The Ecology of Images

Seeing and the Study of Religion

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ABSTRACT: Opening with a review of leading accounts of the image as an object with agency, this article proposes to study religious images within the webs or networks that endow them with agency. The example of a well-known medieval reliquary serves to show how what I refer to as 'focal objects' participate in the creation of assemblages that engage human and non-human actors in the social construction of the sacred. Focal objects are nodal points that act as interfaces with the network, particularly with invisible agents within it. As participants in a network, images are like masks, offering access to what looks through the mask at viewers engaged in a complex of relations that constructs a visual field or the ecology of an image.

KEYWORDS: agency, assemblage, ecology, enchantment, focal objects, images, network

Over the past two decades and more, scholars of religious visual and material culture have refocused their attention on images as agents, as actors whose power has been variously understood (Belting 1994; Christian 1981; Kohl 2003; Morgan 1998; Swearer 2004). This approach has yielded different methods of defining images. The result has, in turn, illuminated the study of religious images and their uses in ways that allow us to consider images as objects acting with and on the body (Belting 2011; Pinney 2004). Beyond that, some have begun to trace the progression of images and objects as part of unfolding networks (Davis 1997; Geary 1986; Hodder 2012; Morgan 2011; Wharton 2006). I wish to argue that we are now in a position to develop an integrated account of the ecology of images, one that may bring together phenomenology and network theory to help us think about images, embodiment, and social assemblage. It is instructive first, however, to begin with the recent developments in visual theory that have brought us to an understanding of images embedded within an ecology or extended configuration of heterogeneous agents.

Defining Images

Images have been defined in many different ways, but a telling pattern emerges when we examine key definitions. Socrates famously dismissed images in Book 10 of *The Republic* as no more than copies of sensible things made from ignorance of their real source, the divine ideas. But less attention has been trained on the context of this iconophobia. Plato (1987: 95) has Socrates

Religion and Society: Advances in Res6arch 5 (2014): 83–105 © Berghahn Books
doi:10.3167/arrs.2014.050106

forbid the elite caste of guardians in his ideal polis from performing ignoble theatrical roles "for fear of catching the infection in real life." The dramatic representations that performers undertake "establish habits of physical poise, intonation and thought, which become second nature" (ibid.). In other words, we become the roles or images that we impersonate. The mask that Greek (μάσκα) and Roman (*persona*) actors wore on stage might intermingle with the person wearing it. That made images either useful or dangerous. While Socrates worried that images degraded those who regarded the world through them, the Byzantine Orthodox tradition held that the sacred image or icon is a relay that directs human attention to the image's celestial prototype. Icons mediate between heaven and earth. This was not just a matter of a symbolic reference, but of presence. Theodore the Studite praised a court dignitary for replacing an absent godfather at the baptism of his son with an icon of St. Demetrios. "The great martyr," he wrote, "was spiritually present in his own image and so received the infant" (quoted in Brubaker 2012: 111). Ninth-century Byzantine iconoclasm may have been motivated by imperial concern that veneration of images had been the cause of defeat at the hands of Bulgar invaders. Banning and removing images, in effect, was calculated to secure divine favor (ibid.: 90).[1] The Protestant reformer John Calvin favored something like the Platonic critique of images of God, contending that such images insulted God by projecting human categories and thereby displaced or replaced the divine. Images of God were seen as idolatrous concoctions of the human imagination, nothing other than the product of the mind, which was, using Calvin's ([1559] 1995: 97) phrase, a "perpetual forge of idols." Empty as they are in an ontological sense, according to his view, Calvin nevertheless recognized the power of images to shape human sentiments.

In this quick sketch, a pattern emerges that we should note: images do things to or for human beings. Even destroying them exerts a spiritual effect. Images operate as agents of one kind or another, and this makes them either dangerous or very useful. In the modern era and down to the present, scholars have scrutinized images in a comparable manner. Anthropologist Stewart Guthrie (1993: 69) has updated David Hume's ([1757] 1993) account of anthropomorphism as the origin of religion. Human beings are biologically inclined to (over)interpret markings, shapes, or objects in ways that bear resemblance to ourselves, resulting in "human faces in the moon, armies in the clouds," as Hume put it in his "The Natural History of Religion" (ibid.: 141). Those investigating the cognitive science of religion have recently operationalized this line of thinking in what Justin Barrett (2004: 32) has called a "hypersensitive agent detection device," by which he means a genetically evolved, built-in perceptual tendency of human beings to over-interpret phenomena. Guthrie, Hume, and Barrett all seek to explain the apparent animation of the material universe by the human projection of animate qualities. Images, therefore, are special forms of such projection, particularly images of faces and bodies. If Hume disparaged religion for its anthropomorphism, both Guthrie and Barrett argue that there is a certain utility in the projective animation that religion entails. Religious belief may offer certain evolutionary advantages since a meaningful universe is one in which human beings, enabled by a pro-active interpretation of phenomena, can find their lives to be worthy, creative, and rewarded.

Scholars focusing explicitly on images and their power in recent years have been less interested in psychological projection per se, as a compelling explanation of images, and more concerned to understand why images beguile, frighten, or move us. In such affective relationships with human viewers, images act or operate as agents. Thus, Roland Barthes (1981) famously described the effect of photographs on the viewer as projecting a point or *punctum* that pricks. The *punctum* "is what I add to the photograph and *what is nonetheless already there*" (ibid.: 55; italics in original). Barthes noted that the erotic photograph, in contrast to the pornographic one, does not reveal what is desired. As a result, the erotic photograph "takes the spectator outside its frame, and it is there that I animate this photograph and that it animates me. The *punctum*, then,

is a kind of subtle *beyond*—as if the image launched desire beyond what it permits us to see" (ibid.: 59; italics in original).

In his widely discussed book, *The Power of Images*, art historian David Freedberg (1989) looked to the history of erotic imagery in fine art to set out the aim of his project to take seriously the non-rational effect of images. Arousal worked very well for this argument since it is undeniable yet eminently repressible, thus drawing attention to the dynamics of response, which, as we are beginning to note, turns on the ambivalence of motive: is it the viewer or the image that enables the erotic experience? Freedberg wanted to keep both in play. "The aim," he said of his project, "is to plot responses, and then to consider why images elicit, provoke, or arouse the responses they do; the issue is why behavior that reveals itself in such apparently similar and recurrent ways is awakened by dead form" (ibid.: 19–20). The image's capacity to terrify, arouse, or harm human beings and art history's long-standing determination to ignore this dark or lurid side of visual experience required careful redress. Freedberg urged art historians to pay attention to the power of images by developing a richer account of response to complement the discipline's much more highly refined study of visual production.

In *Art and Agency*, anthropologist Alfred Gell (1998) was struck by the intense relations that human beings form with certain objects such as dolls, works of art, and cars—objects about which they care a great deal and treat tenderly and which act as social beings. Gell called these objects 'secondary' agents because they differ from 'primary' agents (humans and other animals), which possess minds and act on intentions. But he hastened to insist that the distinction does not deny the actual agency of such objects. The hammer I pick up can do things that my bare hands cannot, although it requires my entire body and mind to do them. In this way, the hammer acts on me, changing my relationship to the world around me. It is our symbiotic relation with objects that constitutes secondary forms of agency. Gell described the agency of objects in terms of a 'distributed personhood' in order to designate "the proliferation of fragments of 'primary' intentional agents in their 'secondary' artefactual forms" (ibid.: 21).

The idea that images can act, that work is performed visually and not as an illustration of ideas or texts, and that thought itself operates in a visual medium rather than a linguistic form has occupied the work of many anthropologists, art historians, and critical theorists of the image under the title of 'image acts' and, in German, *Bildakt-Theorie*, derived from the speech act theories of J. L. Austin and his student, John Searle.[2] Liza Bakewell (1998: 22), for instance, argued that images, "rather than re-present reality and therefore be largely descriptive, are more accurately categorized as actions" and proposed the term 'image acts' to denote the activities of images. Recently, art historian Horst Bredekamp (2010) has urged that the image-act study move beyond the linguistic framework of the speech-act model in order to gain a better understanding of the activity of the image itself, which possesses its own energy and power to produce effects on viewers. In this way of thinking, the image is not framed principally as the tool of the viewer, as the sign of the viewer's meaning-making; rather, it operates as an active source that affects the viewer's thoughts, feelings, and behavior.

One of the most influential theorists of the image since the 1980s has been W. J. T. Mitchell, who has urged in recent work a more modest framework than the 'power of images' approach. He suggests that rather than focusing on everything that images are said to do (cheat, deceive, seduce, oppress), we would do better to try to discern what they desire. By this Mitchell (2005) does not mean the image-maker's desire or the evocation of desire in viewers. As he puts it, "I'd like to shift the location of desire to images themselves, and ask what pictures want" (ibid.: 28). Where earlier in his career Mitchell had placed images in tandem with language,[3] the later Mitchell argues that what images want is "equal rights with language, not to be turned into language" (ibid.: 47). Moreover, images "want neither to be leveled into a 'history of images' nor

elevated into a 'history of art,' but to be seen as complex individuals occupying multiple subject positions and identities" (ibid.). They want, Mitchell seems to say, cultural analysts who will interpret them as something more than signs and discourse, on the one hand, and taste-bound objects, on the other. They want, he concludes, "to be asked what they want," with the capacity to reply "nothing at all" (ibid.: 48). This would involve liberating images from the sphere of anthropocentrism altogether. Images may not be about us, but what then would they be about? Even if they meant nothing, they might still inhabit an ecology of their own. Think of fossils as non-human forms of image-making or replication. And when images do co-exist with human beings, the question becomes, how do they want us to study and understand them?

One answer comes from Bruno Latour, scholar of the actor-network theory in which human and non-human actors collaborate to create assemblages that constitute the collectivities that make up the worlds in which humans live and move. Latour (2002) called for the end to image wars—understood as the violence of a master-slave or victor-vanquished opposition, the iconoclast's dream of banishing all images from the world, of destroying the fake, the superficial, the reproduced, the inauthentic—in order to hail the genuine, the deep, the original, the real. Rather than the zero-sum game of a binary either-or, Latour proposed what he called "the cascade of images" (ibid.: 28), by which he meant the abundance and plurality of images and related things. How to go beyond the image wars? Latour suggested that this can be done by "presenting images, objects, statues, signs, and documents in a way that demonstrates the connections they have with other images, objects, statues, signs, and documents … Images do count; they are not mere tokens, and not because they are prototypes of something away, above, beneath; they count because they allow one to move to *another* image, exactly as frail and modest as the former one—but *different*" (ibid.: 32; italics in original).

The ecology of an image consists of those artifacts and forces with which it comes into connection—viewers, certainly, and image-makers, but also the availability and chemistry of pigments, trees, the lumber industry, and the marketplace. These produce the panels on which images are made. The panels are shaped by the weather and worms that besiege wooden supports or stretcher bars over time; the sunlight that fades pigments; the fashion of framing and displaying images; the commerce of taste; the long, dense histories of genre, theme, and subject matter; style, paint medium, and technique; and the cascade of images from which pictures emerge and into which they vanish in endless acts of homage, comparison, emulation, and rivalry. This assemblage of human and non-human actors is the matrix for understanding any given image.

The clear tendency over the last few decades has been a growing recognition of the need to treat images within the contexts of their production and circulation in order to recognize how objects, places, people, the weather, natural resources, and geography intermingle to share agency. This agency is more subtle than it may at first appear. Like Gell and Latour, I do not wish to suggest anything like an animist ontology of autonomously powered objects. I have in mind instead an approach that treats images as part of material acts of seeing that enfold humans into large and extended networks. Such an approach is able to think in broader ways than strict anthropomorphism. Images do things, they invite our inspection, they engage us in interactive relations called seeing. To this way of thinking, images are objects made as instruments to fit the human body, like shoes, tools, combs, and clothing; they produce work on the body and therefore on people, situating them within the social and natural worlds in which they flourish. Images are instruments that connect bodies to places and to one another, productively integrating humans into their physical and social ecologies.

This approach to thinking about images and seeing, I propose, may be very helpful in discerning a collaboration between two bodies of theory, phenomenology and network theory. Latour (1999: 8–10) criticized phenomenology for intensifying German idealism's focus on the

subject-object distinction, thereby undermining attention to the reticular nature of the human agent's relation to the rest of the world. I will argue that this is a narrow view of phenomenology, one that misses its usefulness in describing the human body as a complex interface with the world rather than as a hermetically sealed universe unto itself. Indeed, phenomenology's careful scrutiny of embodiment is able to help us pursue the relevance of network theory for the study of religion, which is the overarching aim of this article.

Images as Visual Devices

Rather than regard images as less real than ideas, as epiphenomenal surfaces forming over the deeper structure of politics or economic relations, as adjuncts to words, or as nothing more than reproductions of objects, I prefer to see them as devices that interface with the world, as technologies that meet the flesh and senses and pass through them into the body. In this regard, images are interactive devices, objects that invite their viewer's engagement. A human being is not a passive or neutral perceiver, and neither are images, which want to be looked at, want to be seen. By their very nature, images are agents in quest of visibility. As Lacan did before him, Foucault (1995: 200) once said that "visibility is a trap."[4] This unfortunate assertion reduces all vision to an insidious vortex that captures and imprisons the human subject and deprives one of subjectivity and transcendence, as Sartre (1966: 340–400) portrayed the gaze sprung on a voyeur caught in the act. But if we set that grim association aside, we may find in Foucault's comment the insight that images are mechanisms that are tripped by being looked at. Like the faces of bodies engaged in social life, images are, as Jasper Johns's 1955 painting entitled *Target with Four Faces* (fig. 1) suggests, a bull's-eye for sensation, sensitive devices that are activated by sensory interface. In this painting, Johns placed plaster casts of human faces in a row above a target. Exposed by an opened, hinged door, the faces are sensory mechanisms that both receive and seek out one another and the world around them. More than passive targets, they are the devices that gather the world in and respond with feeling and intention. The bull's-eye, therefore, acts by receiving sense data, but also by projecting or telescoping into the world in concentric radiations. In Johns's *Target*, images act as agents in the social process of vision, an apparatus that is engaged and engaging.

We may begin with this definition of an image: an image is an interactive device that responds to being seen by co-creating a relation with its viewer, whose consciousness takes shape with the image in intertwining structures of feeling, memory, and expectation. But as soon as I state that, I am dissatisfied because the definition easily ignores the social context in which an image takes place. I would like instead to enfold the power of images, to which we must attend, into the study of their role in human sociality. Network theory is a helpful way to go about this because ultimately what I want to investigate is not images per se, but acts of seeing. And I want to argue that we see with more than our eyes: we see with our entire bodies in spatial configurations of images, places, people, and an often untold host of other agencies. Yet to make this argument, I first need to pay attention to how images work since they, like any technology, exhibit material features, histories, and uses that have everything to do with their shape and display their own efficacies as well as the powers that are attributed to them. In other words, I think it is necessary to describe the things that images do, which means discussing their particular design in tandem with how they operate in assemblages that include social interactions.

In the first instance, images are devices or instruments that interface with human beings in very powerful ways because images respond to some deeply held perceptual behaviors among humans. As the diagrams in figure 2 easily show, we are disposed by culture and biology to do such things as fill in missing information. Our eyes immediately complete the dashes in figure 2a

Figure 1: *Target with Four Faces*, Jasper Johns, 1955

Source: Courtesy of the Museum of Modern Art; licensed by SCALA/Art Resource, NY

Figure 2: Perceptual Diagrams

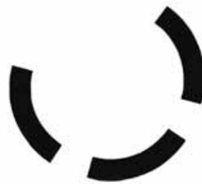

Fig. 2a

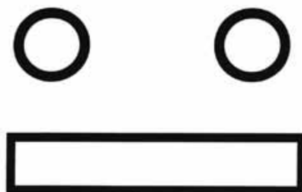

Fig. 2b

Source: Drawings by author

to create a circle, and we instinctively read the two circles above a rectangle in figure 2b as a face. Cultural conditioning comes into play when a viewer is inclined to interpret the face as expressing a particular emotion.

But such simple perceptual action is only the beginning. The preference for narrative coherence and the discernment of plausible causation takes pro-active interpretation much further. Consider, for instance, figure 3, an old photograph of a ghostly subject. Even though it is commonly believed that photographs document actual events and appearances, the standard of credibility is very high when it comes to capturing the supernatural. The medium of photography is easily susceptible to manipulation. Consequently, it is much easier to explain and dismiss the scene than to take it seriously. The same holds for images of UFOs or apparitions of Our Lady on dirty windows or blotchy tortillas. Yet, at least to me, figure 3 remains eerie and bothersome even though I know it was the product of manipulation. The effect is not unlike the allure of horror films, which audiences know very well are the result of nothing more than extremely predictable special effects. So I tell myself that figure 3 is nothing more than a double exposure of two negatives. But I still find the image disturbing, which must involve some degree of believability.[5] Perhaps I am disturbed because the old couple seem serenely unaware of what has emerged from the murky depth to hover between them. The more I look, the more I want to know. My mind refuses to let this go. I am, you might say, haunted by the prospect of something

Figure 3: Couple with Spectral Appearance, ca. 1900

Source: Photograph in public domain

I cannot explain. So the nagging image coaxes me, and I give in, ineluctably. Does their unconsciousness suggest an imminent scare, a menace about to erupt? If we allow it, the picture takes us somewhere macabre, and we find the dark suggestion tantalizing. Spooky pictures seep into the brain and tell stories like bad dreams. They make us watch. We want to leave the dark room of our captivated minds, but we also want to see a nightmare happen. We tell ourselves that "it's only a movie," but we still jump when the maniac lunges from the darkness. There is a nasty potency to images, and it is buried inside of us. This is the seductive power of an image like figure 3: it appeals to a readiness to narrate a frightful, erotic, rousing, sad, shocking, or humorous tale that we find enticing. The image is like a mechanical device tripped by an emotion when we see it. It springs to action, and we find ourselves all too ready to go along for the ride. Belief, then, rides at least in part on the ability of an image to trigger an imaginative response in viewers. 'Hyper-sensitive agent detection' operates in visually compelling terms.

Networks

So far, we have treated the image only in terms of its immediate impact on and relation to the viewer. But if we ask a different sort of question about its relation to what is *not* seen in the photograph, we quickly become aware of a larger ecology, that is, the sphere of interdependency without which the image would not exist.[6] For example, I alluded earlier to the process of using two negatives to print figure 3—one print of the couple, the other of the cloaked girl, who appears to hover between them, emerging from an inky darkness. The popular Victorian industry of spirit photography claimed to bring the living and the dead into contact in a medium that could detect what the naked eye missed. The new technology celebrated a proximity that séances, mediums, and elocutions also offered to those who mourned their lost loved ones. Other features included sideshows, confidence men, psychic parlors, postcards, curiosity cabinets, charismatic raconteurs, rapping spirits, haunted daguerreotypes, magic lanterns, and psychic research. This evocation of images, places, performers, and objects unleashed the cascade that Latour discussed. Even with this short list of connections, we can see that an image belongs to a world—what I would like to call an 'encompassing ecology'—whose excavation will enrich or, as in the case of figure 3, even transform our understanding of it. As the assemblage of smoke and mirrors becomes visible, we discern the apparatus that supports this evocation of Gothic horror.

What may be called a reticular or rhizomatic or network approach to visuality concentrates on what things do as measured by the practices that they enable and in which they are put to work. Iconographical analysis, used by art historians such as Erwin Panofsky and many others, is very good at treating images as visual systems of meaning that encode and transmit complex messages by means of iconography and style. But this approach is limited by looking on images as symbols that deliver content. Certainly, many religions have used images in this way and continue to do so, and I do not wish to dismiss iconography altogether as a method. But lived religion happens differently from encoding and decoding messages. It is less about meaning and more about feeling, intuition, discernment, and presence. A good deal of recent work by historians and anthropologists of Christianity, for example, has sought to recover the material, affective realm of Catholic and Protestant practice as well as that of other religious traditions (Cannell 2006; Hall 1997; Morgan 2010). In the felt-life of lived religion, the gritty, emotional, sensuous character of things emerges in practices that enchant human experience. And in such moments, pictures do speak and their presences do bless. If they did not, we could simply chalk this all up to psychology and be done with it.

A process of enchantment takes place in the extended social apparatus that envelops an object's social life, which may be described as a network of interacting agents that endures over time as a kind of biography. Take, for example, an object from medieval Catholicism, a relic, such as the skull fragments of Sainte Foy, which were enshrined in a tenth-century golden reliquary (fig. 4) at Conques in the region of Languedoc. If you ask why this object has the power it does, you might, like some devotees, simply assert that the saint has dedicated herself to blessing those who faithfully honor her remains. But without the framing device of a reliquary, a shrine, an altar, a church interior, an authorizing narrative, proof of ownership, and provenance to stabilize its identity, a bone or a tooth or a strand of hair easily loses its value and slips out of the category of being special (Geary 1986: 174). At the very least, the relic is more likely to enter the market of commodities without its accompanying container, which is one reason why in 1215 the Fourth Council of the Lateran ruled that "ancient relics shall not be displayed outside a reliquary or be put up for sale" (Tanner 1990: 1:263). In other words, a relic needs a matrix to secure it in order that it might act and provide the benefits that the faithful seek from it. A relic is evanescent and unrecognizable—in a word, invisible—without this apparatus to anchor and enliven it.

Figure 4: Sainte Foy, Conques, France, Ninth Century

Source: Erich Lessing/Art Resource, NY

Scholars wish to understand the social forces and historical nuances that are responsible for the construction of sacrality at a given time and place. To do so, they must discern the intricate relations formed by architecture, space, ritual, patrons, abbots, monastic rivalries, regional politics, economic needs of rival communities, practices and conceptions of spiritual power, collective memory, ritual consecration, debates among theological elites, the psychology and commercial pressures of pilgrimage, and the sacred economies of gift, pledge, and ex-voto. All of these agencies and more combine in complex patterns to structure access to and experience of the bones enshrined in the reliquary of Sainte Foy. We cannot say what the relic is and how it exerts power without the necessary apparatus of an assemblage that takes shape around it like an intricate social scaffold, contributing power to it and distributing its power through a network of many relations. Without the apparatus, the relic is virtually invisible. It is not the cult statue alone that presents the image, but the far larger network of the pilgrimage route, the abbey, its interior configuration, lines of pilgrims limiting access to the cult image, the protocol of petitioning the saint, the economy of exchange governing petitions, and the saint's various ways of responding. In fact, no pilgrim saw the bone fragments of Foy, which were hidden from view. What pilgrims saw was the dazzling gold figure situated within the main apse of the abbey church, where they also heard the constant chanting of liturgical songs (Sheingorn 1995: 102). The reliquary was located near the main altar dedicated to the Savior in the central apse, perhaps on an altar of its own (Fricke 2007: 50–51). The reliquary housing the remains of the saint was in turned housed within an architectural milieu. This concentric pattern of domains took its place within a surrounding network of church, landscape, and pilgrimage routes that worked systemically to achieve the enchantment of sacred matter.

My point is that the structure that enacts sacrality is not something static like a holy piece of matter, but is rather an assemblage. As a category of experience, in other words, the sacred is not a single thing, but is better described as what happens over time, built up by need, opportunity, rivalry, and sheer chance. The power of the saint acts through a meandering confluence of dreams, relics, a devotee's pain and need, the stories of the saint's life and death, institutional rites, processions into the countryside, and the testimony of fellow pilgrims. But the network spreads even wider in time and space. Abbots vied with one another to secure church properties, well-endowed religious communities, and powerfully appointed altars to attract pilgrims and patrons. The presence of an active relic meant a boon to the prestige and income of the ecclesial establishment as well as the local town. Geography and natural resources favored those communities located advantageously for markets and larger numbers of pilgrims, which, the map of major medieval pilgrimage routes easily shows, amounted to staking out a path on the way to Santiago de Compostela on the northwestern coast of Spain.

When locally worshipped saints had fallen into inefficacy, a long-standing practice of sacred theft enabled the 'translation' of relics from one site to another, narrated after the fact by stories of miracles and dreams that justified the theft by registering the saint's own will in the matter of the location of her holy remains (Geary 1978; Hahn 2012). Accounts of bones moving themselves or otherwise making their preference clear are quite common in this genre of literature. In the case of Sainte Foy, in 866, monks at Conques stole the bones of the 12-year-old martyr from their resting place in Agen, the city of her birth, 300 kilometers to the southwest in Aquitaine, where she had died in the early fourth century. The cult was greatly aided by the service of the devotee Bernard of Angers, who arrived at Conques in 1013 to investigate stories of the saint's miracles, which he had heard as far away as Chartres. He collected many of them and produced a book that spread the saint's fame (Sheingorn 1995). His volume gathered a large number of stories about devotees who engaged the saint with gifts, promises, threats, and pleas. It also included accounts of wealthy patrons who offered their bounty or were hounded by the saint in order to

satisfy her lust for gold. When they resisted, Foy invaded their dreams or afflicted them with illness. Pilgrims were directed by family members, priests, and folklore to bring a gift to one altar or another. The devotees might select the saint's feast day or a Sabbath when a mass was to be said in the presence of the saint's image, prepare themselves for the visit, pray and enter the shrine or church with the appropriate gesture, perhaps on their knees, then deposit a gold item before the reliquary. The gift, swaddled in prayer and pious demeanor, was intended to persuade the saint to intercede with Mary, who was to convince her son to heal the supplicant or to enable the birth of a child or to have success in business or to produce a plentiful harvest.[7]

Focal Objects, Gazes, and Networks

The reliquary of Sainte Foy is an excellent example of a category of cultural artifacts that I call 'focal objects'. This is a pivotal mode in a network because it is responsible for constructing subjects by acting as the counterpart to the individual or group. Focal objects meet the eye of the viewer as a corresponding other. The focal object works in tandem with an entire field or ecology to draw our attention to it. Albert Borgmann (1984: 41–42, 196–197) has pointed out that the modern word 'focus' comes from the Latin term for the hearth—the most sacred site in the home, the focal point of family life, but also the location for the gods of the house or family. The hearth draws the human eye with the warmth and allure of its flames, the smell of the food prepared there, and the presence of protective deities.[8] In networks generating sacrality, focal objects mediate a sacred other by giving it a face. A focal object is an interfacial node, the place where all that is unseen becomes visible and interactive. This happens in many different forms, depending on the kind of connection viewers make with the focal object. Each of these connections is a spatial construction of gazes or ways of seeing. For instance, Bernard of Angers remarked on the tender reply issued by the eyes of a statue of Saint Gerald at Aurillac, another pilgrimage church in the region: "It was an image made with such precision to the face of the human form that it seemed to see with its attentive, observant gaze the great many peasants seeing it and to gently grant with its reflecting eyes the prayers of those praying before it" (Sheingorn 1995: 77). This describes a "reciprocal gaze" (Morgan 2012: 73), which structures a two-way visual relationship.

Another example is the sort of "unilateral gaze" (Morgan 2012: 70) that launched Sainte Foy into the dreams of pilgrims where she relentlessly pressed the dreamers to obey her wishes. Her unremitting stare exerts a gripping power (fig. 5), demanding with its penetrating look a submissive response from devotees. This form of gaze constructs vision as operating in one direction, from seer to seen, and is described by Jean-Paul Sartre's famous account of peeping through a keyhole, watching someone as a disembodied eye. This, unfortunately, is what Sartre called all-encompassingly 'the gaze', as if there were just one. It ends abruptly, however, when someone catches him peeping, and can be said to shift from Sartre to his discoverer, who then traps Sartre in a shaming, objectifying, disparaging gaze. This form of seeing exerts power over the one it sees in a relation dramatically represented by the crushing tyranny of the Eye of Sauron. It treats the person as an object, denying any form of transcendence, as Sartre insightfully described it.[9]

These two examples of ways of seeing and being seen suggest the important role that focal objects play in the construction of sacred visual fields. As Ellert Dahl (1978: 188) commented about Sainte Foy, her gaze "is live and piercing, alternatively gracious and terrible to the beholder." The same eyes could be experienced differently under varying circumstances. In some statues, Dahl noted, mechanisms even allowed the eyes to move in order to facilitate

Figure 5: Detail of Sainte Foy

Source: Courtesy Erich Lessing/Art Resource, NY

interaction with viewers (ibid.: 189). Gazes are different patterns of configuring the immediate relationship between an image, a viewer, other viewers, a setting, and a divine or spiritual reality made present in the configuration. Most importantly, gazes structure a relationship between viewers and the image, or focal object, and are therefore modes of interface with the broader network in which any gaze is embedded. Focal objects, I argue, perform their work on the viewer to make him or her the subject of seeing, whether it is to activate the viewer's moral agency, to create a social status, or to construct the notion of a unitary mind, soul, or substance. The focal object can also be said to see viewers and in so doing place them within a particular social body—in the case of Foy, within the class of pilgrims, devotees, and penitents. Constructing a subject-object relation is what the focal object does and how it both subsumes and adds to the enabling network. What I intend is a collaboration of phenomenology and network theory. But it is important to realize that the focal object is more than an object: it is a face, an actor, a body that does something. It enters into a certain kind of relationship with viewers, but not as a passive object.

Dahl (1978) argued that the golden-sheathed figure of Sainte Foy was not intended to be a likeness of the little martyr as she once appeared on earth. Instead, it is what he called a 'heavenly image', that is, a portrayal of the enthroned martyr in Heavenly Jerusalem, enjoying the presence of God, where she might intercede for those petitioning her before her cult statue (ibid.: 182–191).[10] As mortals direct their prayers to her image, she directs her intercessions to the throne

of the Almighty. Her open eyes gaze steadily on the divine no less than on the terrestrial. Fricke (2007: 220) has made a similar point regarding the impact of the mask-like image of Foy on the viewer: "[T]he radiance of the brilliant gold skin, the aura of the divine, facilitates the dialogue of the faithful with the beyond in visual contact with the sacred image." The golden radiance enables the figure to act as a focal object, eclipsing everything else by its brilliance and active shimmer. The focal object acts as more of a subject, an agency that viewers recognize as variously coercive, alluring, welcoming, or terrifying. The focal object performs within a particular visual field or gaze, which acts as an interface with the entire assemblage or ecology in which the gaze and focal object take place. The focal object occludes the network in order to privilege its own relation to the viewer, which results in the production of presence. Phenomenology is very good at analyzing this interface of body and immediate setting, but it can be made to do much more. It can extend itself to describe the interface of the gaze with the larger network, the assemblage that network theory treats as the ecology encompassing the subject-object relation.[11]

A network is not, in fact, a single shape with a directing center; it is a shifting form of relationality that results as human and non-human actors interact in the transient shape of an assemblage. The focal object, however, is an apparent center in networks producing visuality, an ideologically charged hub that addresses itself to viewers and regards them in a particular way. In an illustration used to show the pathway of fabric manufacture from cotton fields to the dresses that two women behold on mannequins in a clothing shop, we find an apt example of what I have in mind (fig. 6).[12] The image is a value chain, a diagram demonstrating the process of the production of a commodity, but also the investment of resources that issues in the value of a product.[13] The two consumers are absorbed in looking at dressed mannequins that display clothing into which they project themselves imaginatively. In this rapt state of absorption, they are not aware of the far-flung network of human and non-human actors that brought these clothes to them—from cotton field and automated harvest to industrial processing and assembly line fabrication. They do not care about that. It is instead the mystique of the clothing's appearance that captures their eyes—it is the prospect of the look they would inhabit by owning the outfits that they behold so desirously as consumers. The circle of windows that encompasses them suggests that they themselves are the final module in a long chain of production. This means that their social presence, their desirability, and their conception of themselves are all produced by the linear series of translations of raw materials into commodities delivered to the store, where they return the gaze of viewers in the ocular display of the picture window. The very image on the page resembles an eyeball. In the bifurcated iris of this eye, the pair of mannequins even mirrors the pair of friends shopping together. Consumption is self-construction, and more. The manufacture of clothing, the chain implies, is also the production of human beings, who dress themselves in this second skin as part of an endless self-maintenance. Little do they care how far the process stretches.

For those of us who do not see what these women see, those of us who do not imagine themselves transformed or enhanced by these clothes, those of us who are not deployed in this particular social theater of envy and glamour by owning the clothing, we are like agnostic observers standing to the side of Sainte Foy's cult image, watching pilgrims pour out their supplications and seek in the glint of the saint's eyes the promise to help. Unbelievers though we may be, however, we might find in the operation of this theater of engagements the traces of an experience that suggest an agency unavailable to us, one we may describe—agnostically, to be sure—as an imagined reality borne by a network and a focal object that we can in fact discern. The same holds for the ghostly image in figure 3 discussed earlier: if you cannot disassemble its fabrication easily, you may be tempted to believe something about the image. Intriguingly, the picture seems to eclipse all the theatricality of the chain of production that manufactured it—the darkroom

Figure 6: Cotton Value Chain

The Cotton Value Chain

There are many stages required to process cotton from fibres to the final fabrics.

After ginning, the fibres are cleaned, carded or combed, spun into yarn, possibly coated with starches or chemicals, woven or knitted into fabric, cleaned up from their coating and their natural wax, bleached, immersed in concentrated caustic soda, dyed or printed, chemically treated for easy care and other properties, and tailored into the final garment.

Usually, the production cycle involves large transport distances since the different processing stages are located in distant world regions. Ecological and social risks of the textile processing industry are high.

Source: Courtesy of organiccotton.org

labor of assembling two different negatives, registering their exposure very carefully; the trays of pungent chemicals that developed the image and fixed it; the pile of scrapped, wet papers that were unsuccessful trials. Because I am unaware of the techniques of deception, the artifice of the artifact is invisible and the image is able to stand on its own, as some kind of fact, a trace or documentation of something that happened. As such, it stares at me, as an Other, and answers to what I bring to it. The image becomes the face of a concatenation of feelings and anxieties within me. In fact, of course, this affect is something I share with millions of people, consumers of cinema and comic books and Gothic horror, children telling ghost stories around campfires, tales animated by spooky figures and decaying Victorian houses. Such a network of associations

and memories is sealed behind this image; in viewing it, I activate that network, plucking the taut strings of old anxieties.

Focal objects are the face of the network, the shape in which an assemblage comes to be seen, the mask that hails the viewer, meeting the eye of the viewing subject as a corresponding other. As a mask, the focal object makes the network usable, visible, accessible to the ritual exchange that characterizes so much in religious life—from devotion to prayer to worship to pilgrimage. The steady gaze and glistening figure of Foy, sheathed in gold and gems, organize vision like a magnet, but always within a larger field of participating agencies: the individual viewer's needs, the ambient light entering the sanctuary at the time of one's visit, the press of other visitors, the sounds and smells of the place. Like the two women gazing together at the shop window mannequins, pilgrims view Foy together, mutually constructing the visual field or gaze that includes them in the presence of the image. Fricke (2007: 221–227) has stressed the shimmering gold surface of the figure as a primary element in the object's animation. The highly reflective surface tends to dematerialize the object in radiant beams of lustrous light. The animation is not due to the gold itself, but to the interaction of the viewer, the environment, and the object. The gold draws attention to itself and away from the enabling network. The focal object emerges as the place for Foy to situate herself as a presence. The ecology of this image is robust: it is the interior of the abbey church, it is the streams of pilgrims, it is the lore and discourse of the saint, it is the long routes and compelling needs that bring people to her. All of these congeal in the expression and radiance of the figure to meet the viewer's inquiring look. To see her is to enter into this unfolding array of influences, which, however, converge on the reliquary and tend to vanish in her radiance. But the scholar may resist the tug of her magnetic attraction in order to see how seeing happens.

Some masks incorporate movement, music, and the allure of ritual absorption to grip viewers and orchestrate vision as part of an encompassing dance of agencies. As a mask, the focal object is a performative device, an actor within the network, a point we might illustrate quite literally with tribal masks such as those crafted and used among indigenous groups in Oceania, India, the Pacific Northwest in America, and Africa. Mauss (1990: 39) suggested that in the economy of the gift in the case of the American Northwest, "to lose one's prestige is indeed to lose one's soul. It is in fact the 'face' [of] the dancing mask, the right to incarnate a spirit, to wear a coat of arms, a totem, it is really the persona—that are all called into question in this way, and that are lost at the potlatch." The mask, the coat of arms, the totem—each is a focal object by which acts of giving, receiving, and reciprocating engage the intricate networks that are personified within the object. Such masks, worn by participants in ritual dance and ceremony, perform the presence of divine agencies. The mask wearers host the spirit that inhabits them by virtue of wearing the masks in the ritual practice. One scholar of African masks has called them "tools of mediation with the unseen" and has asserted that visual presentation of the divine "takes place through the intermediary of a human, who must disappear in order to offer a far greater 'Other' a corporeal presence: the mask's material nature often allows divinities to enter the village, making the invisible visible" (Bouttiaux 2009: 125–126).

This indwelling in the performance of the mask or focal object is pivotal to an understanding of the efficacy of the network. A mask is always something more. It is what it appears to be, but is also something hidden, looking at us. Hodder (2012: 102–103) describes how the entanglements or complex networks in which things exist are easily forgotten or ignored for a variety of reasons. Most commonly, perhaps, we forget a network simply because "in order to use something we do not need to know how it works" (ibid.: 102). Regarding focal objects, to this we should add that we do not see the intricacy of the network so that we may look instead on its face where we may interact or interface with the network. This addresses the question that scholars confront: what

power lies behind the mask? The power of a god, demon, or ancestor? Or tribal elders, bishops, or dominant ideology? The masking of power can be explained in many different ways. For example, Freud (1949) contended that the origin of religious ideas was not experience or rational thought, but desire. Religious dogmas "are illusions, fulfillments of the oldest, strongest and most insistent wishes of mankind; the secret of their strength is the strength of these wishes" (ibid.: 52). Believers change the shape of reality to suit their desires, expecting to see events conform to their fondest wishes. Pierre Bourdieu (1977) argued that the power of the mask is misrecognized. It is in fact the group itself. Bourdieu used the term 'misrecognition' (*méconnaissance*) to describe participation in gift exchange. Regarding the gifts we receive and give, we say it is only the thought that counts or that our generous act was disinterested, expecting no return. Yet we are offended if the counter-gift does not arrive or if its value is less than the gift we gave. We misrecognize our act as selfless when in fact it is self-interested. And without the misrecognition, we would not be able to convert the material capital of money into the symbolic capital of honor or esteem that gift exchange bestows (ibid.: 5–6, 170–173).[14]

Émile Durkheim may provide some help on the matter of masking. It is certainly true that he neglected scrutinizing the articulated politics of power that engaged Bourdieu and the intricate psychology of sublimation and projection that Freud described. Yet Durkheim (1995: 351; italics added) offered an insight when he argued that "the sacred principle is nothing other than society *hypostatized and transfigured* [la société hypostasiée et transfiguré]."[15] We may recognize in this claim a productive understanding of masking without concurring with Durkheim that all religions everywhere organize and maintain coherent social order. Nor must we agree to speak so nebulously about society. A social venue or setting is more concrete because it is less all-inclusive. Thus, for a social setting to be hypostatized means, literally, to be substantiated or personified (from the Greek υποστασις, 'hypostasis' refers to foundation, sediment, essence, or personality). This occurs, as Durkheim described it, as a 'contagion' that infects an object with the emotions aroused in a situation such as mourning: "It is, in fact, a well-known law that the feelings a thing arouses in us are spontaneously transmitted to the symbol that represents it. Black is a sign of mourning; therefore it evokes sad thoughts and impressions. This transfer of feelings takes place because the idea of the thing and the idea of its symbol are closely connected in our minds. As a result, the feelings evoked by one spread contagiously to the other" (ibid.: 221)

Durkheim went on to describe the 'thing' as inchoate, as difficult to comprehend. It may be a situation whose causes are deep, proscribed in taboos, complex, multiple, extensive, or frightening to consider. Faced with its incomprehensibility, we invest the feelings it evokes in the symbol. As Durkheim (1995: 221) put it: "We can comprehend those feelings only in connection with a concrete object whose reality we feel intensely." This object is the group's totem, the infused symbol of the collective that holds the intense feelings of the group within itself. Not all symbols imbued with feeling will be totems, of course, but Durkheim was most interested in the totem as a way of explaining the sociality of religion.

To explicate the emotionally laden totemic symbol to his contemporaries, Durkheim (1995: 222) called on the familiar example of the flag: "The soldier who dies for his flag dies for his country." The totem stands for the group. To see the totem is to see the invisible and far-reaching community called 'clan', 'nation', or 'fatherland'. A photograph of American children reciting the Pledge of Allegiance (fig. 7) conveys just what Durkheim had in mind: their veneration of the totem draws them together as a social body and infects them with a common feeling of civic devotion. The nation that looks back at them from the face of the flag is too large and distant for them to see. So they behold the totem, and in that visual embrace they imagine their relation to the nation, to one another, and to the authority of the school, which enforces the daily ritual. The

totem is the concretion or hypostasis of the group, what I am calling the focal object. Its value, according to Durkheim, was its enduring agency: "The image [of the totem] goes on calling forth and recalling those emotions even after the assembly is over. Engraved on the cult implements, on the sides of rocks, on shields, and so forth, it lives beyond the gathering. By means of it, the emotions felt are kept perpetually alive and fresh. It is as though the image provoked them directly. Imputing the emotions to the image is all the more natural because, being common to the group, they can only be related to a thing that is equally common to all" (ibid.).

Recent work on affect has taken up the idea of 'contagion' into broader conversation with the study of feeling (Brennan 2004: 68–70; Gregg and Seigworth 2010: 8, 36). Durkheim's idea of religion's transfiguration of social formations suggests that the symbiotic relation of human and transhuman relies on the personification of the latter in the rite, practice, or cult object, what I have called the focal object. We need not be limited to the totem, but should regard it only as an instance of the focal object. As a mask, the focal object is not only a disguise or concealment, but also a device that enables interface with a super-subject, which acts within the network as a particularly powerful agent—a god, a king, a saint, an ancestor, a hero, a nation, a people. The focal object is an interfacial node, a mask that allows interaction with the network of relations that encompasses human and non-human. For example, the Eucharistic host is a focal object in the late medieval and baroque periods. Like the relic enshrined in a reliquary, it was displayed in an exalted, consecrated mode in the monstrance as the body of the Savior, inviting adoration so that it might respond with salvation. But, as I pointed out above, a mask is always more than

Figure 7: Italian-American Students Reciting the Pledge of Allegiance, New York Public School, 1943

Source: Courtesy of the Library of Congress. Photograph by Marjory Collins

it appears. Thus, it is also true that the host and the relic were masks through which bishops, abbots, dukes, monasteries, and feudal society gazed upon those who bowed before these focal objects. Another example is the Bible, which is a focal object for Protestants. To scholars, the Bible is not a book produced by a single author named Jehovah. It is instead an evolving library of books, written and edited by many people and assembled over time by political, economic, and social forces that constitute the text's genealogy, what we might call its 'temporal ecology'. But when conservative Protestant believers look at the Bible, they see a compelling focal object, a unitary entity in which a super-subject—the primary other named God—returns their look. And they also see the patriarchal, heterosexual, neo-liberal world of their values shining forth from the pages of Holy Writ.

Concluding Thoughts

Dissimulation is no stranger in the history of religions. Focal objects certainly are able to stage the sacred by deceiving or duping viewers as in the manner of the pyrotechnics operated by a little man performing the terrifying visage of the Wizard of Oz. But I want to stress that the mask is how viewers interface with the network even while they do not see much or any of it. This is directly analogous to how the human face is our communicative access to the vast assemblages that constitute a human person: the face masks the intricate networks of bone, muscle, sinew, and organs, both subsuming and contributing to the complex of networks.[16] It is no mistake that the Latin word for mask is *persona*. We speak of the 'face' of a clock as the mechanism's telling look, its gaze at us, which serves to provide an interface with everything behind it—a dense machinery of gears, springs, wheels, and levers as well as the history of timepieces. Looking at the intricacy of the mechanism does not tell us the time of day. We need the clock face for that. It translates the apparatus into a face that looks at us and reveals what is hidden and, practically speaking, invisible. The interfacial node is special for its ability to connect the user with the network in an interactive way by presenting the network in a face, which is a surface with depth. Focal objects accommodate human perception and embodiment. In a religious sense, they train the body in practices of devotion, as the image of flag veneration among young Italian-American students in 1943 demonstrates (see fig. 7). The devotional gaze of the students directed at the flag and the flag's material reply, its shimmer and size and brilliant color, merge the youths into a regimented social body or collective self—the nation to which it was important that they dedicate themselves during the war, a time when performing allegiances was critical for ethnic groups. The flag is the nation looking back at the boys through the mask of stars and stripes, and the boys are the nation without whom the nation has no future. Their symbiotic relation, as Durkheim (1995: 350) put it, is "a mutually reinforcing exchange."

The focal object in religious experience is therefore something that interfaces with the network in a particular way: the mask disposes the network to open the path for divine intervention, to invite an ancestor's, saint's, or god's contribution, to facilitate divine agency. To appeal to the phenomenal network alone is to undermine the miraculous as well as to disable interface with what the network does. That is one powerful reason why iconoclasts destroy images: images are a means of access to what people want, the form of communication or interface with the network behind the focal object—a network of ideas, personalities, political institutions, and privileged claims. To destroy the mask is to destroy the performance of the network. Examples of this abound in acts of political iconoclasm that are precisely the opposite of flag veneration, whereby patriotism proliferates the network of nationalism. In the case of iconoclasm, destroying a public monument is an act understood to eradicate the network of an entire regime. Another example

involves Christians who oppose Halloween in the United States. They want to call attention to the long-forgotten historical roots of the holiday. Halloween, they assert, is not just a fun time with costumes, masks, and candy; it is an observance of demon worship and witchcraft since the paraphernalia and date recall pre-modern origins in the pagan rites of the harvest festival.[17] An even more common example of action against the focal object takes place when consumers refuse to purchase items produced by companies that rely on labor in sweatshop conditions in the developing world (Hodder 2012: 7). By boycotting the brand, by calling attention to the invisible connections encircling the globe, they seek to disable an intricate international commercial network.

Nestled within a web of agencies that are human and non-human, sacrality takes shape as the efficacy of the interfacial node. The focal object, which emerges from an ecology of actants or actors, subsumes the network in its address to viewers as a powerful Other. The cult image, the relic, the place where Our Lady appeared, or the site of the miraculous spring, oracle, or vision—such objects and places are where one meets the divine, forgetting the complex ecology in which the image or object is embedded. This masking of the manifold aspects of the network enables the ascription of divine agency within the network. Images operate as masks or personae that allow interface with the divine in several different ways. I hope to have demonstrated that further scrutiny of these dynamics can enrich our understanding of the sensory, embodied, and very material nature of religion as the social production of sacrality.

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NOTES

1. For more on the Byzantine tradition and its sources regarding icons, see Barasch (1992).
2. For an overview of *Bildakt-Theorie* and its proponents, see the webpage at Tübingen University: http://www.gib.uni-tuebingen.de/netzwerk/glossar/index.php?title=Bildakt-Theorie.
3. The first version of Mitchell's argument appeared a decade earlier in "What Do Pictures *Really* Want?" (1996).
4. Lacan (1981: 93) said the same in 1964: "In this matter of the visible, everything is a trap."
5. On the fascinating history of interpreting spirit photography, see Kaplan (2008).
6. It is worth pointing out that my use of the term 'ecology' is focused on describing the terrain or system of relations that organizes the material disposition of an image and its engagement with human and non-human actors. The image should not be isolated from the ecology in which it works with a host of other things. I do not use the term in the normative sense of an 'ideal order' or a 'regulated state of affairs', as Susan Sontag (1977: 180) does in her call for an ecology of images in the face of the proliferation of photography in modern life, or in the sense of ecological crisis and health, as does Bateson ([1972] 2000: 502–513), who also described his notion of the "ecology of ideas" as "aesthetic sensibility" (Bateson 1991: 256). And my use of ecology is much more phenomenological than that of Bennett (2010), who focuses on non-human agents in order to counter-balance the much more widespread emphasis on human subjectivity. Bennett's project of enhancing receptivity to what she calls 'vital materialism' is motivated by the desire for "a more subtle awareness of the complicated

web of dissonant connections between bodies, [which might] enable wiser interventions into that ecology" (ibid.: 4). Generally speaking, I use the term 'ecology' in the sense of those who study media ecology, that is, the environments created by media uses, technology, human embodiment, forms of consumption, the circulation of information, the material interface with media, and the mythologies and ideological constructions of value, meaning, immediacy, authenticity, and community. For Fuller (2007: 2), the term 'ecology' indicates "the massive and dynamic interrelation of processes and objects, beings and things, patterns and matter." Fuller provides an overview of the word's several meanings in the study of media and information (ibid.: 2–5). Gibson (1986) used the term 'ecology' in his studies of visual perception. However, he meant by the term the environment that humans perceive, the surrounding world that shapes their perception. When he discussed images, it was as 'pictures', that is, as flat surfaces bearing the lineaments of an optical system: "[A] picture is a surface so treated that it makes available a limited optic array of some sort of a point of observation" (ibid.: 270). Therefore, I do not borrow his use of the term 'ecology' since he was not concerned with an account of images nested within networks. I am using the term in the sense largely intended by Hodder (2012: 103–108) with his concept of 'entanglement'.

7. Fricke (2007: 250–280) explores the dynamic of gift exchange in the cult of Foy at great length.
8. Borgmann (1984: 157) defines 'focus' as "things and practices that grace and orient our lives." His discussion of 'focal things', which I came to after this project was completed, addresses the impact of technology on pre-technological foci like the hearth or dinner table. Borgmann does so by considering Heidegger's critique of technology as having "eclipsed the focusing powers of pretechnological times" and Heidegger's countervailing treatment of the work of art as a focus that gathers a place for human beings to dwell (ibid.: 197–201). Borgmann's fascinating analysis is therefore different from my own project of understanding the role of the focal object as the visual node of networks and their place in the generation of the sacred.
9. See Morgan (2012: 70–83) for a further discussion of these gazes and a taxonomy of several more and for a discussion on Sartre (ibid.: 18–22).
10. For further discussion of the brilliance and countenance of the figure, see Fricke (2007: 207–221), who also argues that the golden image is not a portrait in the sense of "her individual, earthly facial features," but rather a representation of Foy's holiness (ibid.: 216).
11. Bruno Latour (1999: 8–10) has nothing kind to say about phenomenology, pitting his conception of actor-network theory starkly against it. But I do not consider this opposition to be necessary or useful since a phenomenological approach, influenced by the example of Merleau-Ponty, regards neither the body nor the self as enclosed, interior domains, but rather as open interfaces with the world that surrounds and penetrates them. For instance, Merleau-Ponty ([1962] 2002: 246) asserted: "In the same way I give ear, or look, in the expectation of a sensation, and suddenly the sensible takes possession of my ear or my gaze, and I surrender a part of my body, even my whole body, to this particular manner of vibrating and filling space known as blue or red." The classical phenomenological distinction and paradox of 'in itself' (consciousness) and 'for itself' (thing), he argued, needed to be re-examined, and for him the idea of the definition of sensation as "co-existence or communion" of the body and the world was the result (ibid.: 247–248). In his last and unfinished project, *The Visible and the Invisible*, Merleau-Ponty (1968: 137–138) took up this problem once again when he spoke of the chiastic relation of the body sensible and the body sentient, which he also expressed as "the thickness of flesh between the seer and the thing [as] constitutive for the thing of its visibility as for the seer of his corporeity; it is not an obstacle between them, it is their means of communication" (ibid.: 135). See also Hodder (2012: 30) for a discussion of Merleau-Ponty that stresses "a two-way dependence of human bodies and things."
12. http://organiccotton.org/oc/Cotton-general/Cotton-value-chain/Cotton-value-chain.php.
13. The idea of the value chain comes from Porter (1998: 33): "The value chain disaggregates a firm into its strategically relevant activities in order to understand the behavior of costs and the existing and potential sources of differentiation." Porter goes on to define the value chain as an all-inclusive registration of human and non-human activities: "Every firm is a collection of activities that are performed to design, produce, market, deliver, and support its product. All these activities can be represented using a value chain … A firm's value chain and the way it performs individual activities

are a reflection of its history, its strategy, its approach to implementing its strategy, and the underlying economics of the activities themselves" (ibid.: 36).

14. Whereas Freud insisted on the importance of leaving religious delusion behind in the cultural maturation of modern life, Bourdieu (1977: 195–196), as a Marxist, called for the revolutionary recognition of the imbalance of power that misrecognition concealed: "The collective misrecognition which is the basis of the ethic of honour, a collective denial of the economic reality of exchange, is only possible because, when the group lies to itself in this way, there is neither deceiver nor deceived."
15. Durkheim may have taken the term 'hypostatized' from an 1898 work by Hubert and Mauss, which Durkheim cited in *Elementary Forms* (1995: 389n43). Hubert and Mauss ([1898] 1964: 82) refer to a figure in Greek mythology as the personification of a ram: "the hypostasis of the original animal victim."
16. For helpful and sophisticated studies on the face, see Kenaan (2013) and Pattison (2013).
17. See "Is Halloween for Christians?" Word of Truth Radio, http://www.wordoftruthradio.com/questions/46.html (accessed 29 January 2014).

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