

Chapter Eleven

Divinity and Mimesis

Naming and Melancholia

Let us not forget the scene here of the colony itself, with its dozens of voices, some shrieking, some commanding, some laughing and too many *crying, sobbing*. These voices, reduced to their phonetic components of sound in the din, and many no more than sound in terms of clarity, flowed around and through one chaotically like forces of water in a small turbulent pool of hungry fish. In the air, the body of the hole, was the acrid smell of urine, ever present, but soon second nature. As one moved through this room eyes and voices, *scentses*, sought one out, followed one, wanted one, who knows to what end.

On the days when she isn't looking to murder someone, taking on a countenance of a most wicked fashion, Agnes is in the corner loudly singing her words of love, "*Amor, mi amor, de mi amor, de mi amor*" which just repeats like this overandover and which no one can name as a song. Now and then I and the others, out of frustration or what we don't know (or *se*), couldn't help but sing along with her, waving our hands melodically in front of us as if conducting, "*Amor, mi amor, de mi amor, de mi amor*" and then walk away as she gave an insidious laugh, and continued singing. 'Take that Agnes!'

Doris, like many others, continually wanders back and forth. Her path is beaten from the nurse's station to the door (see figure 1), where she stops, looking out the window next to the door and/or at her own reflection in it, and touches the glass and/or her own hand with her fingers,

sobbing, constantly catching her breath, but *never* with tears “*Aye bendiito, aye mamiita, aye papiito*” over and over again, for at least thirty minutes of every hour, going on eight months by the time I left. There were so many times when her sobbing became unbearable, not just to us, the self appointed saints of this mysterious path, but to other clients around her. A few of the clients would spend time, now and then, trying to comfort her and getting nowhere; others would yell again and again, day in and day out, for her to just shut *up*. It was in the crying I was always hearing, here and there, that I first came to the notion of *dreama*. This crying, never with tears, was always subdued, a sort of desperate attempt to cry out, which came only as an outpouring of sound which one could not control. When listened to, really listened to, this sound became a bit terrifying. This crying, it struck me, with its sort of whine, searching for a voice, was one I myself had felt, had cried, but only in dreams.

I imagine here, I *understand* here, these goings on as a play, of sadness and mourning not too dissimilar to that described by Walter Benjamin, yet without acting. If you look at the floorplan in figure one, you will see that this place, like all stages, has a transparent fourth wall, this one of glass, in which, when the effects are right, one can detach one’s gaze from the stage and see oneself in this wall. But a morality play it is not. How easy it is to speak of saintliness and the should. So many did it before they spent time in the colony and some still do. But everyone, even the most saintly, was able, for their own good, to tune a great deal out, to tone it down. How can one ignore crying, and what shame there is in it. If you seek it, there is enough melancholia for a lifetime here. Just try to make sense of it, take it upon your shoulder like the cross, point it towards a star and it will follow you. Along this way lies salvation and redemption, as long as one can deny the feeling of vengeance against life this task engenders. If you seek the death-essence-in- life, like a pilgrim

or Frankenstein's monster in search of your beginnings, this is path to beat. The road to heaven is but a short walk with Agnes from the nurses station to the door, crossing the colony from border to border, passing the coffee table, the office), as you stand both looking at yourselves in the window by the door and into the hallway beyond. At the nurses station you are Saint Jude, at the coffee table John the Baptist, at the piano you, Saint Francis, grab a cute little furry stuffed animal and stuff it into Agnes' hands, and finally at the door you are Saint Peter, fortified and free of magic, yet wholly absurd in your role as gatekeeper.

Here and there are those who do not wander so, who gave it up, sitting in chairs in various forms of posture, some in wheel chairs, wheels locked down, slowly growing into the fetal position, the first and last stations of the crossed. Many of these people must be spoon fed. It is here, or if one ventures into the bush hinterlands of the bathrooms, that one sees not only nature's call, but its answer. Among the Alz people their physicians cannot *se* what leads to these positions, to these calls, which some must answer for others. In this failing to answer one sees the fallenness, the failure, of nature itself. For the guilt of this failure, for this state of childhood, or minority, nature names those who fail it. *Physis*, or nature, becomes laden with guilt in a way not too dissimilar to that in which a mountain begins to crumble, or a tree begins to fall. In their fallenness and failure, which is also that of *physis*, they become increasingly divorced from *kinesis* (or movement), and remarried, *tied*, to love and strife.

It is here, at this time, that they come to manifest for humanity a new idea, that they come of age; yet instead of being recognized as a oneness of the material and transcendental object as seen in Baroque allegory, they come to be recognized as *a relationship* between appearance and essence as

seen in Romantic symbolism. Instead of being recognized as a death's head, as the essence-of-life-in-death, they come to be recognized as dispossessed, as fetishized, and their images as kitsch. In this process of recognition they lose their most obvious aspect, *their materiality*, which is united with their transcendental nature, and are instead made *objects* of sense, cases and victims dependent on perception, i.e. on how they are perceived and how *well* they are perceived. Give this fallen nature, this *physis*, a voice and it would sing songs of love, and lament relationships, parts of itself, long lost. They are not relationships, it would tell us; they are not nature or tied to a state of nature, but rather fallen nature. It is we, in our recognition of them, who speak of symbol, stigma, and subtle, easily *misperceived* relationships of love.

It is due to this self-imposed muteness that these *voices*, (when heard crying and sobbing “*aye bendito, aye mamita, aye papito,*” ‘my daddy’s dead, my daddy’s *dead*’ or shouting out and singing, ‘*Juventud, divino tesoro,*’ ‘*amor , mi amor, de mi amor, de mi amor*’ and ‘*palo, palito, palo es*’) that fallen and failed *nature* mourns. With this feature of mourning, however, says Benjamin, “the converse of this statement leads even deeper into the essence of nature: its mournfulness makes it become mute. In all mourning there is a tendency to silence, and this is infinitely more than an inability or reluctance to communicate.”¹ “To be named—” says Benjamin, “even if the name giver is god-like and saintly—perhaps always brings with it a presentment of mourning.” One must never forget here, though, that it is the symbolic which names in such a way, which names the death-essence-in-life, and classifies it under its category of disease, as the cause towards and from which we humans strive. The allegorist, unlike the namegiver,

¹ What is true for this kind of mourning is also true for the saint as Bataille imagines him or her in his erotic theory of language. See Chapter 2 above, pp.73-79, and elsewhere. Note also the affinities between the Benjamin's

according to Benjamin, does not name in this way but rather sinks the life-essence-in-death into his or herself and, like the storyteller, engages in mysterious instruction, both of his or herself and others, remaining unable to name the cause, symbolically and/or meta-linguistically.¹ In its recognition of the Alz people humanity is wholly symbolic. This symbolist recognition, as Gabriel has led me to see, is the world view of humanity's colonial conquest. Among the Alz people, this view grows ever more influential in their recognition of and ability to heal their own ills.

Amongst humanity, seeing them mime us makes us feel ever more liberated and enlightened.

Naming Divinity

A significant part of this book to this point has been dedicated to the notion of searching for “the cause.” This search depicts a scene in which I dealt with a group of people I refer to as “the Alz people” and another I refer to as “humanity,” ethnologically, *ur*-historically, and philosophically exploring a state of colonization of the former by the latter. This state, these scenes, I refer to as “the Alzheimer’s state.” And what a scene (and state) it was, and is: a person in a daycare center, a morgue, clinics, labs, libraries, rap sessions, situations, contexts. But how situated, how contextualized? “So there I

following sentence and Bataille of saintliness and silence.

¹ The act of naming is, as the very title to this book implies, a most crucial concept to all that is being addressed here. To write, as I have here, that the proper activity of naming is one in which the thinker remains unable to name the cause of this or that phenomena symbolically and (Alz) meta-linguistically. Implied in this negative requirement is also, however, a need to understand that both Symbol and (Alz) meta-language involve the *exterior*, taboo, form of Stoic *logos* in a way in which it is supposed to, but actually fails to, inform the interior form of *logos* in its search. In opposition to this work of the Symbol and (Alz) meta-language, the ideas presented in what follows are intended to lead to an activity of naming in which the exterior *logos* of Alzpeech (in both of its linguistic aspects) leads to an allegorically informing interior *logos* which leads toward the material cause.

am...” “That ain’t livin in the past, that’s real.” Who situates? (I)nc. situate. Words and acts to you, reality to me and them, that is, until (I)nc. situate, until (I)nc. give context. But to what do (I)nc. give context; what do (I)nc. situate? Why *us*, of course; (I)nc. give context to and situate *us*. In giving context (I)nc. give active relation, (I)nc. tell. In the end, there is no way out of this; telling is active relation and active relation is telling and *practically* we can go no further; practically we can only proceed by giving a purer meaning to the words (or actions) of the tribe. With these purer meanings we are to then proceed to some sort of *practical intervention*, be it chemical, social or otherwise relational, which could be called a cure. The physician says ‘(I)nc. will give context, refine words into their purest context,’ i.e. diagnose; action to which prescription is, as the term implies, already written in.

Context is an odd notion when examined closely. If I, for example, write this sentence here and now while sticking my tongue out at you the reader, what happens (or ‘is happening’) in terms of context? Again, (I)nc. create context, like I did just now. (I)nc. put my thoughts out, that is (I)nc. *wrote* these words out, as part of this cultural critique. Why didn’t “I” write them? “I” can’t write them without ()nc., without you and this text, i.e. *context*. When you engage me and I engage you we become complicit, we become (I)nc. and the more we say “I,” the more we make that sound, the more we strengthen the (I)nc. by keeping its secret. And we should do so for, without it, we would be unable to create context, and what we do here, in reading, in exegesis, and in our professional (and/or other) lives, would lose its *meaning*. We would lose that which the activity of symbolic anthropologists is all about, i.e. the search for meaning in immersion

within language and culture as well as the contextualization, the giving of meaning, through a *logos* of phenomena.

As is so clearly seen in Myerhoff's classic work described above, in contextualizing and giving meaning to the strange acts of Others the ethnographer does so even more to those of his or her self. That which attracted me to Myerhoff's use of "I," to her self-reflexivity in this regard, led me in turn to recognize the secretion of the (I)nc.. As the need for self-reflexivity in ethnographic writing was being noticed, as the secreted "I" of the ethnographer was being dealt with, the stronger (I)nc. was being ever more secreted in that context and meaning came to be seen more as subjective, identity-relative features of writing and less as the subjecting and identity-dissolving features of reading, exegesis, and ethnographic professionalism. As in Myerhoff's text, the subjectivities and relative identities of the Other came to be a new stand-in for the meaning giving divinities of the ethnographer (i.e. for the primitive this or that), and their self-reflexive contextualization, their new, phenomenological, active relationality came to be the new way of understanding these meaning giving divinities (i.e. a sort of guilt-laden primitivism). It is for this reason that the social impetus of symbolic anthropology, i.e. a feature of the anthropologist's own culture—the need to understand belief and meaning and the theory which guides that effort—is first a need to understand those Others which the (I)nc. of the symbolic anthropologist has contextually (and reflexively) *named and/or made into a divinity*¹ and, second, to understand the active relations between these

¹ Here I equate naming, *à la* the Symbol, with being made into a divinity. To this, as outlined above, I oppose an allegorical form of naming, *à la* Stoic etymologism, which does not do this in that, unlike the symbolist search for a "solution," it follows material fibers, unraveling them to their ends, instead of solving what is meant to be a puzzle by discovering their all too Platonic and moral, "proper order."

people in the same way one understands the relation between oneself and ones own divinity which the Other has become a stand-in for. Whatever this original divinity is, however it is conceived, it appears to be as one imagines it as a child and, like all things childlike, is never more than a stone's throw from the state.

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I take this notion of divinity from Godfrey Lienhardt's great work on Dinka religion entitled *Divinity and Experience*. In this work we see, as we also see in its sister work on the Nuer by Evans-Pritchard, a struggle to describe notions of some greater power over humanity which do not fit Christian European conceptions of God or gods. First, we are told, in Dinka thought there is no separation of the natural from the supernatural. Lightning, or rather its force, is, for example, attributed to "a particular ultra-human power" but not to a power which could rightly be called "supernatural."

Lienhardt writes:

The force of lightning is equally ultra-human for ourselves as for the Dinka, though the interpretation we place upon that fact is very different from theirs. [M]any features of Dinka religious thought and action are connected with their experience of what we call 'Nature,' and of the scope and limits of human control within their particular environment.

The word which any inquirer into Dinka religion will first and most frequently hear is *nhialic*. Literally, the word is the locative form of *nhial*, meaning 'up' or 'above', and *nhialic* is the word used in many contexts in which we should speak of 'the sky'. Part of the meaning of *nhialic*, then, is conveyed by 'sky' and 'in the above.' The word *nhialic* is meaningful in relation to a number of Dinka terms with which our 'God' has no such association. *Nhialic* is figured sometimes as a *kind* of being and activity which sums up the activities of a multiplicity of beings, while the word 'God' has no such extended meaning in common speech.¹

The word Lienhardt decides to use to translate *Nhialic* is “Divinity.” He writes: “‘Divinity’,” like *nhialic*, can be used to convey to the mind at once *a* being, a *kind* of nature or existence, and can be a quality of that kind of being.” The key question for us here is: *What kind of nature or existence, what kind quality, and what kind of being is ‘Nhialic’ and why is its difference from our metaphysics important to understand?*”

The most immediate answer to this question is that Divinity among the Dinka is a kind of nature or existence, a kind of quality, and a kind of being which is manifesting. To be any more specific than this requires context and, doing so, through giving context, moves Divinity from a nature, existence, quality or being which is manifesting to one which *has* manifested. For example, says Lienhardt, when one is “confronted with unexpected behavior in an animal, Dinka might say... ‘it is Divinity’ (*ee nhialic*). The implications would be, not that the animal itself was... identical with Divinity, but that its behavior manifested... Divinity.” In other words, to the Dinka it is not animals, men or things which are divine, but rather their manifestations.

What we see here, in this concept of Divinity (*nhialic*), I argue, and in the similar Nuer term *kwoth* discussed by Evans-Pritchard, is a way of thinking about manifestation which is not essentially contextual in that although Divinity does rely on context, it does not refer to a relation (active or otherwise) but rather to *the cause*. What Divinity refers to is that which “is going down,” that which is “blowing our way.” In naming what’s going down it does involve context, but does not imply a relation between what’s going

¹ Lienhardt, Godfrey *Divinity and Experience*, p.29.

down and previous actions. When the wind blows or the rain falls heavily out of season, or when something else unexpected goes down, whether human, natural or whatever, the first thought is not to draw a relational conclusion from it, but to simply note it as a manifestation. What we see in these descriptions of the Dinka and the Nuer in saying ‘*ee nhialic*’ or ‘*e kwoth*’ (‘it is Divinity’) is something like a perpetual need to name the cause of whatever unusual or notable is going down. Unlike Christian European explanations of nature which forever attribute unusual or notable goings-down to aspects of relationality, forever suppose these events *manifest the idea*, or *reveal* that relations have gone awry, i.e. that things are the result of supernatural relationship problems (or changes), the Dinka and the Nuer seem to see such goings-down as manifesting nothing.

The first key to the notion of divinity which both Lienhardt and Evans-Pritchard seem to be describing is in understanding, through the meaning of sacrifice amongst these people, in what particular way the manifestations which are divinity are expressed in terms of relations. In what appears to be an unstated contrast between Nuer religious conceptions and those of the Zande, between theistic and magical conceptions, Evans-Pritchard writes:

The role of this religion [Nuer] in the regulation of social life, its structural role, is subsidiary to its role in the regulation of the individual’s relations with God [Divinity], its personal role. The two roles are of different orders and have different functions, and it is the second which has the greater interest for us, for though Nuer religious activity is part of social life and takes place within it they conceive it as expressing essentially a relationship between man and something which lies right outside his society; and it is, therefore, within the framework of that conception that our study of their religion has to be made and its central act of sacrifice has to be understood.¹

¹ Evans-Pritchard, E.E. *Nuer Religion*. p.286

Here and throughout *Nuer Religion* we encounter a great degree of particular positioning in an attempt to translate and make relevant Nuer conceptions to European Christian understandings of “religion” in general. What we also find, however, is a great deal of confusion in the way he tries to do this. In this part of the text, near the end, Evans-Pritchard holds firm to the notion that Nuer sacrifice and religion must be understood in terms of symbolism and relationality, yet he does not justify why this is so. In no clear instance does one find the Nuer describing their own activity in terms of the symbolic or relational; this reading is rather built out of references to the *effects* which Divinity is having on them. What we see in his examples could be equally, and I say better, read in terms of manifestation (which includes the effect of something “going down” like rain, as it literally is said to be, on the person) *and* counter-manifestation by the person or people whom experience(s) this manifestation. Could it not be (as I would in fact maintain) that what really happens in sacrifice is a form of mimesis; that in the extended act of sacrifice one mimes the particular manifestation which is affecting one with another manifestation of like for like? Could saying “*e kwoth*” or “it is Divinity” not itself be a manifestation, like “it falls to me” or “that evokes”?¹ Could it not be, as

¹ Compare this to Mallarmé who, in his own poetic process of mimesis with words and things around him said that it was not these words and things but rather the effects which they produce in him and us which are the subject of poetry. In this example from the Nuer, I argue, we see something quite different, i.e. a naming of something going-down which does not name the experience or the effects which these goings down produce in us, but rather, in saying “*e kwoth*,” “that evokes” or “it falls to me” we mime that going-down directly, leaving the “experience” or “effects produced in us” (like the New Caledonians confronting a stranger, my old friend saying “I resemble that remark,” or the physician’s “I can’t say”) as *something yet to be determined* in an allegorical and *ur*-historical process of naming. For a view of this in terms of Stoic logic see the first chapter of this book,

both Evans-Pritchard and Lienhardt recognize, that the “it is” is a problem here? Something happens, like heavy rain out of season, or a hyena playing with a lion, and it is said that “*e kwoth.*” Divinity is going down, is manifesting. This is the first step in naming the cause. It does not prescribe what to do or what must or will be done, nor does it state a relationship. It does not say what exactly “it is,” does not create an object out of what is going down; it does not reify it. How could it, for it does not yet have a specific name? What are we to call that which is novel, strange, unheard of, or uncalled for? Rather, it seems simply to name the most general cause of it which may or may not be pursued in further personal mimetic action like sacrifice or storytelling (the latter being that activity from which “relations” and, in turn, historical cause and effect relations are derived).

“All gifts,” Evans-Pritchard tells us, “are symbols of inner states, and in this sense one can only give oneself; there is no other kind of giving.” Sacrifice, in other words, involves the personal relationship one has with Divinity, which is symbolized by the gift. In giving the gift, in sacrificing, one “gives a part of oneself,” gives up *a possession*, in hopes of setting this personal relationship straight once again. The sacrifice involved in sickness and healing itself involves just such a relationship. Trouble, like illness, comes from Divinity, we are told, and sacrifices are made to rid one of it. This trouble, however, not only comes from but also *is* Divinity and in sacrifice

one rids oneself of Divinity. The idea here is that Divinity should stay away where it belongs. Evans-Pritchard writes:

Sacrifice is made to persuade him [Divinity] to turn away from men and not trouble them any more. It is made to separate God and man, not to unite them. They are already in contact in sickness or other trouble. The sacrifice is intended to rid the sufferer of the spiritual influence whose activity is apparent in the sickness.¹

So does this then not contradict what I said above regarding the difference between Nuer and Christian European explanations of unusual or notable goings-down? Does this not indicate that divine manifestations as found in illness amongst the Nuer are manifestations or revelations of ideas or forms, of relations which have gone awry? Does Nuer sacrifice then drive Divinity out and back into the realm of ideas and forms, thereby re-establishing the divide between the human and the ideal? Evans-Pritchard seems to think so, even referring just before this to the fourth century Neoplatonist Sallustius whom he uses to support the idea that a third term, a medium, is important in all communication or relation between “two living objects which are distant from one another” (like Divinity and a Nuer). Evans-Pritchard operates throughout this text with a theoretical knowledge of metaphysics which is as much Neoplatonic (i.e. Christian) as it is Kantian. He seems to assume that the divide between a noumenal or ideal and a phenomenal or transcendental realm is somehow a universal which can also describe the divide between Divinity and the Nuer. Inspired by Hubert and Mauss (whom he outlines just before the Neoplatonist Sallustius) he refers to the notion that

¹ *Ibid.* p.275

sacrifice is a communication between the sacred and profane; a dialectic which George Bataille, in his *Theory of Religion*, directly relates to a movement between the transcendental and the immanent of German mysticism, and which Evans-Pritchard describes as communication on “material” and “moral” planes. Directly following this quote above on sacrifice he continues:

There is here a paradox. The solution of the paradox would seem to lie in a distinction between two kinds of union, union on a material plane which is to be dissolved in the moment of sacrifice by bringing about union on a moral plane. This solution is consistent with the Nuer representation of sickness in which the sickness itself, the moral or spiritual state of the sufferer, and the action of Spirit form a complex whole; and also with the essential ambiguity of their conception of God as the source of good and ill.

In Nuer sacrifice then, if we are to sum up Evans-Pritchard’s assessment of it, there first exists a personal relationship to Divinity. This relationship is a divine manifestation in the person which is something like a part of the person. This manifestation “goes down” on the “material plane” and is symbolized by “a part of oneself,” *a possession*, which is the gift given in sacrifice. This gift symbolizes one’s personal relationship with Divinity. In sacrifice one gives a symbol of a gifted part of oneself, a possession, away. In illness this gifted part of oneself is thought of as trouble; it is that which threatens to make one something it is not one’s destiny to be. In sacrifice Nuer and Divinity come into contact on a moral (ideal) plane and the ideal, gifted part of oneself is removed from the material plane. Following Plato in one way and Kant in another the ideal and the moral are seen as the goals toward which all understanding and practice (in this case of, and in response to, illness) should strive.

But are we to simply accept this reading, in spite of the fact that the Nuer themselves seem to offer no such goals to understanding and practice? The attribution of symbolism and relationality are a real chore for Evans-Pritchard in this text and they are so, I argue, due to the fact that the Nuer do not actively partake in the metaphysics in which he bases his analysis. In fact, when the very basic attributes of *kwoth* (God or Divinity), are considered, when the basic descriptions of it are imagined, what is envisaged is something which resists the ontology and logic which Evans-Pritchard, and most all who attempt to treat the metaphysics of other peoples relationally and symbolically, seem bent on making universal. In one way or another it all comes down to certain way in which we imagine or posit the ontology of things novel, unheard of or uncalled for. We experience this or that of this sort and we are immediately moved to name it in certain ways different from the Nuer or Dinka. We often say “That’s strange,” or “That’s weird,” or some such thing but who would relate such sayings to Divinity? My very point, however, is that such sayings seem to be very much like “*e kwoth*” and that they are at least half translations of it. Like the M.D. who, upon examining a patient says “Hmm,” and thereby notices something unusual, he or she does not name anything. Rather, he or she says, if then asked “what it is” by the patient, says (in one way or another) “I can’t say” by which he or she means both that he or she does not know if this manifestation will or should be named (beyond his or her “Hmm”) *or* means that it is yet premature attempt to name it. Beyond this, however, is the fact that it doesn’t yet “mean” anything; it does not yet have, or has not been given, a context. In this moment, where practice and experience meet the Other, the physician (and Christian Platonic European metaphysics) then proceeds in one fashion and the Nuer and Dinka (often) in another.

They do not proceed in different directions in how they both set out to name the particular cause of many such manifestations, they differ rather in the ways in which they understand what they are doing in this naming. They both tell stories, they both give context, and thus they both offer us the possibility to “discover” the symbols, relations, and signs with which they are working, creating and altering. The great difference is that physicians see the symbols, words and relations as reified instruments which they work with—with which (I)nc. the physician make my diagnosis—as forms of creation and knowing which are somehow unaffected by the metaphysics which has been imposed upon them in a colonial encounter, of which they are unaware, and which the ethnographer or sociologist does not see or note. ‘As people express their lives, so they are...’ needs to be completed thus: ‘As people express their lives, so they are most often in a position of not being able to say, of not being able to name the cause which would lead them not out of but further into the problems which confront them, many of which stem from a form of colonial domination (of relationships and symbols) which they are not given credit enough to appreciate by those who would be their spokespersons.’

Though he seems to be struggling against a group of people who defy his need to think in terms of symbolism and relationality Evans-Pritchard forges ahead speaking of the difference between material forms and spirit, between material vs ideal relations and so on. Above all, he says, we must understand that the Nuer “do not mistake ideal relations for real ones”; it never occurring to him that the Nuer may not be thinking in terms of either.

In medicine as I have come to know it in Miami the task of the clinician in diagnosis is to name the formal and not the material cause. Moreover, the goal of their scientific research was a greater refinement of this formal cause.¹ One could say (as I have in my discussion of chemistrism) that it was not matter but rather material forms which held their interest. As the refinement of these material forms begins to stagnate in bodily terms, and as the disease (i.e. the material form) takes on greater social importance, the refinement often moves into social terms of care and making the best of a grave and incurable situation. Such a refinement is what a great deal of Alzheimer's disease research entails. In terms of Azande spirit belief as Evans-Pritchard describes it what we see in the work of the clinician today regarding Alzheimer's disease is like both a search for witchcraft substance in terms of genetics and, more importantly, an attempt to name a formal cause which disarms (by secretion) any notion of sorcery. Just think of the story of Mom and her husband. Mom seemed to feel she was responsible, or maybe too that it was something in life, in their relations with one another. She came to see that it was a material form, a disease—that it was a nursing home and what happened there; what *they* did to him (and her)—leaving the New Center to fill the role of the compound of shamanic protection and spirit familyhood. She entered into a dialogue with God: “please take him.” But there was also a hurricane involved; one which forced the evacuation of her husband from his nursing home and in which *they* lost his identity in the shuffle of this evacuation. It was a great wind which

¹ See second footnote on fourth page of this chapter for my own contrast of a material cause and that which opposes it.

blew in to intervene in the fates of Mom and her husband, *e kwoth*. When she finally found him his life was almost gone, his body wasting away in a hospital in downtown Miami. Whether *we* are talking about his brain, his body, or that diffuse, genetic witchcraft substance manifesting within him, the Nuer according to Evans-Pritchard, describe the situation thus:

Fundamentally, however, this is not a relation of Spirit to things but a relation of Spirit to persons through things, so that, here again, we are ultimately concerned with the relation of God and man.¹

This message seems to be clear: ‘no Spirit in things, but only Spirit and persons in relation through things.’ Following this, a sickness would be a material thing which has been elevated to the status of a material form (a disease) via sacrifice. This elevation is, according to Evans-Pritchard, an elevation to a “moral” and ideal plane on which symbols and mimetic actions symbolically construed (i.e. very narrowly in terms of context) are the things through which the relations between God and man take place. But if a sickness is a material thing, what sort of thing is it? Is it not a manifestation? Of what; of witchcraft substance, genotypic expression, sorcery? According to Nuer it is supposedly one of God, but it is also one’s own manifestation, for they are one and the same. In essence, one’s behavior or bodily condition *is* this manifestation. Another question would be that if symbols stand in for sickness as a material thing, then what do relations stand in for? The answer would be that relations (like those of God to man carried out “symbolically”) stand in for the contact between physical things (or created things).

¹ Ibid. ??

How do I come to this? I do so quite simply, again through the multiple, yet single, nature of “manifestation” as it is seen among the Nuer. From what we know of the Nuer, through Evans-Pritchard’s explanation, manifestation such as that found in illness is at one and the same time understood as both God’s to a person and the person’s manifestation (of God) to his or herself and others. This manifestation is seen as mimetic in that it is said to “be God,” as Evans-Pritchard tells us, but the Nuer do not think of Spirit as sign, effect, or representation alone. It is not the mimetic action which is God, but rather that which it mimes or, I would say, that which causes it. The symptoms of disease, we are told, “are not thought of as being in themselves Spirit, but their appearance in individuals may be regarded as manifestations of Spirit for those individuals.” Here it seems, in symptoms, “appearance” is thought of transitively, as “*appearing*”. The disease, that which the symptoms indicate, is not Spirit but rather a particularly individual manifestation thereof, i.e. an appearance, an image or a moving, acting presence like a stage, screen or public “appearance” of a celebrity. As said above, the disease is the material form of the sickness, of the unusual behavior or bodily condition manifesting (which is the sickness).

It is with this notion of appearance that we move a step closer to the Nuer conception of disease as material form of sickness and away from the symbolic and relational universality which Evans-Pritchard seems to defend in his handling of it. When Evans-Pritchard says that the appearance of symptoms of disease is the manifestation of Spirit for that individual in and to which they appear he shows at least

two important things. First, he shows that he assumes that the notions of symptom and disease somehow fit the Nuer and, second, and more importantly, that appearance is somehow a simple matter. In the very related case of the Dinka Godfrey Lienhardt, as we shall see, shows this to be anything but the case.

In neurological, pathological and psychiatric diagnosis as I have come to know it appearance is noted both spatially and temporally. In order for diagnosis to be most effective these two must be recorded together in the case history. The drive to more greatly refine the material form of illness today includes the use of CAT, PET, SPECT and MRI technology which moves beyond the verbal, behavioral and outward physical condition to generate material objects through which the illness can be understood and further symbolically incorporated into a more refined material *form* (disease). But if one then thinks of the photo-like objects produced by these technologies as material manifestations, as mimetic of matter in themselves, one is mistaken. They do not mime the matter of the brain any more than a photo mimes a person. They are incapable of mimesis. It is rather those who “see” or “look at” them who perform a type of mimesis which is in turn noted and situated by others (like myself) thereby allowing these films and images to be talked about in terms of symbolism and relations.¹ Furthermore, although these images themselves are talked about in terms of symbols and relations, their “reading” is itself a form of mimesis of mimesis; the first being that of the body miming God in a particularly individual manifestation and the second that of another body miming this manifestation through the material object. The same can be said, as

¹ See and compare to discussions in chapter six as well as the story of Marina’s photos in chapter nine.

outlined in chapter nine, of the pathology lab with its brain slices, gloved hands, and microscopes.