daniel's voicing of his "own" words follows his voicing of Paul's, the sequence reflects recognition of two voices apparently taking turns and, in the process, realizing distinctively positioned stances. (The language of turn and sequence is invoked here, even when no other conversationalist is physically present, on the basis of cues that typically accompany turn-taking [Schegloff 2007: 14; and see Du Bois forthcoming.]) The new contribution made by a second voicing is to shift to the self voice, the better to take a stance indexing commitment (Kockelman 2004). Once stance is taken into account, it becomes clear that the first voicing represents a stance lead, and the second, a stance follow (Du Bois 2007: 161–168).

That the present discourse is organized as an alternation of voices taking stances receives some support from what Daniel does next. He confronts the issue that has been at stake all along: whether he will be content with a mere animation of the ritual text (lines 29–34), enacting a provisional voicing of words that remain alienated from him as the stance of another, or will move to align with the prior stance. In line 36 he makes his initial move, departing from the script to interject a clear expression of his own stance alignment, using the convergent alignment marker "yeah" (Du Bois 2007). This "yeah" is introduced in postposed position, that is, at the end rather than the beginning of the response (Raymond 2000). In lines 38 and 40 this positioning is confirmed, if slightly softened, with the stance follow marker "okay" (expressed in two variant pronunciations). "Okay" here serves to mark consent to someone else's proposal. By substituting "okay" for "yeah," Daniel downgrades his participation, marking his move as stance follow

to Paul's stance lead. He thus consolidates both his alignment with the stance of the ritual text and his recognition of its priority. The uncertain balance between alternative contingent outcomes—will he follow Paul's lead or not?—is resolved. He has made the move from entertaining a textually proposed proposition to making it count now as his own stance.

To represent the subtle interplay of virtual voices, it is useful to introduce a new coding convention. Supplementing the standard transcriptional practice of notating the identity of the speaker (*qua* animator) at the start of each new "turn," a further annotation is introduced to indicate what type of voice-position the speaker is inhabiting. Among the general voice types implicated in reading aloud, we may distinguish the *text voice*, in which the speaker primarily animates the words of the text, from the *self voice*, in which the speaker fills both animator and author roles (roughly speaking).<sup>4</sup> One first writes the standard speaker attribution label (here marking the animator role, in effect), then an equal sign (=), and then the annotation specifying the author role. Applied to the previous two passages, lines 29–34 would be analyzed as indexing a text voice (DANIEL=TEXT), whereas lines 35–41 reflect a self voice (DANIEL=SELF). Obviously, such labels serve only as rough guides to aspects of the dynamic flux of vocal polyphony and should be taken with a grain of salt.<sup>5</sup> Yet even partial attempts to annotate vocal positionalities can be useful in calling attention to aspects of the participation frame as it is dynamically constructed in discourse.

In the next installment of the text, the reader is confronted with a question. Refusing to treat the question as merely rhetorical, Daniel responds with an expressive interjection:

- (10) 41 DANIEL=SELF; .. (AHEM) (AHEM)  
 42 DANIEL=TEXT; (TSK) (H) *Are you contentious.*  
 43 .. *easily troubled about trifles.*  
 44 DANIEL=SELF; Oh boy.

Responding with an affectively intensified interjection ("Oh boy"), Daniel seems to acknowledge that the term "contentious" fits him. "Oh boy" goes well beyond the option of a minimal stance alignment marker (e.g., "yeah") to participate empathically in an affectively loaded dialogic exchange between differentiated voices.

This is not to suggest that the exchange is symmetrical, which would be absurd: only one of the voices is capable of responding to the other in real time. As Ricoeur pointed out (1976: 75), in the "asymmetric

relation” between text and reader, “only one of the partners speaks for the two.” In contrast to the relative fixity of the text voice, the self voice has the luxury of contingent response, choosing the terms of its engagement. Still, when the text voice animates what is formally marked as a question (*Are you...?*) addressed to the reader (*you*) and bearing on emotions (*contentious, troubled*), an interactionally appropriate response is forthcoming: Daniel answers with an affective expression of the self voice.

The examples adduced so far have been relatively tame in presenting a more or less consensual convergence of alignment between text and self voices. But dialogic engagement is not all sweetness and light; the meeting of stances at the juncture of self voice and text voice need not be so harmonious. To allow for a dialogic response opens the text to a dialectic of contingent alternatives, exposing it to the very real possibility of divergence and even contestation between voices. We start to get a sense of what is at stake in the next portion of the reading. (The preceding lines are repeated here for context.)

- (11) 42 DANIEL=TEXT; (TSK) (H) *Are you contentious.*  
 43 .. *easily troubled about trifles.*  
 44 DANIEL=SELF; Oh boy.  
 45 (0.4)  
 46 DANIEL=TEXT; (H) (0.7) *Oh but no one who is #a Christian*  
*ever is.*  
 47 (1.1)  
 48 DANIEL=SELF; What absolute nonsense.  
 49 (4.4)  
 50 The way Paul talks,  
 51 there would have been no reason for Christ  
 to have come in the first place,  
 52 because everyone’s supposed to be perfect  
 already.  
 53 (1.8)

Upon reading what he takes to be Paul’s words, *Oh but no one who is a Christian ever is* (line 46), Daniel responds, after a pause, in his own voice. He evaluates Paul’s stance with the harsh assessment, “What absolute nonsense” (line 48).<sup>6</sup> In voicing such a critical evaluation, Daniel gives the clearest evidence yet that he is involved in something more profound than merely animating the words of another. He faces a deeper question: To what extent will he sign on as (co-)author of the

words? In stance terms, the choice is whether to make the stance his own through convergent alignment or to reject it through divergent alignment. If Daniel does not shy away from sharp divergence at times, his very independence lends meaning to his voicing of the ritual stance. As an apparently free agent—according to the ideology of the so-called liberal subject—he seems to wield his free will as he chooses to deploy his own voice and words, whether to reject, embrace, or otherwise define a nuanced alignment with the ritually offered stance.

In the next “turn,” Daniel shifts back to reading in the textual voice:

- |      |    |              |   |
|------|----|--------------|---|
| (12) | 54 | DANIEL=TEXT; | (TSK) (H) <i>Paul says,</i>                     |
|      | 55 |              | (0.3)   |
|      | 56 |              | <i>they are.</i>                                |
|      | 57 |              | (2.5)   |
|      | 58 |              | (TSK) #(H) <i>He connects these things with</i> |
|      |    |              | <i>carnality.</i>                               |
|      | 59 |              | (3.1)   |

Daniel reproduces these words with no explicit evaluation. After a pause, he goes on to read three more sentences of Chambers’s text, the last of which (lines 64–65) elicits a notable response:

- |      |    |              |   |
|------|----|--------------|---|
| (13) | 60 | DANIEL=TEXT; | (H) <i>Is there a truth in the Bible that instantly</i> |
|      |    |              | <i>awakens petulance in you?</i>                        |
|      | 61 |              | (0.4)   |
|      | 62 |              | (H) (TSK) (H) <i>That is a proof that you are</i>       |
|      |    |              | <i>yet carnal.</i>                                      |
|      | 63 |              | (0.8)   |
|      | 64 |              | (TSK) (H) <i>If sanctification is being worked</i>      |
|      |    |              | <i>out,</i>   |
|      | 65 |              | <i>there is no trace of that spirit left.</i>           |
|      | 66 |              | (1.7)   |
|      | 67 | DANIEL=SELF; | (H) (TSK) (H) No: #,                                    |
|      | 68 |              | #that,  |
|      | 69 |              | (0.3)   |
|      | 70 |              | That’s (0.7) (%) crap.                                  |

Daniel shifts to his own voice in line 67, after a pause and in-breath (lines 66–67), which are typical correlates of the beginning a new turn (Du Bois n.d.). The initial “no” in his own voice indexes the beginning of a divergent alignment, relative to the words of the ritual text he has

just finished animating. He goes on to render his verdict on the prior proposition via the metapragmatic assessment “That’s crap” (line 70). “Crap” is a pretty strong word to use in assessing a biblical exegesis, but that’s just what Daniel does. Yet the word “that,” though apparently innocuous in comparison with “crap,” is no less devastating in its own way. It is used here to demarcate a portion of the prior discourse as an object, an utterance whose stance can be evaluated. (This may in fact be the typical, if underappreciated, function of “that”: to point to something in the prior discourse, constituting it as an object cognitively accessible to participants [Ariel 1998; Hanks 1990, 2006; Webber 1991].) Faced with the proposition *If sanctification is being worked out, there is no trace of that spirit left*, Daniel moves to define it as his (reflexive) stance object, apparently even before he knows what to call it. He first utters “that,” then pauses (lines 68–69), then again “that’s” and another pause (line 70), before he goes on to deliver his blunt evaluation, “crap.”

I turn now to the closing moments of this intertextual engagement. (Lines 94–109 were presented earlier, in excerpts (1) and (2); lines 71–93 and 110–116 are omitted in the interests of space.) As he reads the final sentences of the prescribed text for the day, Daniel stays mostly in text voice until the end:

- (14) 117 DANIEL=TEXT; (H) (TSK) (H) *What is the proof that carnality  
has gone?*  
118 (0.2)  
119 (H) # *Never decei:ve yourse:lf?*  
120 (1.0)\_((MOVES\_PAPER))  
121 *When carnality is gone it is the most real  
thing imaginable.*  
(7 LINES OMITTED))  
129 (H) (TSK) (H) *You will never cease to be the  
most amazed person on Earth,  
at what God has done for you.*  
130  
131 (0.6)  
132 *on the inside.*  
133 (1.0)  
134 DANIEL=SELF; (TSK) (H)  
135 (1.9)  
136 Okay, (Hx)

Upon completing the prescribed reading (in line 132), Daniel pauses, takes a breath, pauses again, and finally responds with a simple “Okay”

(line 136). As in the case discussed earlier, Daniel's "okay" here indexes a stance follow aligned with the ritual text's stance lead. It comes across as rather tepid, but Daniel doesn't leave things there; the "continuing" (or "comma") intonation of line 136 hints at more to come. And Daniel indeed goes on to recast his overall evaluation of the text he has just finished reading. Amid a sequence of pauses, clicks, throat-clearings, and other vocalisms, he elaborates a further dialogic response—now whispered, but in his own voice:

- |          |              |                            |
|----------|--------------|----------------------------|
| (15) 137 |              | (1.6)                      |
| 138      | DANIEL=SELF; | (TSK) (H)                  |
| 139      |              | (2.3)                      |
| 140      |              | <WHISPER> Yeah </WHISPER>. |
| 141      |              | (0.7)                      |
| 142      |              | (TSK)                      |
| 143      |              | (1.3)                      |
| 144      |              | #(H) (AHEM) (AHEM)         |
| 145      |              | Mhm,                       |
| 146      |              | (0.2)                      |
| 147      |              | (TSK)                      |
| 148      |              | (1.9)                      |

So this is the way the whirl with the text ends, not with a bang but a whimper. After this Daniel moves on to other activities and topics.

Yet close examination reveals some significance to be found amid the pauses and vocalisms, in the subtle sequencing of stance alignment markers. Compared with his initial "okay" (line 136), Daniel's subsequent "yeah" and "mhm" (lines 140 and 145) represent a nuanced shift in alignment, from acceptance of the stance of a differentiated other to a more direct personal appropriation of the text's ritual stance. As the final explicit response in his own voice, the sequence of alignment markers can be heard as a gradual upgrading of his commitment, indexing his deepening inhabitation of the position voiced—and now co-voiced—in his dialogic performance of the ritual text.

### **The Ritual Stance**

What, if anything, can stance theory bring to the problem of ritual? I began this essay by acknowledging the gap between the entextualized, decentered, authoritative aspects of ritual form and the subjectivity and contingency that attend its local realization by particular participants.

Although the issue may seem moot for mass media products such as devotional publications, it is only masked by the apparent completeness, self-sufficiency, and autonomy of the text. To close the gap, it is important to consider how the users of ritual materials forge a relationship between themselves and their texts. Stance theory can help to model the structures and processes involved in the construction of a participation frame for intersubjective engagement with ritual forms.

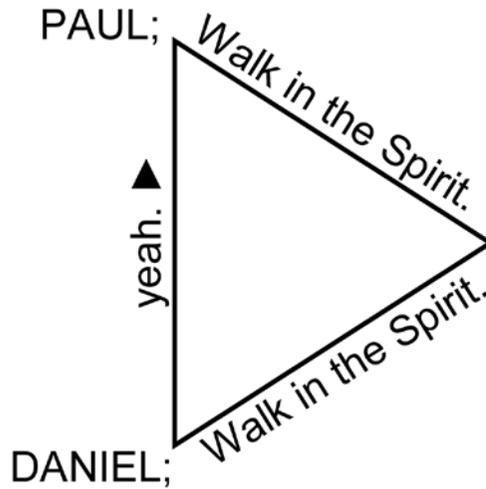
Stance can be defined as a triplex act in which the speaker as subject (1) evaluates an object, (2) positions a subject (canonically the self), and (3) aligns with other subjects (Du Bois 2007). The triune stance model is fundamentally dialogic. It builds on the structure of engagement between speaking subjects who jointly construct, in the inter-individual territory of distributed cognition (Voloshinov 1973; Hutchins 1995), an intersubjective framing of their respective subjectivities. Through repeated processes of stance alignment, each co-participant's expressions of subjectivity come to be structured in relation to the others'. For ritual in solitude, with only one (living) speaker in the room, it may appear that the issue of intersubjective alignment is moot. Once we take the perspective of voices rather than individuals, however, the pervasive relevance of stance alignment comes into focus.

Consider, for example, the relationship between Daniel's voice and the represented voice of the apostle Paul, as discussed earlier.<sup>7</sup> (Portions of excerpt 9 are repeated here for convenience, condensed to highlight the parallels between the voices.)

- (16) 29 DANIEL=TEXT; (TSK) (H) (0.2) *Walk in the Spirit*,  
 30 says Paul.  
 ((4 LINES OMITTED))  
 35 DANIEL=SELF; (H) (TSK) *Walk in the Spirit*,  
 36 yeah.

As noted earlier, Paul's stance is enacted as an imperative admonishment to *Walk in the Spirit* (line 29), to which Daniel responds in his self voice, first reproducing the words he has just spoken (line 35) and then introducing the postposed stance alignment marker "yeah" (line 36). Figure 13.1 represents the structural relations between the stances taken by Paul and Daniel as constructed in this "exchange." In the terms of the stance triangle, Paul's role as first stance subject is represented by a speaker label at the upper left node of the triangle. His stance utterance, the directive *Walk in the Spirit*, is represented along the vector beginning from this node and sloping downward to the right. Daniel is

represented as the second stance subject, with his speaker label at the lower left node of the triangle and his stance utterance represented along the vector sloping upward to the right. What the two stance vectors point to, canonically, is the shared stance object. How to characterize a shared stance object in the present case is not so easy to pin down, but it can be provisionally defined as the principle of moral obligation, “what one ought to do.”



**Figure 13.1.** Co-voicing the ritual stance.

For the present discussion, however, what matters most is the third stance vector, depicted in the vertical line connecting the two stance subject positions. This represents the dimension of alignment between Daniel’s and Paul’s stances. It is important to clarify that alignment is not, as I use the term, a simple binary opposition but a scale of continuously variable degrees. Certainly the polarity of alignment may be dichotomized as convergent versus divergent, which leads some analysts to divide the territory categorically into “alignment” versus “disalignment.” But in a more nuanced approach, it becomes crucial to recognize alignment as a continuous variable, if only because it is actively negotiated as such by participants.

As a process, the implementation of alignment is not symmetrical: it may be initiated by one participant. This lends alignment a directionality, shown in figure 13.1 by an arrow directed from the second subject to the first (from Daniel to Paul). This analysis reflects the fact that it is Daniel’s

stance marker “yeah” that indexes convergent alignment between the two stance subjects. Even if the paired utterances in lines 29 and 35 are identical in words, propositional content, and perhaps illocutionary force, once we consider the matter of voicing, the difference could not be clearer: in this structuring of stance participation, one speaker leads, the other follows.

It may seem that in treating Daniel’s voice as engaging directly with Paul’s, I am committing an unpardonable oversimplification of the intertextuality and polyphony in play, neglecting a whole series of embeddings of Paul’s words—first in the Bible, then in Chambers’s pamphlet, and then in Daniel’s reading voice. The “original” participation frame, after all, can be construed as a matter strictly between Paul and the Galatians. But the status of the Bible as scripture lends it a semiotic openness that transforms the scope and reach of its address. As a ritual text its participation frame is hyperactivated, as it were, inviting us to hear Paul’s admonishment to the Galatians as extended universally, even to ourselves. Read in a ritual attitude of participatory openness, the text calls us as new readers to construct ourselves as addressed participants, filling roles once taken by its original audience. As Ricoeur wrote (1976: 93), “the letters of Paul are no less addressed to me than to the Romans, the Galatians, the Corinthians, and the Ephesians.” This builds on the “omnitemporality” of the text, which “opens it to unknown readers.” By such means, ritual links participatory permeability to constituted authority, inducing a unique capacity for mediation across participation frames. This may be necessary for ritual to function effectively as a center of semiosis (Silverstein, this volume).

What is remarkable in Daniel’s discourse is not so much his habit of talking out loud when alone but his ritual attitude: from the outset he approaches the text at hand as a suitable partner for dialogic engagement. And yet his practice may not be so unusual after all, if we set aside the issue of self-talk. The dialogic connection depends first on separation: the criterion of interaction is that each partner must wield a distinguishable voice. Once differentiated, the dialogic partner has the potential (whether exercised or not) to make contingent contributions that will shape, at least in part, the emerging stance.

To approach a ritual text with a preparatory orientation to dialogic engagement is to adopt a ritual attitude of a certain kind, without which the outcome may be limited to mere vocal animation of prescribed words on a page. This at least is the recurring Protestant critique of ritual’s formalistic tendency (Bauman 1983; Keane 1997b, 2002; Shoaps 2002). There doubtless exist forms of ritual practice designed to be

carried out in a detached manner, as in some kinds of divination (Du Bois 1993). But in individualistic forms of religious practice such as the one considered here, this is clearly not the ethos.

## Conclusion

If ritual has long been favored as a point of entry for anthropological probings into the salient structures of culture and society (Durkheim 1915), in recent years this privileged status has come into question. Ritual awaits a new role in a theoretical landscape transformed by a multiplicity of concerns including practice (Bourdieu 1991; Silverstein 1998), linguistic ideologies (Kroskrity 1998; Robbins 2001b; Silverstein 1985), the social imaginary (Gaonkar 2002; Taylor 2002), technologies of the self (Foucault 1988; Mahmood 2001; Robbins 2004), modernity and its “posting” (Rampton 2006), “afterology” (Sahlins, cited by Robbins 2005), and other contemporary preoccupations. It is difficult to say how much the disciplinary crisis of confidence in anthropology, of which diffidence about the theoretical import of ritual is only one indicator, is connected to the actual crisis of ritual in the world that anthropology proposes to represent. In the face of sociocultural disruption driven by accelerating processes of globalization, the fraught contradictions among jostling forms of tradition, modernity, and postmodernity give rise to a complex pastiche that seems to offer little to bewildered subject populations except a choice between self-referential skepticism and doctrinal fundamentalism. Yet amid this flux, ritual is not so much abandoned by its practitioners as it is transformed via new forms and practices, new projects and interpretations. Against this background, a neglected dimension of ritual stands a chance of becoming visible, even if it was present all along. Ritual’s capacity to induce and embrace the contingent responses of new participants suggests that, even in its interior dimensions, ritual has always been already dialogic.

In previous work I have emphasized the way ritual’s recurrent structural properties serve to systematically imbue it with social authority (Du Bois 1986, 1993), tying its functional efficacy within a community of discourse to the social construction of its own entextualization. Without taking anything away from the import of social authority, entextualization, or structural universals, I would here redress the tacit imbalance by foregrounding a role for the voices of ritual participants—among whom must be included not only ritual speakers but also hearers and readers. To theorize personal participation is to frame the issue of subjectivity so as to recast the active social construction of

*intersubjectivity* as a locally situated project of participants. And the project remains social, indeed intersubjective, even for the individual in solitude. The polyphony of dialogic voicing introduces the potential for socially distributed agency into any utterance. Yet it is precisely ritual's formal constitution as an "objectively" entextualized *technology* of the self that opens up a usable channel for continuously modulated vocal participation in the ritual frame. In ritual, the text voice puts a stance on the table, and the self voice endorses it (or not). The alternation of voices yields a sequential organization not unlike what can be observed in turn-taking, a structural principle long recognized for its contributions to the manifestly social activity of multiparty, face-to-face interaction. The words of a solitary participant can be demarcated into the equivalent of "turns" by recognizing the distinctiveness not only of successive phases of verbal action but also of alternating voices whose positionality is differentially indexed by the stanced utterances they realize. As ritual subjects are drawn into the active construction of intersubjectivity, ritual in its actual enactment comes to resemble, more than might have been expected, the dialogic negotiation of stance alignment in interaction.

I began by posing a fundamental question for the understanding of ritual: How can the gulf be bridged between the impersonal authoritative form of ritual and its affect-laden subjective experience? The answer has to begin with the fact that ritual is not (only) something we do but something we experience in the doing. As active agents in the realization of ritual, we find our selves changed by the activity. Entering the participation frame of ritual co-voicing, we are transformed—as is the ritual itself, in the contingencies of its renewed manifestation. Through ritual we submit to a discipline beyond ourselves, a technology of the self, that has the power and apparently the purpose to induce change in our subjectivity, to penetrate into interior domains of affect, apprehension, and affinity. But this destabilized subjectivity is not left to float freely, untrammelled in an interior realm of imagination and solipsism. What goes on in the interior is dialogue, and dialogue always reaches ultimately to the exterior. There it finds itself constrained by the encounter with another subject, another voice wielding a stance of its own. Ritual is designed precisely to mediate the reflexive engagement between the implied voice of a prior text and the present voice of one who would reenact it. It is in this sense that ritual is constructed dialogically, through the collaborative achievement of co-voicing.

When the solitary individual faces the ritual text, the conditions for dialogic engagement are stripped to the bare minimum. What the case under analysis—in which the protagonist not only animates but also

talks back to the ritual text—reveals is a penetration of the dialogic principle into the deepest levels of the realization of ritual. In this instance the process turns out to hinge on the dialogic configuration of personal involvement in ritual technologies of the self, which makes possible the production of particularized, situated meanings via culturally generalized materials.

Under conditions of solitude, sociality does not disappear. If anything, the solitary social actor challenges us to come to terms with the full scope of sociality, revealed now in its dialogic guise. Dialogic practice is seen to organize even such activities as self-talk and private ritual, which in turn help create an inherently dialogic organization of persons. Ritual text and ritual practice thus emerge as two distinct phases of a single semiotic life cycle that together implicate a third term: a dialogic self that both constructs and is constructed by the circulation of discourse between public and private domains, crossing the exterior-interior divide. Whether in solitude or in public, ritual stands as perhaps the paradigm case among technologies of the (dialogic) self. The critical contribution of ritual co-voicing is to construct a frame for individual participation that links contingent, subjective dimensions of personal meaning to the compelling authority of ritual form, with its ramified links to ideological structures in an intertextual maze of meaning extending to the horizons of the sociocultural field.

## Notes

An earlier version of this chapter was presented at the Wenner-Gren symposium in Sintra, Portugal, that gave birth to this volume. I would like to thank the participants in that event for their many stimulating observations and insights on ritual, as well as feedback on this chapter, both of which substantially benefited the work. I particularly appreciate the generosity of Ellen Basso and Gunter Senft as organizers, editors, and creative contributors to the whole. Thanks are due to the Wenner-Gren Foundation for the remarkable support that made such a vibrant intellectual exchange possible and for its knack for location, location. I thank Wally Chafe for bringing to my attention the literary theories of Humphrey, Cohn, and Bickerton, as well for his insights on interior monologue. Thanks also to three anonymous reviewers, whose comments improved this work significantly. For her deep support and encouragement, I thank Mira Ariel. Finally, I wish to acknowledge my continuing debt to the

man whose voice is heard in these pages, whose collaboration in a particularly intimate piece of research allowed me to witness the private practices of a creative soul—without whom there would be nothing to say.

1. The excerpts are transcribed following the system of conventions known as Discourse Transcription (Du Bois et al. 1993) as recently updated to “DT2” (Du Bois n.d.). For the sake of clarity, the excerpts are presented in a slightly simplified transcription. The transcription conventions employed are the following: {LINE}, each line of the transcription represents one intonation unit; DANIEL;, speaker attribution label; =TEXT, role or voice enacted by speaker; *italics*, reading voice (ad hoc local convention); (1.7), pause, with duration in seconds; .., very short pause (less than 0.18 second); colon (:), prosodic lengthening of previous sound; em dash (—), truncated intonation unit; (H), in-breath; (Hx), exhalation; (TSK), alveolar click; (%), glottalized vocalism; (AHM), throat-clearing; @, laugh (one pulse); #word, uncertain hearing of word; <WHISPER> words </WHISPER>, beginning and end of whispered voice quality.

2. I use italics here in preference to the standard convention of Discourse Transcription (“DT2” revised practice; Du Bois n.d.), which is to enclose the read words within angle brackets as follows: <READ> words </READ>. Given the prevalence of reading throughout this analysis, the use of italics as an ad hoc local convention seemed more user friendly.

3. For those steeped in the rhythms of conversational interaction and the interactional significance of the sequential location of pauses between speakers’ alternating turns (Schegloff 1999: 408, 2007: 14), it is important to recall that in the solitary situation, the absence of real-time, co-present co-participants (though surely not of co-participants in the intertextual sense) provides a reprieve from competition for the floor. One key consequence is a modification of the conditions governing allotment of time for the current speaker’s preferred activities, including, speculatively, cognitive processes such as silent speech or even silent (“interior”) dialogue.

4. Goffman’s influential partitioning of the speaker role into animator, author, and principal is suggestive but ultimately inadequate to account for the interplay of polyphonic voices, as when the implied voices of a ritual text meet the living voices of ritual participants. The hope to subsume Daniel’s voicing under the rubric of a mere animation of Paul’s (or Oswald Chambers’s) words becomes still more difficult to sustain as the dialogic engagement unfolds. Yet promoting Daniel to author will not make the problem go away. What matters more, perhaps, is the tension between the animator and author roles, a tension that may be an integral component of the dialogic construction of social relations by processes of co-voicing. To the extent that they

help us articulate this tension, animator and author are provisionally useful categories, but they capture only a part of what is needed for a fully dialogic understanding of the participation framework within which ritual comes into being. The issue merits further examination in light of Irvine's (1996) critique of the Goffmanian participation model, Hanks's (1996) extension of the debate to embrace ritual, and so on.

5. Note also that vocalisms such as breathing and throat clearing are typically attributable to the self voice, regardless of how the line as a whole is labeled.

6. Although my primary concern here is with what Daniel makes of the text as he reads it aloud, one possible alternative reading of the original is worth mentioning. Close perusal of this passage suggests that Chambers intended the words *Oh but no one who is a Christian ever is* (line 46) as a representation, perhaps, of the imagined response of a prideful Christian, who boasts that the mere fact of being a Christian automatically protects one from error. The intrusion of the interjection *oh* into the written passage can be heard as evoking the language of direct quotation from an oral source (Heritage 2002), thus tending to support the view that this is a representation of the voice of an imagined reader, not of Paul. Chambers originally delivered his homilies as oral performances before audiences. His words were transcribed in real time by his wife, Bidy, a trained stenographer who later edited and published the texts posthumously. Whatever vocal cues might have been present in Chambers's original live performances to index the ventriloquated response of a misguided listener, they did not survive the transition to the printed page. Where Chambers scripted a heteroglossic positionality for the recalcitrant reader's "answering word" (Voloshinov 1973), thereby introducing an additional layer of complexity into the participation frame, Daniel apparently misses the implicit cues signaling a shift in voicing and so attributes the words to Paul. This is the more understandable in that on this page of text, the use of quotation marks is otherwise reserved exclusively to signaling Biblical quotations.

7. For the sake of simplicity, I treat the complement clause following *Paul says* as Paul's utterance in his own voice. A more thorough treatment would take into consideration the many layers of complex metapragmatic embedding that are introduced by the present text's profoundly intertextual pedigree, implicating sources of the Bible, its transcriptions and translations, Oswald Chambers's lectures, Bidy Chambers's real-time transcriptions, her editing and posthumous publication of selections in the form of a devotional volume, and more. This is an interesting story, but not for this occasion.

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