East is East, Except When It's West

The Easternization Thesis and the Western Habitus

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Abstract

An exercise in hermeneutical suspicion, this article engages the extent to which the burgeoning appearance of ostensibly Eastern concepts and practices within everyday late-modern discourse and practice can actually be said to represent a thoroughgoing "Easternization" of Western culture. Using insights from Pierre Bourdieu, this article argues that Eastern themes have been appropriated by successive generations in the West relative to a range of hermeneutical dynamics, most relevant of which are *technologized* conceptualizations of the self, a *depersonalized* view of the cosmos, and the *metaphorization* of the modern cultural field. Holding that appropriated Eastern concepts and practices have been tailored to the contours of the Western habitus, the article concludes that what we have is more of a westernization of eastern themes than an Easternization of the western paradigm. The hermeneutics of suspicion detailed in the article thereby raises doubts concerning the extent to which purportedly eastern-looking "counter cultural" movements such as theosophy, the new age, and contemporary mysticisms/spiritualities actually run "counter" to the Western culture they purport to reject.

Introduction

[1] What follows is an exercise in hermeneutical suspicion. Arising from a sustained academic engagement with the religious field in Europe and South America, this suspicion concerns the extent to which the burgeoning appearance of ostensibly Eastern concepts and practices within everyday late-modern discourse and practice can actually be said to represent a thoroughgoing "Easternization" of the Western mindset. That modern Western society has undergone something of an "Easternization" in its discursive, practical, and aesthetic spheres of existence is, perhaps, now too commonplace an observation to warrant labored assertion. From therapy (e.g., acupuncture and Reiki) to home design (e.g., feng shui), fashion iconography (e.g., yin-yang) to personal belief (e.g., reincarnation and karma), and organized religion (e.g., Krishna Consciousness and Zen Buddhism) to leisure (e.g., meditation, t'ai chi, and yoga), the West has increasingly come under the sway of concepts, practices, and tastes of a distinctly Eastern provenance. Such has been the extent and rate of the West's growing penchant for things Eastern, Campbell maintains, "that the traditional Western cultural paradigm no longer dominates in so-called 'Western' societies, but . . . has been replaced by an 'Eastern' one" (1999: 41-42). Speaking particularly of the religious field, Campbell's "Easternization thesis" asserts

> the abandonment of the traditional Western conception of the divine as transcendent and personal and its replacement by a view of the divine as immanent and essentially impersonal . . . In addition, the Eastern concept of spiritual perfection or self-deification replaces the Western idea of salvation (1999: 41-42).

I hold Campbell's "Easternization thesis" as correct to the extent that these developments in Western paradigm have indeed taken place. Campbell is, however, mistaken in holding that this

process is both a "recent" one and one in which "the Western paradigm has lost out to the Eastern" (1999: 44; 1997: 5-22).

[2] That the appropriation of Eastern themes by the West is not as recent as Campbell believes and that it has been undertaken relative to preoccupations and aspirations of a distinctly Western bent are points already well made in the exhaustive studies of Hanegraaff and Hammer. As part of their wider treatments, each is concerned with tracing the roots of current new age discourses back to the establishment of modern European esoteric and theosophical traditions. A pivotal part of the shaping of what were subsequently to become new age narratives, they argue, was the nineteenth century appropriation of Eastern themes, practices, and syntax by the likes of Blavatsky, Steiner, and Gurdjieff (Hammer: 62-63); figures whose esoteric, theosophical, and anthroposophical legacies continue as integral components of contemporary new age paradigms (Heelas: 44-48). Such appropriation, however, was neither wholesale nor uncritical, but comprised a self-conscious and selective remodeling of Eastern themes along lines determined by existing esoteric/theosophical preoccupations (Hanegraaff: 471-72). Referring to late-twentieth century appropriations as part of his own critique of the "Easternization thesis," Hamilton likewise notes that in

> many instances the form in which Eastern religions have influenced the West is . . . significantly modified to suit Western circumstances or in accordance with the specific interests or prejudices of Western scholars (247).[1]

[3] Although Hanegraaff, Hammer, and Hamilton do well to note the qualified appropriation of eastern themes by late-nineteenth and twentieth century esoteric and new age movements respectively, they do not identify the hermeneutical dynamics that have informed this process of selective appropriation. In addition to identifying the most informative of these hermeneutical dynamics, the following will argue that these dynamics serve as the "spectacles"/ "gaze" (Bourdieu 1993: 23) of an already established Western "habitus" by and through which Eastern themes are identified and appropriated in such a way as to render them "complicit" (Bourdieu 1992: 128) with the prevailing characteristics of emergent and late-modern worldviews. In making reference to an established Western habitus, it should be noted that "habitus" is here extrapolated from Bourdieu's understanding of the term as

> a system of lasting and transposable dispositions which, integrating past experiences, functions at every moment as a matrix of perceptions, appreciations and actions (Bourdieu and Wacquant: 18).

[4] Aware of Bourdieu's strictures against treating habitus as "some kind of a-historical essence" (1993:87), I nevertheless use the term in a generalized way that applies to the multiple fields of force that have combined (in space and through time) to constitute the modern Western worldview. Reference to the modern Western habitus thereby signifies a collective and perduring "socialized subjectivity" (Bourdieu and Wacquant: 126) by and through which successive generations have come to relate to and be related by the world around and within them (Bourdieu 1998: 6-8). In stretching (both temporally and spatially) Bourdieu's concept of habitus in this way, a certain amount of symbolic violence is inevitably wrought against it. Talk of a "Western habitus," it might be objected, risks falling prey to a homogenizing reification that fails to account for the actual heterogeneity of

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[1] Principally orientated to internal debates within the academic field of religious studies, Hamilton's fourfold critique of the "Easternization thesis" concerns its "stereotypical characterization of Eastern religions," its insensitivity "to the many and marked differences between Eastern religions," its uncritical acceptance of "these developments as unequivocally *religious*," and its inability "to deal with the very inner-worldly character of trends within Western thinking" (246).

the socio-cultural terrain under discussion. By extension, the objection may run, the very Easternization thesis itself, in framing its analysis as an "East meets West" scenario, toys dangerously with this risk in so far as it talks of East and West as if they were undifferentiated cultural entities rather than the mosaic heterogeneities we know them to be. Of course, objections such as this are valid in as far as the risk that is run is a real one. Having acknowledged this risk, however, I think it is one worth taking on two grounds. First, while accepting without qualification the significant differentiation that terms such as "East" and "West" may serve to mask, there are, I believe, a number of identifiable characteristics ("family resemblances," Wittgenstein would say) that combine to configure Eastern and Western worldviews respectively. In this instance, then, "East" and "West" stand as polythetic ideal types, each constituted by its own variegated set of hermeneutical predilections, socio-cultural concerns, and religio-moral perspectives, the individual components of which may or may not be shared with other ideal types of this nature. Second, and allowing for the damage done to the particularities of difference, I hold the concepts used here and the manner of their framing to be suggestive of extensive (spatially and temporally) hermeneutical dynamics, the identification and critical analysis of which might otherwise be missed were it not for their employment as heuristic categories.

[5] Allowing for the above, the following argues that Eastern themes have been identified and appropriated by successive generations in the West not because they have offered much by way of novelty or challenge, but rather because they have been and are "recognized" as comprising elements already in correspondence with the "cultural competence" of the modern Western "aesthetic" (Bourdieu 1984: 2). It is on the grounds of this aesthetic competence that Eastern themes have been and continue to be appropriated and ultimately "submitted" to the "epistemic doxa" of the modern Western habitus (Bourdieu 1998: 55-56, 129). Tailored to the contours of the Western habitus, the growing appearance of erstwhile Eastern concepts and practices in the West is, therefore, neither random nor blind. As the Western habitus evolves, it does so on its own terms. Given that the "principles of hierarchization" (Bourdieu 1991: 168) by which this process has and is being managed are thoroughly Western in provenance, it will be argued, what we have is more of a Westernization of Eastern themes than an Easternization of the Western paradigm.

Characteristics of the Western Habitus

[6] What follows seeks to identify and articulate three interrelated dynamics held to be central to the formation of the modern Western habitus. Indicative rather than exhaustive, the following treatment does not purport to offer an exhaustive life-history of each of these formative dispositions, but strives by way of example to substantiate their place as central characteristics of the Western habitus. Rooted in the Renaissance and subsequently radicalized by the scientific and philosophical Enlightenments, these mutually implicating hermeneutical dynamics comprise the *technologization* of the self, the *depersonalization* of the cosmos, and the *metaphorization* of the religious field. While the Western habitus is neither static nor monolithic, each of these dynamics is nevertheless regarded as a prevailing characteristic of the modern Western habitus and thereby held as a central hermeneutical criterion that has informed the selective appropriation of ostensibly Eastern themes by successive Western generations.

The Technologized Self

> [7] Neither an established place, nor a form belonging to you alone, nor any special function have We have given to you, O Adam, and for this reason, that you may have and possess, according to your desire and judgment, whatever place, whatever form, and whatever functions you shall desire . . . You, who are confined by no

> limits, shall determine for yourself your own nature, in accordance with your own free will . . . so that, more freely and more honorably the molder and maker of yourself, you may fashion yourself in whatever form you shall prefer (Pico della Mirandola: 478).

Building upon Renaissance aspirations exemplified by the likes of Petrarch (e.g., *The Remedies of Both Kinds of Fortune*) and Alberti (*On Religion*), Pico's *Oration on the Dignity of Man* (1486) encapsulates well humanist preoccupations with establishing humankind as the determinative center of a new cosmic order. Reappropriating, *ad fontes*, classical sources, and reworking received Christian and Jewish medieval traditions, Renaissance humanism articulates its ideology of self-mastery as a *techne* grounded in the cultivation of virtue and the acquisition of knowledge (Taylor: 115-42). Charged with the technological feat of molding itself into one worthy of a new found *dignitas*, Greek *paideia* and Latin *studia humanitatis* are remodeled as central components of a technology of the self, the objective of which is the formation of the omnicompetent *uomo universale*.

[8] The Renaissance technologization of the self is similar only in appearance to established medieval monastic disciplinary regimes. Regarding the human subject as a psychophysical microcosm (*minor mundus*) of the universe at large, monastic disciplinary regimes were designed to ensure the religio-moral correspondence of the created subject (read *sub specie æternitatis*) with the pre-established metaphysical structures of the cosmos. Inverting the polarity of the established self – cosmos axis, Renaissance thought instead reads out from the subject, who, "confined by no limits," is now free to fashion itself in whatever "form" it prefers (e.g., *Hamlet*, II, ii, 309-31). No longer bound by a pre-given metaphysical order within and by which human endeavor is regulated and evaluated, the "manly man" (*vir virtutis*) born of education and self-mastery is the maker of "his" own destiny.

> "tis in ourselves that we are thus, or thus. Our bodies are our gardens, to the which our wills are gardeners; so that if we will plant nettles or sow lettuce, set hyssop and weed up thyme, supply it with one gender of herbs or distract it with many, either to have it sterile with idleness or manured with industry, why, the power and corrigible authority of this lies in our wills" (*Othello*, Act I, iii, 320-37).

The technologization of the self does not, however, stop here. Self-mastery is not developed in a void but is achieved over and against something other than itself. The development of virtue and acquisition of knowledge that are so central to Renaissance conceptualizations of self-mastery are personal goods won and possessed in the face of external forces. Skinner underlines this point with reference to Renaissance revivals of the "classical opposition between *virtus* and *fortuna*" (94-99); a revival that comes subsequently at the expense of the established Christian doctrine of "divine providence" (95). The substitution of pre-Christian *fortuna* for "divine providence" (e.g., Machiavelli: 82) serves to enlarge the perceived scope of human action by the removal of an otherwise immutable framework by which human destiny is wholly determined. The implacability of the divine will is thereby replaced by an adversarial force that is, for all of its vicissitudes, one that can ultimately be overcome by those whose virtue and wisdom are sufficiently mature. The purchase of the technologized self upon the universe around it is increased relative to the depersonalization of the cosmic forces over and against which self-mastery is achieved.

A Depersonalized Cosmos

[9] The replacement of willful divine agency by blind *fortuna* within Renaissance rhetoric is a motif that resonated well with the nascent scientific worldview. Here, blind *fortuna* finds her equivalent in the impersonal laws of the mechanized universe postulated by the likes of Copernicus, Kepler, Galileo, Bacon, and Newton. Indebted to scholastic appropriations of Aristotelian traditions, the

medieval reinvigoration of natural law approaches had already laid the groundwork for an understanding of the natural order as regulated by causal laws discoverable by deliberative reason. On two counts, however, received natural law interpretations were rejected by the early-modern scientific worldview. First, the teleological hermeneutic (final causality) of Christian-Aristotelianism ran contrary to emergent conceptualizations of the universe as governed by the law of cause and effect. Second, the corrective role accorded by the established paradigm to faith/doctrine in regulating the activities of rational deliberation was regarded as unnecessarily constrictive of scientific investigation (e.g., the treatment of Galileo Galilei).[2]

[10] Incrementally freed from the conceptual and literal constraints of the Christian-Aristotelian paradigm, early-modern academic society set about mapping the cosmos through the formulation of impersonal universal laws. Whether physical (e.g., Newton's law of gravity) or moral (e.g., Kant's categorical imperative), in effect, these universals furnished the scientific and philosophical levers by which humanity would increasingly learn to manipulate its natural and ideal environments. From the torture chamber of Bacon's laboratory to the desensitized surroundings of Descartes' Dutch oven, the modern worldview took shape around the conceptual frame of an impersonal and manipulable universe, the causal mechanisms of which are graspable by the human mind (Doyal and Harris: 27-32). An exemplar of its time, and espoused in one form or another by, among others, Leibniz, Reimarus, Lessing, Voltaire, and Kant, the advent of deism sanctified this emergent worldview. To make way for a mechanized cosmos regulated by impersonal laws discoverable through rational reflection, deity is decommissioned as a goal-orientated, personal agency knowable by means of self-disclosure (revelation) and is instead reduced to the metaphysical margins as a principle of primary (as opposed to final) causality (Wainwright: 188).

[11] As with *fortuna*, the articulation of the impersonal dynamics of cause and effect further increases the perceived scope of human action. On the one hand, the postulation of universal laws (uniform in operation and predictable in scope) empowers the human subject through the correlative positing of the methods (scientific and rational) by which these laws could be discovered, mapped, and ultimately manipulated. Methodological rigor thereby emerges as an alchemic formula guaranteed to furnish the correct results when properly executed. "Act as if the maxim of your action were to become through your will a universal law of nature" and "treat others always as ends in themselves and never as means to an end" (Kant: 88-89). A formulaic summation of morality, grounded in the universal of justice, and grasped through the methodological application of reason. If *a* is followed by *b*, which in turn is followed by *c*, then, things being as they should, *d* is a cast iron certainty: *quad erat faciendum*. Uniformity and predictability underwrite procedural manipulability.

[12] On the other hand, the formulation of impersonal universal laws that are manipulable by way of appropriate methodological application provides a direct, unmediated relationship between the human subject and her environment (physical, moral, or otherwise). Once the relevant formula is known (by way of *natural* rather than *supernatural* means), it remains simply for it to be operationalized in the correct manner. If "knowledge is power," the knowledgeable practitioner is empowered. Unlike the priest of old, scientist and philosopher offer a procedural service, not a sacramental one. Whereas the benefits of the latter are only available by virtue of the consecrated status of the actor (*ex opere operantis*), the efficacy of the former is grounded in the actual deed itself

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[2] Although the *rationem fidei* ("faith alongside reason") approach of Thomas Aquinas's (1225-1274) synthesis of Christian and Aristotelian traditions had accorded reason a qualifiedly independent heuristic function (Finnis: 12), in actual practice the findings of deliberative reason were still held as accountable to the court of faith as represented by the magisterium of the Christian Church.

(*ex opere operato*), irrespective of who performs it. Reliance upon instituted mediation is thereby negated by this procedural turn. From Renaissance humanism, through early-modern science to Enlightenment rationalism, the application of formalized methodological procedures situates the subject as *the* active agent responsible for managing the direct, unmediated interaction with the moral, physical and ideal universe around and within. Allowing for relevant modifications, this emphasis upon unmediated instrumentality was paralleled by laicizing developments in the religious field, as, for example, both Protestant pietism (e.g., Quakers) and Catholic mysticism (e.g., Ignatian Exercises) progressively formalized methodologies that underwrote unmediated, goal-orientated interaction between religious practitioner and divinity (Troeltsch). Again, the *technologized* self comes to the fore as procedural regimes of a cognitive (e.g., rational deliberation), affective (e.g., emotional discipline), and practical (e.g., experimental method) nature are formulated and methodically applied to further enhance the *ex opere operato* manipulation of a cosmic order, the creeping *impersonality* of which is its necessary corollary. From Kant's assertion of "autonomy" over "heteronomy" (88) to Mill's declaration of the unqualified "sovereignty" of the self over itself (69), the self-determinative centrality of the self for itself assumes an increasingly *sui generis*, if not sacral character.

Metaphorized Religion

[13] The coming to prominence of a mechanistic cosmology regulated by impersonal universal laws graspable and ultimately manipulable by anyone applying the appropriate methodology inevitably called into question claims to "special" knowledge available to some rather than others. Furthermore, the devastation produced by post-Reformation wars of religion did much to catalyze emergent Renaissance and Enlightenment reflections upon the existence of natural (e.g., *humanitas*), moral (e.g., the good), and ideal (e.g., reason) universals that serve to relativize, because transcending, otherwise epiphenomenal cultural differences.[3] Added to these discursive developments, the unintended consequences of the rise of modern society resulted in the gradual, yet unrelenting erosion of monopolistic appeals to "special" knowledge grounded in confessional or cultural particularism (Lee and Wallerstein: 228). In effect, the continent-wide disequilibrium generated by the disintegration of the *pax romana catholica* would be rectified by the articulation of a new *common* matrix, this time comprising non-religious transcendent universals over and against which cultural and confessional particularity would be evaluated, relativized, and ultimately negated.

[14] Noting the influence of an emergent transnational bourgeoisie in the formulation of "universalist" (263) tendencies throughout the continent, Mazet exemplifies his observation with reference to the following excerpt from the influential 1738 *constitutions* of Freemasonry.

> In ancient times, the *christian masons* were charged to comply with the *christian* usages of each country where they traveled or worked; but Masonry being found in all nations, even of divers religions, they are now only charged to adhere to that religion in which all men agree (leaving each brother to his own particular opinions), that is, to be good men and true, men of honor and honesty, by whatever names, religions or persuasions they may be distinguished (258).

Indicative of developments taking place throughout associations and movements frequented by the mercantile classes, the transcendent universals of *goodness*, *truth*, *honor*, and *honesty* here represent evaluative criteria against which "particular" cultural and religious expressions are measured,

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[3] The rise of individualism as a philosophical tenet owes much to this desire to liberate the subject from national, religious, social, and idiosyncratic bonds that serve to undermine the "free" association of otherwise "independent" subjects (Macpherson: 263-64).

relativized, and subsequently reduced to the private realm of personal opinion.[4] Under the aegis of Europe's nascent bourgeoisie, these transcendent universals are operationalized through "enlightened self-interest" (Heilbron: 73), anchored, as they are, in the technologized self who is *homo economicus*.[5] As per Bentham's "felicific calculus," the moral deliberations of calculating agents (in which "each person is to count for one and no one for more than one") serve as a universalizing dynamic by which the contours of cultural particularity, including religious confessionalism, are leveled.

[15] Developing Weber's reflections with reference to the religious field, Séguy uses the term "metaphorization" to denote "one of the characteristic features of modernity" by which formal moral and rational universals come to serve not only as evaluative criteria but also as the preferred means of "modern" cultural expression (Hervieu-Léger: 66-71). While Séguy uses examples drawn from Roman Catholicism, the "metaphorization" of the European religious field is perhaps best exemplified by liberal Protestantism's attempts to replace Christianity's pre-modern supernaturalist characteristics (e.g., biblical literalism, devil and hell, miracle, and physical resurrection) with others more in keeping with the modern era (e.g., analogy, good versus evil, moral exemplarism, and cultural progress). Confessional particularity is thereby correlated with rational-moral universality and adjudged to be good, true, or valid to the extent that it is, or is not, calibrated with the established canon of secular, liberal transcendentals. As "there is no religion higher than truth" (a nineteenth century theosophical maxim), religious particularity is of worth only to the extent that it exemplifies rational-ethical universality.

[16] The metaphorizing tendencies of liberal modernity were further radicalized through the vertiginous transition to late-modernity. Characterized by de-traditionalization, glocalization, and individualization (Giddens; Robertson; Beck and Beck-Gernsheim), late-modernity gives rise to a hybridized cultural field typified by the subject as *bricoleur*, mixing and matching increasingly free-floating cultural resources relative to self-styled requirements (Pieterse; Frank and Stollberg). Freed by secularization from the regulatory powers of established religion, religious capital becomes increasingly appropriable within the mélange of late-modern cultural reproduction. Already relativized by modernity's comparison with underlying rational-ethical universals, religious discourse and practice is further metaphorized as it is subjected to late-modernity's source amnesia by which trans-religious (sacred – secular) and intra-religious (e.g., Christian – Hindu) distinctions are further eroded. A form of cultural capital like any other, religious discourse and practice is now readily transposable both within the religious field itself and beyond (e.g., use of "religious" iconography throughout the socio-cultural field in general).

[17] The above has argued that the *technologization* of the self and the *depersonalization* of the cosmos are mutually implicated in that the articulation of the former is predicated upon a negation of willful (end-orientated) divine agency and its replacement with, among other things, an impersonal mechanized cosmology. Central to this mechanized cosmology was the determinative principle of cause-and-effect, the dynamics of which provide a lever that enhances the perceived scope of human action by facilitating the procedural manipulation of the self and its environment. The above has also maintained that the replacement of a theistic teleological worldview by one regulated by a (uniform and therefore predictable) cause-effect dynamic further enhanced the perceived scope of

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[4] Bourdieu regards the centralizing and homogenizing tendencies of the modern nation state as central to this process (1991).

[5] As Marx so astutely observed, bourgeois legerdemain switches almost seamlessly feudalism's divinely orchestrated *ordo naturalis* for a secularized version, the "eternal laws" (e.g., competition) that are as equally immutable in their fixity (209).

human action by placing the subject as the active agent central to the unmediated application of method *ex opere operato*. A logical and practical corollary of this procedural turn was the relativization of institutional claims to mediate between subject and reality. The undermining of confessional authority and cultural particularism resulting from this procedural turn was further catalyzed by the Enlightenment's progressive positing of moral, rational, and scientific universals over and against which local cultural expression is evaluated and ultimately relativized. The *metaphorization* of the religious field, exacerbated by the hybridized conditions of late-modernity, is but one example of this relativizing dynamic.

The Westernization of Eastern Themes

[18] In themselves, the technologization of the self, depersonalization of the cosmos, and metaphorization of the religious field provide evidence of certain purportedly "Eastern" themes (e.g., impersonal cosmos, sacralized self, and non-absolute religious truth) having already been anticipated by the West prior to late-nineteenth and twentieth century developments within esoteric and new age movements respectively. In broader terms, however, these mutually implicating dynamics, while not exhausting the gamut of prevailing themes, nevertheless represent central characteristics formative of and active within the modern Western habitus. By way of their anticipation of certain "Eastern" themes, these constitutive dynamics comprise an aesthetic "competence" (Bourdieu 1984: 2) that, in the first instance, enables the "recognition" of Eastern concepts and practices as worthy of appropriation. However tacit this process, the estimation of Eastern themes as worthy of appropriation is an evaluation predicated upon aesthetic conditions of possibility, the provenance of which is overwhelmingly Western. In effect, Eastern themes are valued to the extent that they resonate with the already well-established aesthetics of the Western "gaze" (Bourdieu 1993: 23), characterized by the technologized self, depersonalized cosmos, and metaphorized religio-cultural field. For example, practices such as yoga and transcendental meditation are appropriated as complementary techniques to the well-established repertoires of the technologized self, just as the self-regulating concepts of karma and reincarnation are dovetailed with the routinized and ameliorative worldview of an already depersonalized cosmos. In the same vein, Eastern epistemological approaches are subsumed within the metaphorizing tendencies of the Western quest for a "perennial philosophy" (*philosophia perennis*) that underlies, and thereby relativizes, all instances of particular discourse and practice (e.g., Huxley). In view of this qualified "recognition," the issue of "complicity" arises in that Eastern themes are appropriated not because they offer anything substantive by way of novelty, but because they are held to correspond with, and thereby tacitly affirm, what is already present within the Western habitus (Bourdieu 1992: 128).

[19] In addition to furnishing the heuristic aesthetics by which Eastern themes are recognized as worthy of appropriation, the principal characteristics of the Western habitus identified above also comprise the hermeneutical dynamic through which ostensibly Eastern themes are adapted for Western consumption. Serving as "principles of hierarchization" (Bourdieu 1991: 168), the aforementioned dynamics orchestrate the selective appropriation and subsequent tailoring of erstwhile Eastern themes. In such a way, appropriated concepts and practices are uncoupled from their cultural and performative contexts, denuded of their original meaning, and rendered palatable to the established predilections of the Western aesthetic. The transposition of the Eastern "guru" to Western "master" is a case in point. Once separated from the cosmological worldview through which status and function are determined, the Eastern guru is transmuted to a purveyor of method whose authority rests more upon an instrumental mastery of procedural technicalities than given metaphysical associations (Flood: 202-3; Smith: 171-80). Tailored to the technologized self and its procedural preoccupations, the status of the "master" as Western guru rests squarely upon a

practical knowledge of the impersonal cosmic principles and concomitant techniques by which self-realization is attained (see Rawlinson).

[20] Related to what some have termed the "psychologization" of late-modern religious discourse and practice (Siqueira; Vitebsky: 287), the nature of the Eastern guru's transmogrification into the Western master is indication of the manner in which the three dynamics outlined above impact upon the religious field in ways that go far beyond the Western appropriation of Eastern discourse and practice. A staple of new age spiritualities and late-modern mysticisms, psychologized approaches encourage the liberation of the subject/pursuit of enlightenment/awakening of consciousness through an inward journey of discovery to otherwise untapped realms of the inner I/self/ego. In so doing, a good number of these approaches draw upon a plethora of concepts, beliefs, and practices trawled, in true metaphorized style, from a bewildering array of sources ranging from purported druidic traditions to the language of the new science paradigm that has emerged on the back of relatively recent developments in quantum mechanics (Amaral).

[21] Late-modern psychologized approaches to spirituality and mysticism underwrite the journey within by recourse to two main rhetorical devices. First, and in parallel to new science discussions of all pervasive nuclear, magnetic, and gravitational forces, an unmediated relationship between self and cosmos is established, grounded in the ubiquitous energy/chi/spirit that unites every element of the universe: "as above, so below." Second, the self within is posited as a microcosm of the (macro) universe without, such that basic discoveries about oneself equate with fundamental discoveries about the nature of the cosmos: "as below, so above." Psychologized approaches thereby promote self enlightenment/liberation/awareness through establishing a correlation between (micro) self and (macro) cosmos, and grounding this correlation within an all embracing field of force, such that micro-self and macro-cosmos are mutually implicated in a relationship through which change in one is tantamount to change in the other. Working with the internal relationship between micro-self and macro-cosmos as a backdrop, psychologized approaches hold the liberation/enlightenment/awakening of the inner self/I/ego to be dependent upon three things: i. the availability of authentic/accurate information about the impersonal energies/forces/principles that pervade the universe; ii. access to efficacious techniques/procedures by which these energies/forces/principles can be manipulated/managed; and iii. the personal aptitude and ability to bring i. and ii. together in a disciplined and focused way. Informed self-discipline equals successful cosmic manipulation equals liberation/ enlightenment/awakening of the inner self/I/ego.

[22] In light of this idealized schematic overview, it can be seen that psychologized approaches to spirituality and mysticism offer themselves as purveyors of a highly metaphorized practical knowledge, the contents of which are drawn eclectically from a bewildering variety of sources, of which Eastern religious discourse and practice has proven a particularly rich vein. Irrespective of cultural provenance or contextual function, all particulars are held to point to one and the same underlying universal reality. As such, one source is as good as another. As Leonardo Boff, a leading actor in the religious field of Brazil, maintains:

> The great spiritual and religious traditions affirm the same event, albeit under different cultural codes. The differences of language bear witness to the same sacred reality. The energy that operates this identification . . . is Kundalini for India, Yoga for the yogis, Tao for Lao Tsé, Shekina for the Jewish mysticism of the Cabala, and the Holy Spirit for the Judaeo-Christian tradition (Muraro and Boff: 113).

The hybridization of content resulting from this metaphorized approach should not, though, confuse matters; for the eclecticism born of metaphorization is neither blind nor random. It is,

rather, guided by the fact that the efficacy of the practical knowledge on offer is grounded ultimately in a *technologized* understanding of the self whose liberation/enlightenment/awakening is dependent upon the mastery of those techniques that underwrite the successful manipulation of impersonal energies/forces/principles seated deep within the inner self/I/ego.

[23] Understood as the microcosmic correlate of macrocosmic forces, the *technologized* self is the fulcrum point by which the forces permeating the universe are manipulated to the end of liberating/enlightening/awakening the inner self/I/ego. It is against this *metaphorized* backdrop of a *technologized* self manipulating the *impersonal* forces of the universe that the Eastern guru has been transmuted to the Western master. Related with, but by no means limited to the psychologized approaches to spirituality and mysticism outlined here, the Western master is a purveyor of practical knowledge who, at one and the same time, is part enlightened teacher, part procedural expert, and part committed therapist.

Conclusion

[24] Holding the basic insights of the above to be correct, I conclude that irrespective of their exotic appearance and despite the subjective intentions of adherents and practitioners, the Eastern concepts and practices that are increasingly common in the West actually do little more than refract the modern Western habitus back on to itself. Of course, a refusal to reify "habitus" as an interpretative category demands the recognition of its historically constituted nature and, therefore, the acknowledgement of change through time and space (Bourdieu 1993: 87). The contemporary Western habitus is as it is thanks to the manner in which successive non-Western dynamics (both material and ideal) have mixed with and ultimately reconstituted prevailing fields of force and the habitualized dispositions to which they give rise. Eastern discourse and practice, then, have not simply been appropriated and subsumed by the Western habitus but have actually wrought change by virtue of their ingression into the Western worldview.

[25] Nevertheless, I argue, developments within the Western habitus, while real, are patterned according to still influential, because well-established, component dispositions such as the *technologized* self, *depersonalized* cosmos, and *metaphorized* religio-cultural field. In respect of the "Easternization thesis," therefore, the fundamental contention that what we have is more of a Westernization of Eastern themes than an Easternization of the Western paradigm still stands. To suggest otherwise, is an act of "collective misrecognition" (Bourdieu 1998: 95) born of allowing a purportedly Eastern accent to mask words that are, when all is said and done, largely scripted by a Western hand. Far from heralding the losing out of the Western paradigm to the East, as some have maintained (e.g., Campbell 1999: 44), the supposed process of Easternization is, in fact, a prolonged act of "symbolic violence" (Bourdieu 1992: 194-95) whereby aspects of the Eastern Other have been subordinated to and rendered "complicit" with the established predilections of the Western habitus. The hermeneutics of suspicion outlined above, thereby raises doubts concerning the extent to which "counter cultural" movements such as theosophy and the new age (along with contemporary mysticisms and spiritualities) actually run "counter" to the Western culture they purport to reject.

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