To what Extent is Religion an Expression of Rational Thought? A Question of Methodology


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Roxanne L. Korpan
MA Program, University of Regina

To answer the question of the extent to which religion is an expression of rational thought, I will explore various arguments and methodologies that seek to characterise religion as either irrational or rational and explain this realm of human social productions accordingly. To this end, I will begin my study by outlining some of the limitations of irrational characterisations of religion in popular discourses and in experience- and belief-based discourses. I will then explore the human cognitive approaches of Scott Atran and Robin Horton, which seek to analyse religion with the same analytic tools applied to non-religious phenomena in explaining religion as resulting from "normal" human brain processing and common thought patterns. Next, I will use the work of Maurice Bloch, Marshall Sahlins, and Pierre Bourdieu to examine how the designations of rationality or irrationality are determined. To conclude this paper, I will draw on the social theory of Bourdieu to argue that the designation of data as rational or irrational is a methodological choice that must be made after serious consideration of the social (and analytical) implications of either designation.

The question of religion's rationality—i.e., the extent to which religion is an expression of rational thought—hinges on the assumption that religion refers to a distinct kind or group of human phenomena. Put another way, the claim that religion is irrational relies on a substantive definition of religion, even if this substantive definition is critically determined in, for example, cases in which scholars acknowledge the difficulty or even impossibility of determining with any certainty or finitude an adequate definition of religion but still rely on a self-consciously constructed "working definition" of religion for their particular purposes. Jonathan Z. Smith's proclamation that "religion has no independent existence apart from the academy" and subsequent call for self-consciousness in defining the parameters of study in his oft-quoted introduction to *Imagining Religion* (1982, xi) comes to mind as a particularly apt example of

such an exercise.[1] With a particular definition of religion in place, a variety of human

phenomena can then be aggregated under this rubric and (often over-)generalised characteristics

can be determined—such as the characterisation of religion and religious phenomena as

irrational.

There is a plethora of examples of the characterisation of religious phenomena (and in

some cases, religious adherents) as irrational. One of the most overt constructions of religion as

irrational is evident in the various critiques of religion launched by the so-called "new atheists,"

such as, and perhaps most notably, Richard Dawkins in his work *The God Delusion* ([2006]

2008) (his book's title, of course, is quite revealing of the thrust of the argument therein). For

Dawkins, faith—that is, non-empirically justified truth-claims—and particularly *religious* faith is

an "open invitation to extremism" in discounting and silencing "rational calculation" (346). It

seems that for Dawkins, irrational thinking (about the existence of gods, the afterlife, et cetera) is

characteristic of religion and is perhaps the singular distinguishing feature between religion and

non-religion.

It is not only in these more "popular" discourses on religion that we find the

characterisation of religion as irrational. Often, this assumption is imbedded in other discourses

on religion, such as experience- or belief-based definitions or characterisations of religion. In his

essay "Experience" (1998), Robert H. Sharf problematises the term *experience* and its centrality

in the study of religion, particularly in regards to the use of experience to position religion

outside the realm of empirical inquiry and criticism. Sharf situates the emergence of the "rhetoric

of experience" as responding to the issues of empiricism and cultural pluralism in the modern

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[1] I doubt Smith would appreciate my use of his theory of religion as an example of substantive definitions of religion, even critically-determined ones. But it seems to me that Smith's focus on *scholars'* production of particular definitions of religion for various academic purposes is a useful way of looking at the commonly encountered "working definition" of religion: we cannot seem to come up with a definition of religion, but for the purposes of this study, religion will be defined as *x*.

period (95). In response to the former issue, the emphasis on experiential dimensions of religion insulates this domain from scientific and empirical scrutiny, which serves the interests of both theologians (who have a vested interest in preserving religious, and specifically Christian, claims to truth) and secular scholars (who have a stake in maintaining their position as experts on this particular and unique data set against empirically-oriented scholars from other human and social sciences) (95). Experience—as a "response to a fundamentally human (and thus pancultural and ahistorical) sense of the transcendent" (96)—thus functioned historically as a useful rhetorical device to assert the validity of Christian claims to truth while acknowledging that other religions, stripped of cultural and historical accoutrements (that is, the experiential dimension of these religions), could also provide access to the ultimate. While there is a great deal of debate about how and to what extent "experience" is affected by cultural, historical, and social contingencies, Sharf suggests there is a general consensus within these debates that experience "function[s] referentially," meaning experience's "signification lies in the [signified] to which [experience] allegedly refer[s]" (103). Though the articulation or representation of experience varies, this assumption constructs the phenomena of experience itself to be indubitable.

In his essay "Belief" (1998), Donald S. Lopez, Jr. similarly advances a critique of the concept of belief, in which he suggests the construction of religions as belief-based and the construction of belief as "an elusive interior state" (21) and as irrational (at least in the sense of its being *different* from or of a *different kind* than empirically verifiable or disprovable propositional statements) serves a particular set of interests.  While there have certainly been many attempts made at evaluating the rationality of particular beliefs, such as the belief in gods, the more common discourse on belief presently seems to be one that treats religious belief as "qualitatively different from other forms of belief because it is an assent to that which can never

be justified by conventional means" (23).[2] Further, belief is constructed as an interior state of mind, though beliefs may be manifest externally in particular actions and speech-acts (note that in this construction, belief is always prior to action). Lopez suggests that the conception of belief as interiorised and non-empirical allows the term *belief* to obscure material conditions and "act as a surrogate for more visible concerns" (27). For Lopez, this characterisation of belief as well as its centrality to the modern construction of religion (the history of which I will not examine in this paper) has historically functioned as a means of identity formation in "establishing a community against 'the world,' [by] hinting at a counterfactual reality to which only the believers have access" (33). Though Lopez does not elaborate on this point in his own examination of belief in the context of discourses on religion, the interiorised construction of belief is also prevalent in, and I would perhaps argue *necessary* to, discourses of religious pluralism or tolerance, again demonstrating how this construction serves particular interests. In Canada, for example, we legally and socially tolerate religious diversity as long as this diversity is properly managed by limiting overt religious expression to the "private," "apolitical" realm; the grouping together of "freedom of religion and conscience" in the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* is perhaps telling of this interiorised construction of religion (Part I, Section 2 (a)). A more accurate characterisation of religious freedom in Canada to my mind might be encapsulated by the following famous words attributed to Henry Ford: "You can have it [the Model T] in any colour, so long as it's black." In other words, you can have any religious beliefs, so long as we all appear the same (that is, as long as those beliefs are not manifest in actions that challenge the state or the social status quo).

It is helpful to note in relation to the rhetorical usefulness of experience, belief, and

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[2] That being said, there certainly still exist scholars and writers such as Dawkins for whom the empirical evaluation of truth-claims about the divine continues to be a productive and profitable enterprise.

irrationality in constructing identity that the designation of religion as irrational is not always applied indiscriminately to all phenomena classified as religious. Rather, certain "kinds" of religion, religious beliefs, and practices or activities that are said to be motivated by these beliefs are considered rational while others are not. If we consider various discourses of religion as being produced by and in Eurowestern colonial and neocolonial contexts, some of the interests underlying this cherry-picking become clear. We may take as just one example the discourse of religious violence, which characterises this violence as irrational due to its "religious" (i.e., belief-based) origins. If belief is irrational and actions are a result of these beliefs, then the violence is also irrational and therefore unjustified. By contrast, violence conducted by the secular (Eurowestern) state is sanctioned as a result of rational and pragmatic policy considerations in response to "real," material concerns even if, for example, George W. Bush allegedly considered himself to be on a "mission from God" in the so-called War on Terror (Bush in MacAskill, 2005). In this case, the selective application of irrationality to religion obscures the material and social conditions from which particular social actions are produced by locating their origin in some interior realm.

As recent deconstructive work of the category of religion (and its binary opposite, non-religion or the secular) and historicisation of the emergence of the term *religion* as a mode of classification has shown, *sui generis* assumptions of religion existing as a particular, unique, or distinct *kind* of human (and "non-human") phenomena or as referring to a distinct realm of human activity and production are highly problematic for a number of reasons, all of which I will not elaborate on in this paper. The most relevant issue advanced by these critiques to responding to the question of the extent to which religion is an expression of rational thought is the argument that the category of religion is, in all configurations, largely incoherent. This is not to say various

definitions of religion do not clearly outline which phenomena should be included in this category of classification and which should not; indeed, this practice is the *point* of such definitions. Rather, as Craig Martin points out in his recent publication *A Critical Introduction to the Study of Religion* (2012), "there are no features that are uniquely common to all the traditions we typically call religions" (2); instead, "the colloquial use [of the term religion] groups together dissimilar things" (4). If there is no common feature that all religious phenomena share, then there also must not be any fundamental distinguishing feature of religion from those human phenomena *not* conventionally included in the category of religion.

This premise shifts the focus of our question of religion's rationality somewhat. As Sharf and Lopez each suggest in their own critiques of the concepts of experience and belief, respectively, the assumption that a particular set of human phenomena is essentially distinct or different from other human phenomena (in these cases, by applying the concepts of experience and belief to particular phenomena) is not especially productive in allowing for nuanced analysis of the phenomena in question (this assumption *is* useful for a variety of scholarly, personal, social, and political interests as I have noted). It is thus perhaps more useful to analyse "religion" along the same lines we might approach various non-religious phenomena. Recent cognitive approaches to the study of religion seek to do just this (i.e., study religion with the same methods by which non-religious phenomena are studied) by explaining religion as resulting from "normal" human cognitive processing.

Scott Atran offers such an explanation in his book *In Gods We Trust* (2002), in which he outlines a detailed explanation for how (and perhaps why) religion exists from a cognitive evolutionary perspective. Atran advances this study from his observation of the numerous "patent" reasons why religion should not exist, insofar as religion seems to not have been an

advantageous human adaptation: in sum, religion is "counterfactual" and "counterintuitive" and religious practice is expensive in terms of material, emotional, and cognitive expenditures (4). Rather than seeking to understand religious phenomena, and specifically religious ideology and beliefs, "on their own terms" or with a special disciplinary methodology, Atran analyses religion in terms of "cultural patterns...generated by specialized core adaptations of the human mind/brain" (17). While I will not reproduce the details of his argument here (and they are legion), for Atran, while the particularities of religious ideologies, beliefs, practices, and entities are counter-intuitive, they are "conceivable...against a rich background of universally commensurable cognitions and emotions" (17). Though I lack the technical background to comment on the plausibility of Atran's evolutionary theory, there are some serious problems with his study that must be addressed in relation to the central question of this paper regarding religion's rationality. First, though Atran applies biological and scientific methodologies to the phenomena of religion (i.e., he treats religion as resulting from rational thought), he uncritically assumes the existence of "religion" as referring to a distinct realm of human beliefs and practices: Atran betrays this assumption in his suggestion that though religion can be explained as being produced from the same cognitive processes as non-religious phenomena, this production occurs in "systematically distinct ways" (ix). Second, and more importantly, Atran fails to consider the question of *how* certain phenomena come to be considered counter-intuitive. Instead, Atran assumes counter-intuitiveness and counter-factuality as being inherent characteristics of religious phenomena and, indeed, it is the counter-intuitiveness of religion which Atran seeks to account for in his study. Counter-intuitiveness thus works as a rhetorical tool to aggregate dissimilar phenomena under the rubric religion.

In his comparative analysis of "African traditional thought" and "Western science" in his larger work *Patterns of Thought in Africa and the West* ([1993] 1997), Robin Horton similarly attempts to explain African traditional thought by appealing to common human thought patterns. His approach, however, turns out to be quite different from and more productive than that of Atran's for reasons I will elaborate later in this paper. In this analysis, Horton deconstructs the conventional dichotomy of traditional (African) thought and rational, scientific (Western) thought premised on the tendency to "mistake differences of idiom for differences of substance" (197), and instead argues that the starting point for productive comparative analysis should be a consideration of *common* features of these different modes of thinking.[3] To this end, Horton spends the bulk of his analysis outlining eight "patterns of thought" present in both of these of these discourses: 1) "The quest for explanatory theory is basically the quest for unity underlying apparent diversity; for simplicity underlying apparent complexity; for order underlying apparent disorder; for regularity underlying apparent anomaly" (198); 2) "Theory places things in a causal context wider than that provided by common sense" (200); 3) "Common sense and theory have complementary roles in everyday life" (207); 4) "Level of theory varies with context" (210); 5) "All theory breaks up the unitary objects of common sense into aspects, then places the resulting elements in a wider causal context" (212); 6) "In evolving a theoretical scheme, the human mind seems constrained to draw inspiration from analogy between the puzzling observations to be explained and certain already familiar phenomena" (213); 7) "Where theory is founded on analogy between certain puzzling observations and other more familiar phenomena, it is generally only a limited aspect of such phenomena that is incorporated into the resulting model" (215); and 8) "A theoretical model, once built, is developed in ways which sometimes obscure

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[3]The idea that African traditional thought does not represent a distinct or unique mode of thinking, and particularly a mode of thinking that is distinct from scientific thought, underlies Horton's methodology here.

the analogy on which it was founded" (216). Horton's emphasis on the similarities between

traditional African thought and Western empirical discourse represents an effort to make "the

strange" (i.e., traditional African thought) familiar and thus comprehensible. As Horton notes,

established dichotomies like traditional thought and science—or, I would add, religion and

rational thought—are "obstacles to understanding" and must be absolved to recognise any *salient*

differences between various modes of thought (220) such as, for example, the absence or

presence of alternatives, the relationship of ideas to "reality," unreflective or reflective thinking,

attitudes that either protect or allow for the displacement of established bodies of theory, and the

absence or presence of experimental methodology (223-243). A focus on differences in *content*

between various modes of thought obscures more crucial differences in patterns of thought,

methodological tools, or systems of knowledge production; so too with religion/non-religion and

irrationality/rationality.

  If we are to take seriously the premise that religion is a product of rational thought or

common human cognitive processing insofar as religion refers to various human social

phenomena aggregated for particular purposes under the category of religion, then it is especially

important to find a way to account for the apparently odd components of our data or those

ideologies and practices that may strike as us strange in a way that does not assume there is an

inherent counter-intuitive characteristic of these phenomena that needs to be explained. As

Maurice Bloch notes in his examination of the question, "Are Religious Beliefs Counter-

Intuitive?" (2005) there is no *a priori* way of knowing which statements, ideologies, or practices

are counter-intuitive because counter-intuitiveness is a *contingent* quality. As Bloch suggests,

counter-intuitiveness is an evaluation of the *content* of particular ideologies or practices, rather

than the cognitive or sociological structures underlying such content. Such a point is clearly

demonstrated in Atran's analysis, in which he assumes the mental processing behind the production of religion to be "normal," rational, and shared in common with the production of non-religious phenomena while simultaneously affirming the distinctiveness of religion: for example, Atran examines extra-human agency in terms of souls, spirits, and deities but not in terms of extra-human agents/entities like Santa Claus, "the market," credit, and the US Founding Fathers. By contrast, while Horton, similarly to Atran, centres his comparative analysis of traditional African thought and Western scientific thought on the premise that different modes of thought can be explained by appeal to common cognitive patterns and processing, Horton does not assume traditional thought (which we could consider as analogous to Atran's "religious" thought) to be substantively or obviously counter-intuitive nor scientific thought to be essentially intuitive or rational. In other words, Horton does not "mistake differences of idiom [between traditional thought and scientific thought] for differences of substance" (Horton, 197). In this sense, Horton's analysis works along the lines of Bloch's critique of religion's assumed counter-intuitiveness. As Bloch suggests, because content (i.e., that which the designation of counter-intuitiveness is based upon as noted above) is context-dependent and content is always changing ("you can never step in the same river twice," as the saying goes), the only way to evaluate the counter-intuitiveness of a particular statement, ideology, or practice is by situating the data in question in its specific *communicative* context (107). From this perspective, no realm of data or phenomena can be considered obviously or essentially counter-intuitive, nor can another realm be considered patently intuitive.

In his chapter "Structure and History" from *Islands of History* (1985), Marshall Sahlins takes a different approach to that of Atran and Horton in explaining the rationality behind those ideologies and practices that appear strikingly different or bizarre to us. Rather than positing

common cognitive processes or thought patterns as underlying different social productions,

Sahlins explains various cultural patterns as making sense within *particular* cultural narratives.

For Sahlins, human social experience and discourse is rational not in the sense of having some

*essential* rationality or *common* cognitive pattern, but rather, the integration of human experience

into *a priori*[4] cultural categories or concepts produces a highly ordered—and in this sense,

rational—social system.[5] As Sahlins summarises:

> Reference to the world is an act of classification, in the course of which realities are indexed to concepts in a relation of empirical tokens to cultural types. We know the world as logical instances of cultural classes [...] [A]s Walker Percy puts it (1958: 138), the symbolic character of consciousness consists in the pairing of a percept and a concept, by means of which the objects of perception become intelligible to ourselves and are transmitted to others. (145-146)

For Sahlins, while the "system" underlying human social productions is not the same or

universal among all humans in all contexts and so does not require an appeal to some objective

notion of rationality (in contrast to the human cognitive theories proposed by Atran and Horton),

this system is highly ordered and rational.

Having established that 1) religion does not refer to a distinct realm or group of human

social productions (ideologies, practices, et cetera), 2) the application of terms such as

experience, belief, irrationality, and counter-intuitiveness to the realm of religion is misguided in

demanding some sort of special treatment or consideration of the contents of this category (and

thus precluding the same scrutiny afforded to other human social productions), and 3) the very

designations of counter-intuitiveness and irrationality (and intuitiveness and rationality) are

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[4] By *a priori*, Sahlins does not mean to suggest these categories are objective or eternal, but that they are not constructed in "the present," i.e., at the precise moment the percept is perceived. Further, the appropriation of "specific percepts by general concepts" (145) alters these cultural concepts by allowing categories to "pick up some novel empirical content" (144).

[5] Jonathan Z. Smith's analysis of the myth of Hainuwele in "A Pearl of Great Price and a Cargo of Yams: A Study in Situational Incongruity" (1982) relies on a similar theory of cultural logic and rationality. Unlike Sahlins, however, Smith seems to assume a common cognitive processing that cuts across cultural and socio-historical differences in his suggestion that those things which "we" find incongruous in our data are one and the same as the incongruity identified by "native" interpreters and producers.

*contingent*, content-based evaluations, we must ask the question of *how* these assumptions should change how we approach the study of religion. Determining an appropriate response to this question is somewhat difficult or at least not entirely straightforward. If we accept the argument that "religion" is a generally unhelpful rubric by which to analyse particular ideologies and social practices due to the various ways this category insulates particular data from critique (noting this argument remains a contentious issue for some), then what are we left with as "data" and how does the setting aside of religion as an analytic category alter our question regarding our prescribed approach to the study of religion going forward? It appears to me that we are simply left with various human social productions for which we need to account. The questions that now need to be addressed are: To what extent are *human social productions* expressions of rational thought? How should this affect our interpretation of it (i.e., human social productions)? These related questions are by no means simple to address. Nonetheless, I will draw on the theoretical work of Pierre Bourdieu as outlined by Terry Rey in *Bourdieu on Religion: Imposing Faith and Legitimacy* (2007) to craft a response.

Bourdieu posits no rational criterion that guides social behaviour to which we can appeal in responding to the question of the rationality of human social productions. Rather, as Rey describes in his discussion of Bourdieu's theory of "radical doubt," for Bourdieu, all forms of knowledge are founded on "arbitrary assumptions" (Rey, 4) and "insofar as they are arbitrary [...] *all* discourses (e.g., literary, political, artistic, economic, cultural, religious) are 'mythical'" (36-37). This is not to say, however, that social behaviour is disordered or random. Instead, a practical logic determined by the interaction of one's *field* and *habitus* underlies social behaviour and ideological production. The terms *field* and *habitus* are perhaps best understood in terms of their social functions. *Field* refers to the various sub-spaces that together constitute society. The

social actions of individuals—which Bourdieu conceptualises as being done in pursuit of various forms of material, symbolic, cultural, social, or economic *capital*—occur "relative to the respective *fields* in which their *practice* unfolds" (39). *Field* might be understood as the material or empirical social conditions within which *practice,* i.e., social actions, takes place. The related concept of *habitus* refers to the subjective or internalised aspect of one's "personhood" that "filters [one's] perceptions, molds [one's] tastes, and casts [one's] inclinations and dispositions" (39) and refers to the "ways in which people perceive and pursue capital" (39). Bourdieu represents *field* and *habitus* as having an "obscure and double relation," in which "the *fields* shape the *habitus* throughout the course of its individual and social development, and the *habitus* in turn renders the *field* 'meaningful' through its developmental influence on agents' appreciation and consumption of capital" (46, my italics). The structures of the social world contained in a person's *habitus* are internalised through a process of socialisation and a "practical sense" of the social world is obtained, which in turn guides or motivates particular social actions in various *fields*.

This relationship between *practice*, *field*, and *habitus* (called "generative structuralism" by Bourdieu) is foundational to Bourdieu's study of how social structures are continually reproduced in human action and imposed on the social world. In turn, social structures "[contribute] to the (hidden) imposition of the principles of structuration of the perception and thinking of the world, and of the social world in particular" (Bourdieu 1991a, 5 in Rey, 75). The resulting "correspondence between the objective classes and the internalized classes, social structures and mental structures [...] is the basis of the most ineradicable adherence to the established order" (75) and is thus integral to the maintenance of these social structures and the power relations imbedded within them. The corollary assumption we can make based on this

assertion is that when a correspondence between "objective classes and internalized classes" or "social structures and mental structures" *fails* to exist, the social structures, objectivity, and authority of particular social constructs is undermined. This lack of perceived correspondence might represent a case in which we evaluate the structure, ideology, or action to be irrational. Rey's articulation of what he perceives as Bourdieu's goal of sociology is made in response to this process:

> "[A]ll truth is relative, all absolutes are illusory, and to exercise radical doubt sociologically is to be on the lookout especially for those assumptions and putative absolutes that establish and perpetuate social inequalities and injustice because '[a]ppearances are always in favor of the apparent' (in Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 246)" (4).

Bourdieu's theory of how social structures are reproduced by social actions that result from the interaction between one's *habitus* and *field* and, especially, the discussion of the goal of academic critique of social behaviours, ideologies, and structures in "[p]roducing awareness of the mechanisms that make life painful, even unlivable" by "making generally known the social origin, collectively hidden, of unhappiness in all its forms, including the most intimate, the most secret" (Bourdieu et al. 1999, 629 in Rey, 41), leads me back to the question of how to approach the data of human social actions and productions. I tend to agree with Bourdieu's assertion that all forms of knowledge are relative and reliant on "arbitrary assumptions" as this perspective on knowledge and knowledge production (as articulated by Bourdieu's theory of generative structuralism) is useful in centring analytic focus on the interaction between material conditions, social structures, and mental structures. If we take the assumption that all knowledge is relative seriously, then we can conclude that the appearance of social order is structural rather than substantive in relying on the correspondence between mental structures (in one's *habitus*) and social structures (in one's *fields*). It then follows that an evaluation of the rationality or irrationality of particular social phenomena, actions, or ideologies is contingent on *my own*

*habitus* (or the *habitus* of whoever happens to be doing this analysis). As a result, this mode of classification is not particularly useful—indeed, my evaluation of rationality or irrationality reveals more about my own social location in relation to other social locations than it does about my data.

Rather than disposing of the question of the rationality of particular social productions, I suggest we conclude that we ought to reverse the order of the questions outlined above concerning the rationality of human social productions: How does analysing human social productions *as rational* affect our interpretation of this data? How does analysing human social productions *as irrational* affect our interpretation of this data? Which classification leads to more interesting, productive, novel analysis? These questions draw into focus Bourdieu's argument articulated in the following:

> Every established order tends to produce...the naturalization of its own arbitrariness. Of all the mechanisms tending to produce this effect, the most important and the best concealed is undoubtedly the dialectic of the objective chances and the agents' aspirations, out of which arises a *sense of limits*, commonly called the *sense of reality*, i.e., the correspondence between the objective classes and the internalized classes, social structures and mental structures, which is the basis of the most ineradicable adherence to the established order. (Bourdieu 1977, 164 in Rey, 30)

Insofar as we reproduce and conceal established orders by assuming there is properly a correspondence between mental and social structures, we perpetuate the unequal power systems that underlie these discourses. In the case of positing that certain human productions are, indeed, the result of irrational thought, the consequences of this characterisation can be extremely harmful (beyond being generally not useful as I have argued). The rhetoric of irrationality has, of course, been used to characterise certain modes of thought, particular cultures, specific social groups, and individuals (for example, in psychological discourses) in damaging ways and this application is especially prominent in discourses that perpetuate systems of domination.

The necessity for consideration of the social implications of our modes of classification underlies my concluding argument that the designation of human social productions (some of which are classified under the category of religion) as either rational or irrational is a methodological choice. Because rationality and irrationality represent contingent categories rather than absolutes, we can only make such designations in light of our own social and ideological contexts: our actions always occur in a particular *field* and are contained and prescribed by our *habitus*. In this sense, either designation will always reflect a certain set of assumptions and interests. If we are to make responsible methodological choices in scholarship, we must take into account how our classifications construct our data in various ways and to what end: as Martin asserts, "Our concepts do not map the social world—they are *blueprints* for the social world" (30).

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