

ENCOUNTERS OF BODY AND SOUL
IN CONTEMPORARY RELIGIOUS PRACTICES

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Blanes

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Introduction

Anna Fedele and Ruy Llera Blanes

In the year 2000, the spirit of an Angolan prophet called Simão Toko (1918 – 1984) entered the body of a young man called Afonso Nunes, who was then ‘personified’ by him, ‘filled’ with his soul. The young man then assumed the bodily posture of the original prophet and took up the leadership of the ‘Tokoist Church’, one of the most important Christian movements in Angola. Today, over one million believers in Angola and in the Angolan diaspora follow him, accepting this form of ‘spiritual embodiment’ (Blanes 2011).

This metaphor of spiritual embodiment, obviously, is not exclusive to Angola or to prophetism. Every day Catholics all over the world attend mass and practice a version of spiritual embodiment that may appear more familiar to the Western reader: they ‘eat’ the body of Christ offered to them by a priest who also ‘drinks’ Jesus’ blood, thereby celebrating the Eucharist. Other Christians, on the other hand, prefer to ‘perform the Eucharist’ being embodied by the Holy Ghost in a Pentecostal experience. Likewise, Hindu practitioners promote fasting and vegetarianism in order to attain purity and spiritual enlightenment, and *candomblé mães-de-santo* and *pais-de-santo* dance and ‘ingest spirits’ in order to be possessed by invisible entities. But other forms of ‘spiritualising’ the body can also be found in the body of the suicide bomber, who sacrifices his physical self, hoping to find a place in paradise (see Asad 2007).

Social scientists confronted with religious phenomena have always been challenged to find a proper way to describe the spiritual experiences of the social group they were studying, and questioned themselves about the role of the body in the construction of those experiences. Analysing religious experiences, anthropologists often distinguished between ‘body’ and ‘soul’, between nonmaterial, spiritual experiences related to the soul and physical, mechanical experiences related to the body. But until today insufficient attention has been paid to the codependent relationship

between these two entities, the way in which different religious cultures describe them and the different strategies developed by social scientists to deal with the overlapping of these two spheres. As the above examples of 'spiritual embodiment' show us, the challenge remains relevant to this day. This book, therefore, proposes a comprehensive approach to this key point: the significance and agency behind religious conceptions of the body in their relationship with ideas of the soul.

We propose to bring to the forefront of the anthropology of religion the part of the body-soul dichotomy that tended to be neglected or treated as merely accessory in many discussions of religious phenomena: the issue of corporeality in religious contexts.¹ As is shown in the ethnographic examples analysed in the different articles of this book, the body and its reactions play an important role not only in healing rituals, but also in establishing a relationship with sacred objects and figures, during pilgrimage experiences, in contexts of religious apprenticeship or in the development of doctrinal configurations. The metaphorical, representational, political, often suffering or dysfunctional body described by the contributors to this volume is not a passive vessel of religious practices but a crucial entity of the experience of the sacred that appears intertwined with and not separated from the soul.

With this volume we propose to discuss the importance of the body and its perceptions in contemporary religious faith, taking the body/soul divide as an epistemological starting point. Bearing in mind that these two entities may be perceived and described in different ways in different cultural contexts, the contributors to this volume confront the following questions: What are the definitions set forth, in contemporary ethnographic contexts, of 'body' and 'soul'? What is the role of the body in contexts of religious agency and creativity? And in contexts of mobility and migration? In which ways can 'spirituality' be interpreted in terms of a bodily habitus or of other embodiment theories? How can the body, but also the soul become a locus of political, ideological and doctrinal expression and discourse? What kind of theories of person and 'being' are involved?

Anthropological Approaches to Corporeality in Religious Contexts

At the beginning of the twentieth century it might have been a stimulating challenge to define or establish the 'essence' and role of the soul (*see e.g.*, James 1982 [1902]), but it was still possible to 'measure' the body and its functions. Yet today, the quick and constant development of medical science allows us to manipulate the body and its processes in the name of survival, sexual orientation or even aesthetical preferences; on the other hand, the deinstitutionalisation and reconfiguration of belief and religious

practice at a global scale have challenged universalist or fixed conceptions of belief and spirituality. Thus, the ‘body’ and the ‘soul’ have lost the reassuring limits they had in the past, forcing us to question their disciplinary place.

As we mentioned previously, throughout the history of the discipline, anthropologists tended to distinguish between nonmaterial, spiritual experiences (i.e., related to the soul) and physical, mechanical experiences (i.e., related to the body), developing differentiated strategies to deal with the overlapping of these two spheres. Thus today, despite the development of important subdisciplines such as a ‘medical anthropology’ (see Scheper-Hughes and Lock 1987) or, on the other hand, an ‘anthropology of emotions’ (see Lutz and White 1986), the issue of corporeality in religious contexts, as a potential challenge to the classic binarism between ‘body’ and ‘soul’, has not been a central theme in the debate. Most of the efforts in this direction have been produced either in religious studies or in theological and philosophical disciplines (see Eilberg-Schwartz 1992; Law 1995; Tilley and Ross 1995; Ammicht-Quinn and Tamez 2002; Coakley 1997; Nicholson 1997; Cooper 2000; Armour and St. Ville 2006; Murphy 2006). Despite noticeable exceptions that will be mentioned henceforth, this interaction has not been object of a recent, extended discussion within the field of the anthropology of religion.²

The ‘body’, as an empirical ground for (and epistemological construct within) the anthropological discipline, would be expected, at a first glance, to be a pivotal figure in the description and interpretation of social and cultural facts – as Mauss had already proposed in his study on *techniques du corps* (1936). Yet, as Margaret Lock (1993) and Miguel Vale de Almeida (1996) among others have pointed out, it was only after the growing input of certain philosophical currents and tenets in anthropological theory – phenomenology, postmodernism, subjectivism and reflexivity on the one hand, poststructuralism on the other – and the subsequent development of ‘body theories’ (‘embodiment’, ‘body subject’, ‘body politics’, etc.), that corporeality was brought to the intellectual spotlight.³ Of these, perhaps Pierre Bourdieu’s practice and habitus theory, and Michel Foucault’s analytics of power in *The Will to Knowledge* (1976) were the most impacting. In particular, Bourdieu’s re-elaboration of Mauss’s classical concept of habitus (of which we will read discussions in this volume) as a complex of ‘beliefs and dispositions’ and mediator between objective and subjective stances were an important background for posterior phenomenological approaches introduced in the anthropology of religion (see below).⁴

Thus, theories of personhood (Strathern and Lambek 1998), ‘bodily sociality’ (Turner 1996; Lambert and MacDonald 2009), ‘mindful bodies’ (Strathern 1996), ‘re-formed bodies’ (Mellor and Shilling 1997) and ‘self’ (Douglas 1992; Csordas 1994a), among others, have become landmarks in contemporary social theory, using ideas of socialisation, agency and practice to remove the body from its epistemological subalternity and plac-

ing it as an object of ‘anthropological puzzlement’ (Strathern and Lambek 1998: 5). These philosophical contributions can be understood as attempts to locate the singular and shifting place of the body in the history of the anthropology of religion (Strathern and Lambek 1998: 5). Following Sarah Coakley (1997: 3), the ubiquity of the body was simultaneously its conceptual Achilles’ heel: it is present in multiple stances of sociality (race, performance, ritual, symbol, power etc.), and therefore it is methodologically slippery.

Yet, despite having placed the body historically at the margins of the anthropology of religion, we should not fall into theoretically comfortable ‘marginalisation arguments’, as it is also true that we can observe a recurrence of the issue of corporeality in religious contexts that emerged even from early analyses of religious experiences – a recurrence that shows us that it has, after all, been a concern for several anthropologists throughout the history of the discipline. Frazer, for instance, debated examples of ‘succession of the soul’ as forms of bodily transmission of power and sacredness, examples of the ‘absence of the soul’ of the body in different cultures, or examples of the impact of the soul, as an invisible entity, in the physical world (1922). Likewise, Lucien Lévy-Bruhl discussed, in *The Primitive Soul*, notions of ontological individuality (and duality) among ‘primitive cultures’ with relation to beliefs in souls and spirits and their bodily manifestations – infants, corpses, werewolves, etc. (1927).

Frazer and Lévy-Bruhl’s proto-ethnographic accounts sampled what countless other anthropologists, from Evans-Pritchard to Mary Douglas, to name but two of the most notorious, also gathered in their researches on religion and witchcraft. Mary Douglas’s pivotal work on notions of pollution and cleanliness in biblical culture offered a symbolic interpretation of the body, as agent of ‘prescription’ (taboo) and ‘boundary’ (1966). Evans-Pritchard, on the other hand, described how the Azande believed ‘witchcraft’ to be a substance placed in the body of the witch, but himself defined the phenomenon as a ‘psychic act’ (1976: 1).

Yet, an ad hoc critique to these classical interpretations of religious phenomena has been, precisely, the underrepresentation of the body, understood most of the time as a physical recipient, passive signifier or locus of cultural, symbolic or political expressions – devoid, therefore, of individuality and significance. Informed by modern and postmodern philosophical concepts – but also by other disciplines (psychology, cognitive studies, etc.), and concomitant to the subsequent ‘body theories’, recent anthropological approaches have progressively proposed different ways of understanding the place of corporeality in religious contexts.

We think, for instance, of the revival of the research on ‘spirit possession’ following I. M. Lewis’s influential work on ‘ecstatic religion’ (1971). After the groundbreaking research developed by, among others, Janice Boddy, who explicitly articulated notions of gender, sexuality and self in the context of feminine spirit possession in Muslim Northern Sudan

(1982, 1988, 1989), this topic seems to be returning to the main debates, also due to the input of recent work on Afro-Brazilian possession cults such as candomblé, etc. (see Goldman 2008 and Saraiva 2008, among others).⁵ But spirit possession has also been object of renewed observation from the perspective of cognitive anthropology. An example that comes to mind is Emma Cohen's *The Mind Possessed* (2007). Her approach is also a contribution to one of the liveliest ongoing debates in the discipline: that of the cognitive perspectives on religious practice, memory and transmission. Her book, and others (e.g., Whitehouse and Laidlaw 2004), has promoted, in contrast with previous approaches that explored the social contexts of possession (e.g., Lambek 1981), a focus on 'perception' and psychological 'disposition' as ways of defining different religious ritual experiences. Yet, an important critique to this approach has been its excessive 'psychologization' of religious experience, which seems to undermine the importance of physical, bodily experiences in these contexts.

In contrast, the burgeoning research on 'religious learning' (see Berliner and Sarró 2007) has argued for the complexity and interrelatedness of bodily and mental practices in the process of religious transmission. As is proposed, transmission (in relation to religious memory) is not processed solely through cognitive processes, but also implies social processes where the body can act as a site of religious learning and experience (2007: 7 and following). Likewise, recent approaches to pilgrimage (see e.g., Eickelman and Piscatori 1990; Eade and Sallnow 1991; Morinis 1992; Badone and Roseman 2004; Coleman and Eade 2004; Hermkens, Jansen and Notermans 2009) have suggested the importance of the body and suffering in the narrativization of religious faith as forms of spiritual ascription of physical experiences (pain, walking, etc.). Through this perspective, the body appears as an active participant of the religious experience: a fulfiller of promises and the locator/producer of religious dispositions (sacrifice, introspection, etc.) and discourses. Equally noticeable in this context is the study of the historical constitution of discipline and regimes of practice as parts of the process of conviction and belief. We are referring here to Talal Asad's famed comments on discipline and humility in medieval monasticism (1993: 125–67), in which the body becomes 'competent' through ritual practice (1993: 75). In this particular respect, this approach comes close to that of Jean Comaroff, who saw the social body as historically constitutive and simultaneously representational in terms of 'signifying practices' in Tswana Zionist cults (1985: 6–9).

Some research on spiritual apparitions has also highlighted the importance of physical (visual, bodily, etc.) 'presence' as a mediation between the empirical, ideological and spiritual aspects of belief (see e.g., Christian 1989; Claverie 2003). These approaches have reminded us of the importance of the social integration of religious experiences, and of the processes of 'socialization' of spiritual (or nonmaterial) entities through prophecies, visions, dreams (see Stewart 1997), gifts (Coleman 2004), etc. Paraphrasing

Matthew Engelke, the issue of ‘presence’ is, in fact, a ‘problem’ (2007: 11 and following), in terms of the dialectics between the theoretical, ideological belief in God (or *a* god that is not visible, for this argument) and the lived experience of faith. The challenge here would be to locate and reflect upon these processes of mediation. For instance, for many Christians they are expressed in the sacrificial character of Jesus Christ’s life on earth, while for Charismatics and Pentecostals they would appear in the bodily experience of the descent of the Holy Ghost.⁶ In this line of thought, the senses can play a central epistemological role in the mediation (i.e., identification, definition, interpretation) of religious experience (Meyer 2008a, 2008b).

But perhaps one of the most influential theories in contemporary anthropology regarding the role of corporeality in religious experience has been Csordas’s work on embodiment (1994) and the phenomenology of healing in religious contexts (2002), which implied an epistemological breakthrough regarding subjectivity and the relationship between psychological and bodily dimensions (overcoming the classic mind/body divide). Through an ‘existential’ approach to the concept of embodiment, overcoming the idea of the body as ‘recipient’, Csordas proposed an interpretation of how the ‘self’ is constituted as ‘sacred’ in specific contexts (namely, of Charismatic healing).⁷ Csordas, whose arguments are invoked and discussed by several contributors to this volume, encapsulates, in the concepts of ‘practice’ and ‘perception’ that support his theory of embodiment, the main stances of the body-soul interrelationship: mediation, experience, discourse. From this particular perspective, the problem of ‘suffering’ reveals itself as a striking locus for the study of these interfaces (*see e.g.*, Antze and Lambek 1996; Lambek and Antze 2003; Sarró 2009).

The different anthropological efforts we have just debated constitute rich contributions that, when put into comparison, defy or at least complexify⁸ the common-sense assumption of a body/soul dichotomized heritage – or the Western problem of monism and dualism and related ‘philosophies of personhood’ (*see* Strathern 1996: 41; Lambek 1998) – and suggest new paths for rethinking the place, agency and discursive weight of the body or bodily experience in contemporary religious experience. They also represent a challenging legacy of concepts, interpretive schemes and theoretical paradigms to those who are dealing with novel empirical contexts within contemporary religiosity. As many authors have argued, contemporary phenomena such as migration, mobility and multiculturalism have brought religion once more into the spotlight in contemporary social theory (*see* Rudolph and Piscatori 1997; Baumann 1999; Berger 1999), and demanded new efforts for their description and interpretation – shifting aims, moving targets, as Clifford Geertz put it (2005). How can we, as anthropologists, interpret, for instance, the development of an ‘individualized Christian pilgrimage’ that focuses on bodily sensations, anthroposophical conceptions of the soul and their development into spe-

cific bodily movements or “New Age” influenced spiritual responses to the ‘evil eye’ in contemporary Greece? The contributors to this volume explain how they responded to this challenge and how their findings can contribute to the cross-cultural understanding of corporeality in a religious context.

Ethnographic Accounts on Body and Soul

Having realized that little attention had been paid to the relationship between body and soul and the importance of corporeality in the study of contemporary religiosity, we organized a panel at the biennial conference of the European Association of Social Anthropologists held in Ljubljana in 2008 with the title ‘Body and Soul: On Corporeality in Contemporary Religiosity.’ We interpreted the success of the panel as the confirmation of the existence of a gap in the anthropological study of religion and decided to give continuity to this project.

In the call for papers for the conference we had emphasized our interest in ethnographically rooted texts; we believed that the contribution scholars in anthropology could give to the transdisciplinary debate about the importance of corporeality in religious contexts derived primarily from their ability to contextualize their analysis through references to fresh fieldwork data (Coakley 1997; Strathern and Lambek 1998). Interestingly enough, the papers selected that now form the chapters of this volume refer in their majority to ethnographic contexts related to Christianity and to ‘new spiritualities’ also described as ‘New Age spiritualities.’ This probably relates to the fact that in the Christian ethos the distinction/opposition of body and soul is a central issue, and alternative spiritualities overtly challenge this dichotomy and advocate for a different sort of sacralization of the body and the physical world. Other religious contexts where corporeality turned out to play an important role are those of migration and missionary action (Rickli and Knibbe in this volume). We decided to divide the contributions into three sections referring respectively to the contexts of Catholic religiosity, religious mobility and new spiritualities.⁹

Bodies and Souls in Catholic Settings

The ethnographic accounts that form the first part of this volume refer to countries where the presence of Catholicism is still very evident, namely, Spain, Chile and Italy.

The religious tourists or secular pilgrims Egan describes on their way to Santiago are those further away from Catholic orthodoxy. However, Egan observes that this pilgrimage cannot be considered as a totally secularized one and ‘the question of motivation can never completely discount religious motives.’ This first chapter explores in fact the multiple ways in

which the pilgrims ‘engage the religious en route’ and find through the physical and spiritual experience of the Camino a way to deal with the sense of dissatisfaction they feel about their lives.

The following two chapters both refer to the cult of an Italian saint and the people venerating these saints considering themselves to be ‘good Catholics’, as Giovanna Bacchiddu puts it. However, the devotional acts they developed are far from being orthodox. Bacchiddu focuses on the cult of a miraculous chalk statue of Saint Anthony of Padua on the island of Apiao in southern Chile. Offering a detailed description of the relationship Apiao islanders establish with the saint, Bacchiddu argues that the interaction between people and sacred objects can and should be considered as a social relationship (Gell 1998). Situating this kind of devotion in the context of Amerindian Christianity, Bacchiddu observes that ‘Apiao people’s experiences of religion strongly merge the physical with the spiritual, and religion cannot be separated from sociality: in fact, it can be accurately described as coinciding with sociality’.

Analysing the impressive mobilization of money and people to celebrate San Paolino in Nola, Katia Ballacchino also relates religion with sociality. Ballacchino points out that ‘on the day of the feast ... , the *body* becomes the principal space for the representation of religious belief, expression of the sense of belonging to the community and of the recognition of a cultural identity’. Here as in the other chapters of this section, we can see that the evident somatism of the devotional acts cannot be separated from the social dimension, and its meanings can be grasped only if considering the corporeal dimension on an individual but also on a collective level.

In this first section we can see how both ‘soul’ and ‘body’ are not abstract entities with a fixed, universal meaning that can be invariably applied as such to analyse different ethnographic contexts. On the contrary, body and soul are socially constructed entities; their meanings and limits are the result of a constant negotiation and can only be understood in the cultural context that generated them. As Bacchiddu points out referring to Fenella Cannell’s analysis of the anthropology of Christianity (2005, 2006), anthropology has been influenced by Christianity’s separation of body and soul, but ethnographic studies ‘easily contradict such clear-cut approaches and fresh data reveal a focus on the body as the fundamental vessel of spirituality – not as a symbolic carrier of asceticism but as the main relational expression of the otherworldly’ (Bacchiddu this volume).

Compared with the ever-present bodies described in this section, the soul emerges as a more elusive entity. Due to its invisibility and its almost ungraspable essence, rather than an entity in itself the soul often appears as a ‘bridging device’ that acts as a ‘heuristic to engage with an oblique institution but often not in traditionally received ways’ (Egan, this volume). It seems as if defining the soul would deprive it from its essence, and the Santiago pilgrims avoid giving a defined sense to the term *soul*, as do other social actors described not only in this but also in the other sections.

The chapters of this first section also show how the Catholic institutions struggle to control the way in which people manipulate their shrines, statues and pilgrimage routes.¹⁰ It is through this manipulation and appropriation process that people make these institutions, routes and statues come alive. As other scholars have shown analysing popular Marian devotion, the ethnographic examples of unorthodoxy among practicing Christians described in this section are not isolated cases (e.g., Christian 1989, 1996; Claverie 2003; Dubisch 1995); ‘lived religion’ should be distinguished from ‘organised religion’ (Ostenfeld-Rosenthal this volume, referring to McGuire 2008). It is in these ‘lived’ religious contexts that anthropologists realize that when we penetrate into the realm of enacted religion, the clear cut limits between body and soul postulated by Christianity and other religions lose their meanings.

Corporeality, Belief and Human Mobility

The three chapters of the second section provide insights about the importance of corporeality in situations where a certain religious body (in its multiple meanings) arrives to a country that is not its area of origin. This happens typically in the context of migration, such as when African Pentecostal churches envisage “bringing the gospel back to Europe” (Knibbe, this volume) or missionaries from the Dutch Protestant church explain their activities in extra-European countries (Rickli this volume). Although religion appears as being mainly a matter related to the soul, the chapters of this section reveal that in reality it is through bodily performances that religion is enacted in everyday life. In turn, in Cimpric’s article about witchcraft in the Central African Republic we learn how beliefs imported by missionaries, such as the body/soul divide and the association of witchcraft with the figure of the Devil, are imported and translated into the local economy of conceptualizations of witchcraft that are later expressed in beliefs in cannibalism and crocodile-men.

In the first chapter of this section, João Rickli focuses on the importance of corporeality in missionary initiatives. Drawing on Birgit Meyer’s concept of ‘sensational forms’ as ‘relatively fixed, authorized modes of invoking, and organizing access to the transcendental’ (2008b), Rickli argues that the Dutch Protestant liturgical performances related to mission and deaconry promote the experience of religion through the body and making the transcendental real. Rickli also described missionary activities as processes of ‘production of locality’ (Appadurai 1996: 204), allowing the Protestant churchgoers to experience through their senses the ‘religious maps’ they are confronted with and to conceive the missionary enterprise not only on an abstract but also on a very practical and physical level.

In her chapter about the Nigerian-initiated Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG), one of the largest Pentecostal churches in the world, Kim Knibbe refers to bodily changes in religious settings in the context of

migration. She points out the differences between the enthusiastic modes of attending the religious services displayed by African, mostly Nigerian members of RCCG and the 'lukewarm' attitude of 'ethnically Dutch' members. She argues that in the context of religious migration, not only bodily practices but also the habitus (Bourdieu 1977) changes. Exploring the relationship between individual religious experiences, the habitus and globalization, Knibbe elaborates the concept of 'habitus of the saved soul'. This latter allows believers to find their place in the context of a globalization process that encompasses the political, the economical as well as the religious sphere.

From the context of a African/Nigerian Christianity we are introduced, in the last chapter of this section, to a classical topic for Africanist anthropologists interested in religious phenomena, namely, the problem of witchcraft. Emphasising the advantages of "thinking through the body" (Sanders 2008: 199), Aleksandra Cimpric analyses the codependency of body and soul in the context of *talimbi* witchcraft in the Central African Republic. Following Peter Geschiere (1999: 215), she considers Central African witchcraft as a useful device to make sense of globalization processes and analyses the evils related to the work of sorcerers as a critique of capitalism and local practices of enrichment (Geschiere 1995). Cimpric also points out the difficulty of disentangling native concepts of witchcraft from later ideas and interpretations related to it deriving from Christianity.

In Cimpric, as in the other contributions to this section, it appears evident that in contexts of religious mobility, the notions of body and soul are very often interwoven and the meanings attributed to the body are of crucial importance to understand the whole religious context.

New Spiritualities Challenging the Body/Soul Divide

An important number of contributions to this volume refer to religious movements that can be described with the umbrella term of 'new spiritualities'. As we will see now, spiritualities criticize and often construct themselves in opposition to established religions and postulate the necessity of overcoming the body/soul divide.

In the opening chapter of this section, Eugenia Roussou describes the beliefs in the transmission of evil eye in Thessaloniki and in Crete and analyses the afflictions deriving from it as well as the ritual practices used to remove it. Even if the social actors she describes formally belong to the Eastern Orthodox Church, they mostly rely on non-Christian spiritual practices to deal with evil eye afflictions; especially, younger evil eye therapists are open to beliefs and techniques related to New Age spirituality. Roussou observes that the beliefs and practices related to the evil eye imply the interaction between body, soul and spirit and analyses the creative rapport of these three entities in a complex system of Orthodox and non-Orthodox negotiations with 'd/evil'.

In her analysis of spiritual healing experiences among patients with medically unexplained symptoms in Denmark, Ann Ostenfeld-Rosenthal focuses on bodily sensed spiritual experiences. Drawing upon Meredith McGuire's distinction between lived and organized religion (2008), Rosenthal argues similarly to Bacchiddu and Ballacchino that anthropologists should focus more on the religious phenomena as they are experienced and practised by social actors and not study them 'from the perspective of organized religion'. The healers and patients she describes refuse to consider themselves as 'religious' and prefer the label of 'spiritual', arguing that 'religion is spirituality contaminated by power and hierarchy'. This is a common trend in the new spiritualities (Eller 1993; Heelas et al. 2005; Fedele 2009; Knibbe forthcoming) shared also by the mediumistic healers described in this volume by Ehler Voss.¹¹

In the following chapter, Voss focuses on what he describes as 'mediumistic' healers, acting during their sessions as mediums for different entities. Voss offers an interesting critique of Thomas Csordas's concept of embodiment (1990, 1993, 1994a, 1994b) as well as an introduction to Bernhard Waldenfels's 'phenomenology of otherness' (1997, 1998, 1999, 2006). Describing mediumistic healers and patients discussing whether the energies or the meta-empirical beings they contact are situated inside or outside the Self, the author links this debate to a more general tendency of 'normalization of otherness' within Western culture as theorized by Waldenfels.

In the final chapter of this volume, Andrew Spiegel and Silke Sponheuer analyse eurythmy, a particular practice within anthroposophy, a philosophy developed by Rudolf Steiner. There is a chapter that in many ways departs from the remaining set of this volume, especially in heuristic and conceptual terms, as it is a result of an interaction between an anthropologist and a practitioner. As they explain, anthroposophy, as a modern set of beliefs and practices of non-Oriental origin and specifically idealized as a way to transcend the traditional philosophical dichotomy, had an important influence on contemporary new spiritualities and its conceptualization of spirit, body and soul as interwoven entities. Simultaneously, they describe us how eurythmists consciously engage in producing structural transformations, and the further proposition of considering Rudolf Steiner as an 'unrecognized precursor to contemporary poststructuralist analytical models'.

The practices discussed in this final section differ from the preceding ones in the extent to which they involve deliberate and calculated techniques for transcending the body/soul dichotomy. In this sense this last article of the book comes as particularly striking and innovative in terms of the debate we have proposed in this volume: what happens when the individuals that we invoke in our research engage in dialogue with our own academic conceptualizations and challenge them?

In the chapters of this last section we also find a common reference to 'energy'. In fact the reference to the existence of an all-pervading life force

is one of the key elements of religious movements related with the New Age or with Neopaganism (Pike 2001; Magliocco 2004; Fedele 2009). In the new spiritualities the fact that body, soul and spirit are held to be made of energy allows to overcome the opposition between the material and the spiritual or sacred and profane – as body and soul are taken to be made from the same substance and none can be considered as superior or more important than the other. Moreover, as Brown (1997: 48) pointed out, there is a tendency in New Age spiritualities to overemphasize those terms of classical dichotomies perceived as having been discriminated within established religions.¹²

As for the concept of the soul, there seems to be within the new spiritualities described in this volume a sort of con-fusion between spirit and soul. The evil eye, spiritual and mediumistic healers described by Roussou, Rosenthal and Voss in this section seem to have taken to its extremes the anthroposophical theories about the existence of a life force described as energy and about the interwovenness of body, spirit and soul. Whereas in the anthroposophical thinking of the eurythmists analysed by Spiegel and Sponheuer, soul and spirit appear as interrelated but distinct and distinguishable, the different kinds of healers described by Roussou, Rosenthal and Voss do not necessarily differentiate between these entities.

* * *

Through the chapters of this volume we have seen that encounters of body and soul can and do take place in different ethnographic contexts and that in order to make sense of religious experience, it is often more useful to consider these two entities as different but interwoven rather than totally separated or even opposite. The soul appears in the ethnographic contexts of this volume as a slippery concept that can only be grasped focusing on its manifestations through the body.

The different authors also emphasize the importance of lived, enacted religiosity and its difference from the official, institutionalized religion. Religion is lived and made visible through the body, and the chapters that form part of this volume illustrate the importance of ‘thinking with the body’ when analysing religious phenomena. In fact analysing the multiple meanings attributed to the body and the ways of coping with its limits in religious context allows anthropologists to do what in our opinion is one of the ultimate tasks of anthropology: grasping humanity beyond cultural and religious differences.

Notes

1. Despite using both terms of ‘body’ and ‘corporeality’, in this text we are focusing more on the latter, as it is more encompassing in terms of ‘bodily experience’.

2. Michael Lambek's pivotal reader in the anthropology of religion (Lambek 2002), for instance, does not address this as a central issue (except perhaps Boddy's contribution in the volume – see Boddy 1988).
3. This is not to say that the body was 'invisible' in the anthropological debate prior to this moment. As Talal Asad reminds us, anthropologists have always been interested in ideas of the body – ever since nineteenth-century racialism and anthropometric evolutionism (1997: 43). John Blacking's edition of *The Anthropology of the Body* (1977) was, from this point of view, seminal. We refer here to the fact that the 'body' as a modern theoretical and philosophical construct had not been given enough attention.
4. A particular development of this theory in terms of 'bodily habitus' has been Loïc Wacquant's study of a boxing apprentice's life (2004).
5. Boddy's work, along with others such as Michael Lambek (1981), also inaugurated an approach that incorporated the problem of 'therapeutics', which in turn implied explicit conceptualizations of the body (see Boddy 1994).
6. Sacrifice, or self-sacrifice (Bloch 1992; Pina-Cabral 1997; Mapril 2009) can also be understood, in this line of thought, as a process of mediation.
7. Within the same philosophical framework, other approaches have focused alternatively on the existential (Jackson 2005), subjective and reflexive (Stoller 1989) character of religious experience.
8. As Michael Lambek reminds us, even if we assume that the distinction is a Western product, this does not mean that dualism does not exist in other contexts; thus, philosophical dualism is not exclusive to Western society (Lambek 1998: 106).
9. We might wonder whether the problems with the concept of 'soul' are not necessarily related to those posed by the notion of 'belief' (Needham 1972; Coleman and Lindquist 2008; Gil, Livet and Pina-Cabral 2004). What is the cross-cultural currency of the concept of 'soul'? Such a question cannot be answered here because the chapters of this volume all actually refer to contexts where 'soul' does appear as a useful analytical category, but one that cannot be easily separated from 'body'.
10. For further examples of the reinterpretation and appropriation by non-practicing Christians of Christian sites and pilgrimage routes see Pina-Cabral (1992); Frey (1998); Badone (2008); Weibel (2005); Fedele (2009).
11. Referring to a 'culture of spirituality' Tanya Luhrmann pointed out that 'the interest in unusual sensory experience of a type called "spiritual"' is a common feature not only in the New Age or neopagan movements but also in Christian and other religious groups in the United States (2005: 140–42).
12. For this reason there is in these new spiritualities a particular emphasis on the importance and sacrality of the body (Brown 1997: 42; Fedele 2006) and of sexuality (Urban 2000; Fedele 2009).

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