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### Citation

Tremlett, Paul-Francois (2007). The ethics of suspicion in the study of religions. *Diskus: The journal of the British Association for the Study of Religions (BASR)*, 8, article no. 3.

### URL

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# D I S K U S

DISKUS Vol. 8 (2007)

<http://www.basr.ac.uk/diskus/diskus8/tremlett.htm>

## THE ETHICS OF SUSPICION IN THE STUDY OF RELIGIONS <1>

**Paul-François Tremlett**

Study of Religions

School of Oriental and African Studies

Thornhaugh Street

Russell Square

London WC1H 0XG

E-mail: [pt10@soas.ac.uk](mailto:pt10@soas.ac.uk)

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### Abstract

In this essay I outline some beliefs and practices among lowland christianised peoples in the Philippines relating primarily to the existence of spirits which are believed to be responsible for causing illness, attending to their imbrication with Catholicism and local cultural notions and practices and post-colonial questions of identity. I sketch three interpretative frameworks that have been brought to bear on these religious beliefs and practices: an anthropological analysis that seeks to explain such beliefs and practices in terms of a cultural logic, a socio-historical account in which resonances are highlighted between such beliefs and the post-colonial question of Filipino identity, and a rationalist account in which the utility of such beliefs is assessed, at all times highlighting the strengths and weaknesses of these different interpretative frameworks vis-à-vis a phenomenological approach. I use the empirical material to demonstrate that the phenomenological commitment to religion as a sui generis phenomenon cannot reasonably be said to constitute a satisfactory theory of context and I argue

that the phenomenological epochē is an inadequate response to the problem of representation.

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## INTRODUCTION

Theoretical debates in the study of religions conventionally revolve around arguments about how 'religion', as a category or object of critical analysis, is to be defined and, in consequence, how it should be studied. Paul Ricoeur's contrast between "psychoanalytic interpretation...conceived as the unmasking, demystification or reduction of illusions" with "interpretation conceived as the recollection or restoration of meaning"<sup>2</sup> sets up an opposition between a hermeneutics of suspicion on the one hand, and a hermeneutics of restoration on the other. Phenomenologists of religion, practitioners of Ricoeur's hermeneutics of restoration who draw from Husserl's search for a philosophy without presuppositions, have commonly asserted that religion is a sui generis phenomenon that must be studied on its own terms. Religion is assumed to be an autonomous and distinct sphere of human belief and practice concerned with relating human beings to a transcendent supernatural or sacred reality. For example, Rudolf Otto claimed to be conducting an analysis of a "mental state [that] is perfectly sui generis and irreducible to any other"<sup>3</sup> while the 'numinous' "states of the soul" to which Otto directed his attention were analysed to discover what was "unique in them" rather than what they had "in common with other similar states".<sup>4</sup> Similarly, Mircea Eliade claimed that "to try to grasp the essence of such a [religious] phenomenon by means of physiology, psychology, sociology, economics, linguistics, art or any other study is false; it misses the one unique and irreducible element in it – the element of the sacred".<sup>5</sup> In other words, both Otto and Eliade attempted to render religion as a unique area of enquiry that necessitated the deployment of very specific and limited methodological tools. Ninian Smart's position was somewhat more nuanced: while advocating the phenomenological epochē as a means of entering into the worldview of the believer, Smart also argued that the study of religions was a field of enquiry open to interrogation by a variety of disciplines and methodologies.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, the recent spate of publications devoted to re-thinking phenomenology, such as those produced by Flood and Cox point to the importance of a theory of context to the study of religions though others, notably Twiss and Conser, have remained committed to the defence of the phenomenology of religion traditionally conceived.<sup>7</sup> In this essay I will show that through the contextualisation of religious beliefs and practices in culture and history, description and analysis is enriched and deepened, and that the charge of reductionism often levelled

at social scientific approaches is specious. Although scholars in the study of religions frequently claim to have 'moved on' from phenomenology, certain key phenomenological assumptions continue to play a vital role in structuring enquiry about religions, in particular the idea of value-neutrality embodied in the notion of the phenomenological epochē.

A related problem, then, with the phenomenology of religion concerns its invocation of the Husserlian epochē as a means to avoid or rather bracket out values and judgements as to the truth or falsity of particular religious beliefs. This strategy is aimed at preserving the integrity of a putative believer's point of view, which in turn is to be accessed or re-experienced through intuitive or empathic liaison. In the essay 'Guilt, Ethics, and Religion', Ricoeur outlines a phenomenological-hermeneutical method with the emphasis placed firmly upon sympathy, empathy and imagination. In order not to judge or evaluate that which the phenomenologist seeks to describe and understand, the phenomenologist must place him or herself in suspense:

"My point of departure is in a phenomenology of confession or avowal. Here I understand by phenomenology a description of meanings implied in experience in general...a phenomenology of confession is therefore a description of meanings and of signified intentions, present in a certain activity of language, namely, confession. Our task, in the framework of such a phenomenology is to re-enact in ourselves the confession of evil, in order to uncover its aims. By sympathy and through imagination, the philosopher adopts the motivations and intentions of the confessing consciousness; he does not "feel" but "experiences" in a neutral manner, in the manner of "as if," that which has been lived in the confessing consciousness." <8>

Even though Ricoeur is here concerned with understanding confession, the methodological steps he outlines are generalisable to the phenomenology of religion as a whole. As such, Ricoeur's emphasis on description, re-enactment, sympathy, imagination and neutrality constitute the distinctive features of the phenomenological method. Yet, if carefully reflected on, the epochē renders phenomenology a strange kind of positivism: a guarantee of objectivity in which some facts are to be separated from some values. It is argued that given the irreducibility of religion and therefore of the believer's point of view, the scholar of religion ought to be, usually in some vague and unspecified sense, an 'insider' or at least in sympathy with the insider in order to properly represent the interiority of 'the' religious commitment. Religions are as such constituted as 'worldviews' that demand a special hermeneutics, a special hermeneutics that is, at the same time, supposed to guarantee faithful or accurate representation of particular

phenomena and the meanings those phenomena allegedly carry for certain people.

Significantly, the so-called insider-outsider debate in religious studies I have alluded to straddles both phenomenology and anthropology. <9> In the phenomenology of religion this is a debate about the objectivity, neutrality and impartiality of the scholar of religion, and also a debate about writing and the role of writing in evoking, within a putative reader, an 'experience' of a particular religious practice or belief and the possibility of seeing the world from another point of view. For instance, Otto self-consciously informed his reader that he would be using "analogy and contrast" as well as "metaphor and symbolic expressions" in order "to make the states of mind [i.e. the states of the religious consciousness]...ring out...of themselves". <10> Similarly, Eliade suggested that

"a considerable enrichment of consciousness results from the hermeneutical effort of deciphering the meaning of myths, symbols, and other traditional religious structures; in a certain sense, one can even speak of the inner transformation of the researcher and, hopefully, of the sympathetic reader. What is called the phenomenology and history of religions can be considered among the very few humanistic disciplines that are at the same time propaedeutic and spiritual techniques". <11>

In anthropology, on the other hand, this has led to debates about ethnographic authority, about the imposition of Western categories on non- Western 'others' and about the very possibility of re-presenting itself. <12>

Yet, the phenomenology of religion as an allegedly restorative approach to the study of religion is conventionally contrasted with so-called 'suspicious' approaches that allegedly seek to situate religions within, reduce religions to or define them in terms of particular social, cultural and historical contexts. <13> This kind of suspicion is typically associated with sociology and social or cultural anthropology. It is an axiomatic assumption of these latter disciplines that human beings are born or thrown into languages, cultures, societies and historical moments not of their choosing and that, moreover, their immersion in cultures, societies, languages and histories necessitates a mode of analysis that seeks to go beyond the point of view of any putative believer to the structures and systemic features that condition and set the limits and parameters to being human in any time or place. Importantly, post-modern epistemological critiques do not challenge this basic assumption – such critiques encourage rather the acknowledgement and explication of the fact that disciplines such as sociology and social or cultural anthropology are themselves products of particular historical and cultural

circumstances and that enquiry or questioning also has a context. Only recently has this kind of reflexivity become a feature of debate in the study of religions. <14>

In this essay, I will proceed in the following manner: firstly, I will sketch some religious beliefs and practices common among lowland christianised peoples in the Philippines relating to the existence of spirits which are commonly believed to be responsible for causing certain categories of illness. I will address their imbrication with Catholicism, local cultural notions and practices, healing and ritual practices of penitence, sacrifice, pilgrimage and practices directed towards the accumulation of spiritual power and potency. This material comes both from the extant historical and ethnographic literature on religion in the christianised, lowland Philippines and from field work that I conducted in the Tagalog speaking provinces of Quezon and Laguna south of Manila in 1999-2000 and 2003. The texts selected for analysis and comparison were chosen as broadly representative of particular strategies for interpreting not only religion in the Philippine context but religions wherever they are located temporally or spatially. Secondly, I will sketch three different frameworks of interpretation that have been brought to bear to understand religious beliefs and practices in the Philippines. I will juxtapose an anthropological account in which such beliefs and practices are contextualised in terms of the local culture, a socio-historical account in which they are framed in terms of their resonance with the post-colonial question of identity and a rationalist account in which their utility is assessed, at all times highlighting the strengths and weaknesses of these different interpretative frameworks vis-à-vis a phenomenological approach to religion. Thirdly, I will argue that a phenomenological approach to religion cannot account for the clear inter-penetration of religion with cultural phenomena and historical experiences because of its commitment to the idea that religion is a sui generis phenomenon. Furthermore, this approach cannot bring itself to critique beliefs that are evidently false because of its commitment to preserving the believer's or insider's point of view even to the extent that that point of view may endanger the believer him or herself or may be dangerous to others. In other words, this paper is ideologically motivated in that the intention is to provide clear evidence for the interpretative superiority of approaches to religion that take context seriously and have engaged in sustained, reflexive theorising over the problem of representation.

#### CON-TEXT

Any visitor to the Philippines willing to spend a little time each day to watch local television, read newspapers and comics, catch a movie or live with a family will soon come to be aware of stories about sorcery and witchcraft (kulam), of blood-sucking flying bats (aswáng and manananggal),

dwarves and elves (*duwende*), spirits that enchant the unwary such as the *engkanto* and *tikbalang*, ancestral spirits (*anito*), as well as the pervasive use of creolised prayers that combine Tagalog, Spanish and Latin (*orasyon*) and amulets (*anting-anting*) through which to guard against the mischief or possible malevolence of these alleged super-natural agents or for the accumulation of spiritual power and potency (*kapangyarihan*). These kinds of beliefs and associated practices sit beside popular christianised practices of healing and pilgrimage as well as more 'exotic' practices such as self-flagellation and crucifixion.

I have conducted field research in and around an extinct volcano called Mount Banahaw, widely believed by many Filipinos to be a source of spiritual power and potency. It is a place frequently mentioned in accounts of the 1896 Philippine revolution against Spain as a site of organised resistance – resistance led by local religious leaders. <15> Today, it is home to a number of religio-nationalist movements that venerate or worship the national hero José Rizal.<16> It is a place of pilgrimage particularly during Easter when tens of thousands come to visit the various shrines on the lower slopes of the mountain and to collect allegedly powerful *anting-anting*. In and around Mount Banahaw, stories about spirits and about the special abilities that certain powerful amulets are said to bestow are commonplace. As such, the problem of the interpretation of beliefs and practices strange and alien to my own was one I needed to address. This was done in the first instance by documenting how such beliefs and practices had been interpreted by others, through problematising such accounts and through comparing them both to one another and to a putative phenomenological account.

#### RELIGION IN CULTURE

The emphasis in social and cultural anthropology is on societies and cultures as organised if permeable and shifting structures of meaning and exchange. The approaches taken by Zialcita and Cannell to popular religion in the lowland Philippines work on the assumption that Philippine culture is structured in terms of a socio-cultural-logic of debt, pity, reciprocity and exchange, relationships expressed locally in terms of *utang na loób* or 'debt from the inside' and *hiyâ* or 'shame'. Note that for the strict phenomenologist of religion this kind of interpretation is inadmissible on the grounds that it refuses to treat religion as a *sui generis* phenomenon.

In her analysis of *penitensiyá* in the Philippines, Zialcita argues that Filipino flagellants engage in *penitensiyá* during Holy Week as a means of re-ordering their relations with their kin or as the fulfilment of a promise or vow made to God usually vis-à-vis the health of a relative. Interestingly, such vows and promises are transferable between or among relatives. In other words, the motivations for engaging in these different practices are as much cultural as religious.

As such, Zialcita argues that these rituals should be analysed not merely in terms of their religious content, but also in terms of their cultural context, particularly

“the social and moral orders of a society, the principles underlying a society’s organisation, the kinds of corporate grouping available, and the norms and values inherent in structural relationships... Thus utang na loob or a moral debt of gratitude, concern for the welfare of the immediate family, and loyalty to the peer group are key organizing principles of lowland Philippine society. These are reenacted and indeed reinforced by the Lenten rituals.” <17>

Similarly, Cannell’s analysis of healing in the lowland province of Bicol begins by noting the syncretism of healing practices. Such practices involve medium-ship, trance and possession as well as prayer and devotional practices associated with Catholic saints, icons and shrines. In her analysis of women healers and their complex relationships with the spirits that ‘possess’ them for the purposes of healing, Cannell notes the similarity in the rhetoric used with everyday talk about marital relationships. <18> Cannell also argues – drawing on the writings of Scott and Rafael – that the relations between healer, spirit and client and the practice of healing itself is understood in terms of local notions of debt, pity and reciprocity whereby persons are, as it were, continually re-made and re-defined in terms of their dealings with persons and entities of higher or lower status or that have greater or lesser access to sources of power. <19> Indeed, Cannell argues that social relationships among lowland Bicolanos (and as such lowland Filipinos more generally) are “dynamic engagements” defined by attempts to “establish and negotiate relationships with various figures of power” where “persons are potentially changed in every interaction with others”. <20>

According to Cannell, then, Bicolano conceptions of self focus on process, mutability, and transformation through contact with persons, objects, places, or entities of a greater or lesser potency or power. Cannell’s analysis of healing therefore rests on culturally specific conceptions and practices of personhood and power as a basis for understanding popular religious beliefs and practices in the Philippines. Critically, when the strategy of interpretation adopted by Zialcita and Cannell is compared to a traditional phenomenological analysis, the weakness of the latter is brought sharply into focus. Zialcita and Cannell demonstrate the interpenetration of culturally specific norms, values, practices and discourses with christianised religious beliefs and practices, an interpenetration that a phenomenological account must deny due to its insistence that religion is a phenomenon sui generis and is as such an autonomous and distinct realm of human belief and practice irreducible to any economic, psychological, linguistic, historical, or cultural

context.

#### RELIGION IN HISTORY:

I shall now sketch a socio-historical account that focuses on beliefs and practices relating to a spirit known locally as an engkanto. In this interpretation, the emphasis is not on the existence or non-existence of the engkanto – i.e., the truth or falsity of the belief in this spirit – nor on the relations between such beliefs and practices with pervasive cultural mechanisms. Rather, the focus is on the extent to which these beliefs and practices resonate with historically articulated, or perhaps better, post-colonial questions of identity, through exploring the meaningfulness of statements made by Filipinos about the engkanto, and the resonance of such statements with contemporary identity discourses in the Philippines.

The engkanto are spirits whose domain of specialisation and modus operandi is the seduction and then possession of human subjects. The results of seduction and possession amount to a diminution of the self and the erasing of physical and mental individuality such that the one possessed can no longer be recognised. Typical symptoms of seduction and possession include conversing with invisible others, becoming stiff and going into a trance-like state, getting lost in the woods, acting violently towards family members and friends and memory loss.

Tagalog healers claim that the self consists of seven aspects that must remain bound together if the integrity and identity of the self is to be maintained. Seduction and possession by an engkanto leads to the separation or loss or calling away of one or more of these aspects or strands of the non-material aspects of the self. Vulnerability to loss of identity resonates with local uses of amulets (anting-anting) that render the wearer invulnerable to either physical or spiritual harm. However, vulnerability to seduction also resonates with the complex history of a country that since 1565 has been subject to Western influence and which, in more recent years, has made its most profitable export its own population who work the globe as seamen, dancers, hostesses, nannies, nurses, carers and teachers. As such, the trope of seduction is an important one, as are the testimonies of persons who say that they have been taken to the land of the engkanto:

“Oral tradition portrays the world of the ingkanto as ideal; their life is an eternal feast. They live in modern cities, linked by an underground and water transportation system, as well as by air stations for their high powered cars, jet planes, luxury ships, and other spectacular vehicles.” <21>

The apparent Westernisation of the land of the engkanto is critical, given that the engkanto is a spirit usually associated

with place:

“The relationship between humans and spirits is governed by explicit rules, primarily regarding land use. After four hundred years of Christianity, the *engkanto* are still believed to be the owners of the earth, and man must pay for its use. Humans must first ask their permission before cutting down their tree-abodes, burning their mountains, or destroying their anthills. In order to plant or build on their territory, or even to pass through it, one has to recite a formula or perform a ritual. According to native theory, failure to observe these rules will result in physiological illness, insanity, or death.” <22>

These beliefs about the *engkanto* and land powerfully echo historical experiences, particularly those of rural Filipinos for whom history has meant, more or less, the loss of land. A steady process of impoverishment and disenfranchisement has been characterised by evictions, tenancy and unemployment. Government failure to initiate any meaningful programme of land reform, the persistence of practices such as illegal logging, land grabbing and widespread squatting indicates that land and rights of access to land are of central concern to contemporary Tagálogs and Filipinos living in both rural and urban areas.

These beliefs also resonate strongly with local conceptions of illness (*sakit*) that may arise, according to local belief, through entering into proximity with persons of greater potency or power, while the fact that the *engkanto* is of Caucasian appearance further indicates the interpenetration of local notions of reciprocity and its possible disruption through contact with outsiders. Tan suggests that beliefs and practices concerning the activities of the *engkanto* and its Caucasian appearance is a “projection of asymmetrical social relationships” <23> and he quotes Lieban who suggests that these beliefs and practices “appear to support social equilibrium in the community by dramatising and reinforcing the idea that it is dangerous to covet alluring, but basically unattainable, wealth and power outside the *barrios*”. <24> Beliefs and practices relating to the activities of the *engkanto* do not only, then, reflect those processes through which Filipinos became a subject population to first Spanish and then American colonisers and, during the post-colonial period, through which Filipinos have been displaced through economic out-migration, but also cultural practices and dynamics that conceptualise the possible negative consequences of moving into the orbit of persons and/or places of greater power or potency.

If the *engkanto* are popularly thought to seduce, possess and dis-locate unwary subjects, they are also sometimes guilty, according to popular belief, of rape. A healer’s anecdote from his own casebook provides an insight into the

activities of the engkanto and discourses of identity in the contemporary Philippines:

“The...engkanto, they rape our women and they become pregnant. And you know what is the result? It is the mongoloid. Retarded. And then I was being asked; ‘What is your proof?’ Look at the mongoloid – they have the same faces, the same look.” <25>

The healer I interviewed had collected numerous newspaper cuttings of cases of possession he had been involved in treating. In Peoples Journal Tonight (April 5, 1994) an article entitled ‘Unseen Figures that Rape Men and Women’ referred specifically to the rape of several women by an engkanto who became pregnant and then gave birth to Down’s Syndrome babies. In another Peoples Journal Tonight article entitled ‘RP: Land of the Engkantos’ (undated), the engkanto were again held to be responsible for raping women, and the offspring from these unions were said to be “mongoloid babies [that] have international faces and appearances”.

The fact that the activities of the engkanto should involve both the seduction and possession of individuals and the rape of women who then give birth to ‘retards’ with “international faces” has considerable resonance in a country with a long history under foreign political and economic control. What the activities of the engkanto expresses is an historically and culturally contingent malice that speaks of the deepest traumas of Tagálogs and Filipinos: it is a fear of historical and cultural dis-location, amnesia, disorder and loss. Localised in its sphere of operations and quite specific in its influence, it is a form of corporeal and spiritual violence that transforms its victims into entities with no knowledge of who they are or where they came from and which is thought to cause the birth of persons who all look alike and who bear no resemblance whatsoever to their parents. Likewise, it expresses profound concern about the potential disruption and/or liquidation of culturally coded ties of reciprocity. Finally, it indicates the feelings of powerlessness experienced primarily by poor urban and rural Tagálogs and Filipinos in their efforts to negotiate the profound collision of local culture with apparently anonymous and impersonal globalising economic and political processes.

#### WHEN BELIEFS ARE FALSE:

Rationalist accounts of religion typically measure the utility of religious beliefs against scientific accounts of ‘reality’. This approach is reminiscent of the intellectualist approach to religion taken by E. B. Tylor and J. G. Frazer. A rationalist approach to religion, however, need not be wedded to any speculative and indeed highly unlikely narrative of stages of development or progress, though it must remain committed

to the notion of a real world.

Rationalist accounts of popular religious beliefs and practices in the Philippines are typically highly critical of those beliefs and practices on the grounds that they cause social violence and perpetuate false knowledge about health and sickness. For example, diseases and conditions such as tetanus infection, cholera, dysentery, strokes, chills and fevers are frequently attributed to the agency of malevolent spirits. Ramos' account of what he calls Filipino "lower mythology" commences with a quote from the Manila Times (September 2, 1964) that, according to Ramos, details "how real the effects of the belief in witchcraft are in Philippine society": <26>

"A triple murder in the outskirts of the town of Pilar, Abra, a few days ago is worth noting for its implications on the state of education in the country. An elderly couple and their son were slain in what the authorities see as a "witch killing". Such cases, although infrequent, are by no means rare. From time to time, innocent persons are assaulted or killed because they are suspected of having caused the illness or death of someone's relative...the belief in witchcraft is still prevalent not only in the rural areas but in the towns as well. Progress in education is usually measured in terms of literacy percentages. Actually, the literacy rate is a poor guide in this respect, and it can be utterly misleading. It is not enough for the people to be able to read and write; more important, they should be freed from the grip of superstition." <27>

By beginning the book with this quotation, Ramos makes it clear that he does not intend simply to re-present Philippine folklore and mythology. Rather, Ramos is concerned with evaluating the contribution of local folklore to Philippine life and with presenting a systematic account of that folklore and mythology as a means of promoting its use in the classroom. Here, it may enhance artistic and creative pursuits while ensuring that practices associated with beliefs in mythological creatures and spirits and in witchcraft are challenged and shown to be without foundation, a project deemed necessary to improve standards of education and to enhance national solidarity. As such, a significant portion of the text is concerned with education, and the necessity of providing the requisite instruction in the classroom so that, for example, explanations of sickness in terms of the activities of malevolent spirits and witchcraft are replaced by scientific explanations:

"The persistence of obsolete folk beliefs and practices is abetted by people's believing that the creature fabricated by their imaginative forbears actually exist. Teachers of science and health should show that while these beliefs enrich men's mental and emotional lives, they have no factual basis."

<28>

To this end, Appendix B of the book is entitled 'Suggested Exercises to Counteract the Belief that Creatures of Lower Mythology Actually Exist'. <29> The appendix consists of a series of questions and exercises for teachers and students designed to draw a distinction between empirical reality and reality as it is portrayed in myth and folklore.

Ramos' account relies rather heavily on a distinction between two kinds of knowledge: a rational-scientific corpus of statements and propositions that are held to accurately describe reality and which encourage forms of social action that are efficacious precisely because of that correspondence, and a religious or traditional corpus of knowledge which while signifying a cultural richness that must be preserved, is out of synch with the real. Its proper place is therefore the library and museum as it cannot serve as an effective guide for living. This opposition highlights a central problem in the study of religions: are the statements and claims of co-researchers to be interpreted as threads in a web of meanings whose sense derives from the fact that they are embedded in specific forms of life, or, is there a need for some principle of verification in order to measure or evaluate such statements and claims? <30>

Advocates of the phenomenological approach to religion would no doubt argue that Ramos' account is at best uncharitable and at worst unethical, precisely because of its orientation towards generating cognitive change in the believer and the general objective of transforming local myths and folklore into state or national property. Yet, Ramos clearly demonstrates – and my own research in the environs of Mount Banahaw supports this – that Filipinos are broadly ignorant of basic standards of health and nutrition and their links to disease and ill-health. Surely, the ethical response to this situation is precisely to challenge beliefs when and where they clearly obstruct or prevent people from understanding the causes of sickness. In which case, for analysis to cease at the believer's point of view as phenomenologists of religion suggest emerges not as ethical, sympathetic or empathic, but as the abdication of responsibility towards those whom one is engaged in representing. What this means in practice is that the study of religions must be interested in the meaningfulness of statements, but must surely direct particular attention to any hiatus between such statements and reality.

#### CONCLUSIONS:

In this essay I have argued against the phenomenology of religion on two fronts: firstly, that the phenomenological commitment to religion as sui generis is, in effect, a denial of context. As such, I tried to demonstrate the depth that can be attained through contextualisation, arguing that

contextualisation enriches rather than reduces the description and analysis of religions. Secondly, I tried to show that the phenomenological commitment to the epoché, a commitment to study religion without prejudice and to privilege the believer's point of view, does not in fact guarantee the end of prejudice but just as likely its furtherance precisely because of the uncritical approach adopted towards the believer. It is my hope that this essay encourages, on the one hand, greater inter-disciplinarity in the study of religions and, on the other, hastens the abandonment of out-dated methodological concepts that have stifled rather than generated theoretical debate in the field.

#### NOTES:

<1> An earlier version of this paper was presented at the BASR annual conference at Bath Spa University on September 4, 2006. I would like to thank James Cox and Mathew Guest for their comments and suggestions. Of course, all errors in fact and in interpretation remain my own.

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<2> P. Ricoeur *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay in Interpretation*. (trans). D. Savage. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970), pp. 9.

<3> R. Otto *The Idea of the Holy*. (trans). J. W. Harvey, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1928), pp. 7.

<4> R. Otto *The Idea of the Holy*. pp. 8.

<5> Eliade in B. Morris *Anthropological Studies of Religion: An Introductory Text*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 176.

<6> N. Smart 'Methods and Disciplines in the Study of Religion' in *Concept and Empathy: Essays in the Study of Religion*. (London: Macmillan, 1986).

<7> G. Flood *Beyond Phenomenology: Rethinking the Study of Religion*. (London & New York: Cassell, 1999); J. L. Cox *A Guide to the Phenomenology of Religion: Key Figures, Formative Influences and Subsequent Debates*, (London & New York: Continuum, 2006); S. B. Twiss & W. H. Conser Jr., (eds). *Experience of the Sacred: Readings in the Phenomenology of Religion*, (Hanover & London: Brown University Press, 1992).

<8> P. Ricoeur P. 'Guilt, Ethics, and Religion' in *The Conflict*

of Interpretations. (London & New York: Continuum, 2004), pp. 422.

<9> For anthropological debates on representing the interiority of the religious commitment see M. Engelke 'The Problem of Belief: Evans-Pritchard and Victor Turner on 'the Inner Life' in *Anthropology Today*. Vol. 18, No. 6, 2002, pp.3-8; E. E. Evans-Pritchard *Nuer Religion*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1956) & E. E. Evans-Pritchard *Theories of Primitive Religion*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965); for general anthropological debates about representing the so-called native point of view see C. Geertz 'Religion as a Cultural System' in *The Interpretation of Cultures*. (New York: Basic Books, 1973) & C. Geertz "'From The Native's Point of View": On the Nature of Anthropological Understanding' in *Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology*. (New York: Basic Books, 1983).

<10> R. Otto *The Idea of the Holy*. pp. 12.

<11> M. Eliade *The Quest: History and Meaning in Religion*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969).

<12> J. Clifford & G. E. Marcus (eds). *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986).

<13> See the debate conducted in the pages of the BASR's Bulletin between Robert Segal, Frank Whaling and myself: R. Segal 'Empathy or Diagnosis?' in *British Association for the Study of Religions Bulletin* No. 100, 2003, pp. 57-8; R. Segal 'Sigmund Freud Totem and Taboo' in *British Association for the Study of Religions Bulletin* No. 102, 2004, pp. 36-39P-F. Tremlett 'Turning Point' in *British Association for the Study of Religions Bulletin* No. 103, 2004, pp. 49-50; F. Whaling 'Empathy or Diagnosis?' in *British Association for the Study of Religions Bulletin* No. 100, 2003, pp. 58-9.

<14> R. T. McCutcheon *Manufacturing Religion: The Discourse on Sui Generis Religion and the Politics of Nostalgia*, (New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997); T. Fitzgerald *The Ideology of Religious Studies*, (New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

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<25> Interview with a ‘Soldier for Christ’ January 27, 2000.

<26> M. D. Ramos Creatures of Philippine Lower Mythology, (Manila: University of the Philippines Press, 1971), pp. 1.

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<30> The recent debate in Anthropology Today on anthropology and truth (via Wittgenstein) fleshes out these two positions rather well. See R. A. Wilson 'The Trouble with Truth: Anthropology's Epistemological Hypochondria' in Anthropology Today. Vol. 20, No. 5, 2004, pp.14-17; K. C. Myhre 'The Truth of Anthropology: Epistemology, Meaning, and Residual Positivism' in Anthropology Today. Vol. 22, No. 6, 2006, pp.16-19;& R. A. Wilson 'Words, Things and the Hippopotamus in the Room' in Anthropology Today. Vol. 22, No. 6, 2006, pp.23-24.

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