SPECIAL SECTION

Unbecoming individuals

The partible character of the Christian person

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According to the received wisdom in Melanesian ethnography and elsewhere, Christianity is “unrelentingly individualistic” (e.g., Robbins 2004: 293). In this chapter, drawing upon the notion of “dividual” or “partible personhood” of the New Melanesian Ethnography and implicit in the classic Van Gennepian model of rites of passage, I revisit Louis Dumont’s, Kenelm Burridge’s, and Max Weber’s authoritative conceptualizations of Christian personhood. I seek to demonstrate that in the early Christian church and the later Protestant Reformation of Luther and Calvin, the person, whether human or divine, qualifies instead as a dividual—a kind of agent radically distinct from the canonical “possessive individual” of Western political and economic discourse. Following Dumont, Burridge, and Weber on close reading, I argue that the seeming “individuality” of Christian persons consists merely in singular moments of overarching processes of elicitive detachment, gift-transfer, incorporation, and reciprocity whereby the constituent parts of total or overall dividual persons are transacted. Christian “individualism,” in short, is nothing less than an instance of dividual personhood and agency, fundamentally distinct from the possessive individual of modern secular society.

Keywords: personhood, agency, Christianity, individualism/individuality, dividuals, ritual process, sacred/profane alternation, Melanesia

The expression individualism includes the most heterogeneous things imaginable.

—Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*

In the anthropology of religion, which has so dramatically burgeoned in recent years, it has been widely presupposed that Christians as persons, whether in the West or elsewhere, inherently qualify as “individuals” and, accordingly, that

Christianity itself fits comfortably within the bounds of modernity. While there can be little doubt that the Christianities manifested in many contemporary settings worldwide now co-occur alongside the secular political and economic forms that have emerged since the Enlightenment, it remains to be shown, I suggest, how or whether the sorts of persons existing in those two settings are identical or whether the empirical parameters of the one can be taken as indicative of the constitution and capacities of the other. I am drawing attention here to the possible relevance of the longstanding analytical distinction in anthropology, ultimately derived from Émile Durkheim ([1915] 2001) but subsequently amended (see below), between “sacred” or “religious” notions and activities and those “secular” or “profane” with specific regard to the character of Christian personhood.

I raise this matter in light of the appearance on the Melanesian ethnographic scene—roughly coincidental with the relatively newfound anthropological interest in Christianity—of a new kind of person: the “dividual,” “partible,” “composite,” or “distributed person,” as formulated in the writings of Marilyn Strathern (1988), Roy Wagner (1991) and Alfred Gell (1998) among others. This figure, inspired by the classical Maussian theory of reciprocity and gift exchange (Mauss [1925] 1990) as interpreted chiefly by Gregory ([1982] 2015) is the central actor in what has come to be known as the New Melanesian Ethnography (Josephides 1991, hereafter NME). From that perspective, the dividual stands in analytical contrast to the canonical modern Western “individual” as perceived in Christian and other sociocultural settings. Where the dividual is a composite being, one who is divisible or *divide*-able into component parts or relations that are transactable with other similarly constituted dividuums through processes of elicitive gift exchange, the individual is stereotypically presented as an ideally impermeable, indivisible or nondividable being whose relations with others consist of transactions over “things,” “objects,” or “entities” that are categorically distinct from they who exchange them.

In the wake of the dividual’s arrival, Melanesianists’ and others’ understanding of the nature of Christian personhood and sociality has become considerably more complicated when it is appreciated that most Pacific Islanders have, through missionization, colonialism, and their reverberations, converted to one of several Christian denominations. This additional complication consists in the tight intersection of several factors. First, in what most regard as the foundational text of the NME, Marilyn Strathern’s *The gender of the gift* (1988), the parts of which dividual Melanesians are composed are distinguished almost solely in gendered (i.e., same-versus cross-sex) terms. As I have argued elsewhere (Mosko 2001, 2009, 2014, forthcoming), traditional Melanesian religions and ritual practices identify persons and the parts and relations of which they are constituted in terms often additional to gender—that is, as sacred or profane, pure or impure, clean or dirty, hot or cold, and so on—which in established Durkheimian (1915) view can be construed as closely analogous to familiar Judeo-Christian understandings of holy and unholy, godly and ungodly (see below). There would not seem to be any reason why the dividuality of persons in Melanesia, the West, or elsewhere in a generic sense need be restricted to gender as just one semantic dimension of personhood and agency.

Second, as Talal Asad (1993), Marshall Sahlins (1996), Fenella Cannell (2005, 2006: 14–22), Michael Scott (2005: 104), Chris Haan (2007, 2012) and others have

noted, anthropology generally and the anthropologies of religion and Christianity specifically, including Durkheim's legacy, have been strongly shaped by the religious background of the anthropologists producing them; namely, Judeo-Christianity broadly speaking and post-Reformation Protestantism particularly. For Melanesia and nearby regions, this orientation has proven to be critical insofar as Christianity and converts to it have been routinely represented ethnographically with varying degrees of intensity as "individualist" in senses routinely accepted in the West, even as "unrelentingly individualist" (Robbins 2004: 293; see also, for example, Robbins 2002, 2012: 18–19; Trompf 1977; Douglas 2001; Errington and Gewertz 1995; Knauff 2002; Keane 2002, 2006, 2007; Tomlinson 2006; Bialecki, Hayes, and Robbins 2008; Barker 2015). Indeed, individualism has been noted as being a central issue in the anthropology of Christianity to the relative neglect of other modes of personhood (e.g., Robbins 2012: 18–21; 2014a: S167).

Third, my concern here is that, although the cluster of scholars noted above may well base their claims as to Christianity's individualism on somewhat varying grounds, their positions converge with the exceptionalism of most Christian theology; namely, that Christian individualist personhood as an expression of modernity is radically distinct from the modes of personhood and sociality characteristic of "premodern," pre-Christian peoples, as exemplified by Melanesian dividuality. Consequently, there appears to be a notable measure of agreement among contemporary anthropologists of Christianity that conversion from the religions of the latter folks constitutes a fundamental cultural "rupture," "break," or "discontinuity" as concerns personhood particularly (e.g., Meyer 1998: 82; Engelke 2004; Robbins 2003, 2004, 2007a, 2012; Bialecki, Hayes, and Robbins 2008: 1143–46; Robbins, Schieffelin, and Vilaça 2014; Barker 2015; but see Robbins 2012: 15). I am not alone in questioning these presuppositions, implicit or explicit (see Coleman 2004, 2006, 2011; Scott 2005, 2014; Cannell 2005, 2006; Toren 2006; Rutherford 2006; Erikson 2008, 2012; Hess 2009; Daswani 2011, 2013, 2015; Werbner 2011a, 2011b; Vilaça 2011, 2014; Klaitis 2011; Pype 2011; Haan 2007, 2012; Bielo 2012; Sarró 2012; Myhre 2013; Telban 2013; Formenti 2014; Bialecki 2015; and see also Bialecki, Hayes, and Robbins 2008: 1141, 1142, 1144–52).

Fourth, it is a curious fact that in the ethnographic materials emerging over the past few decades from Melanesia, the dividual and individual have tended to appear singly in contexts of synchronic reproduction or diachronic transformation, respectively, but not both. Thus the dividual has been overwhelmingly identified as an artifact of continuity, where the individual has been taken as index of change (see, e.g., Foster 1995: 8–18; cf. Englund and Leach 2000; LiPuma 2000; Strathern and Stewart 2000). Hence, again, in some of the most authoritative writings from the region, the postconversionary Christian person has been configured in close accord with the theological orthodoxy of Christian individualism (e.g., Barker 2003: 285, 287; Errington and Gewertz 1995: 117, 122; Robbins 2004: 293, 295–96; 2012: 18–19; 2012; see also Keane 2007: 201–7). However, there have been some who have proclaimed the copresence of dividual and individual modes of personhood in their Melanesian and Western forms, respectively, in *both* indigenous and post-contact situations regardless of whether the systems at issue are undergoing stability or change (LiPuma 2000; Strathern and Stewart 1998, 2000; and see below). This to me indicates that contemporary theorizing of dividuality and individuality

in relation to processes of continuity and change generally in Melanesia has yet to reach clarity.

One alternative would be to construe the two types so as to diminish or obliterate the differences between them.¹ Another, which I shall adopt in this article, is to capitalize on those analytical differences so as to highlight capacities for dynamism and transformation intrinsic to anthropological conceptualizations of the dividual that have been largely elided in studies of social change, religious and otherwise, in Melanesia and elsewhere. At the risk of oversimplifying, the sheer observation of change has all too often been taken as *prima facie* evidence of the workings of individuals or individualism of the familiar kinds (or both). As I have argued elsewhere regarding numerous contexts of supposedly secular commodification in Oceania (Mosko 1999, 2002, 2007, 2012, 2013, 2014, forthcoming), however, the processes of reciprocal elicitation, detachment, and attachment of the parts/relations of dividual persons are as amenable to people's transacting ritually over novel exogenous elements of personhood as over traditional ones. Thus in contexts of change including and additional to Christian conversion, the dividual is as potentially capable of fostering change as it is for producing continuity in people's personal repertoires and relations.

I make these assertions in the aftermath of the vigorous exchange with several of my Melanesianist colleagues that appeared in the *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* in 2010 as noted by Jon Bialecki and Girish Daswani in their Introduction to this Special Section (see Mosko 2010a, 2010b; Barker 2010; Robbins 2010; Errington and Gewertz 2010; Knauff 2010).² My aim here is to add precision to anthropological conceptualizations of the capacities for dynamism respective to both dividual and individual agencies as they appear to have developed or made manifest in contexts of Christian conversion and experience. This can be taken in part as an attempt at what Wagner (1975) as a key contributor to the NME has termed "reverse anthropology" (see also Turner 1988; Scott 2005; Kirsch 2006). Rather than employ preconceptions of Christian personhood that have likely been shaped by Christian theology, I suggest that indigenous Melanesian views and practices involving the partibility of persons might well offer a perspective from which new insights on Christian personhood in general might be gleaned.

With respect specifically to Melanesians' conversions to Christianity, as I argued in 2010, the question whether adherents to Christianity qualify as dividuals or individuals, or in what specific respects, is yet more complicated, even contradictory.

1. This, I believe, is the option presented by Andrew Strathern and Pamela Stewart (1998, 2000; cf. Scott 2007) when in their formulation of the Melanesian "relational-individual" the critical dynamics of personal partibility are effectively elided. Somewhat differently but to the same effect, in his characterizations of Urapmin "relationalism" in its indigenous, postconversionary hybridized and modern forms, Joel Robbins (2004: 13, 291–94, 298–307, 332–33, 2014b: 174–77) gives no hint of how significant subtleties along the lines of personal partibility might well be at play.
2. Jon Bialecki (2015) provides an excellent summary of the central issues in the initial *JRAI* exchange and several of the important theoretical and comparative implications that follow from them.

This is largely owing to widespread folk, ethnographic, and historical accounts, on the one hand, that in Western Christianity and indigenous Melanesian religious systems persons are morally configured in accordance with *both* poles of the classic Durkheimian dichotomy (e.g., sacred versus profane, and its homologues holy versus unholy, transcendent versus immanent and so on). But on the other hand in the canonical political and economic discourse of the post-Enlightenment West, persons have been routinely conceived as bounded individuals, specifically as manifestations of *solely* secular, profane, or mundane milieu untainted by religious or sacred qualifications (Weber [1930] 1992; Burridge 1979; Dumont 1986; Macpherson 1962; Taylor 2007).

The solution to this convoluted puzzle, I suggest, is to be found in the observation that in Christianity as in most if not all other religious traditions, a kind of individuality intimately connected with local understandings of sacredness can indeed be discerned—one that is itself *a dimension of overall dividual personhood*—but which unfortunately in the thinking of many commentators has been collapsed or confused with the individualism of modern secular society. Conversion of dividual Melanesians or others to Christianity need not necessarily consist in the sorts of ruptures that have been often presupposed but rather in an alternation from one mode of overall personal partibility to another.

So what kind of “individuality within dividuality” is this that differs from the secularized individual of Western modernity? That is the central question of this article. To foreshadow my answer, I refer as background to the well-known formulation in extant social anthropological theory inspired by Arnold Van Gennep’s ([1909] 1964) seminal study of *rites de passage* and elaborated by Kenelm Burridge (1969), Victor Turner (1969), Edmund Leach (1976), Valerio Valeri (1985), Maurice Bloch (1992), and many others. With Christianity as with other religions, I shall argue, converts seeming to appear to Western observers as individuals and often professing to be such in their own estimation routinely undergo initiatory ritual processes involving changes to the personal briefs in the course of transcending the gap between sacred or transcendent and profane or immanent domains. This is accomplished through sequential acts of separation, transition, and reaggregation wherein actors as overall dividual beings, whether as humans of the mundane world or spirits, deities, et cetera of the sacred realm, reciprocally detach, exchange, and attach the religiously relevant components of their respective persons. The sort of individuality intrinsic to these contexts of interaction for Christians as for devotees of other religions therefore consists in those transitory moments when specific elements/relations of actors have been ritually separated and discarded or set aside from their persons in anticipation of incorporating yet-to-be-detached and elicited components of others into their own personal briefs. This kind of “individuality,” and the mode of agency associated with it, I maintain, is radically distinct from that of the ideally thoroughly secular condition of the canonical modern individual.

In my 2010 essay outlining the contribution of personal partibility to processes of Christian belief, ritual practice, and conversion, I sought to substantiate basically the same claims outlined here through focused ethnographic and comparative analyses of others’ and my own Melanesian materials (see also Mosko 2001, 2009, 2010b, 2013, forthcoming). Here I pursue a different course to the same objective,

which unfolds in four more theoretically focused steps. First, for the sake of non-Melanesianist readers, I outline as briefly as possible the analytical distinction between Melanesian dividual and Western individual as they have emerged in the NME and associated broader literature.

Second, I trace out a number of modifications to the conventional understanding of the Melanesian dividual so as to make it amenable to the analysis of specifically Christian personhood and agency. Here I focus on persons as composed of detachable and transactable sacred and profane elements.

Third, by way of formal contrast, I summarize Crawford Macpherson's (1962) authoritative portrayal of secular modern individualism highlighting the key differences between it and the modified formulation of ritualized Melanesian partible personhood that I am presenting as focused on the sacred and profane components of persons and relations. And given the notoriety Talal Asad's work on religion (1993) and secularism (2003) has earned, I address his alternative approach to both.

Fourth, as the main body of the chapter, I revisit through careful rereadings of three oft-cited authorities the supposedly "individualist" character of Christian personhood: Louis Dumont, Kenelm Burridge, and Max Weber. I focus particularly in Weber's case on his treatments of charismatic authority and the sort of personhood distinctive to Christian personhood in the Protestant writings of Luther and Calvin. But as regards all three, I suggest, their depictions of Christian individuality are actually isomorphic with religious images of overall dividual personhood of both living and spiritual persons of the Christian universe.

The Melanesian dividual

The "dividual" was introduced to anthropology from India by McKim Marriott (1976) but received its chief renown from Marilyn Strathern's *The gender of the gift* (1988). For Strathern, particular or single dividuals are composite beings constituted of the gift contributions of the detached elements of other persons.³ Social life in this context consists in the reciprocal elicitive exchange and distribution of those transactable parts of persons with one another. Through lifetimes of such transactions, persons are cumulatively composed and decomposed of the elements of other persons; hence, social relations can also be seen as people's mutually embodied components. Persons are thereby attributed agency, or the ability to anticipate and elicit the reciprocation from yet other persons as patients, through the strategic assessment of the composition of their own persons—that is, which parts to detach that will be effective in eliciting the desired components of the patient, and so on. The attachment of the part of the agent by the patient thus equips him/her with additional capacities, which he/she can similarly use strategically for detachment in relation to that or other relations.

3. Strathern (1988: *passim*) introduces in her book a second mode of "individuality"—i.e., the "collective" as distinct from the "particular individual"—which is tangential to the present discussion; see Mosko (2015).

Figure 1: Elicitive gift-exchange between dividual persons.

All of this, of course, is temporalized in accord with Pierre Bourdieu's (1977) critique of Maussian timeless synchrony. Strathern's model of personal partibility and exchange in turn allows for agents' strategizing. From her perspective, the relevant detachable elements or relations of persons are selected in terms of their same- and cross-sex gendered identities. And critically, the partible or dividual person as a total composite being is not bounded from other similarly constituted persons; they are mutually composed of the reciprocated elements of each other. As Sahlins (2013) has recently commented on the definition of kinship, dividuals of this kind are linked by a "mutuality of being." This means that in settings of dividual agency, there is no distinction between subjects and objects, or persons and things, as is characteristic of the commodified individualism of the West (see below). It thus remains to be seen whether Christian persons qualify as dividuals related through the very elements of their mutual composition, or whether as individuals they are instead beings linked to others only by the exchange of items or objects external or distinct from their persons.

(In)dividuality, the sacred, and the profane or secular

Foremost among the adaptations of Strathern's model that are necessary with respect to Christianity is the substitution of same- and cross-sex components and identities of dividuals with their sacred and profane analogues. Here I argue Christians as total persons in Western as well as non-Western settings are similarly composite beings constituted of detachable, transactable elements or parts. But they are also distinguished, first, in *religious* rather than gendered terms as played out, second, in belief and ritual according to elicitive modes of Maussian gift reciprocity rather than commodified market exchange. This necessitates that I digress briefly into the meanings of sacred and secular or profane that I employ in this chapter.

The Sacred and the Profane. Up until the postmodern turn of the discipline in the 1980s, the anthropological study of religion was mostly dominated by Durkheim's theoretical legacy premised on a cross-culturally universal focus on matters *sacred*

as opposed to *profane*.⁴ People's sacred religious understandings and actions in this view are "collective representations"; that is, shared, obligatory images reflecting the powers of society over its members. Profane ideas and actions, by contrast, are expressive of individual or private concerns and thus lack the collective resonances. Accordingly, for Durkheim, despite the enormously varying ways in which sacred and profane were locally defined, the two always are in a relation of absolute or categorical opposition. Indeed, Durkheim's basic definition for "sacred" is "set apart" or separated—dare I suggest "detached"?—from the profane.

Over the course of the past century, Durkheim's classic formulation has been criticized and amended from various perspectives. There are three revisions or elaborations that are directly pertinent to the present context. First, the separation of matters sacred from those profane as found in many societies (such as those typical of Melanesia) appears to be less absolute than as posited by Durkheim. Similarly to Leach's findings concerning analogous terms of "expressive" versus "technical" phenomena, sacred and profane are better viewed as denoting "aspects" rather than "types" of almost any kind of being, entity, or action (1954: 10–13; 1976: *passim*). From this perspective, the same beings, entities, and actions may well embody features that alternately express both sacred and profane qualities, and, of particular relevance to individuals, their associated powers may well be separable from each other and thus singly transactable.

Second, consistent with this, the late structuralist theory of symbolism inspired by Mary Douglas (1966) and Leach (1964, 1976) offered an important refinement

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4. For reasons that go well beyond the bounds of the current essay, many if not most anthropological students of religion of the past few decades have turned away from Durkheimian approaches in the course of a broad-based disciplinary rejection of all such modernist "grand narratives." Language of sacred and profane has not disappeared but most of their relevance to ritual processes has. Talal Asad's *Genealogies of religion* (1993), which critically focused on Clifford Geertz's (1973) famous definition of religion, has proven to be particularly influential in this regard. Rather than pursue the study of religion as a more or less homogeneous range of phenomena through the analysis of the varying symbolic meanings of ritual, Asad asserted, in large measure following Michel Foucault, "different kinds of practice and discourse are intrinsic to the field in which religious representations (like any representations) acquire their identity and their truthfulness. From this it does not follow that the meanings of religious practices and utterances are to be sought in social phenomena, but only that their possibility and their authoritative status are to be explained as products of historically distinctive disciplines and forces" (1993: 53–54). I suggest, however, that Asad's attention to Geertz (who mentions the sacred but not the profane) effectively sidestepped a direct engagement with the long list of contributors to the Durkheimian tradition mentioned above who have struggled to refine Van Gennep's model of ritual passages as heavily modulated by sacred/profane alternations (see below). Most obviously lacking in Asad's otherwise impressive treatment of medieval monastic discipline, for example, is any overt acknowledgement of the relevance of the religious (i.e., sacred/profane, holy/unholy) status of penitents through the course of their ordeals. In light of Asad's and others' valid claims as to anthropology's historically distinctive Western roots, one would think the one context where representations of the sacred and the profane would be considered especially apropos would be that of indigenous Christian ritual practice.

in the conceptualization of sacredness in terms of structural ambiguity. In this view, sacred entities are those which simultaneously contain contradictory elements on the logical order of both “P” and “~P” From this vantage, profane or secular things are defined as lacking in such classificatory confusion.

Third, as noted above, Van Gennep’s formulation of the model of rites of passage comprising phases of separation, transition, and aggregation is premised on a notion of religious personhood of a basically dividual sort; that is, one alternately capacitated to incorporate both sacred and profane elements, to detach or attach them (or both) in the course of elicitive gift interactions with other persons, and in the process to transform their religious (i.e., sacred or profane) conditions.

The Secular. In the Durkheimian tradition of the cross-cultural study of religion, the concept of the “secular” more or less coincides with that of the “profane” as is common in vernacular English. In the *Random House Webster’s College Dictionary*, for example, “secular” is defined as: “1. of or pertaining to worldly things or to things not regarded as sacred; temporal. 2. not relating to or concerned with religion (opposed to sacred); secular music. 3. concerned with non-religious subjects; *secular schools*” (1991: 1212). However, in studies of the historical developments initiated with the Reformation and Enlightenment leading up to “modernity,” as exemplified in the analyses of Max Weber, among others, the notion of the secular has taken on a related but rather more specific meaning as referring to those discrete public spheres or compartments of culture and society that are separate from domains of the religious or transcendental, most particularly the nation-state. I take Charles Taylor’s (2007: 2-4, 18) notion of the “secular” in the first of his senses to denote institutions of modern large-scale, complex societies “emptied of God, or of any reference to ultimate reality” (2007: 2). For Taylor, this means that people can engage socially in such autonomous spheres while still participating separately in activities of the religious sort “believing in God” (2007: 2).

For my purposes, these two meanings of the secular give rather direct expression to the underlying question this article is aimed at answering: Is the “individualism” widely taken to be intrinsic to modern market-based secular societies equivalent to the “individualism” that has been posited as inherent to Christianity?

Christian dividuals

In nearly all Christian sects with which I am familiar, God the Father, Jesus, Mary, the Saints, the Devil, as well as self-declared human Christians and sinners are persons seen as composed of the parts of persons that have resulted from their distinct elicitive reciprocal exchanges with one another.⁵ Theological details in these

5. The following synopsis of typical features of Christian belief and practice are presented merely as illustrations of the general sort of thinking and sociality that I am attempting in this chapter to illuminate. I do not by any means claim that the specific content of any of these indications is to be taken as definitive of “Christianity” in general or any of its many empirical variations. I have found Geoffrey Lloyd’s (2012) recent comments on cross-cultural commensurability and “semantic stretching” to be particularly useful for this exercise.

matters vary greatly across denominations, of course, but the general outlines are fairly clear. In regard to kinship or relations of “the flesh,” say, persons are connected to parents and other relatives through the detachments and attachments of blood, seed, flesh, or other material qualities constituting them as embodying parts of one another, as kin. But through their specifically Christian intercourse, the transactions of which distinctly Christian interaction consist—let us say in the default condition—are predominantly ritual or spiritual, hence, sacred, in being marked as either morally good or evil, or at least that is their relevant characteristic. The list of examples is immense. Grace is a detachable token of God and his Will, often associated with Holy Spirit that has been given to humans, whether to some or all of them, by God for the life and sustenance of the spiritual parts of their being. All of creation, both materially and spiritually for that matter, can be regarded from Genesis as similarly a detachment from God’s total person; that is, originating from him and retaining some element(s) of his divinity despite his subsequent transcendence, distant or otherwise. Therefore all members of God’s creation still embody some features or aspects of his sacredness through the gifts of grace or creation (or both).

God’s Word is also a detachment from his person incorporated in the many works of his creation—a gift that humans uniquely are obliged to receive and internalize. God’s grace, Will, and Word given by him thus become parts of the recipients’ persons, intimately attached to the vital parts of their total personal being—e.g., their hearts or souls. The receipt of God’s gifts accordingly morally obligate the recipients in various ways to reciprocate directly to God further gift offerings to become attached to God’s person (e.g., with confessions of sin, prayers, songs of praise, tithes, glorifications, good works). For many Christian traditions, there may be other spiritual persons, of course, with whom members may or should similarly transact: Jesus, Mary, Saints, Church officials, prophets, and so on, depending on denominational sect.

But also, it is essential to much Christian belief and ritual that God’s various gifts of grace, Will, Word, Holy Spirit, and Jesus himself are antithetical to the analogous gift-bestowals of sin that humans are vulnerable to receiving from evil spiritual persons such as Satan, Lucifer, or the Devil and his minions. Of course, Christian denominations differ greatly in the ideological details as to how persons achieve salvation and avoid the damnation of their ultimately detached human souls in light of God’s gifts of grace and his Word. And indeed, it is the varying details of *what parts of which persons* endowed with *which associated capacities* transacted between Christian persons that determine their fate as saved or damned. Sin is generally viewed as thoroughly opposed to, incommensurable with and corrupting of God’s gifts. It is receipt of the unforgiven gift-transfer of sin that dooms the souls of humans to life-everlasting existence in hell with Satan and his devils. Ultimately, though, for most Christians it is God’s gift of forgiveness through Jesus’s sacrifice that enables them, *or at least the soul-parts of their identities*, to experience eventually life everlasting in relationship and union with God, Jesus, the Saints, angels in Heaven, and so on. Even when the gift of salvation offers the prospect of eternal life to a person’s soul, due to original sin all humans are destined to experience the death and extinction of the flesh, the bodily part of their persons. Death thus involves the detachment from one another of the profane flesh- and sacred

soul- or spirit-parts of the total or composite person, the former to be returned to the ground, as ashes or dust for example, the latter destined for continued existence in heaven or hell.

In sum, Christian persons, both human and divine, qualify as overall dividuals constituted of the multiple, religiously-defined parts and capacities that have been incorporated in them as the result of prior elicitive reciprocal gift exchanges with one another.

So in all of this, where does the definitive “individualism” of the Christian person fit in? Supposedly—that is, theologically—through the eternal indestructability and nondivisibility of the human soul, whether internalized in the living body or in ultimate union with spirits in either eternal afterlife. However, I suggest, the Christian soul is itself typically conceived as a detachable sacred *part* of the *total* Christian person; that is, one attachment (among many others) resulting from a previous separation and transfer from God of a *part* of his *total* composite person. Also, while the soul is not itself dividable into subsidiary individual parts, it is amenable to having the detached sacred parts of other persons attached to it, as for example with God’s grace, Word, or Holy Spirit, or with the sins resulting from Satan’s corrupting inducements. These attachments, furthermore, determine the soul-part’s changing ritual status when the person is first conceived, while living, and then following mortal death.

By this reading, in short, Christians as total persons unambiguously qualify as dividual beings composed through the reciprocal exchange of the detachable parts of other similarly composite persons and relations.

Possessive individualism—Macpherson

Crawford Macpherson’s treatise, *The political theory of possessive individualism* (1962) has been generally accepted among social scientists including numerous Pacific anthropologists (e.g., Sykes 2007a, 2007b; Robbins 2007b) as having captured the essence of modern secular “individualism.” Macpherson thus provides another convenient vantage point other than Christian orthodoxy for assessing the individualist credentials of Christian persons.⁶

6. A noteworthy philosophical antecedent to Macpherson’s treatment of “the individual as essentially the proprietor of his own person or capacities, owning nothing to society for them” is the nineteenth-century egoist and anarchist, Max Stirner’s *The ego and his own*:

Nevertheless, property is the expression for *unlimited dominion* over somewhat (thing, beast, man) which “I can judge and dispose of as seems good to me.” According to Roman law, indeed, *jus utendi et abutendi re sua, quatenus juris ratio patitur*, an *exclusive* and *unlimited right*; but property is conditioned by might. What I have in my power, that is my own. So long as I assert myself as holder, I am the proprietor of the thing; if it gets away from me again, no matter by what power, e. g. through my recognition of a title of others to the thing—then the property is extinct. Thus property and possession coincide. It is not a right lying outside my might that legitimizes me, but solely my might: if I no longer have this, the thing vanishes away from me. (Stirner [1907] 2010: 332).

Macpherson traces the modern notion of the individual to the Enlightenment and its Hobbsian-Lockean “possessive quality.” As frequently quoted,

the individual [is] essentially the proprietor of his own person or capacities, owing nothing to society for them. The individual was seen neither as a moral whole, nor as part of a larger social whole but as owner of himself. . . . The individual, is free inasmuch as he is proprietor of his person and capacities . . . [and free] *from dependence on the wills of others. . . . Society becomes a lot of free equal individuals related to each other as proprietors of their own capacities and of what they have acquired by their exercise.* Society consists of relations of exchange between proprietors. (1962: 3, emphasis added; see also 263–77; cf. Ullman 1966).

Macpherson is very clear on at least two critical points: first, that modern individualism corresponds “to the actual relations of a market society” (1962: 4) and continues to exist due to the historical persistence of the latter wherever they prevail.⁷ Here the possessive individual is expressly viewed as *not* being a circumscribed “whole” (at least a moral one), thus seeming to contradict much anthropological discourse where the individual is construed as being essentially “bounded” from other persons. The key issue here for Macpherson is the categorical distinction between the proprietary individual proper as *possessor*, on the one hand, and his/her capacities, and even his/her internal sense of being a person, as items *possessed* on the other. The possessive individual, in other words, presupposes an absolute distinction between owning *subjects*, each bound in their own right from one another and from their owned *objects*. This curious situation came about, according to Macpherson, as the result of the relation of ownership having been historically developed first in the sphere of economic or market affairs external to the total person, but then being *secondarily* “read back” into the constitution of the individual with the consequence that one’s labor capacities became alienable and thereby differentiable from the individual as person or subject him/herself.

Also, Stirner anticipated the very distinction I draw upon between the Christian “individual” animated through relations with the sacred Christian divine as distinct from the “individual” of modern secular political economic philosophy:

Sacred things exist only for the egoist who does not acknowledge himself, the *involuntary egoist*, for him who is always looking after his own and yet does not count himself as the highest being, who serves only himself and at the same time always thinks he is serving a higher being, who knows nothing higher than himself and yet is infatuated about something higher; in short, for the egoist who would like not to be an egoist, and abases himself (*i. e.* combats his egoism), but at the same time abases himself only for the sake of “being exalted,” and therefore of gratifying his egoism. Because he would like to cease to be an egoist, he looks about in heaven and earth for higher beings to serve and sacrifice himself to; but, however much he shakes and disciplines himself, in the end he does all for his own sake, and the disreputable egoism will not come off him. On this account I call him the involuntary egoist. (Stirner [1907] 2010: 46, original emphasis)

I am grateful to one of this chapter’s reviewers for this reference.

7. Macpherson distinguishes between two subtypes of market societies, “simple” and “possessive” (1962: 46–61; see also Mosko 2013: 191ff.).

Second, Macpherson's proprietary possessive individual is not a part of any larger social whole. He/she is thus separated from personal relations with others and thus bounded from them but on grounds other than morality. This individual accordingly "owes nothing to society" for being the owner of his/her possessions. Instead, it is through the secular exchange of their alienable object-possessions that such encapsulated individual persons become capacitated to establish relations, albeit *strictly impersonal* ones, with other similarly constituted individuals.

On both these counts, the possessive individual differs fundamentally from the dividual, a being instead composed of the mutually constitutive relations with other persons who can be regarded morally as "owing everything to society."

If the individual in his/her own person is not a part of society and is not obligated to others for being the proprietor of his own person and capacities, what for Macpherson is the philosophical source of the notion of the individual's ownership of him/herself? Here he turned to Hobbes who offered for him "a valid theory of political obligation *without relying on any supposed purposes of Nature or will of God*" (1962: 274; see also 83–84, and below). Even so, Macpherson acknowledged that this sort of individualism did emphasize "the equal moral worth of every human being [that] was clearly fundamental in Puritan political thinking" (1962: 2) and that the Puritan theories in this regard contributed significantly to the justification of the liberal democratic state (1962: 2). I take this to be at the crux of the problem in differentiating the individual of modern secular society from the momentary ritual individuation of dividuals mentioned above in Melanesia and other non-Western societies *and* in Western Christianity.

Religion and Secularism—Asad

More recently, Talal Asad (1993, 2003) has also influentially commented on constructions of "the religious" and the "secular." First, he aims to cultivate a concept of agency capable of illuminating how in Judeo-Christian-Islamic thought and practice "modern living is required to take place, and nonmodern peoples are invited to assess their adequacy" (2003: 14). Here he draws chiefly on Foucault's (1975) analysis of discipline and punishment, "how the body lives pain and punishment, compassion and pleasure, hope and fear" (Asad 2003: 99). Writing of Islam in sharp contrast to Macpherson's possessive individual,

the body-and-its-capacities is not owned solely by the individual but is subject to a variety of obligations held by others as fellow Muslims. There is therefore a continuous, unresolved tension between responsibility as individual and metaphysical on the one hand, and as collective and quotidian on the other—that is, between eschatology and sociology. (Asad 2003: 91)

This tension, I suggest, recapitulates the very dichotomy that both underpinned Durkheim's treatment of religion and provided Strathern (1988) the principal target of her critique—namely, the Individual versus Society—thereby on both scores impeding any grasp of modern and nonmodern persons as mutually constituted dividuals.

Second, when in *Genealogies of religion* (1993: 60, 126-30) Asad engages with recent anthropological approaches to ritual, he goes so far as to acknowledge Leach's (1954) reframing of the sacred and profane as procedural phases rather than types of ritual actions. But he refrains from examining Leach's or others' supplementary expansions of Van Gennep's separation-transition-reaggregation scenario. In his own words, "I am sceptical of ritual as an object of general theory. While I take it for granted that communicative discourse is involved in learning, performing, and commenting upon rites, I reject the idea the ritual itself encodes and communicates some special meaning" (Asad 1993: 130).

In *Formations of the secular* (2003), Asad once more alludes to the Durkheimian-Van Gennepian legacy of a supposedly universal opposition of sacred and profane. He notes,

Critics have objected that Durkheim was wrong to claim that profane and sacred are mutually exclusive because profane things can become sacred and vice versa. . . . More recently, critics have protested that in ordinary life sacred and profane are "scrambled together." (2003: 31n32)

But upon reaching this point, Asad again refrains from exploring further the procedures by which, during rites of passage, such "scrambling" is affected.

Christian "individualism"—Dumont and Burridge

These considerations bring me to the very question that was examined by Max Weber in his classic treatise on the link between specifically Protestant forms of Christianity and capitalism ([1930] 1992). Before I turn to Weber directly, however, I think it instructive to consider the views of two anthropologists, Louis Dumont and Kenelm Burridge, who have been authoritatively cited as to the Christian roots of modern individualism, and vice versa. But distinct from Weber, they point to the birth of individualism in early rather than later Christianity.⁸ Contrary to the widely accepted view, however, I claim that for both Dumont and Burridge as I argue below for Weber, *this early Christian so-called individual actually qualifies as a prime instance of Christian dividuality*.

Dumont. Similar to Macpherson, Dumont (1986) was quite explicit that the non-divisible modern *individual* as subject, categorically differentiated from his/her marketable possessions, appeared *fully formed* only in the last few centuries of Christianity's unfolding. So for Dumont, what kind of individual existed in pre-Reformation times? He located its first appearance in the early church as a transformation from an "inworldly" to an "outworldly" orientation. Like ancient Hindu ascetic renouncers, early Christians removed themselves from profane society and thereby became "individuals" in the sense of having momentarily rejected, detached, or disembedded themselves from connection with inworldly members

8. I fully appreciate that Weber's thesis on the link between Puritanism and capitalism is one that has been strongly critiqued. But more importantly, my aim, rather than validating Weber, is to interrogate his detailed arguments against those who cite him as an authoritative source on Christianity's individualism and its nature.

of society. Moreover, it was in this state of outworldly or sacred detachment that Christian persons were able to be given, receive, and attach to their persons outworldly donations—essentially sacred gifts of Pentecost such as Holy Spirit possession, trance, speaking in tongues, healing, and so on, analogous to the spiritual experience of Indian renouncers. These sacred gifts were expressly intended for later conveyance to the initial recipients' still-inworldly Christian fellows, just as renouncing Indian gurus give their knowledge "to the great mass of men-of-the-world" (Dumont 1980: 284; 1986: 25ff.; cf. Strathern 1988: 282; Mosko 2015).

In sum, Dumont's early Christian is an *overall* dividual (as in *divide*-able) being who through ritual gift exchange is only temporarily individuated as a person bounded from others for the sake of eventually realizing relatedness through the transactability of both their respective inalienable components. Thus Christian individualism for Dumont differs radically from Macpherson's possessive individual in that the items transacted consist of *inalienable* parts of the exchanging persons themselves. There is here, in effect, no distinction between subject and object. This point is critical, as Dumont acknowledged:

something of modern individualism is present with the first Christians and in the surrounding world, *but that is not exactly individualism as we know it. Actually, the old form and the new are separated by a transformation so radical and so complex that it took at least seventeen centuries of Christian history to be completed, if indeed it is not still continuing in our times.* (Dumont 1986: 94, emphasis added)

The key pivots of this later transformation for Dumont, as with Weber, were the Puritan theologies of Luther and Calvin in coordination with the liberalist philosophies of the Enlightenment. With Puritanism in Dumont's view, early Christian out-worldliness was refocused upon the Christian's inner, eternal, indestructible, and sacred but indivisible soul-part that was accordingly identified with the will of God (1986: 56, 113–19). That indivisible soul and God's will thus both consisted of *detachable, transactable, inalienable parts of both the Christian's and God's respective total persons*. The Reformation Christian as a total person thus remains a composite dividual categorically distinct from the modern individual as bounded possessor-owner (see above)—a being, in other words, composed at minimum of inner immortal soul-, will-, and faith-parts as well as mortal flesh or body, outer devotions to the glorification of God, good works directed to fellow communicants, and so on. And even if the individuated soul is construed as hierarchically valued over other inalienable parts of the person, it remains only one component of the plurally-constituted total Christian being (cf. Robbins 2002; 2004: 8–13, 291–94; 2012: 19).

Dumont was evidently aware prior to the development of the NME of the challenge presented by Melanesian sociality to his premodern "holist" versus modern "individualist" comparative schema:

But can one maintain that the simpler, less numerous, and less extensive societies, which have been the chief object of anthropological study, can be opposed to the modern societies in the same way as those previously considered? In short, there are doubts concerning some of these societies. Let us take Melanesia, or, more precisely, New Guinea: what is known

about it, and the failure of both substantialist and structuralist theories to this day in that field would seem to indicate that we have not discovered—or that, by comparison with other cases, we have not discovered *at all*—the ideological axes which would provide a relatively coherent and simple formula. One would then advance the hypothesis that these societies use forms of differentiation *different* from those to which we are accustomed elsewhere. In terms of our present interest, these differentiations would lie beyond or outside the opposition individualist/holism, with the result that they would be as badly described from one point of view as from the other. (1986: 215–16, original emphasis)

With the advent of the Melanesian partible person, I suggest, Dumont would likely have been able to discern its commonality with Christians as individuals possessing analogous agential capacities.

Burridge. In *Someone, no one*, Burridge (1979) wrote also on the “individualism” inherent to Christianity, but with an authority perhaps superior to Dumont’s with respect to Oceania since his principal comparative alternative to the Western Christian individual was a Melanesian figure informed by his own extensive ethnographic experience. For it is in the kind of agency encountered in the Melanesian “big man” or “manager” (1979: 92–98, 124–30; see also Burridge 1975) that he detected a formal accord with the Christian individual that resonates strongly with Dumont’s.⁹

While participating in community life as other persons do, the Melanesian big-man appears at moments as a singular individual, “one who, both of and also in a sense *outside or set apart from the moral order*, makes his private being sociologically relevant” (Burridge 1975: 87, emphasis original). This “private being” is, however, a “necessarily *religious* value” (1975: 87, emphasis added) similar, Burridge notes, to that of other religious beings such as divine kings, shamans, Melanesian cargo prophets, Nuer leopard-skin chiefs, Australian men of high degree, Dinka masters of the fishing-spear, Hindu sanyasi, and so on (1975: 86–87, 103). Here Burridge locates the manager’s specifically individualist capacities as emanating from the sacred realm, “set aside” or “apart,” “singled out” from ordinary daily community life (1975: 93, 96; 1979: 126). Not only is the manager in this respect essential to the social process, but it is through him as a temporarily sacred being that profane or mundane social processes can be understood and affected (1975: 87). This dual situatedness of the Melanesian big-man thus recapitulates Dumont’s in-worldly/outworldly transcendence.

Like other Melanesians, the manager participates in ordinary community life in accord with the everyday mundane moralities of reciprocity, generosity, and self-restraint. But to be a manager, to become an individual in Burridge’s sense, the big-man has to pursue his self-willedness—a part of his total person (cf. Robbins 2004: 197–206)—in such ways as to create and maintain relations of support and consensus among his followers (1975: 96, 1979: 129).

9. Joel Robbins (2004) and Webb Keane (2007) are two particularly prominent anthropological authorities on Christian individuality who have explicitly drawn from *Someone, no one*.

Burridge notes expressly, moreover, how the manager's individualism contrasts with that of the Western (i.e., possessive) entrepreneur in several respects: in terms of the kinds of items transacted—inalienable pigs, foodstuffs, shell valuables, and so on, versus alienable money (1979: 88–92); in frequently being momentary “forced into going beyond the normative moralities” (1975: 93; 1979: 126) through dreams and encounters with ghosts, spirits, and the sources of ultimately sacred truth, those experiences being unstructured, disordered, anomic, dangerous, ambiguous, and so on (1975: 94; 1979: 127–29); and in eventually delivering the fruit of those encounters to his ordinary consociates (1975: 87, 104; 1979: 126–27). The individualist Melanesian manager in this sense thus oscillates temporally between opposed conditions of relational self-restraint and nonrelational or individuated self-willfulness—modalities corresponding respectively with profane and sacred conditions but differing from the perpetual boundedness of the West's “possessive individual.” Burridge's “individualist” Melanesian manager, in short, is merely one temporalized facet of a total dividual person's experience analogous to that of Dumont's outworldly renouncer and early Christian.

Burridge provides additional clarity to Dumont's formulation of individualism, however, where he distinguishes formally between “person” and “individual” as alternate states of a composite (i.e., dividual) “self.” On the one hand, the thoughts and actions of a “person” basically conform to accepted roles, statuses, and norms in close approximation of Dumont's inworldly being. The predications of an “individual” for Burridge, on the other hand, consist in the stripping away of those conventions and *in the receipt from other plurally composed persons of new charismatically-inspired arrangements intended for transmission to and attachment by still other dividual persons in the future* (1979: 41, 47, 54, 165, 211, 218).¹⁰ Burridge's “individual” is therefore a person who both detaches from and attaches to himself/herself inalienable elements of others' personhood through reciprocal transaction and exchange—a type of agent, again, radically distinct from the possessive individual whose relations with others consist of the impersonal market exchange of alienable objects.¹¹

10. See Mark Mosko (2010a, 2010b) for a more extensive sample of Melanesian examples.

11. John Barker (2015) has recently offered a lengthy critique of my 2010 interpretation of Burridge's formulation of Christian individualism in these terms. His own claims, however, misread entirely how, for Burridge, the whole point of *both* Melanesian managers' and Christians' (and others') charismatic leadership and ritual individuation/individuality is to make them momentarily amenable to receipt of detachable powers elicited from the recognized moral or sacred sources for later distribution among those leaders' community fellows. Also, while at some junctures Burridge focuses his model of Christian individuality on the person or practice of “the missionary,” as Barker claims, this does not mean that the value of Burridge's overall formulation of individuality, personhood, and metanoia need necessarily be appreciated as narrowly “wrapped up” in missionaries or even Christianity. In the portions of text on individuality that I cite from Burridge's writings, it is clear that his theoretical ambitions were broadly cross-cultural. It must be questioned, therefore, whether the missionary's supposedly novel capacity of conveying “a new conception of personhood” (Barker 2015: 627) is in Melanesian or other contexts all that novel or new. Finally, Barker attempts to undermine my focus

Similarly to Dumont, Burridge traces the historical origin of Western individualism to the early Church, specifically to Pentecost where penitents, having shed their customary social identities and relations, became qualified to receive spiritual gifts from God for later communication to fellow Christians (1979: 54, 72, 158–59, 168, 194, 208). And even further in the direction of personal partibility, Burridge ties this sort of individualism cross-culturally to what he terms *metanoia*—“a *renunciation* of the given moralities when it is not a transcending of them . . . a *change of mind* envisaging new moralities, it appears as the basis of, and may lead into, individuality” (1979: 215, emphasis added; see below). As a process, I argue, this *metanoia* presupposes the dividuality of the overall self into parts—alternate states of mind and moralities—neither of which qualify as alienable objects separate from possessing selves (1979: 193, 210). Burridge’s “individual,” Christian or otherwise, therefore, implicates a conception of personhood that, similarly to the composite *partible* person of Melanesia, contrasts with the bounded possessive *individual* of the West whose agency consists in transactions over depersonalized things.¹²

However, Burridge’s and Dumont’s analyses do differ in certain details that are important to my purposes. For Burridge, the individual is “set apart” from the ordinary moral order of persons in/of relationships, demonstrating an “essentially religious value” (1975: 87), which fits comfortably within the Durkheimian framework of the sacred and profane. Here the removal of this individual from normal standards of morality would amount to a Van Gennepian (1964) rite-of-passage-like separation from profane to sacred realms where, from that liminal, detached condition the individual is capacitated by gifts received from gods, spirits, other divine persons or “sources of truth” (1979: 79ff.). Dumont (1980: 278) insists otherwise throughout his writings that movements of Hindu renouncers and Christian individuals between inworldly and outworldly realms correspond with shifts instead between conditions of “purity” and “impurity” (but see Dumont 1980: 279). I have elsewhere (Mosko 1994) dealt at length with Dumont’s sustained efforts at eliding the sacred and the profane in favor of the supposedly foundational purity and impurity of India’s caste

on Burridge’s thoughts on Christian personhood as distinctly amenable to the NMEs theory of partible personhood “for the simple reason that virtually all human activities entail exchanges and intersubjectivities, albeit in varying degrees” (2015: 632). But are the differences between gift and commodity economies, for example, reducible simply to matters of degree? Such a view completely obscures the question of whether the mode(s) of individuality that developed over the course of Christian history might be categorically different from that manifest in the secular dimensions (e.g., political, economic) of the post-Enlightenment era, as discussed above.

12. Actually, Burridge employs a slightly different, and to me somewhat confusing terminology to characterize the possessive “individual.” For “total composite person” in my usage here, Burridge writes of “individuality” comprising the movement between “person” and “individual” I have just described in rough parallel to Dumont’s inworldly and outworldly conditions. To distinguish the “European and Western” version of this mode of personhood from that pertaining elsewhere, as for example with Melanesian big-men, Burridge indicates that it is “generalized and institutionalized” (1979: 74). I take this to imply the imposition of the subject/object distinction characteristic of modern secular possessive individualism as described above by Macpherson and below by Weber (cf. Taylor 2007: 16–17; Tomlinson 2006: 94–97, 194–95).

system—an exercise going well beyond the bounds of the present discussion. Notwithstanding, for Dumont as for Burridge, the transition from inworldly embeddedness in society to outworldly extrasocietal individuality remains a religious one with a corresponding relevance, therefore, to Christianity's presumed individualism. In this regard it is necessary to expand Dumont's definition of the "religious" from purity/impurity to sacred/profane, just as it was necessary in my comments above on Strathern's formulation of the agentic dynamics of personal partibility to consider dimensions of personhood and relationship additional to gender.

Christian "individualism"—Weber

Weber's classic sociology of charisma and charismatic authority is of particular relevance at this juncture. Where Dumont and Burridge identify the early Christian Church as the source of modern individualism, Weber, like Macpherson, saw it in the ideological features of the Protestant Reformation, especially the Puritanism of Calvin. Despite this historical question, there is also the conceptual issue of the degree of harmony or disharmony between the characteristics of the Christian "individual" when Weber's model is compared with those of Dumont and Burridge. As I have shown thus far, the Christian individual according to Dumont and Burridge is but one momentary element or part of a more summarily encompassing composite total person wherein the definitive subject-versus-object criterion of Macpherson's modern possessive individual is absent. In light of the notoriety of Weber's treatment of Protestantism and the rise of capitalism, it is critical to ascertain whether Dumont's and Burridge's conceptions of "individualism" are sustained. On the one hand, how does Weber's portrait of the Puritan Christian measure up to the criteria of the dividual or the individual, and on the other hand how do Dumont's and Burridge's formulations of the composite dividual Christian "individual" figure in Weber's overall sociology?

The dividual charismatic "individual." Throughout his writings, Weber employed the term "individual" quite loosely as was the common usage of his—and, needless to say, our—time (see epigraph above). In particular, the dividual/individual dichotomy of present concern was not available to him. However, close examination of his cited thoughts on charismatic leadership and Protestant personhood reveal a three-fold formulation of the dividual as (1) a total, composite person, (2) the individual as just one manifestation among many of an encompassing total dividual being at singular moments of ritual transaction, and (3) the modern possessive individual.

Charisma as a relation for Weber ([1922] 1972: 1143) consists in the receipt and possession of a gift of extraordinary or divine powers inhering in a person that qualifies him/her for leadership. Charismatic persons as leaders are:

bear[ers of] specific *gifts* of body and mind that were considered "supernatural" (in the sense that not everybody could have access to them. . . . They practiced their arts, and they exercised their authority by virtue of this gift "charisma") and, where the idea of God had already been clearly *established, by virtue of the Divine mission inherent in their ability*. (Weber [1922] 1972: 1111–12, emphases added)

Charisma as a gift of grace from God or as a blessing of some other supernatural powers consists thereby in a detachment from that sacred being that is transmitted and attached to and typically internalized in the person of the momentarily out-worldly charismatic recipient:

[charisma's] "objective" law flows *from the highly personal experience of divine grace and god-like heroic strength*. (Weber [1922] 1972: 1115, emphasis added)

Charisma and charismatic blessing [are] a unique, transitory gift of grace of extraordinary times and persons. (1121)

The bearer of charisma enjoys loyalty and authority by virtue of a mission believed to be embodied in him. (1117)

Charisma is basically an extra-ordinary and hence necessarily non-economic power. (1120)

[charisma possesses] a strictly personal quality . . . a unique gift of grace. (1135)

Those persons so blessed are by definition detached, separated, cut off, or set apart from the usual, ordinary, or secular conditions of social life in the world. Thus in relation to the world, charisma expresses typically ascetic attitudes:

Charisma rejects as undignified all methodical rational acquisition, in fact, all rational economic conduct. (Weber [1922] 1972: 1113)

Those who have a share (Greek) in charisma must inevitably turn away from the world. (1113–14)

The master as well as his disciples and immediate following must be free of the ordinary worldly attachments and duties of occupational and family life. (1113; see also p. 1143)

Charisma . . . manifests its revolutionary power from within, from a central metanoia of the followers' attitudes. But charisma, in its most potent forms, *disrupts rational rule as well as tradition altogether and overturns all notions of sanctity*, it enforces the inner subjection to the unprecedented and absolutely unique and therefore Divine. (1117, emphasis added)

So endowed with extraordinary divine gifts, the charismatic person is regularly obliged to communicate, distribute, or otherwise detach from him/herself those gifted powers or the concrete products of those powers for the benefit of followers; that is, to be given and incorporated as parts of worldly followers' persons:

Most of all, [the charismatic leader's] divine mission must prove itself by bringing wellbeing to his faithful followers; if they do not fare well, he obviously is not the god-sent master . . . the genuinely charismatic ruler, who is responsible to the ruled—responsible, that is, to prove that he himself is indeed the master willed by God. (Weber [1922] 1972: 1114)

To this extent the charismatic leader gives or distributes divinely obtained elements of his person to his/her fellow members of society. He is accordingly entitled to receive from them reciprocal gift detachments of their allegiance, loyalty, obedience, praises, or other donations—essentially tokens of their total dividual persons:

If [charisma] has a peaceful purpose, it receives the requisite means through sponsors or through honorific gifts, dues and other voluntary contributions of its own following. (Weber [1922] 1972: 1113)
It is [the followers'] duty to recognize his charisma. (1113)

Charisma itself as a detachable personal quality can be transferred between persons: From a unique gift of grace charisma may be transformed into an attribute that is either (a) *transferable* or (b) *personally acquirable* or (c) *attached* to the incumbent of an office or to an institutional structure regardless of the persons involved (Weber [1922] 1972: 1135).

In short, with specific reference to the dividual/individual distinction of current interest, Weber's charismatic authority model consists in relations constituted of the elicitive detachment, transfer, attachment, and reciprocal exchange of extraordinary, sacred parts of persons, human and divine, in contexts periodically separated away from and enjoined with the mundane affairs of ordinary secular society. Insofar as charisma is transmissible or transactable between persons to become inherent or inalienable parts of their being, those persons, even in their momentarily individuated states, qualify as dividuals. And the sort of agency and personhood exhibited by such total beings is fundamentally distinct from the rational or secular type of capitalism's possessive individualism premised on the categorical subject/object or possessor/possessed distinction.

In these terms, moreover, it is difficult to detect any profound differences between Weber's formulation and those of Dumont and Burridge. As in the views of the latter, the charismatic leader becomes a singular "individual" only when he/she has severed his relations with the world as a momentary precondition for ritually attaching to himself/herself the personal gift(s) of forthcoming divine grace intended for subsequent distribution.

A key element of Weber's analysis of charisma is its inherent instability—its tendency to become routinized with either of two outcomes: to become transformed into either traditional or rational organizational forms. In the former instance, charisma holds it ritually alternating sacred quality, and in the other the sacredness is replaced by secular, profane, rational measures of value and worth (see below). Charisma routinized as traditional authority thus retains the characteristics of inalienability and dividuality of persons, human, and spirits, without a categorical differentiation of subjects from objects. With charisma's routinization as rational authority, persons as possessive subjects may preserve certain sacred capacities but at the expense of the desacralization, disenchantment, and newfound alienability of the objects of their labor available for subsequent production, exchange, and consumption.

The dividual character of the Protestant "individual." Although Weber's discussions of charisma drew frequently on Christian illustrations, his objective was to formulate a model of religious change applicable not only to Western contexts but anywhere. When later in *The Protestant ethic and spirit of capitalism* ([1930] 1992) he turned to the contribution of religion specifically to the rise of capitalism, he necessarily focused on Christianity; namely, the Protestant Reformation as expressed in the ideas of Calvin and Luther. Although the term "charisma" appears only once and incidentally near that text's conclusion ([1930] 1992: 121), there can be no

doubt that the entire thesis is to be regarded as an illustration of the author's more general model of charismatic processes. In the following, however, I shall concentrate on Weber's representations of Luther's and Calvin's formulations of Christian personhood, seeking to clarify the extent of their correspondence to overall dividuals, ritually individuated persons, or secularized possessive individuals.

For Weber, the type of person that typifies capitalism is a historical transformation of the Puritan Christian. Capitalism in this view is not just the quest for wealth or even profit but "forever renewed profit, by means of continuous rational, capitalist enterprise" ([1930] 1992: xxxii). When this motive arose in the West in the aftermath of the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, it took the form of "rational capitalist organization of (formally) free labor" (xxxiv) premised on two conditions: the separation of the person's business activities from his/her familial affairs, and the development of "rational book-keeping" for the assessment of value (xxxv). In the terms adopted here, in other words, the preconditions for development of a capitalist market of free labor consisted of a bifurcation between a person's familial relations, which, on the one hand, can be assumed to have involved elements of dividual, including spiritual personal composition, and on the other his/her business activities that partook of secular or rational procedures. These conditions correspond closely with the key differentiation for Macpherson between the possessor of his/her own person and possessions as an individual subject, and that which he/she possesses as objects separate from him/herself (see also Taylor 2007, and above).

The central question before us thus becomes, what for Weber was the character of the religious person of early Protestant Christianity that antedated the possessive individualism of secular economic rationalism?¹³

For Weber, the two essential innovations of Protestantism were Luther's notion of a religious "calling" and Calvin's premise of "predestination." As regards the former, "the only way of living acceptably to God was not through monastic asceticism, but solely through the fulfillment of the obligations imposed upon the individual by his position in the world" ([1930] 1992: 40). Here the "individual" bears, accepts, or attaches obligations to his person that have been granted or given to him/her by God—a detachment of God's person in the form of his "will." This amounts to "a real entrance of the divine into the soul of the believer" (67), or a "feel[ing] himself to be the vessel of the Holy Spirit" (67).

The eventual reward for fulfilling one's God-given calling for Luther was God's gift of the salvation of the eternal soul detached from the person upon mortal death and united with God. As this notion of worldly labor in a calling developed, it came to represent what Luther termed an "outward *expression* of brotherly love" (Weber [1930] 1992: 41, emphasis added). That which the Christian has accepted as an internalized personal gift from God became externalized or detached from him/her as an outward demonstration of that person's gift of love to his/her Christian siblings as the premise of Christian fellowship.

13. It is critical to note here, however, Weber's and Macpherson's formulations differ with respect to whether the individual's person includes or excludes his/her relations with family and kin, whether natural or spiritual (see Gudeman 1971).

Moreover, in the receipt of God's will as a calling expressed through the giving of love to fellow Christians, Luther construed one's actions in the world as the only kinds of gifts that were, in turn, "acceptable" as gifts back to God (Weber [1930] 1992: 41). Also for Luther, the sorts of engagements in the world willed by God varied among persons according to their station or relations with others; hence, the following of one's specific personal calling was the divinely ordained route of fulfilling one's moral obligations to God and other humans but not in the sense of producing mundane, purely secular wealth objects instead of inalienable parts of persons themselves. And, of course, it was incumbent upon the Christian to resist the temptations incited by callings from the Devil. Thus, again, the Lutheran dividual remained fundamentally distinct from both Macpherson's possessive individual subject and his/her alienable possessions.

It is noteworthy that in *The Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism*, the Lutheran innovation of the personal confession (as distinct from that of the institutionalized formula of the Catholic Church) is greatly downplayed (see Weber [1930] 1992: 62, 85, 87). For the sake of present purposes, however, it is of the utmost significance that the Lutheran notions of sin, confession, and absolution as legitimate paths to "individual" salvation involved the reciprocal transaction of detachable, inalienable components of dividual persons, and expressly *not* exchanges over the alienable objects or properties of possessive individuals (see Mosko 2010a: 227, 230–31).

According to Weber, it was Calvin's notion of predestination, wedded to Luther's view of the Divine calling, which provided the ingredient that eventually proved to be critical to the development of the spirit of capitalism including the formation of the modern individual. But again, I maintain, the Calvinist individual preceding that event qualifies fully as a dividual. Consequent to the Fall and entry into a state of sin, for Calvin according to Weber, humans lost the capacity, whether through their inferior will or even through good works, to attain spiritual virtue sufficient to merit salvation. God's superior will alone was capable of allocating the gifts of love, grace, and salvation. Thus in accord with God's superior power, some humans, or at least the souls (i.e., soul-parts) of those humans, were predestined as spiritually saved, where the souls of others were fated for eternal damnation (Weber [1930] 1992: 56–62). Those whose souls God chose to save were presumed to have received from him their calling, which in their worldly exercise served primarily to praise and extol the glory of God. The Lutheran calling for vigorous activity in the world and in the service of brotherly love was aimed under Calvinism ultimately at God's glorification, the giving of glory to God in reciprocity for the preordained gift of His grace (64). Consequently, for the Calvinist Puritan salvation through the confessional, whether institutional or personal as practiced by Catholics and Lutherans, respectively, was impossible (62).

But also, as distinct from Catholics and Luther, the Calvinist calling was essentially ascetic; that is, on the one hand, the "Calvinist's intercourse with his God was carried on in deep spiritual isolation" (Weber [1930] 1992: 93), similar to the momentary "individualist" condition of Dumont's renouncer that capacitates the overall dividual separated from the world to receive and later distribute as gifts other-worldly spiritual blessings or charisma (see Weber [1930] 1992: 64, 181–82n30, and above). On the other hand, for Puritans, the results of ascetic labor in a calling

by the producing of material wealth presented humans with the opportunity either toward the moral good, as with praising God and his glory, or for evil, as temptations and enjoyments of the flesh. However, the wealth produced by labor inspired by the receipt of the calling, whatever its source, contained inalienable, detached components of the source spiritual persons; that is, of God or Satan. So to that extent the saved Calvinist ascetic and the damned sinner both qualify as composite, dividual persons. And crucially, the wealth produced by the labor of the Calvinist Christian did not achieve the status of alienable objects or possessions separable from the subjects who labored in their manufacture.

In Calvin's doctrine of predestination, Weber argues that, for one who is a predestined recipient of the gift of salvation, it is an "absolute duty to consider oneself chosen, and to combat all doubts as temptations of the Devil, since lack of self-confidence is the result of insufficient faith, hence of imperfect grace" ([1930] 1992: 66–67). Just as important as the duty to affirm oneself chosen, one has to detach or "get rid of the fear of damnation" from the consciousness of one's person (69). And to the same effect, one's conscious certainties and doubts as to one's spiritual destiny are themselves internalized attachments of potent inalienable parts of the persons of God or the Devil. In this regard as in others, God, the Devil, and the Protestant recipients of their grace or temptations, respectively, are alike dividual persons.

For the followers of Calvin (but not Calvin himself evidently; see Weber [1930] 1992: 65–66), the inalienable quality of the items of wealth produced by Puritan labor had one additionally critical spiritual implication: so long as it was not used in the idolatry of the flesh, the concrete generation of wealth served as an external or detachable sign, expression or token of God's selection of the laborer as among His chosen or elect—those who had been given his love and grace and whose souls were predestined to be spiritually saved. Part of the Puritan ascetic attitude consisted of a suspicion of "pure feelings and emotions . . . faith had to be proved by its objective results in order to provide firm foundations for the *certitudo salutis*" ([1930] 1992: 68; cf. Keane 2007; Robbins 2012). As with Luther, the objective results of one's calling in the form of external products served to augment the glory of God and to contribute to the order of his creation, both of which stood as detachments from God's person (Weber [1930] 1992: 69). But wealth in this form also gave back to the Puritan who produced it the assurance of his/her own election (65–69).

Although Weber does not construe it in exactly these terms, the Calvinist's receipt of the confirming signs of one's election following from one's worldly enactment of God's will meant nothing less than a further gift from God in this world as to the salvation of one's soul in the next. Additionally, of course, as Weber notes, the followers of Calvin who attributed each other's worldly success in the production and ascetic accumulation of wealth to God's gift of grace can be seen as personal gift reciprocities, albeit secondary in nature ([1930] 1992: 65–66). And to the same effect, the assurance of one's own election produced inner sensations and legitimate external reciprocities of "hatred and contempt" (75) with respect to one's less successful, hence sinful neighbors.

Conclusion

To be sure, Weber's treatment of Lutheranism and Calvinism does not cover the full range of modes of personhood and sociality contained in all of Christianity's post-Reformation varieties, much less so those that have been manifested in Roman and Orthodox Catholic churches. But it seems to me indisputable that the sort of "individualism" that has commonly been posited as inherent to Christianity generally and Protestantism specifically has been the one supposedly, but mistakenly, shared with post-Enlightenment secular modernity, whether of Macpherson's possessive market society type or its sociological cognates. I therefore take it to be appropriate to focus my concluding remarks on Weber's authoritative accounts as I have just reviewed them. His augmenting of Luther's notion of the divine calling with Calvinist predestination consists in several doctrinal revisions of the terms of relationship between Christians, sinners, God, the Devil, Jesus, et cetera. But his representations of those persons and the relations between them evince all the characteristics of total composite or dividual persons ritually transacting over inalienable and, I stress, spiritual, holy, or sacred bits of themselves. To the same extent, the formulations of Christian personhood that I have rehearsed in Weber's writings, as in those of Dumont and Burridge, express little of the absolute distinction between subjects and objects as presupposed in Macpherson's notion of the possessive individual of secular modernity.

Weber's image of this partible Protestant person, however, does possess one feature which in the terms before us oriented it in that very direction—its existential instability contained within a distinctive kind of overall stability. The composite dividual implicit in Weber's generalized formulations of charismatic and traditional leadership and in Dumont's and Burridge's versions of early Christian personhood incorporated processes of *recurrent* detachment, attachment, elicitation, and reciprocation of the parts and relations of persons—and hence transformability—closely approximating classic anthropological modeling of Van Gennepian rites of passage. In this view, it should hardly be surprising to witness in contexts of Christian ritual practice the transitory emergence of "individuals" who, of necessity, have been momentarily separated from relations with other similarly constituted persons. The analogous relations of God, the Devil, the chosen, and the damned in the doctrinaire Calvinist view, however, are by comparison permanent, but only by virtue of the premise of predestination. Or, as Weber might well have put it, *the relations among dividual persons in Puritan doctrine had become eternally routinized but not yet secularized*.

If this last contention is correct, then the following analytical claim can be asserted with a conviction comparable, perhaps, to that of the Puritan: so long as Christians view themselves as total beings imbued in at least some of their parts with detachments of the divine, they remain by definition dividuals. What, then, would it take for dividual Christians in this sense to become possessive individuals? Nothing less, I suggest, than becoming non-Christians as regards those elements of their proprietorship that are transacted *impersonally* with others.

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Des individus inconvenants: La divisibilité de la personne Chrétienne

Résumé : Selon certaines conceptions ayant cours dans l'ethnographie mélanésienne et ailleurs, le christianisme se caractérise par un "individualisme impénitent" (eg., Robbins 2004: 293). Dans ce chapitre, en m'appuyant sur la notion de "dividualité" et de personne "divisible" présentes dans les ethnographies mélanésiennes et implicites dans l'oeuvre de Van Gennep sur les rites de passage, je propose une nouvelle lecture des conceptualisations canoniques de la personne chrétienne, chez Louis Dumont, Kenelm Burridge et Max Weber. Je défends l'hypothèse que selon l'Eglise Chrétienne à ses débuts et plus tard au moment de la Réforme de Luther et Calvin, la personne, qu'elle soit humaine ou divine, se présente plutôt comme une personne dividuelle (a dividual) - un type d'agent radicalement distinct de la "personne possessive" de la pensée politique et économique occidentale. En lisant attentivement Dumont, Burridge et Weber, on s'aperçoit que l'apparente "individualité" de la personne chrétienne n'est rien de plus qu'une série de moments particuliers d'incitation au détachement, de transfert de don, d'incorporation et de réciprocité où les différentes parties des personnes dividuelles font l'objet de transaction. L'individualisme chrétien, en bref, n'est autre qu'une forme prise par la personne et l'agency dividuelles, une forme fondamentalement différente de la personne possessive des sociétés modernes et laïques.

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