# Ritual, Difference, and Durkheim

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## 1 Introduction

Religious rituals bring people together and create unity – in sociology, at least since 1912 and the publication of Emile Durkheim's *Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, this has been regarded as a crucial feature of rituals. Through participation, people are brought together and unified in their actions, feelings, thoughts, and beliefs. Therefore, following Durkheim, rituals are seen as at least a part of the answer to the question of how social order is possible.

A Durkheimian perspective on rituals can explain how rituals help to create a "sense of 'with-ness'" (see Bieler in this volume) with which conviviality is associated. But does such an approach, given its focus on unity, underestimate social difference? Can it take into account the differences with which situations of conviviality are also associated? These situations are fundamentally different from the picture painted by early ethnographers of Aboriginal Australians, that Durkheim based his theory of ritual and society on. The social order in the context of modernity, as is the subject of the concept of conviviality, is characterized by differences, caused for example by increasing mobility, that rituals cannot simply absorb and dissolve. With this in mind, this paper attempts to reconsider a Durkheimian approach to rituals in a way that makes it more suitable for interactions involving differences that cannot just be brushed away.

Accordingly, the following chapter attempts, on the one hand, to develop a Durkheimian approach to rituals and, on the other, to critically discuss and modify this approach with regard to difference. For this purpose, a basic position will be developed in the following chapter, following Emile Durkheim, Randall Collins, and Catherine Bell. This will be subject to a critique following Gerd Baumann, before the third section actually attempts to bring difference and ritual together.

## 2 A Model of Ritual

### 2.1. Emile Durkheim: Co-Presence and Solidarity

Starting with Durkheim is not the obvious choice for the topic of ritual and difference. Other authors prominent in ritual theory seem more fitting: Victor Turner (1974, 1986) for example, has dealt with differences in ritual in his studies on initiation and his anthropology of performance. Rather than seeing rituals as separate performances, Durkheim offers an approach that analyzes them as intrinsic parts of the social order that they are a part of. In doing so, he takes bodily interactions into account as well as the symbolic and social structures they reproduce. Authors like Randall Collins (2004) and Robert Bellah (1967; 2011) take up different aspects of Durkheim's work and develop it further. This results in a vast body of ritual theory inspired by Durkheim that is worth delving into.

In the concluding section of *Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, Emile Durkheim writes: "If society is to be able to become conscious of itself and keep the sense it has of itself at the required intensity, it must assemble and concentrate." (Durkheim 1995: 424)

According to Durkheim, the cohesion of a social group is owed to the occasions on which its members gather as a group – or to say it in one word – to rituals. In the assembled group, united in joint action, individuals experience a power greater than themselves – namely, the power of the collective. Participating in the rhythm of the group, the individuals experience excitement and exaltation (e.g. Durkheim 1995: 216–225), an "effervescence collective" takes hold. Individuals behave according to the degree of emotional interaction that is built and act beyond deliberation and calculation. These moments of collective emotionality stand in contrast to everyday life, in which individuals go about their business separately, and the level of emotion is generally lower.

In contrast Durkheim identifies what he sees as a fundamental opposition: the difference between the sacred and profane. The sacred is perceived as something special, powerful and is set against normality. For Durkheim, the perception of this contrast arises precisely from the experience of effervescent moments in the collective that contrast with the normality of everyday life. This difference gives the impression that there are two distinct worlds that cannot be compared to each other (Durkheim 1995: 220).

Durkheim describes the effects of ritual co-presence in some ethnographic detail, often of dubious quality from today's perspective. Maybe due to that questionable quality, his "micro-sociological" analysis of rituals in Australia remained in the background of Durkheim's sociological reception, which emphasized the "macro-sociological" aspects of his work. Since the 1970s, however, the passages concerning ritual interactions have re-entered the discussion, in great measure due to the work of the American sociologist Randall Collins.

### 2.2 Randall Collins: Interaction Ritual Chains

Randall Collins focused the attention of his sociology on what is often called the micro level. He drew on Erving Goffman, who since the 1950s had made the analysis of elementary interactions the main focus of his sociological work, and in particular on Durkheim's *Elementary Forms*. Following in these footsteps, Collins asked how encounters produce

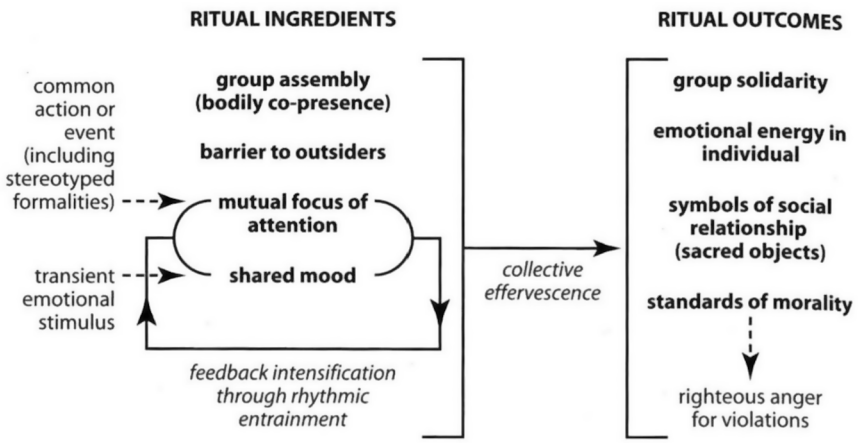
social order and a sense of solidarity. Collins analyzes the interactions between people present at "interaction rituals," which he defines as not only what is commonly called ritual, in the narrower sense, but also any other interpersonal interaction. So, even everyday interactions, down to the informal encounter of two people in a corridor, are regarded as rituals.

The conditions for the emergence of an interaction ritual are the physical presence of two people, and a high degree of a shared or mutual focus of attention that synchronizes behavior and perception. This synchronization leads to a growing emotionality, and, in Collins' words, "emotional entrainment:" the expression of feelings that mutually resonate and are thus amplified. Collins himself summarizes it this way (see also Figure 1):

> The central mechanism of interaction ritual theory is that occasions that combine a high degree of mutual focus of attention, that is, a high degree of intersubjectivity, together with a high degree of emotional entrainment – through bodily synchronization, mutual stimulation/arousal of participant's nervous systems – result in feelings of membership that are attached to cognitive symbols; and result also in the emotional energy of individual participants, giving them feelings of confidence, enthusiasm, and desire for action in what they consider a morally proper path. (Collins 2004: 42)

People participating in a successful interaction ritual increasingly share an emotional state and feel a sense of confirmation through collective participation.

*Figure 1: Interaction ritual chains according to Randall Collins (reproduced from Collins 2004: 49).*




An example of such an interaction ritual is rhythmic clapping, through which people synchronize their perceptions with each other and harmonize their actions. This makes people feel reassured about the way they are behaving. Another example would be a conversation between two people, which also follows a certain rhythm of speaking and lis-

tening. If such a rhythm is established, i.e., there are no painfully long pauses and people do not interrupt each other, there is a high level of confidence: Interlocutors feel comfortable, and the conversation seems to move forward by itself. Instead of feeling awkward, they can go with the flow. After the conversation, they feel better than they did before. In other words: The confirmation of one's behavior within an interaction with others leads to increased confidence, or in Collins' words, "emotional energy."

This "emotional energy" can be attached to objects that are at the center of the ritual interaction. Things such as wooden crosses, material images of deities, or charismatic leaders who are at the center of the focused attention become associated with the experienced emotions. These objects become imbued with "emotional energy" and can take on the role of a sacred symbol for the community, constituted through ritual. The role of the cross in an ecumenical prayer night analyzed by Hoffmann (see this volume) can serve as an example: It is placed in the center of the interaction and thus becomes a symbol of the group that is constituted by the ritual. The fact that that the group includes non-Christian participants shows that the ritual adds new layers of meaning to an already existing symbol.

## 2.3 Catherine Bell: Ritualization

In contrast to Collins' broad understanding of ritual, ritual here is intended to denote interactions with specific characteristics. However, identifying a particular group of actions as rituals could lead to unnecessary controversy. Instead of introducing a dichotomy, it is more useful to focus on the degree of ritualization that structures an interaction. Following this strategy, Catherine Bell identifies three characteristics of ritualized actions (Walthert 2020):

1. Formalization: Certain forms of behavior, appearance, and utterances are to be followed by the participants in the interaction. Typically, there are expectations regarding clothing, speech style, or posture. Although often there may not be an explicit dress code, people dress nicely to fit in and want to pay tribute to specific occasions, thus rendering them special. In a celebratory dinner in the Methodist community of Milan, that takes place regularly, participants dress in a festive way (see Ghiretti in this volume).

2. Repetitiveness: The action is structured as a reproduction of previous performances – one acts in this way and not differently because one has done it the same way in the past. According to Bell (1997: 153), there is a punctilious concern with repetition. In highly ritualized sequences of ritual performances, like standard prayers, the words uttered are an exact reproduction of earlier performances.

3. Tradition: The action is located in a tradition, i.e., it is legitimized by placing the present ritual in the context of an order that is presumed to have existed in the past. Even innovative rituals like the interreligious prayer analyzed by Hoffmann (in this volume) are deliberately situated on days with traditional meaning (Good Friday) and in the vicinity of traditional locations (a church and a mosque).

A Roman Catholic Mass, for example, imposes requirements on the garments of the participants and demands a certain way of speaking during the offertory (formality). It reproduces previous performances with the same sequence of actions and is the same

Mass as the one a week ago (repetitiveness). In terms of symbolism and self-understanding, it refers to a broader tradition in which the ritual practice is situated (tradition).

The expression of these three dimensions may differ from one other. For example, the inauguration of a new football stadium may be the first of its kind, and it cannot be expected to be repeated. However, this lack of repetitiveness can be compensated for in the other ways: To give the occasion the dignity it is intended to have, the participants are more solemnly dressed (formality) and more reference is made to the club's tradition, in which a new chapter is being written (tradition).

In this context, ritualization is a strategy for structuring action that can be used more or less consciously by those involved. It may be in the interests of certain actors to repeat actions with formality and reference to tradition – for example, the importance of a building is publicly emphasized when the key is not simply handed over to the new occupants, but the handover is ritually inaugurated, which means that people dress up and make speeches.

In her understanding of ritualization, Bell follows not so much Durkheim as Pierre Bourdieu's concept of practice. Bourdieu's understanding of practice emphasizes, as he explains, on the one hand, the structuring of actions and, on the other hand, the structuring effect these actions have on these structures. In a perspective based on such an understanding of structure and action, ritualization is seen as a process that structures practices. It leads to the differentiation of a certain sequence of actions in a specific form. Through the performance of formality and references to tradition, ritualized practices are likely to be seen by the actors and their observers as part of a larger order that they reproduce through interaction. Individuals involved in ritualized practices have no choice but to behave within the framework of the structures that prescribe the mode of behavior (Bourdieu 2009: 253).

The approaches of Durkheim, Collins, and, at least to some extent, also Bell, point to unity: According to Durkheim, the individual participating in a ritual is integrated into a group whose power he or she feels in the interaction. According to Collins, this occurs through synchronized interactions within the group in which the participants' actions, perceptions, and emotions are aligned. In the process, ideas and symbols imbued with emotional energy are created that remind people of the group's unity even after the ritual has ended. Ritualization standardizes these interactions by fixing them in terms of sequence, form, and reference to tradition.

## 2.4 Gerd Baumann: Diversity

Such a perspective on rituals has been criticized, for example, by the German anthropologist Gerd Baumann. He bases his critique on several years of fieldwork in the London borough of Southall, which is characterized by different populations, in particular by Sikhs and Hindus from India, Muslims from India and Pakistan, but also English, Irish, and Afro-Caribbean groups. According to Baumann, the Durkheimian image of ritual as a mechanism for creating unity does not help in understanding how this diversity works. While rituals certainly play a role, they do not culminate in unity, but rather, participants use ritual opportunities to emphasize difference.

Baumann identifies several configurations of difference and rituals that Durkheim did not pay enough attention to:

First, the performance of rituals seems, in many cases, to consist of marking a group's difference from others. For example, on the occasion of a memorial service, Southall's Sikhs celebrate the sacrifices made by Indian soldiers for Great Britain. In doing so, they do not emphasize their unity and attachment to Britain, but rather a difference between themselves and the British: "[…] a ritual has been used here to convey a message across a cultural cleavage to 'others' or to an outside 'public' and that this message is concerned quite centrally with reformulating the cleavage between 'us' and 'them'." (Baumann 1992: 98)

Second, and arguably more notable, such boundary demarcations can also be made by several groups at the same time, in the same ritual. For example, while the inauguration of a sports center was described by the mayor as a celebration of community unity, other speakers addressed those in attendance only as fellow Indians. And yet another politician framed the event and the center as a symbol of anti-colonialist and socialist movements (Baumann 1992: 101–102).

Third, such differences can also be observed in the private performance of rituals. Because of its omnipresence in commercial media, Christmas as a holiday seems inescapable. However, very different practices and interpretations of the celebration of Christmas can be observed (Baumann 1992: 105): The example of a Hindu family shows that they initially tried to reproduce the ritual model learned through the media as accurately as possible, but in the end they performed something quite different. They ended up eating snacks instead of turkey, and St. Nicholas did not make an appearance, instead, gifts were given directly to one another. Negotiating the different expectations and knowledge between the children and their parents led to a practice of celebrating Christmas that turned out quite differently from family to family (and probably also from year to year).

Baumann points out that Durkheim's underestimation of the relevance of differences in rituals cannot be explained by his focus on non-plural societies. The Aborigines, who make up the empirical background of Durkheim's explanations, may represent a more unified social structure than the diverse borough of Southall. However, comparable ethnographic examples show that rituals in the context of non-plural societies also serve to negotiate difference, not just to dissolve it. For example, Baumann reports from his fieldwork with the Nuba in Sudan, that so-called rain priests play an important role for many, while others follow Islam relatively exclusively. This leads to different interpretations of one and the same ritual: For some, the climax of the annual ritual cycle, celebrated by all Nuba, is to bring rain. At the same time, the more passively participating strict Muslims see its purpose as forging solidarity across the urban-rural divide (Baumann 1992: 112).

Durkheim, Baumann concludes, has sketched out, in an essentialist way, the ideal case of a ritual community that upholds a particular set of values and a uniform reading of symbols, which represents a culturally integrated form of the social (Baumann 1992: 101). He argues that such an assumption is a false starting point for approaching real rituals and communities. With this emphasis on unity, such an approach also forfeits the ability to explain social change through rituals. In making this reproach, Baumann

(1992: 99) follows the broader critique of Durkheimian approaches, especially structural-functionalist theories, which identifies exactly this as a weakness (Walthert 2020: 82–88).

However, this chapter's discussion will not include these broader theoretical implications. Instead, it will pursue the question of whether and how a Durkheimian point of departure can still be fruitful for the analysis of differences in ritual.

## 3 Differences in Ritual

How can we think of differences in rituals using Durkheim's concept other than seeing it in terms of their eradication? Two considerations are necessary before answering this question:

First, the need for such a consideration of difference is obvious. Baumann's examples are far more empirically robust than Durkheim's. Indeed, Durkheim relied on ethnographic studies of doubtful quality. Moreover, the question that most interested Durkheim – namely, how is the social order in modern society possible? – strongly influenced the interpretation of these data. His strategy for finding an answer to this question in what he considered the most primitive form of social life, the Aboriginal totemism, was problematic. By contrasting this with the French society of his time, he ascribed too much unity and consistency to what he regarded as a "primitive society" (see Kuper 1988).

Second, both ritualization and emotionality of interaction are a matter of degree: interactions can fail, for example, if no one joins in the applause (lack of physical synchronization), if there is gossip in the pews (lack of focus), or if there are no participants (no physical co-presence). The same applies to ritualization: lapses in form, deviations from the norm, and violations of tradition are to be expected. The critical question, however, is whether ritualization always correlates with unity – whether a ritual that is interpreted in different ways, such as the one observed by Baumann in Sudan, is ultimately to be described as a weakly ritualized or even a failed interaction because of the lack of unity in its interpretation. Or is this approach open to understanding differences in rituals not only in terms of partial failure? That is, the aim must be to give the existence of difference, even in a Durkheimian approach, a place other than as an indication of a lack of ritualization.

Therefore, the forms of difference identified by Baumann will be addressed, and the concept of ritual developed above will be reconsidered in light of them.

### 3.1 Physical Co-presence and the Boundaries Against the Others

Baumann emphasizes the boundaries that rituals create between participants and others. Collins also notes the "barriers against outsiders" that occur as a result of interaction rituals. Indeed, from Durkheim's starting point that bodily co-presence is crucial to the constitution of the ritual situation, it is not a stretch to assume that this leads to the drawing of boundaries: The distinction between those who are present and those who are absent is reinforced precisely by the ritual coordination of behavior, within which those present are recognized and act as participants in the event – and those outside do

not. This distinguishes ritual interactions from a mere juxtaposition of people putting up their umbrellas at the same time, not coordinated by the interaction itself, in which presence/absence plays no role in coordinating behaviors or interpreting the situation.

Even without modifying Durkheim, interactive boundary making can be captured. For his part, Durkheim (1995: 208) referred to the totem, which he considered the symbol of clans, as "the sign by which each clan is distinguished from the others." But if this demarcation from the out-group remains the only difference an approach to ritual can take into account, then more work needs to be done.

## 3.2 Stratification of the Sacred

The challenge of Baumann's critique lies in the ability of a Durkheimian approach to capture the differences between those who are simultaneously present. Shared bodily presence, in his view, enables differentiation: in ritual space different positions, costumes, and postures can be assumed. Ritual co-presence thereby becomes the starting point for perceiving and sometimes creating these differences.

In the examples analyzed by Eugster-Schaetzle (in this volume), multilingual worship affirms unity (all pray the same prayer) and diversity (they do so in different languages). This affirmation is made possible by the ritualization of the spoken text, which convinces the participants that they all perform the same ritual act despite apparent differences.

As in other situations, rituals can become sites for individuals to present themselves as particularly wealthy, beautiful, or pious. At the same time, however, the formality of ritual also offers the possibility that certain circumstances prevent this: For example, individual glossolalia can be intentionally prevented in evangelical services, and children receiving first communion in Roman Catholic churches are dressed uniformly, limiting the possibilities for differentiation in hairstyles or footwear.

A strategy of ritualization can be the differentiation of those involved in terms of their sacrality: This is most obvious in one-to-many rituals, where collective attention is focused on one person who may be privileged due to the spatial configuration and who is the center of attention through the ritual's design or their particular actions. This renders him or her more sacred as compared to the average participant.

As mentioned above, rituals draw boundaries between themselves, and all that is involved in them, and the profane environment. Sacrality is given to all who are perceived as present – but whatever lies at the center of attention during the ritual, be it an object or a person, is attributed this sacrality even more strongly. These become, in Collins' words, the very symbol of the community associated with the ritual. Rituals can therefore be expected to distribute sacrality unequally among the participants, thus creating difference.

Furthermore, rituals can also sanctify differences that are not related to the degree of sacrality, such as binary gender differences through the physical separation of men and women, as is common in mosques, synagogues and, depending on the context, Roman Catholic churches. Ritual lends a sacred character to social boundaries by enacting them publicly.

## 3.3 Emotions Between Attunement and Antagonism

Shared presence does not mean equality and can even create and make visible differences between participants. In this respect, emotions are a critical factor and outcome of ritual in Collins' theory. On the face of it, rituals result in the uniform distribution of emotions among participants, despite the differences they may bring to the ritual situation: Bodies are arranged and outfitted differently and not all ritual participants perform the same actions, but attention and actions are directed towards a common focus. This alignment leads to the synchronization of movements and utterances, establishing a rhythm to the interaction and thus to the shared emotions and the mutual confirmation of behavior. If this coordination falls apart, one can no longer speak of a ritual or an interaction in the sense of Collins' understanding. A dinner conversation that splits into two separate discussions constitutes, in the end, two separate interactions because it is no longer possible to assume the shared attention of everyone sitting at the table; at one end of the table, there may be laughter while an intellectual debate takes place at the other.

Ritualization ensures that the one coordinated event remains and that any differentiation of the situation into individual sequences (e.g., through personal prayer after communion or greetings those in neighboring seats) reverts to a common focus.

Examples from sports are both proof and modification of this point: The fact that shared focus is necessary to coordinate actions and to create a shared, mutually reinforced mood is demonstrated, for example, by the fact that in ball sports only one ball is played at a time. Even the most boring game of football would definitely collapse in terms of the attention, involvement, and emotion of the participants and the spectators if a second ball were in play. The ritual unification of focus leads to the emotional attunement of the participants.

At the same time, ball sports are an example of the differentiation of emotions: Depending on which team you support, the emotional experience can be very different. Some people cheer, others suffer. The out-group against which one differentiates oneself is present and can thus function as an object of delimiting one's own experience – thus, in Baumann's words, "competing constituencies" (1992: 99) are found. The emotional upsurge described by Collins occurs between the two groups present, whereby the emotionality of one group is essential for that of the other. If the losing side is ostentatiously indifferent to its defeat, victory does not taste half as good.

Balance is also crucial. Teams are grouped by strength to avoid indifference on the part of supporters due to lack of success on one side and the superiority of the other. It's not so much the level of emotion that differs between the competing constituencies but the quality of emotion. Joy on one side of the stadium and frustration on the other side may confirm the dualism that both structures the ritual encounter and is reaffirmed by it.

## 3.4 Moral Differentiation

Ritual structures similar to the ones just discussed can also be found with examples more closely related to morality and even religion in the narrower sense.

The public punishment of people considered witches or criminals is a ritual in which a moral dualism is enacted with competing constituencies (see, e.g., Royer (2003) on such rituals in late medieval England). Those who are seen as evil are ritually put in juxtaposition with those who believe themselves to be on the side of good. At least initially, both sides are physically present.

The condemned are the focus of ritual attention and are therefore, following Durkheim and Collins, sacred objects. At the same time, they stand in moral opposition to what is represented in the ritual and embodied by the spectators. To consider something evil and sacred simultaneously does not pose a problem from a Durkheimian perspective. In Durkheim's understanding, the sacred is not to be equated with the morally good but with the moral in general, which is the unity of the distinction between good and evil. God, seen by Durkheim as a symbol of society, is considered sacred, and so is the devil. Both represent one side of the difference between good and evil, which is what morality is about. Both sides of morality, good and bad, God or the Devil, are sacred (Durkheim 1995: 413). The profane is what takes place outside of this distinction, it is a quality of things like daily chores, furniture, and tax returns, that are not associated with fundamental collective issues. They do not, like sacred things, relate to matters of social and moral importance.

The emotions of the victims of a ritual alienation, such as what happens in trials and witch hunts, are probably directly opposed to those of the spectators. This opposition is parallel to the sports example just mentioned. The consequences, however, are more predictable and drastic: witches were often killed during the ritual, so the ritual can ultimately culminate in moral unity. The same applies to many forms of funeral ceremonies: In the death rituals of the Parsi Zoroastrians, for example, the corpse is the focus of the first days of the ritual and is at the same time considered impure and dangerous. It constitutes a negative association of sacrality. During the so-called four-day ritual, the body is buried in the Towers of Silence, the interior of which is only accessible to the corpse bearers due to the impurity contained within (Lüddeckens and Karanjia 2011). The ritual is an enactment of the moral distinction between purity and impurity and the transformation of the situation from the latter into the former.

In the case of sports, moral differences can be constitutive for both groups involved: for example, cricket matches between India and Pakistan strengthen the identity of both countries (Nair 2011). However, the uncertainty of the outcome carries with it the risk of vilification of the players from one's own team in the event of an ignominious defeat. Compared to sports, most religious rituals are more reliable in this regard due to the comparatively high level of ritualization, which also helps to determine the outcome and see to it that good prevails.

Rituals publicly create moral differences and show how these can be dealt with.

## 3.5 Interpretations

This chapter has outlined how rituals take up, dramatize, and generate role differences, hierarchical differences, and moral differences. Since rituals are also associated with meaning and, not least in the Durkheimian tradition, are understood as processes in which people learn, the question of unity and difference must also be raised in this regard: Do rituals lead to the unification of ideas and beliefs among the people involved?

A ritual may have different meanings for different participants. Baumann (1992: 101) shows this in his observation of the inauguration of a sports center in Southall, which was – as discussed above – interpreted very differently by the various participants. Rituals, one must conclude, sometimes can't even convince people of a uniform interpretation of their own meaning. For further elaboration, it is therefore essential to consider the capacity of rituals to transmit information. According to anthropologists like Maurice Bloch (1989: 31; see also Rappaport 1999: 113), rituals are limited to a restricted code. What is done (and also said) is predetermined in highly ritualized interactions – the formality of the ritual limits the freedom of action and speech, even for the ritual leaders (Bloch 1989: 29). The breadth of emotions cannot be achieved through extensive elaborations, because rhythmic entrainment requires structures of action and utterance that are easy for the participants to become involved in.

Accordingly, the information conveyed must be rather simplistic: A moral dualism can be dramatically enacted, but a theology of evil in its differentiation cannot. Due to the traditionality and repetitiveness of rituals, the information communicated is usually not new or surprising. Moreover, this information can be learned by the participants over time through repeated performances of the ritual.

It is crucial, however, that ritualized interactions do not require either understanding or acceptance of the message conveyed. A corresponding validation in the consciousness of the participants is unnecessary as long as the ritual communication works: As long as people engage in ritualized interaction, it is insignificant whether they understand or approve of the content or whatever it may be about. Anyone can attend a sermon as long as he or she sits his or her body in the pew the way the others do. It does not matter whether the words of wisdom are understood or even accepted. This is also true of the ritualized aspect of encounters between individuals: It is challenging to converse with a person with whom one does not share a language or with whom one does not get along with for other reasons. But it is much easier to enter into a more ritualized interaction with the other person, because one can greet them according to the rules of politeness. Even if one may secretly not wish them a good day or does not speak their language, the ritual form guarantees a smooth interaction.

Ritualized interactions are impervious to the differences between the individuals involved. Further, they may render the people involved into a semblance of unity. Participants may mutually infer attitudes based on assumptions regarding the connection between participation, emotionality, and persuasion: If the others are here and participate in this ritual, they presumably accept what it stands for. Or at least the power behind the practice is strong enough to entice those present to participate. Union is celebrated, and difference is upheld.

Rituals may, as has been acknowledged since Durkheim, serve to implement ideas. However, the peculiarity of ritualized interactions is precisely that they allow interactions to function independent of differing interpretations and assessments.

## 4 Conclusion

The perspective developed in this paper shows that with some modifications, a Durkheimian approach to ritual can take differences into account, and therefore situations characterized by conviviality into account.

First, marking the difference from an out-group is a fundamental aspect of ritual. Following Collins, this becomes clear through the dimension of bodily co-presence. It is only through this presence that a ritual comes into being, creating a demarcation from those who are not present. Those outside can even become the direct object of ritual attention.

Second, rituals can stratify moments through the orientation of the participants and their focus of attention: Sacrality follows the distribution of attention, which may be unequal. The result of rituals can lie in the plausibility of charismatic leadership, that is, precisely in the unequal distribution of sacrality and power through the specific ritual structure.

Third, mutual focus and rhythmic entrainment lead to emotional alignment. However, the example of team sports such as football shows that emotional escalation can be based on antagonistic emotions: Dejection on one side nurtures triumph on the other.

Fourth, the ability of rituals to incite very different emotions in different participants results in the enactment of moral difference between good and evil. In certain rituals, dead people, delinquents, or witches even incorporate the sacred through the form of impurity or evil. Ritual practices serve to emphasize these differences, and, sometimes to omit them.

Fifth, besides establishing, dramatizing, and transforming differences, ritualization is also a means of facilitating communication despite differences: Sticking to the form and acting in a familiar way relieves the participants in a ritualized interaction from improvisation or the need to be articulate.

As stressed in the first point above, an interaction ritual draws a boundary between the in- and outgroup. And as discussed in the last point, rituals can create "a sense of 'with-ness,' of affective togetherness" (Bieler in this volume), which is a fundamental aspect of conviviality, and they can achieve this despite different degrees of knowledge, belief, and mastery of the ritual among the participants. The second, third, and fifth points discuss the fact that rituals can deal with differences other than simply by trying to make them disappear. While the ritual creation of antagonistic emotions and interpretations would be detrimental to conviviality, the creation and allocation of different degrees of emotion and sacrality through ritual may very well be conducive to it: Leaders and symbols can be shaped, and ideas of good and evil can be realized ritually.

Rituals are more versatile than Durkheim may have thought. They can achieve something other than unity, which in its totality is out of reach anyways. As interactive prac-

tices, they can take on, manage, and negotiate difference under the conditions of conviviality.

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