

RESPONSE
TO PAPERS
BY
ROSIK, NOLL,
AND CRABTREE

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Discussants may have misinterpreted my comments on the "Double Aspect Picture." If so, the fault is mine for not being sufficiently clear. DAP pertains to cases in which naturalistic ("dissociation," "ego states") and supernaturalistic ("spirit intrusion," "demons") interpretations are parasitic on a common data-base. Diagnosticians may divide on whether it characterizes all cases of possession or only a subset of them. I have argued for the latter alternative because of the polymorphous character of the phenomenon revealed in anthropological field work. In short, I believe all possessions cannot be squeezed into an MPD or DDNOS procrustean bed, irrespective of metaphysical persuasion.

The question, "possession or dissociation?" is ambiguous. It may address either an issue about the reality or non-reality of spiritual intrusions, or a *taxonomic* one over whether certain possessions can be distinguished from dissociation or multiplicity on purely descriptive grounds (i.e., where data-bases do not overlap). I have suggested that there is a lack of overlap with dissociation in such non-dissociative patterns as Bourguignon's pure possession cases (P) in 34 societies, and the lack of overlap with multiplicity when it comes to non-pathological cultural forms, varying degrees of ritual control, non-traumatic origins of most possessions, epidemic character of possessions, etc. Crabtree takes me to be saying that "therapists who hold that possession is qualitatively different from MPD or dissociation seem to 'straddle two cultures'" (Crabtree, 1993, p. 259). Such straddling is implied only when it pertains to an ontological, not a taxonomic issue. The two are quite distinct.

The failure to make the necessary distinction may be at the source of Fraser's and Noll's alarm over the inclusion of *trance/possession disorder* in *DSM-IV*. Along with Coons and Crabtree, I favored the inclusion, if only to permit anthropology to enrich psychiatric classification. There is nothing about the inclusion implying ontological commitments, only taxonomic differentiation. Noll's caveats may overlook the fact that the notion of "pathological" has a transcultural, not just psychiatric, connotation. Accordingly, inclusion of *trance/possession disorder* in *ICD-10* is not tacitly racist in the manner he suggests, nor does it imply the pathological status of most possessions. Moreover, anticipating epidemics of possession in North America as a result of inclusions in diagnostic manuals may overestimate the actual influence of the latter.

Crabtree and Noll are both convinced paradoxes of the subject abate if we adhere to phenomenological definitions of possession. True, such a move sidesteps confronting deep-

er existential mysteries. However, phenomenology has its own share of headaches. For example, Crabtree, on the trail of a serviceable definition of "possession," asserts (as against Coons) that a "conviction" one is possessed does not meet definitional requirements. "Convictions," he indicates, have to be about something, and the something for him is the "experience" of possession. However, the notion of "experience" can be as troubling as that of "conviction." As was indicated, Bourguignon documents "pure" possession beliefs (P) in 7% of her field work with 488 societies. In these cases, "possession" amounts to a conviction and a set of physical complaints or symptoms, such as headache, stomach ache, and the like. Where is the "experience" in question? Anthropologists classify such cases as "possession," although they obviously differ in nature from lucid possessions in which the presence of "ego-states" or "demons" is, so to speak, more "experientially" palpable.

Crabtree's dissatisfaction with Coons's cognitive criterion of possession may to some extent spring from a more fundamental problem of all empirical concepts. It is their open-texture (Waismann, 1963). This pertains to the potential vagueness of all concepts, not just "experience," "belief," or "conviction." For example, we cannot answer the question "is a blue lemon a lemon?" prior to deciding whether yellow is essential for lemonhood. The problem of open-texture may figure prominently in the source of Noll's cautionary remarks about "ritual," "voluntary," and "involuntary." Because of open-texture, it is always possible for patterns to manifest in ways complicating the determination of whether a given concept applies. Even so, I cannot share Crabtree's dissatisfaction with the "conviction one is possessed" as a definition, nor an emphasis on the conviction having to be that of the host. After all, in cases of somnambulistic (i.e., non-co-conscious) possessions hosts sometimes have no convictions about their states because they lack awareness of them. Often, it is the conviction on the part of a cultural, tribal, or diagnostic community that establishes the phenomenon, at least anthropologically.

I disagree with Rosik on a minor point, hardly affecting his beneficial approach to possession. I'm afraid quantum physics offers less solace to theologians than he imagines. Some of them have even tried to squeeze free will out of Heisenberg's Uncertainty Relation. The quest for God in quantum phenomena is as implausible as it is in Newtonian mechanics. In the former, we presumably find him in the vagaries of microphysical events; in the latter, he is the aloof, albeit necessary, author of a self-regulating mechanism, the

universe as a whole. But evidence for deity in every new-fangled twist of physical theory represents the wishful thinking of theologians who ignore the incommensurate nature of separate levels of discourse. (Kierkegaard and William of Ockham would have had less flattering things to say about bridging the gap between Reason and Faith!)

Crabtree deserves plaudits for drawing attention to the much-neglected distinction between possession and obsession, as regards degrees of possession. My paper originally dealt at length with this crucial distinction, although I had to omit the section because of space limitations. When European possessions gave rise to allegations of witchcraft, issues pertaining to degrees of possession became a life-and-death affair. Inquisitors in such bodies as the Roman Congregation of the Holy Office sometimes pondered the allegations of the bewitched (i.e., those showing signs of possession who accused others of casting spells on them) from the standpoint of true authorship (Tedeschi, 1991). Specifically, if the victims in question were only partially possessed or *obsessed* (i.e., assailed by demons from without), accusations against witches were more credible because hosts were assumed to retain executive control over their allegations. On the other hand, if the Devil had usurped executive control, allegations might be contaminated by infernal ploys. The Salem Village possessions were rife with the possibility of this kind of complication, although Bay Colony Puritans did not seem to be as aware of its implications as were Catholic inquisitors in several European jurisdictions. In previous centuries, Protestants were more skeptical than Catholics about the reality of demonic possession. Today, the situation is reversed. Diocesan exorcists are a dwindling host, whereas the trend is towards avidity, if not wild improvisation, among certain Fundamentalist constituencies. Fraser even reports one of his exorcists was a Satanist! Enthusiasm here turned a devil-worshipper against a demon, one of his own ilk. That's gratitude for you. ■

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