

CHAPTER 7

FRAMING HIERARCHICALLY, FRAMING MOEBIUSLY

Author's Note

A preliminary version of this chapter was prepared as a response to the presentations of a panel on “Reframing *Naven*” at the Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Religion in 2009. This was an opportunity to rethink lineal framing. Lineal framing, to which we are so accustomed in the most mundane of ways, separates absolutely and definitively between one side of the frame or boundary and the other, for example, between outside and inside. Whereas in Chapter Six, I argued for examining the interior of the frame itself in order to find clues to passage through the boundary, in this chapter I suggest that in certain, perhaps in many instances, the idea of lineal framing and its making of neat order should be put aside entirely. I was invigorated by the thinking of Steven Rosen (a polymath in his own right) in his *Science, Paradox, and the Moebius Principle* (1994) which gave me the impetus to think moebiusly on framing. To think with what Rosen (2006) calls post-mathematical topology. Thus I understood that if a frame is constituted through self-entering moebius movement then one can do away with the ideas (that deeply informed Bateson’s thinking) that a frame must be lineal; that passage through a frame must require metacommunication and meta-organization; and, so, that the organization of framing must be hierarchical. This opens to framing that is interactive, and, as such, to more fuzziness and indeed messiness in how framing relates to realities.

More than twenty years earlier I used a more structural approach to understanding what the appearance of sacred clowns within ritual accomplished. I suggested then that the paradoxical interior of the sacred clown resonated with the interior of the boundary, foretelling the argument that is Chapter Six of this volume. In the earlier

study I understood that sacred clowns were intimately involved in moving ritual within itself through itself, thereby shifting ritual from one phase into another by themselves revolving within themselves through their own contradictory and oppositional attributes (Handelman 1981). However, thinking moebiusly, I later concluded (Handelman 2009) that rather than the interior of the sacred clown being composed of structural oppositions this self-same interior of the clown was more fluid and dynamic. Thus it was this fluidity that was homologous with the fluidity of the moebius-like boundaries within the ritual. And, so, it was this homology of fluidness that enabled the sacred clowns to pull one phase after another into and out of the ritual. In Chapter Seven I extend this thinking to the interior organization of cosmos, contrasting cosmos that is intra-grated within itself more through fluid moebius-like movement and interior transformation to cosmos that is more inter-grated by monothetic hierarchies whose ultimate ordering is actually outside cosmos itself. I expand on this argument in Chapter Eight of this volume.

Prelude

I am taking a roundabout way in thinking about Gregory Bateson's theory of framing. This enables me to foreground certain of my own positions. Bateson's approach to framing had great personal impact on me in the late 1960s. Doing my PhD thesis in anthropology on face-to-face interaction in small work groups, I discovered that emerging realities of play and game were crucial to comprehending the daily goings-on in these settings. Bateson's idea of metacommunication gave me insight into how realities like play and ritual could be entered because they were constituted sometimes as radically different within everyday realities, Bateson gave to the idea of framing a complexity that had not existed beforehand and that (apart from Erving Goffman [1974]) has hardly existed since, yet who could have expected Bateson to be simply commonsensical and matter-of-fact? In anthropology at the time, framing was hardly mentioned analytically.

I eventually realized that Bateson's play frame, and his framing as this could be applied to ritual, is itself composed of logical paradox. Indeed, the paradox *is* the frame (see Chapter Six), and without the paradox there is no such frame. Or, we can say that the metacommunication of paradox is itself the frame. For Bateson, metacommunication is critical to the organization of framing, and the metalevel necessarily operates hierarchically and more abstractly. This is clear in the theory of schizophrenia he developed with Jackson, Haley, and Weakland (Bateson 1972: 203–78). The lack of a hierarchical metamessage develops in the victim a kind of terminal chaos within which communication is all “noise,” all self-disrupting, all self-negating. The celebrated idea of the double bind results from oscillation between opposing values that are destructive because they are not organized hierarchically and that therefore are self-negating (I love you / I hate you). If this oscillation were hierarchized, then

one of these values would become the metamessage, subordinating the other, and, so, the system of self-other communication could stabilize.

In Bateson's (1972: 184) diagram of the play frame, the metacommunication "All statements within this frame are untrue," should not be (as he places it) inside the rectangular frame. More accurately, "All statements within this frame, etc." should be written as the frame itself, because it is this (truth) claim that invokes the paradox that is the framing. "This is play" is a further direction in which the frame may be taken, given the paradox of crossing into this kind of reality. Perhaps there are others. If the metacommunication itself is the frame, then the frame must be in hierarchical relationship to its "sides," to what it frames on the one hand and to what it leaves outside on the other. Logical paradox—the higher level in this instance—acts as a block to passage through itself (Colie 1966). The paradox both creates and separates realities. The solution to passage is to change values (perceptions, emotions) that belong to one side to those that are regnant on the other side. With this shift, the paradox-as-block disappears and/or one finds oneself on the other side (though I'm not so certain of this).

In Bateson's pathbreaking cybernetic analysis of *naven* behavior in the epilogue to the 1958 edition of *Naven*, his use of feedback to analyze social setups gave me a tool to think on rituals that do radical change within and through their own interior organization, and to separate these out from events that could be discussed straightforwardly as presentations and representations of sociocultural orderings. In turn this made me realize that basically collecting together all "ritual" events under the rubric of RITUAL, even when they had little or nothing in common, is not just pointless but indeed detrimental to comprehending these occasions (Handelman 2006a). This was the impetus for writing *Models and Mirrors* (Handelman [1990] 1998), which argued that there will be no progress toward a general theory of ritual until the term "ritual" itself is thrown out and other ways of thinking are encouraged. I mention this here because at the time that I took to the idea of metacommunication as a universal property of framing and interactivity, basic to analyzing play and ritual, I began to think on South Indian Hindu cosmologies with my colleague, the Indologist David Shulman, and to do fieldwork in South India on goddess rituals. Then my perspective changed little by little.

For one thing, the status of logical paradox of the Epimenides variety came into question as did, together with this, the premises of linear framing. Logical paradox abounds in India, yet mostly as something perhaps to be noted as curiosity and largely disregarded. My own understanding of logical paradox as blocking passage, as acting as a trap for mind and perception (Colie 1966), seems to have little or no cachet in India. While such paradox blocks Westerners from moving through to elsewhere, for Indians paradox itself is a forming or shaping of potential reality to be played with and perhaps appreciated (O'Flaherty 1984). Through India the idea of metacommunication also came into question, sometimes. David Shulman is fond of saying that in

India the elephant does not precede the footprint that it leaves behind. Rather, first the footprint appears, followed by the elephant, coming into being and presence—in Western terms, the effect appears before the cause. To put this another way, cause and effect exist simultaneously, and entires appear entirely, together, so that distinguishing between signifier and signified, and thereby addressing their relationship (which is at the heart of the idea of symbol, of representation and of symbolic analysis), just doesn't play. Of course this relationship can be forced to cooperate, but this is indeed just that, forced, and somehow not true to the rituals I observed and had a hand in discussing, in which the symbolic as representation loses its authenticity (Handelman 2014). So, too, in the cosmic logics which historically influenced these and other rituals (i.e., Handelman and Shulman 1997, 2004). This is not simply to relativize these matters but rather to insist that great variabilities and uncertainties open up, that I doubt can be addressed deeply and profoundly in terms of existing theories of ritual, so long as the habit of, the convenience of, and the investment in this rubric of RITUAL, with its great biases (especially those of representation), hold sway.

I also began to doubt the universality of metacommunication that, as I understand it in terms of Bateson, must be in a hierarchical relationship to the “content” of frames like those of play and ritual. My critique of Batesonian framing recognizes that levels are related recursively, reciprocally, though I may do this too implicitly. After all, Bateson thought with systems that were constituted through levels, through the reflexivity of second-order thinking, and so forth, and there is no Batesonian system without recursiveness and reciprocity among levels. Yet these are levels of increasing abstraction, and I had doubts about the neat hierarchical nesting of these levels of communication within one another in Batesonian formulations.

For Bateson, recursive cybernetic-like feedback loops (positive and negative) were critical to understanding how systemic or systemic-like properties organize cosmic and social orderings. In these terms, a feedback loop cannot describe itself, that is, it cannot be reflexive toward what it is and what it is doing, and therefore requires a higher-order feedback loop (above, and, so, external to the first loop) to do this, thereby correcting the activity of the lower loop, which communicates this to the higher loop. I will return to this in a moment. I also began to question the universalizing proposition that our understanding of reflexivity requires a perspective of externality or otherness which itself tends toward a clear-cut distinction between inside/outside, self/other. This claim, I venture to say, is basic to understanding reflexivity through the academic disciplines. In human setups and systems, reflexivity is critical, because on it depends the capacity to self-correct, to alter direction, to return and repeat, and so forth. Therefore reflexivity is central to Batesonian framing. Norbert Wiley (in Harries-Jones 1995: 250) puts reflexive organization in the following way (which Bateson himself accepted): “A reflexive hierarchy is an inter-relation between communicators and the same interrelation looked back at itself from an ‘outside’ vantage point. The notion of reflexivity always entails an ability of an intelligent being, or group, to ‘get out’ of itself in order to attend to itself.”

At issue for me became whether there are alternative ways of conceiving framing that do not require the premise of meta-organization and its hierarchical, linear order, and that alter the relationship of framing to reflexivity.¹ It was in this spirit that I suggested moebius framing as a stimulus to thought, one that would not simply make order neatly between realities by separating them cleanly and meta-organizing the inside of the frame.² Rather, one that would open the way for mess and fuzziness in organization. This in the spirit of Bateson's first metalogue ("Why Do Things Get in a Muddle?") in *Steps to an Ecology of Mind* (1972: 3–8), appreciating "noise" in the setup that Bateson understood as desirable (unlike the cyberneticians), as "playful and creative"—as novelty that could lead to the creation of new patterns (Harries-Jones 1995: 113–14). Alternative dynamics of framing should bring forth the flexibility of organization and not simply its capacity to make linear order.

Moebius qualities helped me to understand just how taken-for-granted in Western thinking is lineal hierarchy and the role of the meta in this logic of organizing; and, so, just how significant logical paradox could be in such setups. Let me illustrate this in the following manner, which, in my view, has cosmic implications. Say we begin with a feedback loop. A feedback loop is relational. Common to Russell's Theory of Logical Types (if this is used as the basis for a cybernetic system) and to Batesonian thinking is that such a loop does what it does yet cannot describe itself or what it does. It is not self-reflexive. So, needed is a higher-order loop which encompasses the lower and describes what the latter does. This more abstract loop is necessarily both relational and reflexive about the setup. It is a relationship about a relationship. Yet, though the second loop does what it does, it cannot describe itself and what it does. Therefore a still higher loop is needed, and this third encompasses and describes reflexively what the two lower ones do, but it cannot describe itself. Even if we drop the transitive character of Russell's levels (as Jens Kreinath [2012] argues) and accept that the levels in Bateson's hierarchy are intransitive, interactive, and reciprocal (Harries-Jones 1995: 248), this emerging "system" contains the following problem: will it become self-limiting, as metalevels are piled atop one another? Moreover, will it become self-limiting yet not fully self-knowing (which would enable it to consciously change itself in systemic ways)? One way of self-closing and self-limiting is to create a metalevel as logical paradox. As such, the paradox itself becomes an impassable boundary that closes and turns the entire system back on itself.

Then it struck me that, looking from the opposite direction, top down, this is the elementary logic of organization of the surviving monotheistic cosmoses. The ancient Hebrew cosmos, the first of the surviving monotheisms, during a lengthy period came to postulate an absolute rupture, an utter discontinuity between God the creator and human beings, creating a binary of absolute difference yet similarity (God first created man in his image and then changed this similitude). God, the cosmic encompassment, is outside His cosmos, holding the entirety of cosmos together from outside itself. Human beings cannot penetrate the paradox that separates him/her from God. Within itself, cosmos is held together through *integration*, the rela-

tionships *between* its parts. The other surviving monotheisms modified this paradigm but basically remained within it. But the important point is that the monotheisms shattered the logic of cosmic organization that was (and still is in many respects) prominent among traditional and tribal peoples.

The late Galina Lindquist and I argue that so many of these tribal and traditional cosmoses are held together from within themselves, through the dense, intense, multiple, and overlapping connectivities of their interiorities. These cosmoses are held together through what I call *intra-gration*; they are quite continuous within themselves (absolutist binary distinctions are rare), organizing through multiple domains or planes rather than more discrete, clearly hierarchical levels. Indeed they may have no closure at all, no external boundaries, since they are held together from within themselves; and in these cosmoses logical paradox does not play the roles it has in the surviving monotheistic cosmoses. The creation and operation of these tribal and traditional cosmoses are more akin to autopoiesis (i.e., self-creation) and self-organization than they are to the metalevels of encompassment and disjunction of the surviving monotheisms.³ (These arguments are developed in Handelman and Lindquist 2011.) Yet these traditional and tribal cosmoses are no less reflexive than are the surviving monotheistic ones, but the former are continuously self-entering, *and their reflexivity derives from this*, from their ongoing entering within their own interiorities. Self-entering moebius movement can be understood to *fold* into itself, to self-connect through itself, thereby describing itself self-referentially, yet without creating levels or binary distinctions between inside and outside. This actually relates to the potentiality for fractal organization in such cosmoses, but fractals that entangle or braid with one another rather than nesting neatly within one another on different scales.

An intra-grated cosmos invokes a holism quite different from a cosmos that is integrated through encompassment, one which continues to have binary distinction at its core, metaphysically and historically. Altogether, however, binary structure (*pace* Levi-Strauss) may be a limited case of organization through recursiveness. In the surviving monotheisms, binaries are foundational, and logical paradox that derives from binary organization has powerful stopping power when it becomes a hard-and-fast boundary that in the first instance is impenetrable to human being's attempts to interact directly with God (though of course there are both historical and present-day modifications to this). Yet, as I pointed out, in India what looks like a logical paradox and may be recognized as such *is* more a curiosity than a block to movement. There, in cosmoses and in many areas of ritual, binaries are irrelevant and symbolism as representation makes no sense.

This description of a cosmos that is intra-grated through the density and intensity of its self-entering recursivities and infra-connectivities, has moebius-like qualities, but this moebiusness goes deep, way inside and through and through. Unlike Yair Neuman (2003), I do not see that the self-entering self-enfolding dynamics of moebiusness, which may characterize setups that are held together by themselves,

through themselves, are paradoxical. If we keep in mind that moebius dynamics are neither hierarchical nor structural, then they are not characterized by movement that . . . starts . . . stops . . . starts. . . . There is no “make a distinction” that creates sides, that creates a binary (the first step in G. Spencer Brown’s [1969] influential treatise on a logic of emerging space), and that enabled, for example, Hegel’s theory of the dialectic, and Louis Dumont’s (1970, 1986) theory of holism as encompassment. Take away the binary and moebius movement that has one side that turns or twists into itself, and so that has two sides that are never two, becomes illuminating. More generally, the use of chaos theory by anthropologists (Mosko and Damon 2005) and other social scientists needs to recognize that the stop . . . start . . . stop . . . mentality of analysis which continues to distinguish between “structure” and “process” (and other similar distinctions) simply retards recognition of the dynamics that are the social and the cultural (Handelman 2007). The interior potentiality of moebiusness is relevant as well to how certain rituals may be framed, and to how deeply this framing goes. Linear framing may be shallow by comparison, lending itself more to distinctions between a frame and its content. The potentially deep framing of moebiusness may plumb interiority to depths that emerge elsewhere and differently, and in this sense their *raison d’être* may be metaphysical, as is that of numerous rituals that are intended to do transformation within and through themselves.

Moebius Qualities of Ritual Framing: Or Is Moebius Necessarily Paradoxical?

Jens Kreinath (2012) has done an exhaustive and stimulating rethinking of *naven*, arguing that Bateson’s conception of framing is compatible with that of moebius framing, and adding the idea of fractal dynamics to discuss framing in the Iatmul *naven* “ritual.” Kreinath opts for a universal logic of the phenomenon of boundary (as apparently did Bateson) and for the mathematical reasoning that enables this. Just about all discussions of “boundary” agree that it has two sides, one outside and one inside (see for example, Zerubavel 1991). In Bateson’s terms the movement from outside to inside requires a higher, hierarchical level of abstraction, an encompassing metalevel, to accomplish passage. Recursively, the metalevel informs and is informed by the lower level. Kreinath agrees with Yair Neuman that the boundary (in Bateson’s evocative phrasing) is a difference that makes a difference, “a paradoxical event.” Bateson’s thinking on the frame, “This is play,” implies the paradoxicalness and dynamism of boundaries more generally.

Neuman introduces moebius-as-boundary in order to highlight the self-referencing paradoxical nature of the boundary generating difference. The moebius surface is paradoxical because mathematical logic demands this, and the phenomenological acquiesces: topologically the surface has one side; phenomenally it is a binary, an outside and an in-side. “Out” and “in” relate to one another such that phenomenally they are separate and distinct yet topologically they are one another. Here logical

paradox generates dynamism in every crossing of the boundary which also reproduces the boundary as paradox.

Does the moebius surface necessarily have the qualities that Neuman and Kreinath ascribe to it? Must the moebius surface be a paradoxical form? For Neuman the phenomenological is cultural, and the topological, mathematical. Yet whose phenomenological culture axiomatically established the ever-presentness of a binary distinction resulting from the postulation of a linear boundary, and, so, its two sides (after all, Spencer Brown was a mathematician and a logician)? Is the phenomenological culturally subordinate to the topological, given that the latter claims the truth of its universalism, which the former cannot do (despite Merleau-Ponty)? I do not think that the moebius form must be paradoxical in relation to itself, despite mathematically being both one-sided and two-sided, two-dimensional and three-dimensional. If one looks at the surface from the outside, it curves into itself. Yet if one moves along the moebius surface from its inside, it appears flat and never seems to curve self-referentially, even as it goes elsewhere. Moving on this surface, one doesn't know if one is outside or inside since the surface is continuous within itself. We can say of the moebius surface that what goes around comes around . . . only differently.⁴ One can argue that the moebius surface is relatively autonomous of its environment precisely because it is continuously self-entering, self-referencing, self-reflexive, self-processing. Yet it is *because* of these qualities that this surface is not paradoxical in relation to itself. The loops of the moebius surface are not hierarchical, higher abstractions of one another.⁵ So they may be described as braiding with one another, thereby making their relationships both stronger and more complex, since they all hold together from within, through one another. Therefore moebius framing likely is more resilient in its self-integration than is lineal framing.

Moebius framing comes closer to opening into forms within ritual that entangle and braid with one another (Handelman 2006c). Consider the sequencing of phases within ritual. Is an act or event coming before or after another a matter of norm, program, and script, as such positioning is commonly described in ritual studies? Or is it the very practice of an act that brings into phenomenal presence an act that “comes after,” as it were, yet that is already present (perhaps as potential) in the former as it emerges? An act shaping that which will come after itself even as it shapes itself into practice? An act that “hooks” itself into a future that becomes possible because the former is phenomenally actualizing itself? Those self-entering reflexive moebius qualities that enable passage into ritual—going around and coming around . . . but differently—may be no less the properties that enable the ritual to move into itself and through itself, shaping itself into its future so that what is “coming around” is no less present in what is “going around.” The boundary between one phase and another *within* a ritual may be no less moebius in its dynamics than the boundary between the environment and the ritual. One can envisage some rituals as braids of moebius surfaces that self-enter and emerge further along or deeper into the braid. This kind of movement of the ritual through itself—this deeply interior quality of dynamism—generates the ritual and abjures the shift of one ritual phase into another as something

like stop . . . start . . . stop. This entangling and braiding of ritual within and through itself is closer to what I called (in the previous section) intra-gration rather than integration, to ritual creating and holding itself together from within itself through its own emerging phenomenal *integrity*, the very quality that makes a particular ritual the kind of phenomenon that it is. This is the significance of thinking of ritual as self-organizing. The idea of braiding, if it is ever developed, may well offer a very different take on classification through ritual, one closer to the polythetic and to Wittgenstein's (1953; see especially Saler 2008) idea of "family resemblance" and Vygotsky's (1962) of "chain complexes."

Kreinath (and Neuman) argue that there is a universal logic of framing that will be based in mathematical logic, itself a universal method of reasoning. I am of mixed mind though more doubtful than not. Moebius framing and lineal framing seem to be radical extremes, yet in a *field* of framings we hardly have begun to think on. Jadran Mimica (1988), who studies the Iqwaye people of Papua New Guinea, once said during discussion (in 1999 at the Israel Institute for Advanced Studies) that among them ritual is something like a "swelling" of aspects of everyday life, hardly an occasion on the other side of a binary set apart in order to act on social life, yet also not an event with the recursive complexities of moebius framing. Perhaps among the Iqwaye, ritual does what social life does, only more intensely (and densely) so? So perhaps the boundary of ritual among the Iqwaye is neither a linear frame nor a moebius one, but one located elsewhere in the field of framings? Bruce Kapferer argues in *The Feast of the Sorcerer* (1997) that the Sinhalese *Suniyama* exorcism creates the cosmos entirely out of itself since it contains the basic premises and the dynamics of the cultural order, which created the ritual, which creates the cultural order and its cosmos. A ritual intensely recursive, hardly lineal, possibly moebius in its framing, yet perhaps not, again located elsewhere in the field of framings.

Today I would think twice and more about turning play and ritual into a binary whose two sides complement one another, with play metacommunicating make-believe and ritual, truth. In Batesonian terms, as Engler and Gardiner (2012) point out, the binary would be organized hierarchically, with that of truth subordinating make-believe, which in turn subverts the former, especially when play (which I understand more abstractly as indeterminacy) is located within ritual. The binary of play and ritual has an explanatory capacity, but it also is too overburdened. In the 1970s an ongoing issue in thinking on play was its relevance to sociocultural orders; and, for a few, the relevance of play to ritual phenomena. As it turned out, two major books (Spariou 1989; Sutton-Smith 1997) marked the apex of play studies, which since then has turned primarily to Internet play (Danet 2001) and video games.⁶

The Fractal *Wau* in *Naven*

My understanding of *naven* behavior changes accordingly in the wake of Roy Wagner's (2001) discussion of the fractal person in Melanesia and Jens Kreinath's (2012) discussion of fractals. Previously I had argued that the *wau* (the classificatory mother's

brother) playfully inverted himself in relation to his *laua* (the classificatory sister's son) and through this rebalanced this relationship which had been thrown out of kilter by the increase in status of the *laua* in relationship to his *wau*, because of the achievements of the *laua*. A neat solution through play to the instantaneous destabilizing of a crucial Iatmul social relationship. Today I would try to argue something like the following: faced with the accomplishment of his *laua*, the *wau* goes into himself and finds a fractal part of his distributed personhood which is entangled and shared with female kin, and in the full-blown dramatization of *naven* the *wau* acts out to others this aspect of his fractal being. This fractal part is him and it is also others. He does not turn himself inside-out or upside-down (both standard forms of inversion), but rather interiorly finds a part or part of others that is also part of his selfness and that is directly relevant to the *naven* context. In this sense, *naven* opens interiorly to others and this may be a movement that is more moebius-like yet closer to Melanesia. What looks like a binary inversion on the part of the *wau* is more like a non-linear re-assemblage of his person in relation to that of the *laua* and others. This could be understood through play as make-believe, yet this is no longer necessary since *the wau is not pretending to be other than he fractally is.*⁷

Though he alludes to this, Kreinath (2012) does not mention a fascinating fractal-like aspect of *naven* behavior—the way its forms condense and expand one another. This is the feature of *naven* behavior that persuaded me in the first instance that the fractal is relevant here. The most compact form of *naven* behavior is a single sentence—“Husband thou indeed”—which the *wau* utters (on hearing of the *laua's* accomplishment) in the absence of the latter, yet which condenses the core significance of what the *wau* is doing in *naven*. If the *laua* is present then the *wau* says the sentence, throws lime powder on his *laua*, and recites a list of his own descent group's genealogical names. I note here that these two forms are the least social in terms of the number of participants and in the spread of relationships that are affected by *naven* behavior, and this may be why Kreinath does not dwell on them, given his insistence that ritual must be social.⁸ The third form is the fully fledged, with the *wau* constituted in evident detail through both male and female attributes, with the participation of multiple others (Bateson 1958: 84–85, 109, 111, 119, 259, 288). Bateson wrote that he did not really understand the first two forms until he had witnessed the full-blown one. The fractal-like nesting of scale here is hard to ignore, yet with the following proviso—the social fractal is two-way, it both condenses and expands into and out of itself. In this regard these fractal forms also may be thought of as entangled with one another, their choice dependent on social and contextual forms.

It is worth noting here that Wagner's conception of the fractal person in Melanesia is paralleled in another radical rethinking of cultural personhood, that of McKim Marriott's (1989: 1–39; Babb 1990) ethnosociology of India. Marriott thinks of the interior entirety of the person as continually reformed, reorganized, and nuanced through what I call intra-action with many others—persons, the earth he/she was

born on, one's home, the constellations, and so forth. The substances of person, of all persons, move from the interior of one to the interior of another without necessarily becoming exterior (see, for example, Bar-On Cohen 2009 for a temporary setup of this sort). All of these beings (they are all alive) continually exchange elementary substances, thereby continuously altering their being in relation to one another (see Daniels 1984). They are deeply in-tangled with one another. Entireties here are first and foremost intra-grated rather than integrated, and the entirety of the person is, in a sense, cosmic, without going outside of itself. Though the fractal *wau* is unlike Marriott's understanding of Indian personhood, the former may be just as intra-active as interactive in *naven* behavior.

Kreinath (in press) uses the mathematical idea of random fractal dynamics to conceptualize the emergence of indeterminate factors emanating from unpredictable decisions of individual participants, which introduces uncertainty and contingency into *naven* interaction. The problem of emergence in social life is crucial to understanding the appearance of change in any social setup and is the key to one of Bateson's originary and brilliant concepts, schismogenesis, through which similarities, indeed identities in interaction, generate the emergence of difference, and differences in interaction generate similarity. Potentially, schismogenetic dynamics are open-ended and so do not surrender to the academic temptation and comfort to slip into a Hegelian dialectical mode whose processes generate the very parameters which self-constrain and limit the dynamics of emergence. Yet, apart from the value in thinking experimentally with such ideas, do we need random fractal dynamics to think about the indeterminacy of and the appearance in social life of emergent and unexpected properties? All interaction generates "noise" in Batesonian terms. Novel elements (regardless of how tiny) continuously appear, even as the great majority are disregarded and discarded, while a few are focused on and elaborated (Handelman 1977, 2006b; see too the Epilogue to this volume). Indeterminacy and the potential for change are always present. This brings us back to "ritual" and the making of change.

Naven as Social Ritual

Let's say for the sake of argument that all rituals are social, and so are relational. For example, for the anthropologist, Michael Houseman (and, I surmise, for Kreinath), ritual must be social, put together through the sociocultural and producing and altering social arrangements and social relationships. I think there is basic agreement on this among anthropologists.⁹ Houseman's (2005) illuminating experimental ritual, "The Red and the Black," is very convincing in this respect. Houseman built into the design of his invented ritual the kinds of social changes he wanted it to produce among his students, and the design persuaded the students and did just this. Does Houseman's ritual do *trans-formation*, that is, the changing of one form of being into another, or does it more directly move that being from one category to another within

a setup of classification? Changing a person from ill-health to improved health, or reviving an entropic cosmos, may not be only a matter of persuasion and performance, but of metaphysical alterations. The Jewish bar-mitzvah is a social ritual which confirms shifting a thirteen-year-old male from the social category of a child to that of an adult who is competent to fully participate in religious ritual. The change in category, in status, is profound, yet the ritual is a performance that only confirms what is already known; it does not directly transform the inner being of the youngster. On the other hand, the circumcision ritual—the cut that binds—done to a tiny male infant is transformative, since through a blood sacrifice (of a perfect form) the tiny male is de-formed by the cutting of the foreskin, de-created from God's image in which he was created, and re-formed in his de-creation as one forever bound as fully and only human to the Almighty, as one of His chosen people, a status he can never be fully rid of. The infant is related to socially as a Jew, yet elemental qualities in his self-constitution are understood to change unalterably through the ritual. He is potentiated for the future in a radically different way. The act of sacrifice is one of transformation, with the infant perhaps aware of this as shock and pain.

Naven behavior is social ritual first and foremost, and perhaps entirely so. It is ritual behavior that is wholly continuous with social life (perhaps as something like a “swelling,” an accentuation and intensification of the social, as Mimica mentioned for the Iqwaye people).¹⁰ This is emphasized even more if we accept that *naven* in its different forms is constituted at least in part through social fractals. The fractal is powerfully recursive and reproductive in its self-similarity, yet it is not transformative. *Naven* does rearrangement and recalibration of social relationships, but I do not consider these transformations since in them there is no radical change of one being or form into another. The fractal character of *naven* points to the continuousness of the *wau* with and among the fractal parts of his person. Random fractal dynamics may open ways to indeterminate change and perhaps to unplanned transforms, yet this is strongly discouraged in rituals whose phenomenal integrity depends on their interior design (nonetheless, see Kreinath n.d.). However, here is one example of what may be a random fractal dynamic in an unusual setting in which fractal-like forms seem to be prominent, taken from Sundar Kaali (2006).

In the region of Tanjavur in South India there are ritual enactments of the story of the demon-king, Hiranya, and his slaying at the claws of Visnu's avatara, the man-lion Narasimha. In one village these performances have taken an unusual turn in that all of the characters in the performance arena, with the exception of Narasimha/Vishnu, are doubled. There may be one cosmos in this performance or two, or perhaps a second is coming into existence; yet in any case something new has or is developing and the doubles seem to be fractals of one another, even as Narasimha/Vishnu holds all cosmos together from inside himself/itself. Because of a special boon, the demon-king cannot be killed under ordinary circumstances and he threatens the integrity of Vishnu's cosmos. Nonetheless the man-lion triumphs and cosmic entropy is reversed.

Especially interesting here is what did indeed happen during one performance. The defeat of the demon-king is usually demonstrated in performance by removing his crown and giving it to the man-lion. On this occasion, as Kaali notes, a performer of high status who was enacting Narasimha removed the man-lion's mask—his face, his being—at the climactic moment and brought it to the demon-king (apparently without knowing consciously why he did so), thereby announcing (but also in a way, generating) the victory of the demon-king over the god. This ending should never have happened, and it was corrected ritually; nonetheless the ending seemed a possible outcome, emotionally and logically, and one that, within the ritual enactment, had of course profound cosmic implications. In this ritual performance, within which a (perhaps random) fractal-like organization had developed, a random fractal suddenly emerged that threatened to entirely upset the logic of the cosmos being enacted ritually.

Framing and Depth

One of these issues is the depth of the frame. If for Bateson the metamessage constitutes the frame, then the depth of the frame is “thin” (as it especially would be in using set theory to discuss this). However, if the frame has moebius, braiding, or fractal qualities, the issue of depth becomes complex. For example, if a frame is constituted through self-entering moebius qualities, where do these “end” as it were? They may enter deeper into the ritual, connecting to, braiding with, boundaries and thematics within. There may be no clear-cut distinction between a metacommunicational feedback loop and information that is keyed to this, especially if the self-entering qualities of moebius also begin to self-organize. Thus it is worth considering the topology of homotopy.

Homotopy refers to two paths (or lines) that have the same points of start and the same endpoints but different ways of going from one to the other. The homotope contains different forms that coalesce between these points of start and the endpoints. Then there is smooth passage among these forms even though they are quite different in form and purpose. Put otherwise, two forms are homotopic if the deformation from one to the other is continuous (Armstrong 1979). A *common* example is the cup with a round handle that can morph into a doughnut, a torus, and back or likely elsewhere. These forms are quite different even though their smooth passages into and out of one another are related to their sharing only one hole in each, as do all the forms “in between,” as it were.¹¹

If one thinks that this idea is simply distant from anthropology and social organization, consider the pioneering study of Edmund Leach, *Political Systems of Highland Burma* (1954: 8–9). Leach argues that the Kachin peoples have two contradictory political modes of organization. One is the *shan* form, which is something like feudal hierarchy. The other is the *gumlao* form which is anarchistic and egalitarian. Most Kachin communities are neither one or the other, but rather that which Leach calls

the *gumsa* form. *Gumsa* communities are unstable in their political organization: with favorable economic circumstances they shift toward the Shan form; with unfavorable ones, toward the *gumlao*. Despite the profound differences between *shan* and *gumlao*, Leach understands each Kachin community as a variant turning within itself toward one or the other; in homotopic terms, as paths or planes that have the same starting points and endpoints but that move on different lines between the two.¹²

Cleaning Up Bateson's Framing

In an enlightening essay, Steven Engler and Mark Gardiner (2012) are owed a debt for disentangling Bateson's framing from Russell's set theory; for emphasizing that the frame need not be paradoxical in Russell's sense; for explicating that there is no necessary hierarchy of frame that distinguishes "outside" from "inside"; and for arguing that "something" framed differently (i.e., play) should be considered in its own right and not as a "not-something," which reduces its truth value and makes it hierarchically subordinate to whatever that "something" is. As I see it now, that Batesonian frames can be confused with Russellian sets is a good reason to rethink framing. Their introduction of Frege and denotation in place of Russell and hierarchical Logical Types enables the nuancing of framings and their graduated entering into one another, or indeed their entanglements with one another. Undoubtedly, we can think of social life as constituted through numerous framings with persons *moving* through these frames in the courses of living. This was Goffman's (1974) later understanding of social life, in which experience of the interpersonal became laminated into its framings.

Engler and Gardiner's critique of the centrality that Bateson gives to Korzybski's map-territory distinction is important since again for Bateson this is the relationship between representation that lacks truth and reality that is truth. A character in the noir thriller, *Blindside* (Bayer 1990), says, "Photographs lie; diagrams tell the truth." Diagrams make no claims to truth, as photos (in the pre-digital photo age) often do. Diagrams can neither be real nor unreal since they purport to be nothing other than that which they are, selective abstractions that have no significance outside themselves (i.e., the diagram of the London Underground cannot be used to move around London outside of the Underground). Lewis Carroll (1893: 169) showed the absurdity in confuting the map-as-representation with the territory-as-real (the idea later was adopted by Borges). In *Bruno and Sylvie Concluded*, the interlocutor converses with Mein Herr on the value of maps. The interlocutor tells Mein Herr that the largest map considered useful is on the scale of six inches to the mile. Mein Herr responds with amazement, telling how in his country people tried a scale of six yards to the mile, then a hundred yards to the mile, and "then came the grandest idea of all! We actually made a map of the country, on the scale of *a mile to the mile!*" Asked whether this map has been used much, Mein Herr responds: "It has never been spread out yet . . . the farmers objected: they said it would cover the whole country, and shut

out the sunlight! So now we use the country itself, as its own map, and I assure you it does nearly as well.” The absurdity is one of trying to do the representation (the map) of a normal territory which will be no different than the territory, yet which will be the not-territory because it is a representation which is intended to replace the territory but cannot because it is not the territory, but a representation of this. When the territory is used within itself as a guide to itself it does quite well, even if it is not an abstraction of itself.

Engler and Gardiner argue that if Batesonian framing is treated in Fregian terms as a denotative guide, then relationships within the frame are sense-making, relativistically, but not, or not necessarily so, outside the frame. In this regard, ritual as itself does not necessarily denote truth outside itself but makes sense within itself to itself—thus the Catholic priest, the wafer, and the body of Christ come together. This may be another way of arguing (though from very different premises than mine) that ritual is worth studying in its own right, in and of itself—that ritual should make sense to itself (see Chapter Three, this volume).¹³ The denotative, guiding function of the frame is metacommunicative, but this too is relativistic—more or less distinctive, more or less explicit, more or less powerful, and so forth. In this regard, ritual need not be set apart from the everyday in a hard-and-fast way, but may be similar, for example, to what Mimica called “swelling.” For that matter, “swelling” may well describe all the forms of *naven*, understood fractally.

For Engler and Gardiner, framing-as-map denotes where ritual is positioned in the world. They do not relate to the interiors of frames, of rituals. If I understood them correctly, they would argue that frames within ritual also are marked and guided by further denotative shifts into context. Yet missing from their formulations is any attention to *practice*, apart from the semantic (implying that rituals are context-sensitive grammars?). Perhaps too much reliance has been placed on the cognitive (and semantic) constitution of framing? Which in a way is “thin” framing, unlike the “thick” framing of moebius qualities of self-entering, which is that which rituals of trans-formation do? And that not enough reliance has been given to practices that bring a ritual into being and shape its self-forming and self-organization that may separate it from the everyday?

Conclusion

Bateson’s holistic vision was cosmic and all-embracing. He proposed a universal logic of framing that was consonant with his understanding of the systemic organization of cosmos in its fullest sense. If we accept that cosmoses differed in their organization (and likely continue to do so, to various degrees) then it is not that Bateson’s universalism fails in the face of relativism, but that human beings have created great variability in the metaphysics of their cosmoses, and of their rituals. There is no universal frame for “ritual.” Generally speaking, there is not even a single more advantageous theoretical perspective to take on the framing of ritual. While this reflects

the weaknesses of the category of “ritual,” it nonetheless highlights the need to think empirically, abductively (in C. S. Peirce’s sense; see Chapter Two), through a case-by-case approach to ritual framing. At present this is the intuitive way to go, since it is more likely to open to fruitful ideas for analyses of framing.

Utterly evident is that the understanding of framing as first and foremost cognitive is wrong-headed. Sensuousness and aesthetics (in the sense of practice, not beauty, [see Chapter Five, this volume]) are integral to ritual framing. To complicate this, if one takes a framing approach to ritual (and this is not self-evident or given), should one relate only to the frame as it relates ritual to the world around it? Or should one ask whether framing is no less important within a given ritual, whether it is constituted through phases, whether these, too, should be considered framed, and how it is that the ritual moves through them, frame after frame, frame within frame, frame entangled with frame? If so, we would have to ask whether the same kind of frame is consonant throughout the ritual.

Issues of framing within ritual come to the fore when rituals that do trans-formation within and through themselves are distinguished from rituals that are continuous throughout themselves. In the former, trans-formation may be predicated on making a kind of being or condition of being discontinuous while using cultural dynamics to create this form or condition differently, indeed perhaps as another form or condition of being. In the latter, rituals that are wholly social tend to rearrange, conform, and confirm social relations through representation rather than transformation. In *Models and Mirrors* (Handelman 1998: 47–48) I suggested a simple rule of thumb to check the distinction in ritual between trans-formation and representation: run the ritual backward (hypothetically, of course). In a ritual that does representation, running it backward may well produce a different cultural narrative, yet one that is viable. In a ritual that does trans-formation, say one of healing, running it backward is likely to produce the unviable, perhaps the deleterious, perhaps sorcery in place of healing. If framing is to be of increased value in studying “ritual,” then we need to expand our sense of the multiplicity of framings that shape ritual phenomena from without and from within.

Notes

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1. Making framing looser and more flexible is not a new issue. Framing in art is a case in point. The sixteenth-century portrait painter, Jan Gossaert, painted subjects with an empty picture frame behind them. He took them out of the picture frame and painted them more realistically, perhaps more true-to-life, warts and all. See his *A Young Princess (Dorothea of Denmark?)*, c. 1530. (The National Gallery, London), and his *The Children of Christian II of Denmark*, c. 1526. (The Royal Collection). Metaframing does not work for Picasso’s cubist *Portrait of Jaime Sabartes as a Spanish Nobleman*, 1939. The portrait is usually understood as bringing together multiple external perspectives of vision as a simultaneity of the same face. I think that in this

- work (and in many others) Picasso paints the face as it is in mundane motion, showing the dynamism of expressive movement that is within itself as face.
2. The moebius strip is a mathematical construct, yet its form and (perhaps its dynamic) are found in nature, for example in the circulation of the earth's warmer and cooler ocean currents. On the nano-scale, the moebius form has been created at Arizona State University ("DNA art imitates life: Construction of a nanoscale Mobius strip") using a variant of origami DNA, measuring less than a thousandth of the width of a human hair, and thought to have a variety of applications (Science Daily, accessed 16 August 2020 <<https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2010/10/101004101530.htm>>). At the opposite extreme of scale, astrophysicists using the Herschel telescope have identified a twisted ring of gas and dust at the center of the Milky Way galaxy, measuring something like six-hundred light years across. Called a twisted ellipse by the scientists, the ring includes some of the most active areas of star formation in the galaxy. At the center of the ellipse is a massive black hole. And, who knows, perhaps this gigantic twisted ellipse will turn out to have moebius properties ("Herschel telescope discovered twisted ring of gas and dust at the centre of our galaxy," World Socialist Web Site, accessed 16 July 2020 <<https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2011/08/ring-a05.html>>).
 3. Niklas Luhmann postulates that social autopoiesis refers to systems that differentiate themselves from their environments through their recursive operations, through their self-organization. Phillip Guddemi (2007: 914) dubs as "sympoietic" those recursive systems that do not bound themselves from their environment. In the case of cosmos, which is self-creating, intensely recursive, yet without boundaries, sympoietic organization might be relevant. In the case of rituals of transformation that do enclose themselves recursively, the autopoietic self-organizing sense is more relevant.
 4. David Lynch uses this quality in his films, *Lost Highway* and *Mulholland Drive* (see Chapter Ten).
 5. Perhaps it is because Kreinath takes Bateson's universal framing to be paradoxical and hierarchical that he does not understand why I did not so much abandon this formulation as look for alternatives that related with greater congruence to a variety of the empirical materials.
 6. In this book, Sutton-Smith introduced the idea of "playfulness" with the intention of modifying emphasis on the abrupt discontinuity between "play" and the serious. In this respect, Engler and Gardiner are close to his position.
 7. Gil Daryn's (2006) ethnographic analysis of a community of Nepalese Brahmins is one of the few detailed works in anthropology that actively uses the idea of the fractal.
 8. Elsewhere I address the issue of "how social must ritual be?" (Handelman 2005b; and Chapter Three, this volume).
 9. Houseman's approach to ritual has strong resonances with that of the social anthropologists of the Manchester School (founded by Max Gluckman) during the 1950s and 1960s (see Evens and Handelman 2006). The Manchester School utterly eschewed metaphysics in the understanding of ritual, concentrating entirely on social arrangements and relationships. One need only compare Gluckman's essay, *Les rites de passage* (1962) with his student, Victor Turner's discussion of rites of passage in his *The Ritual Process* (1969), after he broke with the Manchester insistence that all ritual was solely social.
 10. Communication to the colloquium of the Research Group, "Narratives of Ritual," The Israel Institute for Advanced Studies, May 1999.
 11. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/homotopy>. Accessed 14 August 2020.
 12. It is worth noting that Leach (1961: 7) was an early proponent in anthropology of thinking topologically.
 13. The eighteenth-century empiricist philosopher, Bishop George Berkeley, felt fully the complete identity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost within the Mass and simultaneously the absence of this identity, indeed the distinctiveness of each from the others. Outside the Mass, as philosopher rather than believer, he concluded that the simultaneous presence of identity and non-identity was impossible.

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