Implicit Religion
Edward Bailey
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- Editor of the journal *Implicit Religion*
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Implicit religion exists “when someone’s (or some group’s) basic beliefs about the way the world is or should be (which may hitherto have been unconscious, even to themselves) are affirmed (‘Here I stand’) – or are changed; when what we ‘must’ (or ‘must not’) do, has priority over what we merely ‘can’ (or ‘cannot’) do, and when we discover who is most profoundly ‘one of us’ (or ‘not one of us’) and ‘whose side we are on’, ‘when the chips are down.’”

• In other words:
  – when you can pinpoint what a person stands for, whether they are consciously aware of it or not, based on what they feel they must or must not do, you get a glimpse into a person’s implicit religion.
  – When you can see who they feel they are, who they feel they belong with, and how they ultimately situate themselves in their own personal history, their community, the world, and the cosmos, then you can identify their implicit religious framework.
Bailey suggests there are three interconnected ways to identify implicit religion. The first of these is by examining their commitments. Bailey’s own definition of commitments is obscure – he writes: “It points to behaviour whose explanation involves, in part, the exercise of a certain freedom. Fortunately the term does not suggest a restriction to self-conscious and deliberately willed, individual decisions. Commitments can be inherited with one’s mother’s milk, and be entirely unconscious, unknown even to their owner, until perhaps brought to the surface by an individual or national moment of crisis…”

Jadev Payeng plants 1360 acre forest by himself: “I feel sad when I see people felling trees. We have to save the nature or else we all will perish.” Source: http://www.takepart.com/article/2013/04/23/jadav-payeng-plants-new-forest-in-india

In unpacking the idea of implicit religious commitment, however, we can identify ways in which the sometimes unconscious commitments of individuals can be revealed:

1. **Time and energy** - does the individual devote a lot of their time and energy to some particular concern? Do they spend time on it in a regular, even daily fashion? Do they devote large amounts of mental, emotional, physical energy to it?
2. **Creative effort** - does the individual find inspiration in the object of concern that allows them to find creative ways to express their affiliation to it? Do they create new works of art, craft, or artifact inspired by their connection to the concern?
3. **Participation in community** - does the individual find a community of like-minded people who support, sustain and validate their relationship to the concern?
Commitments

4. Defining the self in relation to the sacred:
   • Understanding one’s own identity in relationship with the concern
   • Understanding that the self has “gifts” that can be used to express/experience something transcendent through connection to the object of concern.
   • Understanding the self in relationship to others who share access/appreciation for the object of concern.

5. Interpreting the world through the lens of the sacred
   • Finding proverbial wisdom in the object of concern that applies to life in the world
   • Devoting resources (money) towards furthering the connection to the concern
   • Perceiving an “I/They” relationship with others - that is, seeing in others who share a similar passion, a connectedness that transcends difference.
Integrating Foci

- Something that is implicitly religious contains integrating foci – certain objects or concepts or symbols that serve to override the temptation to divide “the natural from the social environment; the individual from society; the chosen from the cultural; the conscious from the unconscious; the subjective from the objective; the rational from the emotional; the ethical from the ontological; the transcendent from the immanent; the divine from the human; the supernatural from the natural.”
- Integrating foci are those places, moments, objects, events, concerns, etc. that transcend these and other conceptual divides, overcoming difference and leading to new modes of being or understanding.
Mayor steps down after being banned from every pub in his town

A MAYOR has stepped down after he and his partner were barred from EVERY pub in his town after going on a drinking spree.

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By Jane Mathews

Wayne Ronayne served as Mayor of Gosport for just 40 days [SOLENT]

Wayne Ronayne stood down as Mayor of Gosport after he and his partner Paula Carter upset local pub owners on his first day in office.

The pair, both 54, were barred from 36 pubs in the area, after the Mayoress reportedly threatened to get a Wetherspoon's shut down before being escorted from the premises.

Former Royal Navy warrant officer Ronayne announced his resignation yesterday, after just 40 days in the role.

He is thought to be the first person in the history of the town to ever leave the ceremonial position before his year-long term was up.

The Pub

1. “You get all types in a pub.” – Although Britain is known for its class structures, the pub is seen (by Brits and others) as having an egalitarian appeal – pride in having a venue for embodying the ideals of human equality and diversity. The pub symbolizes the unity, rather than the diversity, of British society, while validating the appeal of, and necessity of, difference.
2. The physical building of the pub – a focus for the sense of local community (along with post office, school, church, and open space) – bringing together public space with private leisure. No town can be a town without a pub – reflecting the need for a social space for unity and diversity.

3. The doorway between the “public” side (where “bitter” is sold at a set price; and the “lounge” side (where cigars are sold, for example), and where beer costs more. Bailey says the two sides symbolically (and over-simplistically) represent Britain’s class structure, but in the case of the pub, patrons can choose which “class” to join, and can move fluidly between them – the “door” marks the boundary, and the connectedness, of the two sides.

4. The bar – (or 2 bars) – the public one, which runs the length of the public side, emphasizing the community space; and the lounge one, semi-circular, where one side is the “ladies” side and the other for the “gents” – a physical object, lovingly maintained, embodying ideals of communal celebration, and gendered space. The bar(s) integrate the personal (individuals going for a drink) with the social (the choice of which space, and/or bar to sit at; and the historical – integrating past, present, future, individual, social, class.
The Pub

5. The “busy time” – 9pm or so to 10:30, when the pub closes. This is the time everyone has been waiting for, when the pub “comes to life” – the noise, sounds, smells, crowding, etc. all contributing to the focus on ‘that’s what this is about.’ The busy time integrates personal and social lives.

6. The Manager (and by extension, the wait staff) – who embodies the “spirit” of the pub – “The presiding Bishop and proverbial scapegoat”, the manager greets guests by name, stamps his/her personality on the pub, and serves as the focus for blame (why the pub doesn’t live up to its ideal – its too quiet, its too noisy, its too impersonal, its too cold, etc.)

7. The Transaction – the “giving” of the drink and the “giving” of the money – very ritualized (for example, always using the largest denomination of money available, never counting the change) - an enactment of individuality (choice of drink), trust (financial exchange), equality (choice of side), etc.

“A threefold division is common within the study of (recognized) religions... so the implicit religion of the pub may likewise be described as possessing three facets. They are the ritual activity of ‘having a drink’, the communal solidarity of the initiates, and the mental (mythical and ethical) rationale of ‘being a man.’
Intensive Concerns, Extensive Effects

• In order to be considered “implicitly religious,” something must not only be of deep or intensive concern, but must have long-lasting, extensive effects on the life and mind of the individual – so, being intensely concerned about a political election might be important, but unless it leads to clear and long-lasting effects (joining the NRA, lobbying for PETA, adapting your lifestyle, your priorities, etc.) it wouldn’t necessarily be “religious” in Bailey’s model.
The Parish

• Bailey says, even among those who are explicitly religious, there is an implicit religion that functions to validate and affirm certain social and individual tenets that are not necessarily validated within the explicit religion. He uses the example of individuals within a larger parish to make this point. Although the parish is a community centered on a religious institution, those interviewed identified things not necessarily affiliated with or of primary significance to the church – most specifically:
  – children (as “willful divinities”) – although Christianity certainly values children, children and not part of the central theology of the church. Children, however, are the focus of commitment, act as integrating foci, and reveal the intensive concerns and extensive effects of individuals. Do we as a society sacramalize children, childhood, parenthood?
  – bodies (“hedged about with divinity”) – again, bodies are not the focus of Christianity, in fact it has been argued that Christianity is hostile to the body (Descartes referred to the soul as the “ghost” in the machine) – our society, in contrast, is possibly fixated on bodies? Health, beauty, youth?
  – me-time – Bailey says people construct the need for personal space/time in opposition to all of the demands that work, family, economics, politics, etc. place on the individual – sometimes, you can’t let people push you around, and just have to assert your right to your own “thing”?
  – buildings – the home, the church, the bank... ; Interestingly, Bailey observed that people identify themselves in relation to physical buildings – the time spent at school, at church, the geography of the home, the symbolic importance of wealth as seen in the bank building, etc. Can you think of any examples of this here?
  – Christianity – the explicit religion, embedded in the implicit. People like to self-identify as Christian (or Hindu, Muslim, etc.) – the self-identification acts as an element in the implicit religion of individuals...

• The implicit religion of contemporary society is a commitment to the human... This system of religion revolves around the notion of the sacredness of the Self and incorporates the sacredness of the personal Self, the sacredness of other Selves, and the sacredness of relationships with other Selves. We combine religion and the secular in this way and so carve a middle path between the sacred and the profane, which enables us to extend our understanding further. A two-pronged approach proves necessary since “not only does the secular appear to possess a secondary quality: religion itself appears incomplete, when it is without relevance to that which is not religious” (IMPLICIT RELIGION AND INTER FAITH DIALOGUE: A SCIENTIFIC PERSPECTIVE Kevin Sharpe and Rebecca Bryant. Implicit Religion 2 (1) May 1999).