

CHAPTER FOUR

THE TOPOGRAPHY OF THE SACRED

I WAS IN MY near teens when I first encountered the rites of Roman boundary stones, the *termini*, in *The Evolution of Property from Savagery to Civilization* by Paul Lafargue,¹ Karl Marx's son-in-law. A footnote there led me to Fustel de Coulanges's classic, *The Ancient City*, a book that I continue to reread regularly with admiration and pleasure. In Fustel, I found not only a more satisfactory positive theory of religion and the rituals concerning the boundary stones but also an introduction to the Roman god Terminus, a name that in youthful enthusiasm I rendered as the god "Stop!"²

Lafargue, in passing, compared the Roman boundary stones with two passages in the Hebrew Bible, Deuteronomy 19:14, "You shall not remove your neighbor's landmark, which the men of old have set," and Job 24:2, which lists as the first class of evildoers, those who "remove landmarks."³ A quick check in Strong's *Exhaustive Concordance*⁴ added three parallels, Deuteronomy 27:17, Proverbs 22:28, and 23:10.⁵

In my English class, at the time, we were reading the King James Bible in that ubiquitous and pridefully titled anthology, *The Bible Designed to Be Read As Living Literature*,⁶ and I was assigned a report on the episode of the 'Burning Bush' in Exodus 3. I used the god "Stop!" as well as the passages just enumerated, along with other passages, garnered from Strong's *Concordance*, which contained the idea of stopping (based, I confess, on English synonyms collected from dictionaries and thesauri),

to interpret the divine voice's command to Moses at the bush, "Do not come near; put off your shoes from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground" (Exodus 3:5)—most especially Isaiah 65:3–5 which spoke of people performing odd rituals in gardens and graves, consuming "swine's flesh and broth of abominable things," and saying, "Keep to yourself, do not come near me, because I am holy to you." That which was holy, it seemed to me, was a boundary, a place where one stopped. Removal of such a boundary, crossing such a boundary, was illicit or dangerous. The deity of the Burning Bush was the god "Stop!" Such a notion, I suggested, surely also lay behind such expressions as 'holy land.'

But there was more. At the same time, as well as for years afterward, my two bedside books, which I read in 'religiously' each night, were the seventh edition of Asa Gray's *New Manual of Botany*⁷ and A. S. Hitchcock's *Manual of the Grasses of the United States*, soon replaced by the second edition, revised by Agnes Chase.⁸ I was then intending to become an agrostologist and to study at Cornell Agricultural School. My interest in taxonomy (especially the varied genera of grasses) was intense. Therefore, I concluded my youthful paper on the Burning Bush by suggesting that holiness was a classificatory term designating a genus of places, people, and things before which one must stop. The classificatory nature of the distinction, sacred/profane, remains fundamental for my thinking about the topic.

When I went off to college, forsaking botany for philosophy and becoming interested in the Cornford thesis⁹ on the relations of Greek mythology to Greek philosophy (an interest that subsequently landed me, quite by accident, in religious studies), I retained some of these earlier enthusiasms. My senior thesis was on systems of order and place especially in terms of Hesiod's *Theogony*. As a graduate student in religion at Yale, my longest manuscript short of the dissertation was on the symbolism of the 'center,' with special reference to Jerusalem. From my third published article, "Earth and Gods,"¹⁰ to my later book, *To Take Place: Toward Theory in Ritual*,¹¹ I realize, in retrospect, that my careerlong preoccupation with sacred space began, years earlier, with *termini* and the god "Stop!" In the meanwhile, I had become at home in that French sociological and anthropological tradition of Coulanges, van Gennep, Hubert and Mauss, Durkheim, and Lévi-Strauss, each of whom began with an essentially spatial and classificatory understanding of the sacred and the profane.¹² Coulanges and van Gennep focused on the domestic threshold (the *limen*); Hubert, Mauss, and Durkheim on the duality of sacred/

profane with the prohibition of contact between them; Lévi-Strauss, on the notion of placement itself, "being in their place is what makes [sacred things] sacred, for if they were taken out of their place, even in thought, the entire order of the universe would be destroyed. Sacred objects therefore contribute to the maintenance of order in the universe by occupying the places allocated to them."¹³ This approach stood in suggestive contradistinction to that Germanic tradition exemplified by scholars such as Otto, Söderblom, Feigl, Splett, and Baetke, which saw the sacred (or the holy) as a positive religious force and reality.¹⁴ This deep conflict between two long-standing and influential traditions of scholarship gave rise to attempts at mediation, most famously by Eliade, to some degree influenced by Caillouis.¹⁵ The cost, however, which seemed (and seems) to me unacceptable, was a scanting of the anthropological in defense of the ontological. This is, in fact, a debate at least as old as Hume, now rephrased under the influence of various neo-Kantianisms, as to whether the sacred is best understood as an expression or an experience, as a representation or a presence. I side, with the French, in affirming the first member of these two oppositional pairs.

I would not have imposed upon you this remembrance of things past, which may seem an act of self-indulgence, were it not that the same kind of a history appears to underlie what remains for me the single most provocative treatment of our theme, that by Durkheim in *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (a title better translated as *The Elemental Forms of Religious Life*).¹⁶ This history remained hidden until 1950 when a Turkish professor of law made available the complete text of Durkheim's lecture course, "The Physics of Morals and of Rights," delivered on a number of occasions between 1890 and 1912, based on a manuscript prepared by Durkheim between 1898 and 1900.¹⁷ These *Lectures* constitute Durkheim's earliest persistent use of the distinction of sacred/profane, which is here presented as a set of spatial categories in the context of a sustained meditation on property rights. Until this publication, the only contemporary hint of such an important turn in Durkheim's thought was a cryptic note in favor of comparison in the preface to the first volume of *L'Année sociologique* (1898): "One cannot adequately describe a unique fact, or a fact of which one has only a single instance. . . . [For this reason, with reference to Coulanges,] the true character of the Roman *sacer* is very difficult to grasp and, above all to understand, if one does not see it in relation to the Polynesian *taboo*."¹⁸

The three lectures on "The Right of Property," forming part of "The Physics of Morals and of Rights" and framed as a critique of Kant, con-

tain in nuce much of the argument of *Elementary Forms*. The most dominant influence is that of Durkheim's teacher at the École Normale Supérieure, Fustel de Coulanges, to whom Durkheim dedicated the 1892 publication of his Latin dissertation, and whose work, *The Ancient City*, is the chief cited secondary source in the *Lectures* on property.

Allow me to summarize the argument of these three *Lectures*, (133–70) which comprise numbers 12–14 in the series. Durkheim begins with Roman law, characteristically shifting attention from the usual focus on individual property rights to legal provisions concerning property that cannot be appropriated by any individual: sacred things (*res sacrae* or *religiosae*) and things held in common (*res communes*). In a move that anticipates one of the central argumentative strategies of *Elementary Forms*—the claim that if a given phenomenon is not natural, then it is social, with arbitrariness serving as the mark of that which is not natural—Durkheim concludes that it is not their “natural composition” that determines which items will be held as private and which held as sacred or communal. The same sort of ‘thing’ can be classified in either category (137–39). Nor is the distinction to be made on pragmatic grounds (139–42). This latter point is sharper in *Elementary Forms*, which views pragmatic understandings as characteristic of native interpretations which must always be set aside. In the *Lectures*, the characteristic of both individual and communal or sacred things is that their possession must be “exclusive” (142).

It is this characteristic of absolute separation that allows Durkheim to make a comparison with religion. For “the world over . . . the feature that distinguishes the sacred entities is that they are withdrawn from general circulation; they are separate and set apart.” Durkheim illustrates this by describing Polynesian taboos.

Taboo is the setting apart of an object as something consecrated. . . . By virtue of this setting apart, it is forbidden to appropriate the object of taboo under pain of sacrilege, or even to touch it. Those alone can have access to it who are taboo themselves or in the same degree as the objects. . . . There are only degrees of difference between the taboo of the Polynesians and the *sacer* of the Romans. We can see how close the connection is between this concept and that of ownership. Around the thing appropriated, as around the sacred thing, a vacuum formed. All individuals had to keep at a distance, as it were, except those who had the required qualifications to approach it and make use of it (143).¹⁹

Furthermore, in addition to property being exclusive, in the sense of being withdrawn from circulation, its second characteristic is that it may be transmitted. While the usual focus is on inheritance or transfer through sale, Durkheim shifts our attention to the provisions, again in Roman law, concerning rights of accession (*accessio*), namely, the right to all which one's property produces and the right to that which is united to it either naturally or artificially (148–49). While Durkheim does not entertain the intricacies of the law, a few examples from the six modes of accession distinguished in the Latin codes help clarify the point. “First, that which assigns to the owner . . . its products such as the fruit of trees, the young of animals. . . . Fourth, that which gives the owner . . . what is added to it by way of adorning or completing it.”²⁰ On the latter, a contemporary American law dictionary provides the example, “if a tailor should use the cloth of B. in repairing A.’s coat, all would belong to A.”²¹ Durkheim compares this legal concept of the accession of property with the contagiousness of the sacred, which sacralizes anything it comes into contact with (147–49).

Having established the general parallelism between the concept of sacred and the concept of property, using materials from classical antiquity and Oceania, Durkheim now turns to Coulanges and the latter’s further Greek and Roman examples, including my old friends, the *termini*. Coulanges describes a checkerboard-patterned landscape in which each field or holding was surrounded by a narrow belt of uncultivated land which was sacred, the property of the gods which could not be profaned, that is to say, which could not be privately acquired. This sacrality was regularly renewed and reinforced through sacrifices and rituals re-marking the *termini*, the boundaries that insulate the sacred ground (read, collective) from the family’s individual plot (read, profane). Durkheim argues that there is no intrinsic difference between the two loci. They have been arbitrarily separated (150–58).

The fact that the structure of property and the structure of sacrality are parallel leads Durkheim to invoke a procedural ‘scientific’ rule often appealed to in *Elementary Forms*, “since the effects are identical, they can in all likelihood be attributed to similar causes” (144).

Let me pause here to take up this language of causation. Durkheim’s positivism often leads to the suggestion that, for him as for common-sense usage, explanation is primarily the identification of causes. But his analytic procedures belie this claim. His favorite appeal is to concomitant variation, a parallelism that invites causal speculation but neither requires nor establishes it.²² It would be better to take up a more linguistic view that insists that explanation is, at heart, an act of translation, of

redescription. A procedure where the unknown is reduced to the known by holding that a second-order conceptual language appropriate to one domain (the known, the familiar) may, with relative adequacy, translate the language appropriate to another domain (the unknown, the unfamiliar). The cognitive advantage of such a proposal from language is that translation is, by its very nature, corrigible. Whether of a conceptual or natural language, whether intercultural or intracultural, translation can never be fully adequate, it can never be complete. There is always discrepancy. Central to any proposal of translation are questions of appropriateness and 'fit.' These are questions that must be addressed through the double methodological requirement of comparison and criticism. Furthermore, the cognitive power of any translation, model, generalization, or redescription (as, for example, in the imagination of 'sacred/profane') is, by this view, a result of its difference from the subject matter in question and not its congruence. (As an aside, this is the way in which I would rewrite Wayne Proudfoot's now-classic distinction between "descriptive" and "explanatory reduction.")²³ A second advantage to an understanding of explanation as an affair of language is that it is, thereby, in Durkheim's term, a "relentlessly social" activity, a matter of public meaning rather than individual significance. Focusing on translation at the level of second-order conceptual language requires that the public be the academic community and entails specifying the relations between, in our case, the study of "religion" and other disciplines' theoretical objects of study. This is a matter of locating oneself with respect to one's conversation partners, those with whom one will work out appropriate translation languages.

Perhaps the strongest example of this process in the study of religion is Durkheim's translation in *Elementary Forms* of the language appropriate to religion (for him, in this work, functioning as the unknown) into the language appropriate to society (for him, the known). The point at which one might differ from Durkheim's goal is with respect to his acceptance of explanatory simplicity. Better, here, is Lévi-Strauss's formulation: "scientific explanation consists not in a movement from the complex to the simple but in the substitution of a more intelligible complexity for another which is less."²⁴

While the adequacy of any translation proposal may be debated, the only grounds for rejecting such a procedure *tout court* is to attack the possibility of translation itself, most often attempted through appeals to incommensurability.²⁵ Such appeals, if accepted, must entail the conclusion that the enterprise of the human sciences is, strictly speaking, impossible.

In the *Lectures*, as in *Elementary Forms*, Durkheim's explanation is

relentlessly social. The gods whose property is marked off as sacred are to be translated as society projected in material form. (Durkheim, here, does not use the more adequate language of "collective representation.") Such projections are to the social order what perception is in the individual order. Both distort, but both can be interpreted and corrected by the scholar who knows how to "get through to the realities and to discover beneath the myths" the reality they "express" (158–59). The sacred is power that is in common; the profane is that which is individual (here expressed as private property). The eventual prioritizing of private property in western juridical discourse is the result, Durkheim suggests, of historical processes that eventuated in both social division and the supersession of landed property by personal or movable property (163–66). In a remarkable utterance that gives comfort to those of us who would see sacralty in terms of a socially spatial, topographical model, Durkheim insists that it is "only landed property that had the sacred character" (166).

There are only three aspects of the sacred in *Elementary Forms* that are not anticipated by the *Lectures*. The first is the lack of Durkheim's later linguistic analogy to sacralty, which I celebrate in *To Take Place*.²⁶ While I regret this absence, I do not mourn the lack of the second and third aspect of sacralty featured in *Elementary Forms*. This second aspect is Durkheim's positivistic assertion that the collective and, therefore, impersonal, social force that serves as his translation of the sacred is analogous to natural force as described by contemporary physics. This notion is encapsulated in his appeal to the Oceanic notion of *mana*—a notion I have discussed elsewhere that need not detain us here.²⁷ The third is his claim, toward the conclusion of *Elementary Forms*, that the sacred is ambiguous or ambivalent. This proposal has had a long and complex history and serves as the point of origin of both Mary Douglas's critique and positive proposals in her instant classic, *Purity and Danger*.²⁸ The ambiguity of the sacred has largely been argued in terms of two bodies of data, the Priestly tradition in the Hebrew Bible and the obscure Roman legal regulations surrounding "the sacred man" (*homo sacer*), recently the subject of an important monograph by Giorgio Agamben.²⁹

I would argue that the alleged ambiguity in these cases is the result of the fusing, both in native and in academic discourse, of three systems (two cultic, one juridical) that need to be held distinct, at least in thought. First, the sacred and the profane (or, the holy and the common), which are binary, spatial, classificatory categories that must be kept apart. (You may picture them, if you like, as two separate circles.) Second, the distinction between the clean and the unclean, a set of hierarchical relative categories, which focus on the integrity of an individual container. (You

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may picture the clean as a balloon and the unclean as the result of a balloon bursting.) Third, the behavioral distinction between the permitted and the forbidden, including, in some systems, prohibitions against mixture, a set of interdictions often justified by reference to cosmogonic models. (You may picture this sort of instance of a category of the forbidden as that space resulting from two overlapping circles, Venn-diagram-like.) The three systems are homologous in important respects, but they are neither identical, nor are they interchangeable. In my own work, especially in *To Take Place*, I have tended to think of the sacred/profane distinction as essentially a royal one, the clean/unclean distinction as a cultic one, and the permitted/forbidden as a legal one. Given the reciprocal relations between king/priest, palace/temple, and law/cult it is not, then, surprising that the three systems coexist in texts that are the product of these relations.³⁰

Allow me to illustrate aspects of Durkheim's mature understanding of the sacred with a contemporary American example. The Vietnam War Memorial in Washington, D.C., is one of three prime sites of present-day pilgrimage—along with Graceland and the Wisconsin farm that is home to a white bison. The memorial is preeminently sacred in Durkheim's sense of the term. That is to say, it may not be profaned. To see spray-painted graffiti, posters, or stickers on it would be felt a sacrilege.³¹ Yet, it is only an expanse of black, polished stone. Like Durkheim's privileged example of the Australian *tjuringa*, which gives rise to his linguistic analogy, its "super-added" sacrality is signaled by arbitrary marks. (In the case of the memorial, by 58,132 proper names). Recalling Durkheim's prioritizing of nonrepresentational markings—a demonstration of their social rather than natural nature—there is, as well, a second memorial, erected as a result of political pressure, a realistic bronze statue of three "grunts." A few moments of observation at the site will be sufficient to convince you that, unlike the stone, the statue does not function as sacred.

The memorial was constructed at an arbitrary place, wherever there happened to be room in the park system. There is nothing natural about its location. There are no entombed bodies, such as at Arlington National Cemetery. It marks no site of historical significance, such as the memorial at Pearl Harbor, which eerily includes the remains of the actual actors (the ships and the sailors). There is, in my sort of language, no static, no noise. There is nothing to interfere with the Vietnam War Memorial's pure social representation. (Recall Durkheim's rejection of the theory by some natives and some anthropologists that the *tjuringas* are sacred because they embody either the souls or the bodies of the ancestors.)³²

Visitors to the memorial form what Durkheim would term a "moral

community," exhibiting high affectivity. Standing before the memorial, it is irrelevant whether one was once for or against the war. Divisiveness is overcome—at least for the moment. Hence, it is a community that requires periodic renewal.

At the memorial, Vietnam veterans are present in uniform. Like Durkheim's clan, this is a kinship socially created by insignia, not by natural processes of biological descent. One group of veterans stands in perpetual watch. Other veterans return to the memorial periodically to reestablish their solidarity with their brothers and sisters in arms, an extended community encompassing both the living and the dead in a web of reciprocal obligations. The latter characteristic defines, for Durkheim, a moral community.³³

Behaviorally, there is a set of special relations between some of those who are at the wall and the memorial. In Durkheim's *Lectures*, these fit into the category of "qualified persons." In the more interesting characterization in *Elementary Forms*, they are participating in ritual which entails the notion of a "veritable sacrilege,"³⁴ that is to say, a rule-governed, socially sanctioned profanation. This subset of visitors (relatives, comrades, friends) touch the wall, especially the segments with which they feel associated. They often trace a name, which, while only an arbitrary mark, results in a deeply meaningful and highly emotional experience (one which Durkheim might label 'comm-union'). This subset, along with other visitors, often brings gifts (i.e., offerings), which are placed at the base of or against the wall. Some four thousand objects are left annually, each one of which is removed, nightly, by the Park Service and carefully preserved in climate controlled government warehouses in Lanham, Maryland. Having touched the wall, these gifts acquire sacrality by contagion. Furthermore, these gifts themselves are signs of that reciprocity that, for Durkheim, characterizes a moral community and are, therefore, "eminently social" representations. One set consists of letters, photographs, and household objects which assert the continuing community of the living and the dead. Another set consists of flags, military insignia and medals, parts of uniforms, cans of K-rations—each of which expresses, metonymically, the socially created kinship of military service; each of which is an emblem that maintains and renews solidarity.³⁵

Sacred is not only a representation in the Durkheimian sense, it is also a word. We have been recently assisted in understanding its usage in the French anthropological tradition I have just reviewed by the semasiological studies of Despland and Bourgeaud on the terminological opposition sacred/profane in French literature prior to Durkheim.³⁶ Then, too, there is the long scholarly tradition within both classical and Indo-

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European studies of tracing the complex history of ancient usages, ranging from Benveniste to Palom ,³⁷ brilliantly summarized by Huguette Fugier in his monograph on the use of 'sacred' in Latin, the linguistic and religious system that most clearly distinguishes between the sacred and profane.³⁸

English has been deeply influenced by Latin as a Christian ecclesiastical vocabulary and, by derivation, through Anglo-Norman French. It has been further enriched, at least since Middle English, by its Germanic heritage, which introduced a different, although parallel, terminology, for example, 'holy' for 'sacred' (*heilig*; cf. Middle English *holy* as well as *sacrid*); 'offering' for 'sacrifice' (*das Opfer*; cf. Middle English *offryng* as well as *sacrifise*). Staying only with the Latinate constructions, the essential elements of the Roman systematics are replicated in English.³⁹ 'Sacred' (Latin, *sacer*), functioning as an adjective, indicates what is set apart as wholly consecrated to the gods. Parenthetically, I know of no English dictionary that has recorded the substantive 'the Sacred,' so common in our field, a modern import from the French anthropological tradition and that was popularized by Eliade, although some dictionaries do note the archaic, usually plural, noun 'sacreds' denoting ritual objects. Continuing with the Latin system as exhibited in English, the 'sacerdote' (*sacerdos*; cf. Anglo-Saxon *s cerd*), literally 'the presenter of sacred gifts,' that is to say, a 'priest'—a word more common in English in its adjectival form, 'sacerdotal'—denotes the specialist in communication between the sacred and the profane through ritual, especially the 'sacrifice' (*sacrificium*) which, as Hubert and Mauss powerfully argued, effects this communication by transferring the offering from the profane to the divine realm through the agency of death which separates it from the mundane, thereby 'making it sacred' (the literal meaning of 'sacrifice,' in Latin, *sacer + facere*). 'Sanctified' (*sanctus*) focuses on the separative, inviolable, and prohibitive aspects of sacrality, at times expressed in legal formulations, a meaning carried over in the word 'sanction' and the pleonasm 'sacrosanct.' If portable, sanctified objects were protected in a special place, a 'sacrary' (*sacrarium*).

Of greater interest to me is a set of archaic, English, usually transitive, verbal forms (built on the Latin verb *sacr re*, 'to make sacred'), such as in the Middle English *Merlin Romance* (III.502): "In the whiche he sacrefied first his blissid body and his flessch . . . that he sacred with his owene hande." The verbal forms are often paired with verbal nouns denoting the object resulting from the action. These usages are now listed as obsolete, the result of a process of semantic depletion, with its only survivor being the modern English 'consecrate' (*com-* or *con-* serves, here, as an intensi-

fyng prefix).⁴⁰ This archaic set includes the verb 'sacrate' with its noun, 'sacration'; the verb 'sacre,' with both its nominal and adjectival homophonic forms, 'sacre;' and the verb 'sacring.' These archaic forms reinforce the overall perspective of the Durkheimian tradition: 'sacred' is a product of human agency, this or that is made or designated 'sacred.' 'Sacred' is not the human response to a transcendental act of self-display.

In service of this conclusion, I offer, as a final and cautionary tale, an anecdote from the Africanist anthropologist, Colin M. Turnbull. The text addresses the sin of overseriousness, my version of the shrewdly perceptive Roman Catholic moral flaw of overscrupulousness, and exhibits both conscious and unconscious humor. Turnbull's work, *The Forest People: A Study of the Pygmies of the Congo*, focuses on the Mbiti. Turnbull describes their relations to their surrounding forest, which they view as a providing and protecting deity. He goes on to write of their most sacred object, an instrument called the *molimo*, which they understand to be "the voice of the forest." I pick up Turnbull's narrative as a group of males, accompanied by Turnbull, enter the forest in silence in order to "fetch" the *molimo*. One group of five breaks off and disappears from sight.

Just as I was about to ask where the others had gone they returned, announcing their presence with low whistles. . . . They were in two pairs, each pair carrying between them, over their shoulders, a long, slender object. . . . They came on toward us. Madyadya was carrying the rear end of what proved to be a huge tube of some kind: fifteen feet long. He gestured proudly and said, 'See this is our *molimo*!' Then he turned and putting his mouth to the end of the trumpet, which it was, he blew a long, raucous raspberry. Everyone doubled up with laughter, the first sound they had made since leaving camp. I was slightly put out by this sacrilege and was about to blame it rather pompously on irreligious youth, when I saw something that upset me even more. I do not know exactly what I had expected, but I knew a little about *molimo* trumpets and that they were sometimes made out of bamboo. I suppose I had expected an object elaborately carved, decorated with patterns full of ritual significance and symbolism, something sacred, to be revered, the very sight or touch of which might be thought of as dangerous. . . . But now I saw that the instrument which produced such a surprisingly rude sound . . . was not made of bamboo or wood, and it certainly was not carved or decorated in any way. It was a length of metal drainpipe, neatly threaded at each end, though some-

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what bent in the middle. The second trumpet was just the same, shining and sanitary, but only half the length. . . . I asked, keeping my voice low, how it was that for the molimo, which was so sacred to them, they should use water piping stolen from roadside construction gangs, instead of using traditional materials. Evidently now that they had the trumpets in their possession there was no longer any need for silence, for they answered calmly and loudly with a counter-question. 'What does it matter what the molimo is made of? This one makes a great sound, and, besides, it does not rot like wood. . . .' Ausu, to prove how well it sounded, took the end of the longer pipe . . . and all of a sudden the forest was filled with the sound of trumpeting elephants. The others clapped their hands with pleasure and said, 'You see? Doesn't it sound well?' My conservative feelings were still wounded however, and it gave me some pleasure to see the difficulty the Pygmies had on the way back, carrying a fifteen-foot length of drainpipe through the forest."

In this essay, I have sided with the theoretical sophistication of the Mbiti with respect to the sacred—"What does it matter what the molimo is made of?"—over against Turnbull, who plays the role of the 'superstitious,' 'primitive' European who has apparently read too many books in the religious studies field and thinks of sacrality as something inherent, as something fraught with ambivalent danger. Besides, given his glee at the pygmies' discomfiture in threading the lengthy drainpipe through the thick density of trees, Turnbull exhibits a most unpleasant sense of retribution.

Notes

1. P. Lafargue, *La Propriété: Origine et évolution* (Paris, 1895). I cite the English translation, *The Evolution of Property from Savagery to Civilization* (Chicago, 1910), esp. 50–74. This material is not found in the better-known treatment by F. Engels, *Ursprung der Familie, des Privateigentums und des Staat* (Stuttgart, 1884); English translation, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (London, 1986).

2. N. Fustel de Coulanges, *La Cité antique* (Paris, 1864). I cite the English translation, *The Ancient City: A Study of the Religion, Laws and Institutions of Greece and Rome* (Boston, 1896), esp. 76–92.

3. Lafargue, *Evolution of Property*, 58–59.

4. J. Strong, *The Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* (New York and Nashville, 1890), s.v. "landmark."

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5. "Landmark/landmarks" (*g^ébûl/g^ébûlâ*) in these passages refers to boundary stone(s), the moving of which constitutes land theft. It is not a matter of moving historical markers!

6. E. S. Bates, ed., *The Bible Designed to Be Read As Living Literature* (New York, 1936).

7. A. Gray, *New Manual of Botany: Handbook of the Flowering Plants of the Central and Northeastern United States and Adjacent Canada*, ed. B. J. Robinson and M. L. Fernald, 7th ed. (New York, 1908).

8. A. S. Hitchcock, *Manual of the Grasses of the United States* (Washington, D.C., 1935); 2nd ed., ed. A. Chase (Washington, D.C., 1951), in the series *United States Department of Agriculture, Miscellaneous Publications*, 200.

9. See, especially, F. Cornford, *From Religion to Philosophy* (London, 1912; reprint, New York, 1957); and Cornford, *The Unwritten Philosophy: The Origins of Greek Philosophical Thought* (Cambridge, 1952).

10. J. Z. Smith, "Earth and Gods," *Journal of Religion* 49 (1969): 103-27, reprinted in Smith, *Map Is Not Territory: Studies in the History of Religions, Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity*, 23 (Leiden, 1978), 104-28.

11. J. Z. Smith, *To Take Place: Toward Theory in Ritual*, *Chicago Studies in the History of Judaism* (Chicago, 1987).

12. Fustel de Coulanges, *Ancient City*; A. van Gennep, *Les Rites de passage* (Paris, 1909), English translation, *The Rites of Passage* (London, 1960); H. Hubert and M. Mauss, "Essai sur la nature et la fonction du sacrifice," *L'Année sociologique* 2 (1899): 29-138, English translation, *Sacrifice: Its Nature and Function* (London, 1964); E. Durkheim, *Les Formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse: Le système totémique en Australie* (Paris, 1912), English translation, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (New York, 1995); C. Lévi-Strauss, *La Pensée sauvage* (Paris, 1952), English translation, *The Savage Mind* (London and Chicago, 1966).

13. Lévi-Strauss, *Pensée sauvage*, 17, *Savage Mind*, 10. See, however, my correction to this passage in Smith, *To Take Place*, 121-22, n. 2.

14. R. Otto, *Das Heilige: Über das Irrationelle in der Idee des Göttlichen und sein Verhältnis zum Rationalen* (Breslau, 1917), English translation, *The Idea of the Holy: An Inquiry into the Non-Rational Factor in the Idea of the Divine and Its Relations to the Rational* (Oxford, 1924); N. Söderblom, "Holiness (General and Primitive)," in the *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, ed. J. Hastings (Edinburgh and New York, 1913), 6: 731-41; F. K. Feigl, "Das Heilige:" *Kritische Abhandlung über Rudolf Ottos gleichnamiges Buch*, 2d ed. (Tübingen, 1947), see the excerpt in C. Colpe, *Die Diskussion um das "Heilige," Wege der Forschung*, 305 (Darmstadt, 1977): 380-405; J. Splett, *Die Rede vom Heiligen: Über ein religionsphilosophisches Grundwort* (Freiburg and Munich, 1971); W. Baetke, *Das Heilige im Germanischen* (Tübingen, 1942), excerpt in Colpe, *Diskussion*, 337-79.

15. M. Eliade, *Das Heilige und das Profane* (Hamburg, 1957), English trans-

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lation, *The Sacred and the Profane* (New York, 1959); R. Caillois, *L'Homme et le sacré* (Paris, 1939), 3d ed. (Paris, 1963), English translation, *Man and the Sacred* (Glencoe, 1959). See further the useful summaries in H. Bouillard, "Le catégorique du sacré dans la science des religions," in *Le Sacré: Études et recherches*, ed. E. Castelli, 33–56 (Paris, 1974); C. Colpe, "[The] Sacred and the Profane," *Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. M. Eliade (New York, 1987), 12: 511–26; V. Anttonen, "Sacred," in *Guide to the Study of Religion*, ed. W. Braun and R. T. McCutcheon, 271–82 (London, 2000).

16. Durkheim, *Elementary Forms*, see above, n. 12.

17. E. Durkheim, *Leçons de sociologie: Physique des moeurs et du droit*, ed. H. N. Kuball, Publications de l'Université d'Istanbul, Faculté de Droit, III (Istanbul, 1950), with a simultaneous publication in France (Paris, 1950). I cite the English translation as *Lectures from Durkheim, Professional Ethics and Civic Morals* (London, 1957; reprint, London and New York, 1992), in parentheses in the text.

18. E. Durkheim, "Préface," *L'Année sociologique* 1 (1898): i–vii, English translation, K. H. Wolff, ed., *Emile Durkheim, 1858–1917* (1960; reprint, New York, 1964), 341–47.

19. Durkheim cites (144) as his source for Polynesian taboos, "Wurtz, VI." This is a miscitation. The reference should be to T. Waitz, *Anthropologie der Naturvölker*, ed. G. Garland (Leipzig, 1859–72), vols. 1–6.

20. Cited in W. E. Baldwin, ed., *Bouvier's Law Dictionary*, 2d ed. (New York, 1928), s.v. "accessio."

21. *Ibid.*, s.v. "accession."

22. J. S. Mill, *A System of Logic*, 10th ed. (London, 1879), 1: 460–71.

23. W. Proudfoot, *Religious Experience* (New York, 1985), esp. 194–97.

24. Lévi-Strauss, *Pensée sauvage*, 328; compare the different translation of this sentence in *Savage Mind*, 248.

25. The issues of translation and incommensurability find their base in the fundamental work by W. Quine, *Word and Object* (Cambridge, Mass., 1960); see further, R. Feleppa, *Convention, Translation, and Understanding: Philosophical Problems in the Comparative Study of Culture*, State University of New York Series in Logic and Language (Albany, 1988). In thinking about this subject, I have been much helped by two quite different discussions, T. S. Kuhn, "Commensurability, Comparability, Communicability," in *Proceedings of the 1982 Biennial Meeting of the Philosophy of Science Association*, ed. P. D. Asquith and Th. Nickles, 2: 669–88 (East Lansing, 1983), reprinted in Kuhn, *The Road since Structure: Philosophical Essays, 1970–1993*, ed. J. Conant and J. Haugeland (Chicago, 2000), 33–57; and T. May, "From Linguistic Difference to Linguistic Holism: Jacques Derrida," in May, *Reconsidering Difference* (University Park, 1997), 77–128.

26. Smith, *To Take Place*: 105–8.

27. See J. Z. Smith, "Manna, Mana Everywhere and /-/-," (2002), reprinted in this volume.
28. M. Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (New York, 1966).
29. G. Agamben, *Homo sacer: Il potere sovrano e la nuda vita* (Florence, 1995), English translation, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford, 1998), esp. 71–86.
30. Smith, *To Take Place*, 54–56 et passim.
31. I am indebted to Professor Ed Linenthal, University of Wisconsin, Oshkosh, for pointing out, in an oral communication, that such profanation has, in fact, occurred.
32. Durkheim, *Elementary Forms*, 122 and n. 125 et passim. Compare Lévi-Strauss, *Pensée sauvage*, 316–19; *Savage Mind*, 238–41 which rejects Durkheim at this point.
33. Durkheim's term for such a moral community, if religious, is *l'Église*, "Church" (*Elementary Forms*, 41–43). The English connotations of this word has caused some confusion. The French, *l'Église*, derived from the Greek *ekklesia*, carries the social sense of an assembly, as that which is 'called together.'
34. Durkheim, *Elementary Forms*, 342, cf. 38.
35. My general understanding of the memorial has been informed by William Lloyd Warner's classic work in the Durkheimian tradition, *The Living and the Dead: A Study of the Symbolic Life of Americans*, Yankee City, 5 (New Haven, 1959; reprint, Westport, Conn., 1975).
36. M. Despland, "The Sacred: The French Evidence," *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion* 3 (1991): 41–45; P. Borgeaud, "Le Couple sacré/profane: Gènes et fortune d'un concept 'opératoire' en l'histoire des religions," *Revue de l'histoire des religions* 114 (1994): 211–14. See also Boullard, "Le categorie du sacré," 33–38.
37. E. Benveniste, *Le Vocabulaire des institutions indo-européennes* (Paris, 1969), 2: 196–207, English translation, *Indo-European Language and Society* (Coral Gables, 1973), 445–69; [E. C. Palomé], "Indo-European Religion," in J. Z. Smith, ed., *The HarperCollins Dictionary of Religion* (San Francisco, 1995), esp. 488.
38. H. Fugier, *Recherches sur l'expression du sacré dans la langue latine*, Publications de la Faculté des Lettres de l'Université de Strasbourg, 146 (Paris, 1963). See also the summary in Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 79–80.
39. In the following lexical summary, I have drawn on the following standard works: A. Blaise and H. Chirat, *Dictionnaire latin-français des auteurs chrétiens* (Strasbourg, 1954); A. Ernout and A. Meillet, *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue latine*, 4th ed. (Paris, 1959); J. R. Clark Hall, *A Concise Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, 4th ed., Medieval Academy Reprints for Teaching, 14 (Cambridge, 1960; reprint,

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Toronto, 1984); A. L. Mayhew and W. W. Skeat, *A Concise Dictionary of Middle English from A.D. 1150 to 1580* (Oxford, 1887); J. A. H. Murray, ed., *The Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford, 1882-1928), vols. 1-12; J. P. Pickett, ed., *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, 4th ed. (Boston, 2000); J. Pokorny, *Indogermanisches etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 3d ed. (Tübingen, 1994); M. Proffitt, ed., *Oxford English Dictionary Addition Series* (Oxford, 1997), vol. 3; A. Souter, *A Glossary of Later Latin to 600 A.D.* (Oxford, 1949; reprint, 1996); A. Walde and J. B. Hofmann, eds., *Lateinisches etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 4th ed. (Heidelberg, 1965), vols. 1-3; W. D. Whitney, *The Century Dictionary and Cyclopedia* (New York, 1899-1910), vols. 1-10.

40. Alas, the modern verb and verbal noun pair 'sacralize' and 'sacralization,' which occurs from time to time in the writings of contemporary students of religion (including mine) carries, in dictionaries, only the medical sense of an operation that fuses the last lumbar vertebra with the sacrum.

41. C. Turnbull, *The Forest People: A Study of the Pygmies of the Congo* (New York, 1962), 74-79.