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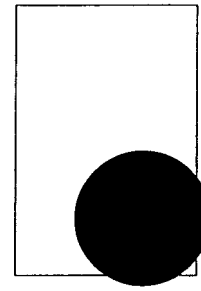

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From status to contract revisited

Value, temporality, circulation and subjectivity

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Abstract

Using Henry Sumner Maine's text *Ancient Law* as a starting point, this article theorizes the relation between value, circulation, subjectivity and temporality. Merging the interactional framework of Erving Goffman with the political economy of Karl Marx, it introduces a metalanguage for describing transformations in subjectivity that occurred with the transition to capitalist modernity. In doing so, it unites the foundational concerns of British social anthropology (with its attention to modality, or permission and obligation) and Boasian cultural anthropology (with its attention to meaning, or signification and interpretation). And, with this unification, it seeks to illuminate transformations in social relations underlying emergent forms of contract.

Key Words

circulation • contract • financial derivatives • modernity • political economy • subjectivity • temporality • value

INTRODUCTION

Henry Sumner Maine's classic work *Ancient Law* (2002 [1861]) is one of the foundational texts of British social anthropology. Now mainly remembered for its famous phrase *from status to contract*, it describes key transformations in sociality that occurred with the transition to modernity. While ostensibly a history of Roman law, Maine's work may also be understood as the juridical self-consciousness of the 19th-century British Empire. Indeed, in a Marxist idiom, it may even be understood as a history of pre-capitalist relations of production when traced through legal texts (and when eliding forces of production). With Maine's work as a starting point, and with these caveats in mind, this article has four overarching goals: one, to sketch a rapprochement between Boasian cultural anthropology and British social anthropology, or meaning and modality more generally; two, to draw a set of linkages between linguistic anthropology and political economy; three, to develop several of Maine's insights into a self-consistent

metalanguage for describing various modes of sociality; and finally, to use these ideas to theorize the relation between modality, temporality, circulation and subjectivity.

Section 1 theorizes deontic modality, or permission and obligation: types of behavior that one may or must do in types of circumstances. Section 2 examines status, or the personification of modality: ensembles of rights and responsibilities attendant upon inhabiting a certain position in society. Section 3 examines the relation between political economy and performativity: the circulation of items of possession, and the transformation of statuses of possessors. Section 4 theorizes economic detachment: how modes of circulation allow more or less social, temporal, and spatial 'distance' between the alienation and acquisition of items of possession, and/or between the destruction and creation of statuses of possessors. Section 5 theorizes the temporality of semiosis: how semiotic processes, such as the contractual procedures underlying circulation, constitute the space-time-person manifold in which distance may be judged. Section 6 theorizes selfhood in relation to the temporality of semiosis: a movement through a complex space of social and intentional statuses that once belonged to the signer, now belong to the signer, and will belong to the signer. And the conclusion uses the foregoing framework to theorize transformations in selfhood that occurred with the putative transition 'from status to contract'.

1. DEONTIC MODALITY: PERMISSION AND OBLIGATION

One way to distinguish between Boasian cultural anthropology and British social anthropology is whether meaning or modality is used to understand group-relative patterns of human behavior. The term modality is borrowed from Kant, who assumed that there were two kinds: epistemic modality (possibility and necessity) and deontic modality (permission and obligation). To get a feel for the nature of these metaphysical concepts, one may turn to linguistic categories. A sentence like *it may be calcite* expresses epistemic possibility; and a sentence like *it must be calcite* expresses epistemic necessity. Likewise a sentence like *you may go to the store* expresses deontic permission; and a sentence like *you must go to the store* expresses deontic obligation. Epistemic modality is generally a way of characterizing the pairing between causes and effects, and hence a way to describe the regularities of natural phenomena. And deontic modality – which will be of primary concern in what follows – is generally a way of characterizing the pairing between circumstances and behaviors, and hence a way to prescribe the regularities of social phenomena.

British social anthropology was oriented towards deontic modality: types of behaviors that one may or must do (or not do) in types of circumstances. Stated as such, deontic modality covers phenomena ranging from how to build a proper canoe to when is the most propitious time to set sail, from incest taboos to mother-in-law avoidance, from sacrificial offerings to commensality injunctions, from sumptuary laws to grazing rights, from how should cattle be ritually slaughtered to who should receive bride wealth. But it is also much wider than that, covering phenomena from the Ten Commandments to the Categorical Imperative, from the Magna Carta to the Bill of Rights, from the Poor Laws to Martial Law, and from despotic commands to social contracts. In this way, deontic modality captures phenomena typically labeled with terms like morality, law, religion, tradition, and culture. Moreover, key texts in social theory have often been explicitly couched in terms of such categories. For example, Mauss characterized the gift

in terms of the obligation to give, the obligation to receive, and the obligation to reciprocate (1990: 13). Weber characterized the spirit of capitalism as the individual's duty to increase his capital (1992: 51). And Maine's *Ancient Law* is concerned with nothing but deontic modality, and the changes wrought in it with the transition to modernity. Indeed, *facticity* – as a combination of the cultural relativism of Boas and the social fact of Durkheim – is best understood as a kind of second-order modality: deontic pairings of types of behaviors and types of circumstances that must be this way (here, now, and among us), but may be otherwise (there, then, and among them).

Three questions may now be asked of deontic modality. What are the different ways of *regimenting* permission and obligation? What are the different ways of *sanctioning* this regimentation? And what are the different ways of *unitizing* that which may be sanctioned?

In regards to the first question, there are three key means of regimenting the various types of behaviors that one may or must do in various types of circumstance: norms, rules, and laws. For an entity to have *norms* requires two basic capacities: it must be able to imitate the behavior of those around it, as they are able to imitate its behavior; and it must be able to sanction the (non-)imitative behavior of those around it, and be subject to their sanctions (Brandom, 1979; Haugeland, 1998). Norms, then, are embodied in dispositions: one behaves in a certain way because one is disposed to behave that way; and one is so disposed because of imitation and sanctioning. While *rules* presuppose a normative capacity, they also involve a linguistic ability: a rule must be formulated in some language (oral or written); and one must 'read' the rule, and do what it says because that's what it says (Haugeland, 1998: 149). Rules, then, are like recipes; following a rule is like following a recipe, and to have and follow rules requires a linguistic ability. Finally, as used here, *laws* are rules that are promulgated and enforced by a political entity – say, following Weber (1978: 54), an organization with a monopoly on the legitimate use of force within a given territory. Laws, then, typically make reference to the threat of violence within the scope of polity. While there are other means for regimenting behavior (for example, conventions, traditions, and regularities), norms, rules and laws are the most important for what follows. Moreover, while the typical focus is on rules and laws (so far as they are easily articulated and overtly political), the vast majority of behavior is regimented by norms (and typically below the level of awareness of those who abide by them). As a terminological convention in what follows, then, the terms *right* and *responsibility* will be used to refer to modes of deontic permission and obligation when regimented by rules and laws; and the terms *entitlement* and *commitment* will be used to refer to modes of deontic permission and obligation in an unmarked sense – that is, regardless of the means of regimentation (but usually as regimented by norms).

When speaking about the difference between norms and rules, scholars such as Wittgenstein (1953), Sapir (1985), and Bourdieu (1977) come to mind. Maine, however, was really the most prescient theorist in this tradition (2002: 1–19), distinguishing between habits (à la norms), commands (à la parent-imposed rules), themistes (divinely-inspired kingly judgments), verbal codes (à la customary law as remembered by an aristocratic order), and written codes (or 'law' per se). Moreover, he argued that there was an historical movement – with a Roman and/or British modernity as its endpoint – from habit to written code, or from the embodied and provincial to the

articulated and universal. And, along with this movement – sometimes driving it, and sometimes emergent from it – he thought that there was a tendency towards increased self-consciousness and increased self-control. That is, with this historical transformation in modes of regimentation, mankind was slowly getting more and more agency over its own behavior (2002: 21–4).

In regards to the second question, which asks what the different ways of sanctioning such regimentation are, the following distinctions are crucial (cf. Maine, 2002; Radcliffe-Brown, 1965). First, while sanctions are typically thought of in negative terms, this is too restrictive: a sanction may be positive or negative. That is, either it may entice one to adhere to one's commitments and entitlements, or it may deter one from not adhering to one's commitments and entitlements. The classic positive and negative senses are reward and punishment, approbation and censure, carrot and stick. Second, a sanction may be causal, and thereby make reference to the bare-life (*zoe*) of an organism, its capacity to be regimented by pleasure and pain; or it may be normative, and thereby make reference to the social-life (*bios*) of an organism, its capacity to be regimented by permission and obligation.[1] Putting both these distinctions together provides a four-fold typology: negative and causal (pain); positive and causal (pleasure); negative and normative (obligation); and positive and normative (permission). Additionally, such sanctioning may be framed in public reputational or private psychological terms: one may be subject to praise or blame (in the public's eyes), and one may experience pride or shame (in one's private feelings). Foucault's distinction between discipline and punishment is really a distinction between normative and causal sanctions, respectively. Finally, it should be emphasized that while we tend to focus on negative sanctions of the most discomforting type (thumbscrews and so forth), the most typical sanction is probably just 'business as usual' – and hence positive and normative. That is, when one's comportment is average and ordinary, one is 'rewarded' merely by the opportunity for more unimpeded comportment – not remarked upon and unremarkable.

And in regards to the third question, a *unit of accountability* is that entity in which commitments and entitlements adhere, and that entity to which sanctioning is applicable. It is the referent of the indefinite pronoun 'one' in the preceding passages: types of behaviors that *one* may or must do in types of circumstances. Nowadays the individual is the key unit of accountability. However, this is not always the case and, in Maine's mind, was probably never the case until modern times (2002: 126–8). In particular, Maine thought that the most typical unit of accountability was the family (consisting of a nexus of husband–wife, parent–child, and master–slave relations). But it could also be the lineage or clan, the village or tribe, the nation or race – in short, any corporate entity imaginable. And for such corporate entities, the key idea is this: if a unit of accountability (or any of its individual members) violates a commitment or entitlement, the unit of accountability (or any of its individual members) is sanctioned for it.[2] For example, if a family cannot pay its annual tribute to the king, all members, or any individual member, may be punished. And if any member of one lineage kills a member of another lineage, any member of that other lineage may seek revenge by killing any other member of the first lineage. In the historical and ethnographic record, from feudal France to 20th-century Sudan, such practices are commonplace (Bloch, 1961: 125–30; Evans-Pritchard, 1969: 150–62). In short, any member (and all members) may be sanctioned for the behavior of any other member (and all members). Indeed, so far as a corporate entity

never dies, it may hold for members of the unit of accountability who are not yet born, and who have already died – say, future generations of a lineage, or children not yet inducted into the responsibilities of adulthood.

2. STATUS: THE PERSONIFICATION OF DEONTIC MODALITY

Depending on the *one* in question, the salient pairings of circumstances and behaviors, of commitments and entitlements, may vary. For this reason, there needs to be a way of characterizing different types of *ones*. To this end, the classic distinction between status and role was introduced by the Boasian Ralph Linton (1936), building on the work of Maine (2002) and those scholars, such as Tönnies (2001) and Weber (1978), who were inspired by him. For Linton, a *status* (as distinct from the one who holds it) is a collection of rights and responsibilities attendant upon inhabiting a certain position in the social fabric.[3] That is, the rights and responsibilities that go with being a parent or child, a husband or wife, a citizen or foreigner, a patrician or plebian, and so forth. And a *role* is an enactment of one's status. That is, the behavior that arises when one puts one's status into effect by acting on one's rights and according to one's responsibilities. Roles and statuses, then, are two sides of the same coin. Indeed, one cannot see a status (which is just a collection of rights and responsibilities); one can only infer a status from a role (any enactment of those rights and responsibilities). The basic process is therefore as follows: we perceive others' roles; from these perceived roles, we infer their statuses; and from these inferred statuses, we anticipate other roles from them which would be in keeping with those statuses. In short, if a status is deontic modality personified, a role is personhood actualized.

With these basic definitions in hand, several finer distinctions may be introduced, and several caveats may be established. First, Linton focused on rights and responsibilities, with no indication of how these were to be regimented. For present purposes, the modes of deontic permission and obligation that make up a status may be regimented by any number of means: while typically grounded in norms (as commitments and entitlements), they may also be grounded in rules or laws (as responsibilities and rights). Most statuses probably involve a combination of norms, rules, and laws (as well as conventions, traditions, and regularities).

While Linton focused on the statuses that an individual may hold, any unit of accountability may hold a status: individual, family, lineage, village, tribe, nation, and so forth. Hence, just as his ideas should be reframed in terms of regimentation, so too should they be reframed in terms of unitization.

While the three classic types of status come from the *Politics* of Aristotle (husband/wife, master/slave, parent/child), statuses are really much more varied and much more basic. For example, any kinship relation involves two reciprocally defined statuses: uncle/nephew, mother-in-law/son-in-law, godparent/godchild and so on. (Also included here are sub-statuses such as pater and genitor, mater and genetrix.) Any segmentary relation involves two reciprocally defined statuses: the relationship between any two members of the same clan (age-set, minimal-lineage, nation, baseball team and so on); and the relationship between any two members of different clans (age-sets, minimal-lineages, nations, baseball teams and so on). Any position in the division of labor is a status: lawyer, plumber, doctor, spinner, gleaner. Any position within a bureaucratic and/or military organization is a status: sergeant, general, private; CEO, vice-president,

secretary of state. Statuses also include economic actors, such as buyer and seller, creditor and debtor, broker and proxy – what Marx, heralding Goffman, would call the 'characters', or *dramatis personae*, of economic processes (1967: 113). Social categories of the more colorful kind are statuses: jock, nerd, mama's boy, wet-blanket, fair-weather friend, fuck-buddy, and so forth. As are social categories of the more political kind: race, class, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and so forth. Most of the distinctions just enumerated are nowadays called 'roles' (in the pre-theoretical sense); or, if they seem particularly important to who someone is (and hence a position someone inhabits much of the time, rather than just some of the time), they are called 'identities'.

Just as the notion of status can be quite complicated, so can the role that enacts it. In particular, a role can be any normative practice – and hence anything that one does or says, any sign that one purposely gives or unconsciously gives off (cf. Goffman, 1959). It may range from techniques of the body to regional pronunciations, from wearing a particular form of clothing to having a particular style of hair, from standing on a certain base in a sandlot to sitting in a certain place on a bus, from possessing certain physical characteristics to succumbing to certain types of illnesses, from giving orders to a certain set of people to showing deference before certain idols, from not engaging in certain forms of economic transaction to going out of one's way to prepare certain kinds of food, from expressing certain beliefs to espousing certain values. More generally, a role can be any sign that one gives (off) for others to interpret, and any interpretant of the signs others give (off). In this way, a status is just a collection of commitments and entitlements to signify and interpret in particular ways, and a role is just any mode of signification or interpretation that enacts these commitments and entitlements.[4] Here, then, is where modality is most intimately tied to meaning, and hence where the tensions between British social anthropology and Boasian cultural anthropology are most easily resolved.

Given that any sign or interpretant that one gives (off) may be used by others to infer one's status, there is much ambiguity: many different roles can indicate the same status, and the same role can indicate many different statuses. Hence, the idea of an *emblematic role* needs to be introduced (Kockelman, 2005: 278–84): a role which is minimally ambiguous (so that it stands for only one status), and maximally public (so that we each know that we all know the status in question). Another cross-cutting definition of an emblematic role frames it in terms of modality: a role that one may (only) do if one is of that status, and a role that one must (always) do if one is of that status. For example, wearing a uniform is an emblematic role in both senses: not only is it minimally ambiguous and maximally public, but it may only be worn by members of a certain status, and it must be worn by all members of that status. Other examples of emblematic roles include flags, hats, badges, insignia, and so forth. Turner's classic article, 'The Social Skin' (1980), is in part a discussion of the ways in which most emblematic roles (among the Kayapo at least) are embodied: hair-length, tattoos, clothing, jewelry, penis-sheaths, and so forth. (See Agha (1998, 2003: 236–44) for a more extended and sophisticated treatment of the emblematic function of linguistic signs in relation to social identity and value.) Finally, if one relaxes the criteria in the second definition, then quasi-emblematic roles may include any physical characteristics stereotypically used to identify people: skin color or hair-quality (racial status), relative stature or facial features (ethnic status), body-shape or voice-pitch (gender status), and so forth.

In addition to emblematic roles, there are several other key means by which statuses are distinguished, perpetuated, explicated, and objectified. While the emphasis so far has been on the commitments and entitlements that constitute a particular status, this is merely the substance of a status: what anyone who holds that status has in common with others who hold that status. As implicit in Linton's definition, any status is also defined by its contrast to other statuses (its commitments and entitlements in relation to their commitments and entitlements): husband versus wife, parent versus child and so on. And finally, though not remarked upon by Linton, anyone who inhabits a status usually has a second-order or 'reflexive' understanding of this contrastive commonality – typically called self-consciousness, and often structured as a stereotype. In short, statuses have an 'in-itself-ness' (commonality), a 'beside-another-ness' (contrast), and a 'for-itself-ness' (consciousness). Marx's celebrated definition of class involves all three of these features. Indeed, members of any corporate status – say, a group identity – typically have a conscious sense of their own contrastive commonality (often regardless of whether they have anything in common with each other, or anything in contrast with others). In this last regard, many quasi-emblematic roles are self-ascriptions, typically involving nouns that denote the status in question: I am Armenian (a plumber, a doctor, an aggressive top, a mother, American, this afternoon's speaker, a ruthless son-of-a-bitch, your waiter for the evening, and so forth).

Linton made a distinction between ascribed and achieved statuses. *Ascribed* statuses are those statuses one is born into (e.g. male/female, citizen/slave, black/white), and those statuses one will necessarily mature into (e.g. husband/wife, teenager/elder in certain societies). Their inhabitance is outside of the will of the one who inhabits them. *Achieved* statuses are those statuses one willfully inhabits via some intentional act: for example, any proprietary status of 'possessor' that one achieves by entering into some contract; or, indeed, many of the occupations held by those with the resources to be able to hold them, and the wherewithal to choose them – doctor, lawyer, fashion designer, and so forth.

It is worthwhile asking how Linton's two key distinctions (status/role, ascribed/achieved) relate to Maine's famous distinction between status and contract. First, note that while Maine makes no explicit distinction between status and role, he does make an implicit distinction between rights and responsibilities per se, and actually acting on them (2002: 178). Second, with many caveats, the closest parallel between the two theorists is that Maine's distinction between status and contract maps onto Linton's distinction between ascribed and achieved status. However, from the point of view of this article, Maine makes a category error by contrasting status and contract: statuses for Maine are really what Linton calls ascribed statuses; and contracts for Maine are really a means of acquiring statuses associated with property.

Indeed, it is perhaps because of such a caveat that Weber took a different tack: contrasting status groups with classes, where the latter turns on a kind of achieved status via the possession of certain forms of property which only exist within a capitalist economy, and where the former is closest to prestige (see later in this article), and serves as an analytic means to explain economically non-rational behavior (Weber, 1978: 302–7; and see Finley, 1999: xvi). Bridging Maine and Weber is Tönnies, whose distinction between community and society is really a distinction between forms of sociality that are grounded in status versus contract; or, loosely speaking, forms of sociality

grounded in iconicity (blood and kinship) and indexicality (face-to-face contact) versus forms of sociality grounded in symbolism (arbitrary social relations with strangers that are mediated through money). Finally, modern notions of the private and the public are just ways of seeing modern society as having two relatively distinct spheres: one closer to Maine's notion of status; and one closer to Maine's notion of contract. The private, then, is where community continues to exist within society.

As may be seen from the preceding discussion, one should not confuse Linton's sense of status with the folk-sociological sense of 'status', which is better labeled *prestige*. That is, nowadays scholars and lay-folk alike use 'status' to mean something like the relative prestige that accrues with holding a certain position in society, and/or the relative value that certain statuses have in relation to others. No doubt, certain statuses (in Linton's sense) are more valued than other statuses (e.g. patrician over plebian, lawyer over plumber). But this is not essential to his definition; nor was it essential to Maine's original definition. Rather, the relative prestige of any status is a function of many other factors: that the rights of a high status are the responsibilities of a low status; that a high status is difficult to achieve, and/or infrequently ascribed; and so forth. The fact that status has been reduced to prestige in the anthropological lexicon, like the conflation of status and role, as well as the turn from culture (as the group-relative intersection of meaning and modality, turning on commonality, contrast, and consciousness) to a relatively vacuous conception of 'identity', is one of the more lamentable theoretical moves in 20th-century social theory.

Finally, while the focus has been on social statuses, it may be argued that there are also *intentional statuses*: being angry, believing it will rain, wanting an ice-cream, fearing dogs, and so forth. That is, so called 'mental states' may be framed in terms of the foregoing categories. Thus, an intentional status is just a set of commitments and entitlements to signify and interpret in particular ways: normative ways of speaking and acting attendant upon being a certain sort of person – a believer that the earth is flat, a desirer of ice-cream, an intender of good deeds, and so forth. An intentional role is just any enactment of that status: actually putting one or more of those commitments and entitlements into effect; or speaking and acting in a way that conforms to one's intentional statuses. And relatively emblematic intentional roles include facial expressions (crying, smiling, frowning) and self-ascriptions such as 'I believe it will rain' and 'I'm mad as hell'. No doubt, to make this argument would require an essay in itself (Kockelman, 2005), but for present purposes 'mental states' should be understood in the same terms as social statuses. Note, also, that this shows that the 'privateness' of mental states is no different from the privateness of social statuses: they are each only known through the roles that enact them, and are only relatively incontrovertibly known when these roles are emblematic.

3. ECONOMY

Property, and *possession* more generally, is just a type of status. One has rights to, and often responsibilities for, the item in question. These rights may consist of use-rights: one may wield an instrument, wear a pair of pants, milk a cow, drink a beer. They may consist of exchange-rights: one may sell a house, lease an apartment, rent out a tractor, pawn a diamond ring, spend one's money. They may consist of supervision responsibilities: one must leash one's dog, patrol one's territory, care for one's children, watch one's

back, defend one's country. They may consist of personal discipline: one must control one's emotions, wash one's hands, exercise one's body, maintain one's appearance, care for oneself. They may consist of liabilities: one must pay one's bar-tab, confess one's sins, be punished for one's actions, own up to one's failings. And so forth.

In keeping with the tenor of the last two sections, one should not confuse possession in the abstract with the modern notion of private property. In particular, the one who has such commitments and entitlements need not be an individual. Indeed, for Maine (2002: 259), ancient property was typically held by a corporate entity like a village or lineage – each member having use-rights (and, say, supervision responsibilities), but no member having exchange-rights. Moreover, responsibilities are as important for possession as rights: possession is as much a burden as it is a boon. The mode of regimentation need not be grounded in rules or laws (à la rights and responsibilities); possession is more often regimented by norms (à la commitments and entitlements). The item in question need not be a commodity in the stereotypical sense (i.e. a use-value produced for its exchange-value, which is relatively easy to alienate, unitize, quantify, standardize, price, and circulate). Rather, it can include anything one can consider one's own: body parts, children, home and field, reputation, actions (and their repercussions), labor power, skills and talents, thoughts and memories, and so forth (cf. James, 1985; Kockelman, 2007; Lévy-Bruhl, 1914; Veblen, 1998). Finally, the mode of acquisition (loss, or transfer) need not be through contract; it may be through biological metonym (body parts), birthright (inheritance), capture (slaves and lands), first-dibs (finder's rights), labor (if one owns the means of production), invention (patents, copyrights), reproduction (the calves of one's cows), usucapion, gleaning, and so forth. In short, do not confuse possession with private property: it is only recently that we have begun to focus on the latter, as an individual's legal rights to commodities through the mechanism of contract.

So if the notion of status can be used to account for possession more generally, can it be used to account for certain features of political economy? To answer this question, several distinctions need to be made. First, the term economy is being used in the substantivist sense of Polanyi (1958), rather than the traditional sense of liberal economics. That is, an economy is primarily the systematic provisioning of the needs of society; it is only secondarily the allocation of scare resources to diverse ends (see Sahlins, 1972a). Thus, there need not be a principle of least effort, a motive for gain, labor for remuneration, or a separate institution grounded in economizing motives (Polanyi, 1958: 47). Second, again keeping in Polanyi's framework (1958: 43–55), there are minimally four key modes of economy: householding (based in self-sufficiency, à la an isolated domestic mode of production); redistribution (based in centricity, à la tribute payments to a polity); reciprocation (based in symmetry, à la the exchange of gifts between two moieties); and market (in the stereotypical sense). Third, following Sahlins (1972b), we might further distinguish three kinds of reciprocity: generalized (exemplified by the pure gift); balanced (closest to Polanyi's sense of reciprocity); and negative (involving competition, haggling, and so forth). And finally, following Polanyi (1958: 56–67), we might further distinguish three kinds of markets: external (based in relatively long-distance geographic complementarity, and often grounded in balanced reciprocity); local (say, between town and country); and internal (the seemingly competitive, self-regulating, state-centered liberal market). In short, as the terms are used here, just

as one should not confuse the larger category of possession with private property, one should not confuse the larger category of economy with internal markets and negative reciprocity. For if one does, one is merely taking the modern species to be the exemplar, if not the definition, of the genus (cf. Finley, 1999; Polanyi, 1958).

One might therefore consider the four basic types of economy – householding, redistribution, reciprocation, and market – to be four key ways of circulating items of possession (any number of which may be at play within a given social formation). Or, inverting the emphasis, they are each ways of transforming the statuses of possessors to various items of possession. That is, in keeping within the framework of the foregoing sections, rather than focus on the circulation of items of possession, one may focus on the transformation of statuses of possessors. Or, phrased another way, rather than focus on the 'social circulation of matter' (Marx, 1967: 106), one may focus on *the material circulation of sociality*.[5] In any case, the two are intrinsically linked in Marx's general sense of value as a relation between relations: a relation between people (i.e. statuses of possessors) mediated by a relation between things (i.e. items of possession).

One of the great strengths of substantivist economics is that it emphasizes so many complementary modes of circulation; however, one of its weaknesses is that it de-emphasizes production and consumption. Thus, keeping with the frame-inversion introduced in the preceding paragraph, it should be emphasized that statuses of possessors are not only transferred, they are also transformed – indeed, often wholly created or destroyed, brought into existence or taken out of existence. In this way, the three key parameters of an economy – the production, circulation, and consumption of items of possession – may be looked at as the creation, transfer, and destruction of statuses of possessors.

More generally, as will be taken up in Section 6, if we move from statuses of possession to statuses per se, then this also holds for the reproduction of persons: birth usually inaugurates such a status, and death usually extinguishes such a status. And much of the ritual events of the life-course are essentially transformations of status: baptism, age-set gradations, marriage, menopause, senility, and so forth. Indeed, shifting focus to the intentional status of desire, one may found a libidinal economy; or to the intentional status of emotion, one may found an affect economy; or to the intentional status of belief, one may found a knowledge economy and so on. In short, focusing on all statuses – from being a mother, through owning a house, to believing it will rain – one can look at an 'economy' in the metaphorical sense as the creation, transformation, and destruction of various modes of personhood – qua social and intentional statuses.

Within the foregoing framework, economic value, as embodied in money, may be understood as the quantification and abstraction of right (cf. Marx, 1967: 136–7). It is abstract because what one has rights to is not specified, being any use-value that has a certain exchange-value. And it is quantified because the exchange-value fixes the relative proportion of rights that one has access to. For example, my $10 is abstract insofar as it is a right to any use-value (any bundling of qualities) that has that exchange value (a particular quantity). And it is quantified, insofar as I have ten times as much right as someone who only has $1. More generally, credit and debt may be understood in terms of quantified and abstracted rights and responsibilities, respectively. In this way, double-entry book-keeping (as one of Weber's condition's for capitalism) is really just a way of tracking one's rights and responsibilities: assets, or abstracted and quantified rights, are listed in one column; and debits, or abstracted and quantified responsibilities, are listed

in another column. Here, then, is where money is most clearly tied to modality.[6] And here is where self-conscious rational calculation regarding one's economic status is brought to the fore with a novel semiotic technology and a novel technique of the self: the accountant's ledger.[7]

The transfer of rights and responsibilities and, more generally, the transformation of statuses, are just ritual processes. And the most general means of enacting a ritual are those sign events known as performatives. In particular, the essence of John Austin's famous insight is this: assuming the proper words are said, and the proper actions are done, sign events are only *appropriate* insofar as participants currently hold certain social and intentional statuses; and sign events are only *effective* insofar as participants subsequently hold certain social and intentional statuses (2003: 14). For example, a wedding ceremony is only appropriate insofar as the two people to be married have the social statuses of unmarried, adult, man and woman; and insofar as the one doing the marrying has a social status such as priest, rabbi, or captain at sea. Moreover, a wedding ceremony is only effective insofar as the two people come to occupy the statuses of husband and wife. This is the essence of any ritual process, and indeed the 'meaning' of any sign event more generally.[8]

Most germane to this section, however, is the idea that any form of contract, and indeed any form of exchange which undergirds circulation, is just a ritual event in which the possession statuses of the participants are transformed. No doubt, the stereotypic sense of 'ritual' may be lacking: there is no burning of incense, no beating of drums, no incantations or bloodletting, and so forth. But the essence of ritual – the transformation of social and intentional statuses – is present. For example, any time I give someone $2 for a coke, I am engaging in a ritual event: such an event is only appropriate if I had rights to the $2 and they had rights to the coke; and it is only effective so far as I come to have rights to the coke, and they come to have rights to the $2 – where these rights, qua statuses, are evinced in our subsequent roles: I drink the coke (thereby demonstrating my right to it); and they invest the $2 (likewise demonstrating their right to it). Thus, in a market economy, whose main ritual process is a contractual procedure, we have streamlined ritual: I just tilt my head towards what I want, and slide over my credit card; or bring what I want to the counter, cash in hand. In short, when seen through the lens of deontic modality and status, a foundational insight of the philosophy of language, and linguistic anthropology more generally (see Kockelman, 2005: 284–90 for a review), is equally foundational to political economy.[9]

4. ECONOMY CONTINUED

Aristotle's discussion of the economy, both in the *Nicomachean Ethics* and in the *Politics*, turns on a distinction between quality and quantity (2001). For example, he argues that all things have two uses: shoes can be worn, a mode of usage that takes their physical qualities into account (relative to the person who uses them); and shoes can be exchanged for something else, a mode of usage that takes their proportional quantity into account (relative to the thing that is exchanged for them). Nowadays we would say that shoes have both a use-value (UV) and an exchange-value (EV). As is well known, and relatively speaking, not all things that have use-value have exchange-value (e.g. arms and legs, sons and daughters, air and water); and not all things that have exchange-value have use-value (e.g. dollar-bills and bank checks). However, this is really a distinction that

exists in the eye of the beholder and the context in which an object is beholden. For example, we can use paper money as fuel in a pinch; and we can bottle water for a high price. And, more generally, in any transaction, what counts as a use-value to the buyer counts as an exchange-value to the seller, and vice-versa (Marx, 1967: 112–13). The issue, then, is not so much whether some object is a use-value or an exchange-value, nor what its use-value or exchange-value actually is. Rather, the issue is how does the use-value and exchange-value of a thing, as well as its relative usefulness or exchangefulness, change as a function of the spatial, temporal, and personal context in which it is placed (cf. Kopytoff, 1986).

Assuming these points are relatively unproblematic, six kinds of *economic detachment* may be introduced, each of which turns on some aspect of exchange: quantization of items transacted; quantization of ends of transacting; displacement between actions within a transaction; displacement between initial and final transaction; embedding of multiple transactions; and decomposition of transactors. If circulation – Kula or otherwise – establishes 'an intricate time-space-person system' (Polanyi, 1958: 12; and see the brilliant reformulation by Munn, 1992), then these six species of economic detachment are ways of characterizing the relative distance – temporal, spatial, or personal – between various actors, actions, and things within such a system. To some degree, economic detachment is a way of generalizing a key point of Karl Marx: 'Circulation bursts through all restrictions as to time, place, and individuals, imposed by direct barter, and this it effects by splitting up, into the antithesis of a sale and a purchase, the direct identity that in barter does exist between the alienation of one's own and the acquisition of some other man's product' (1967: 115). Economic detachment, then, is a way of gauging the degree of 'splitting up' (versus 'direct identity') of any economic process – whether between the alienation and acquisition of items of possession, or between the destruction and creation of statuses of possessors (cf. Goffman, 1981).

The first mode of economic detachment – quantization of items transacted – is just the degree to which the exchange-value of an object is relevant (rather than the use-value). That is, in certain contexts, and for certain types of objects, proportional quantity (relative to something it may be exchanged for) rather than physical quality (relative to someone who may use it) comes to the fore. To Aristotle, this is a distinction between the proper (or primary) usage of a thing and the improper (or secondary) usage of a thing. One may therefore introduce a kind of scale, depending on the degree to which a thing's exchange-value is relevant rather than its use-value.

As may be seen from Figure 1a, many other types of properties *tend* to correlate with the poles of this scale – sometimes as its condition, and sometimes as its consequence. For example, in discussing the metamorphism of capital, Marx is constantly contrasting the commodity pole (C) with the money pole (M), as the disguised and general form of capital, respectively. There is the contrast between motivatedness and arbitrariness of any token of value (e.g. real versus nominal value, coin versus money and so on). Following Kopytoff (1986), there is the contrast between singularization and commoditization (or tokenization and typification). Following Marx (1967: 55–6), there is the contrast between relative value and equivalent value (or things whose value is measured versus things by which value is measured). Following Aristotle and Marx, there is the difference between lifeless and living instruments, or constant capital and variable capital (aka dead labor versus living labor, or things whose value is grounded in past labor, or

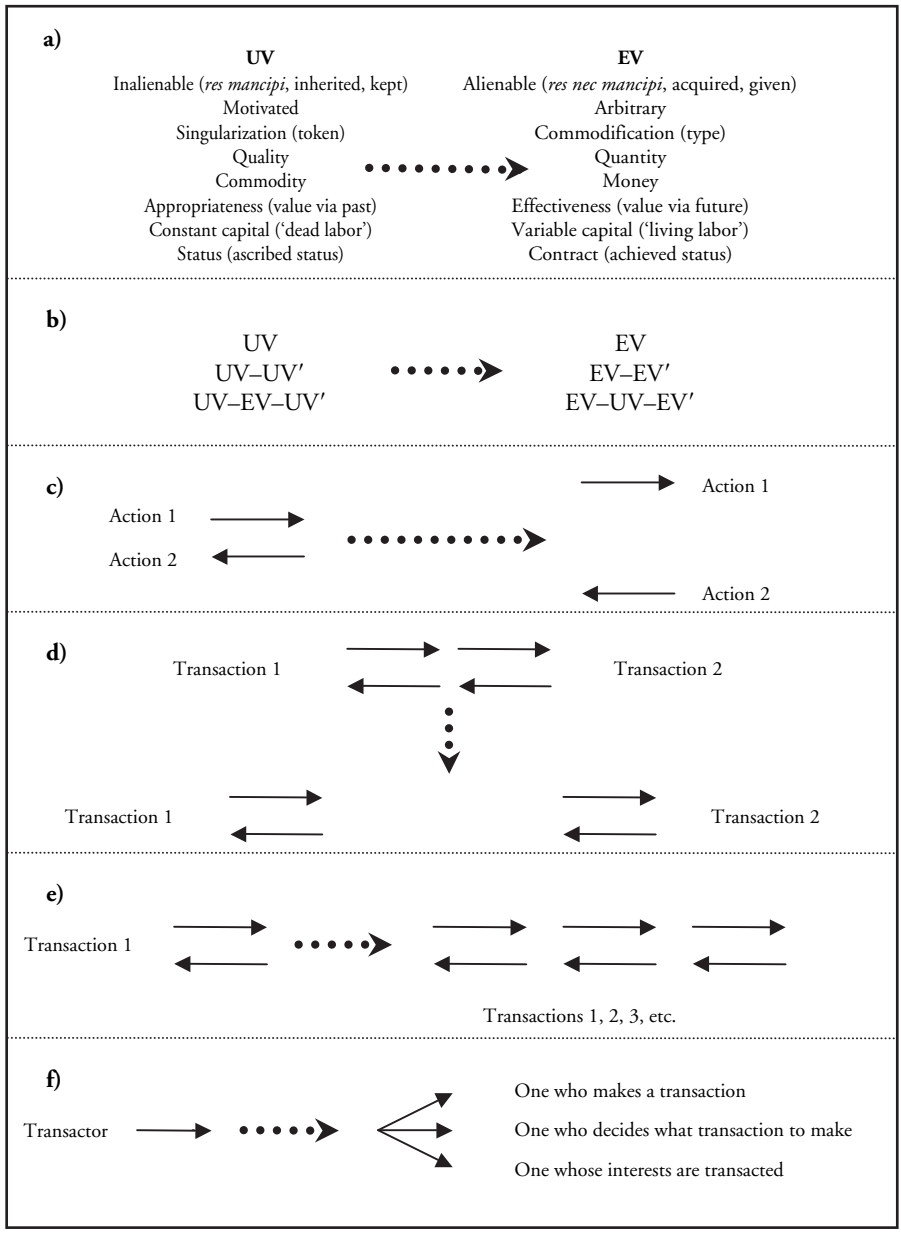

Figure 1. Modes of economic detatchment

actuality, versus things whose value is grounded in future labor, or possibility). In regard to items of property, following Maine (2002: 273, 281; and see Mauss, 1990 and Weiner, 1992), there is the contrast between inalienability and alienability (or keptness versus givenness, *res mancipi* versus *res nec mancipi*, and inherited versus acquired). And, in

regards to statuses of possessors, there is Maine's distinction between status and contract, and Linton's distinction between ascribed and achieved status. Finally, as discussed in Kockelman (2006: 79–81), Marx's ontology of the commodity turns on the successive embedding of such a scale into itself.[10]

Reading Aristotle somewhat anachronistically, the key way to distinguish between unnatural and natural economies is whether the ends of exchange are oriented toward use-value (i.e. quality) or exchange-value (i.e. quantity).[11] Thus, for an unnatural economy, things on the left-hand-side of the scale in Figure 1b are means for things on the right-hand-side of this scale as ends (cf. Marx, 1967: 150–1). And for a natural economy, things on the right-hand-side of this scale (if they exist at all) are means for things on the left-hand-side of this scale as ends. In this regard, if a transaction is the giving of one thing (as a means) for the receiving of another thing (as an end), then to Aristotle and Marx, we owe six key transactions (cf. Meikle, 1995). There are three natural transactions that have use-values as their ends: UV (autarchy, a limit transaction); UV–UV′ (barter, and so forth); UV–EV–UV′ (use of money as means of exchange). And there are three unnatural transactions that have exchange-values as their ends: EV (hoarding, again a limit transaction); EV–EV′ (usury); and EV–UV–EV′ (from merchants' capital to industrial capital). If the first kind of economic detachment turns on whether *means* are oriented towards quality or quantity, this kind of economic detachment turns on whether *ends* are oriented towards quality or quantity. Usually, both kinds of economic detachment are part and parcel of the same process.

Aside from the two limit cases of transaction (UV and EV, in which there is only a single action: autarchy and hoarding, respectively), the four other modes of transaction involve one or more reciprocal actions, whereby one thing is given in exchange for another: UV–UV′, UV–EV, EV–UV, EV–EV′. While the unmarked case occurs when the action of giving is simultaneous with the action of receiving, this need not be the case. Sometimes these are simultaneous actions: some use-value is given and some other use-value is received. Sometimes these are displaced actions: the money is given one day and the commodity arrives the next week. Hobbes, for example, distinguishes between contract and covenant (1994: 82): the former is the mutual (and immediate) transferring of right (i.e. I give you something and you give me something in return), and the latter is a case where one of the parties promises to pay at a later time (or in which both parties will make the agreed-upon transaction at a later date). In short, there are two distinctions being made: one, the temporal and spatial distance between the making of a contract (e.g. legal transference of right) and the performance of that contract (e.g. physical transference of things); and two, the temporal and spatial distance between each of the party's actions within the transaction (e.g. my giving something and your giving something in return). This may be understood as the displacement (in space and time) between two actions within a transaction (see Figure 1c).

There are really two senses in which something can be a means or ends in a transaction. First, as already developed, within any single transaction the thing given is a means for the thing received as an end (from the perspective of one of the transactors; it is the reverse for the other). And second, one transaction can be a means for another transaction as an end. For example, one may engage in a UV–EV transaction (qua sale) as a means to engage in an EV–UV′ transaction (qua purchase) as an end. In this regard,

one may inquire into the temporal and spatial displacement between two transactions in a circuit – say, between the sale of a commodity for money and the purchase of another commodity with that money. For example, one function of money is as a store of value: on the one hand, money can be used to 'wait out' the time between the sale that pulls it in and the purchase that pushes it away; and, on the other hand, money can be transported between the market in which it was pulled in and the market in which it was pushed away. Such a notion was crucial to Marx, who argued that, 'If the interval in time between the two complementary phases of the complete metamorphosis of a commodity become too great, if the split between the sale [C–M] and the purchase [M–C′] becomes too pronounced, the intimate connection between them, their oneness, asserts itself by producing – a crisis' (1967: 115; and see 134–41, on the separation of buying and paying via money functioning as a means of payment). If the last mode of economic detachment turned on the temporal and spatial distance between two actions within a transaction, this mode of economic detachment turns on the temporal and spatial distance between two transactions within a circuit (i.e. between an initial and final transaction; see Figure 1d).

While the canonical image from *Capital* (1967: 106–15) is two interrelated transactions, in which the same transactor plays a role in both transactions, the first as means (say, UV–EV), and the second as ends (say, EV–UV′), there may be any number of intermediate transactions between an initial transaction and a final transaction: UV–EV–UV′–EV′–UV″–EV″–UV‴.[12] What is at issue here, then, is the number of transactions a single transactor is involved in from production (of some initial commodity to be subsequently exchanged) to consumption (of some final commodity the initial commodity was ultimately exchanged for). Indeed, the null-case is really either autarchy, as production for consumption (UV); or, hoarding, as holding money for the sake of having money (EV). And the ultimate cases may be unfathomably long: I take this commodity to that market to get this amount of money, which I then take to another market to buy another commodity, which I then take to a third market to sell for other money, which I then exchange for another currency, which I then. . . . In some sense, this is the distance between the production of one thing and the consumption of something else that the exchange of that thing will (ultimately) bring (see Figure 1e).[13] In short, what is at issue in the last two modes of economic detachment is the relative distance between an initial transaction and a final transaction – both in terms of their temporal and spatial distance from each other, and in terms of the number of intermediate transactions between them.

Finally, for any action within a transaction, there are potentially several sub-actors: the one who makes a transaction, the one who decides what transaction to make (and/or predicts what effect the transaction will have), and the one whose interests are transacted. (The 'one' in question need not be an individual.) For the relatively simple case of a transaction involving goods for money, the first sub-actor is the one who physically hands over goods (or accepts the money). The second sub-actor is the one who decides what goods to sell (or how much money to sell them for). And the third sub-actor is the one whose goods are being sold (or to whom the accepted money will belong). In much of day-to-day life, each of us inhabits all three statuses in the same transaction. However, it is also the case that in much of economic life, different people may inhabit different statuses in the same transaction. Indeed, for much investment, a proxy will make the

transaction, a broker will decide what transaction to make, and an investor will be the one whose interests are transacted (see Figure 1f).[14]

It must be emphasized that any economic processes may involve all six of these modes of detachment at once: quantization of items transacted; quantization of ends of transacting; displacement between actions within a transaction; displacement between initial and final transaction; embedding of multiple transactions; and decomposition of transactors. And, needless to say, modern economies are characterized by greater detachment along any one of these six dimensions.[15] Indeed, financial derivatives push detachment to the extreme. Moreover, insofar as the items of possession involved in such transactions are intimately tied to the statuses of their possessors, detachment may also be understood in terms of statuses – thereby providing an account of the social detachment among economic actors: the temporal, spatial, and social distance between contractually interrelated commitments and entitlements; and the temporal, spatial, and social distance between the 'ones' to whom these commitments and entitlements belong. Indeed, if following Marx, 'the characters who appear on the economic stage are but the personifications of the economic relations that exist between them' (1967: 89), then this framework may also be used to analyze the relative detachment of persons.

5. TEMPORALITY

In the preceding sections, a notion of *distance* has been invoked: the degree to which two things are proximal or distal to each other in a manifold of space, time, and person.[16] Distance may be understood in two ways. First, assuming we are *measuring* space, time and person in an 'objective' way (say, via rulers, clocks, and names), then we can see how such things are proximal or distal to each other within an already existing space-time-person manifold. And second, assuming we are *experiencing* space, time and person in a 'subjective' way, then we can see how such processes establish a space-time-person manifold within which proximity and distance will be subsequently judged. In the first case, distance is calibrated in terms of a structural background; and in the second case, distance is created in terms of a phenomenological foreground. Or, metaphorically speaking: in the first case we measure the length of something with an already calibrated ruler; and in the second case we calibrate the length of the ruler by which we subsequently measure. For the sake of simplification, only the temporal dimension of this manifold will be at issue in what follows, and only in the phenomenological sense.

As introduced in Section 3, and as implicit in Section 4, Austin's ideas of appropriateness and effectiveness – the way in which sign events pull contexts behind them and push contexts before them – belong to a much longer tradition than the philosophy of language.[17] For example, Augustine spoke of memory as the present experience of the past, and he spoke of expectation as the present experience of the future. James described the *now* as '[not a] knife-edge, but a saddle-back, with a certain breadth of its own on which we sit perched, and from which we look in two directions into time' (1975: 371). And Piaget spoke of accommodation (of the organism's schemas to its environment) and assimilation (of the environment to the organism's schemas). Indeed, at a very abstract level, all of the foregoing dichotomies relate to Aristotle's claim that, 'Two characteristic marks have above all others been recognized as distinguishing that which has soul in it from that which has not – movement and sensation' (*De Anima*, Book I, Chapter 2).

As these examples illustrate, there is an incredible continuity across various historical epochs and scholarly traditions in regard to their baseline assumptions as to the modes whereby language and context, subjects and objects, organisms and environments, minds and worlds, past and future can influence each other. Indeed, Austin's ideas regarding the appropriateness and effectiveness of speech acts may be rendered in a temporal idiom: any sign event is appropriate so far as the participants *already* hold certain social and intentional statuses, and any sign event is effective so far as the participants *subsequently* hold certain social and intentional statuses. In other words, any sign event establishes a local present, which is fat with its appropriateness conditions as a local past, and fertile with its effectiveness conditions as a local future. Phrased another way, any sign event (such as a wedding or sale) establishes a present, whose immediate past is the social and intentional statuses that are its condition (qua already existing commitments and entitlements), and whose immediate future is the social and intentional statuses that are its consequence (qua subsequently existing commitments and entitlements).

If the phrase *semiosis of temporality* (Bernstein and Kockelman, under review) is used to designate any account of those signs that have temporal features as their objects (i.e. 'signs of time', or words like *now*, *three days ago*, and *in 1492*), then the phrase *temporality of semiosis* may be used to designate the foregoing understandings of signs. That is, if the semiosis of temporality focuses on structural distance, the temporality of semiosis focuses on phenomenological distance. The key point, then, is not that sign events occur in time (relative to a clock or calendar), but rather that *semiosis constitutes temporality* – and the space-time-person manifold more generally.

As will be seen in the next two sections, this point holds for three time-scales (or scopes of temporality). First, as will be taken up in Section 6, the life-course of any individual (or unit of accountability more generally) may be understood in terms of the development of its social and intentional statuses: when I acquired this belief or gave up that desire; when I was baptized or married; when I bought a house or sold my car; and so forth. This, then, is the temporality of semiosis from the signer's point of view. Second, as will be taken up in the conclusion, the history of any community may be understood in terms of the development of the social and intentional statuses that its members could inhabit: new contents for beliefs and objects of desire, new forms of property and modes of contract, new gender roles and sexual relations. This, then, is the temporality of semiosis seen from the sign-community's point of view. And finally, the phylogeny of any species may be understood in terms of its capacity to hold more or less complex kinds of social and intentional statuses: from the pecking orders of chickens to the prestige hierarchies of French nobility, from the third-party relations of non-human primates to the joint-attention processes of human infants. This, then, is the temporality of semiosis from the species' point of view.

The semiosis of temporality has therefore three natural scales: sign events (or signers), systems of signs (or sign-communities), and capacities for semiosis (or sign-species). And for each of these scales (or groupings), the semiosis of temporality has one (shifting) origo, which provides a 'present', and two basic vectors from it, which provide a 'past' and 'future'. In short, not only is the temporality of semiosis the original time-piece, it is the only biographically, historically, and evolutionarily *meaningful* time-piece.

6. SELFHOOD

The *self as temporality of semiosis* is essentially the temporality of semiosis understood from the signer's point of view: one's commitments and entitlements to signify and interpret at any moment in one's life and across all moments of one's life. In particular, as a sign event may be understood as establishing a *present*, with a past and future, a signer may be understood as establishing a *presence*, with a history and fate. Indeed, the life, biography or *bios* of a signer may be understood as the chaining together of such presences (into a finite length), which itself is located between two absences (of infinite extent).

In other words, focus on the signer's presence as an ensemble of commitments and entitlements to signify and interpret, where this ensemble is simultaneously the consequence of prior sign events that have led to it, and the condition for subsequent sign events that will follow from it. That is, one may examine a signer's commitments and entitlements to signify and interpret at any moment; or one may examine its changing commitments and entitlements across moments – providing each of its moments with 'momentum', and thereby projecting onto its multiple and fleeting presences a unified and enduring 'essence'.

In this way, depending on the theoretical idiom involved, the self as temporality of semiosis may be understood as a finite length of constant and simultaneous appropriating and effecting, interpreting and signifying, sensing and moving, remembering and planning, accommodating and assimilating, receiving and giving, selling and buying, and consuming and producing – not to mention mourning and mounting, concealing and scheming, wasting and hasting, regretting and dreading.

Indeed, to make this idea more concrete, focus not on commitments and entitlements per se, but on social and intentional statuses as particularly salient and relatively stable swatches of commitment and entitlement space. At any point in time, the self as temporality of semiosis may be understood as the unique ensemble of social and intentional statuses that belong to the signer. And across time, the self as temporality of semiosis may be understood as a kind of movement through an abstract space of social and intentional statuses that once belonged to the signer, now belong to the signer, and will belong to the signer – a movement that, nowadays, is characterized by greater and greater degrees of economic detachment in regards to the processes that create, transfer, and destroy such statuses.[18]

Several facets of this definition of the self as temporality of semiosis bear a family resemblance to classic definitions and western intuitions of the self. As already mentioned in Section 5, Aristotle claimed that, 'Two characteristic marks have above all others been recognized as distinguishing that which has soul in it from that which has not – movement and sensation' (*De Anima*, Book I, Chapter 2). Kohut offered one definition of the self as 'a unit, cohesive in space and enduring in time, which is a center of initiative and a recipient of impressions' (1991: 452). Geertz (1973) famously characterized the western notion of the self as 'a bounded, unique, more or less integrated motivational and cognitive universe, a dynamic center of awareness, emotion, judgment and action organized into a distinctive whole and set contrastively both against other such wholes and against a social and natural background'. And D'Andrade has characterized American ethnotheories of selfhood as a 'conscious, perceiving center of awareness and agency' (1995: 163). Notice, then, that these kinds of autarchic theories

of selfhood usually have three basic parameters: (1) cohesiveness in space and continuity in time; (2) organism–environment and environment–organism interaction; and (3) psychological underpinnings and self-conscious capacity.

As just described, then, the self as temporality of semiosis seems to retain the basic outline of the autarchic self of western ethnotheory: cohesive and continuous, acting and reacting, psychological and self-conscious. However, what the self as temporality of semiosis really bears a resemblance to is Mead's theory of the self as a dialogue between an I and a Me: 'The "I" is the response of the organism to the attitudes of the others; the "me" is the organized set of attitudes of others which one himself assumes' (1934: 175). Or, in the idiom introduced earlier – a semiotic and temporal reading of Linton, Mead, and Austin – the Me is the self as appropriating, having taking into account others' attitudes towards its social and intentional statuses; and the I is the self as effecting, enacting social and intentional roles that change others' attitudes.

More generally, the self as temporality of semiosis involves the following shifts in focus and theory away from the autarchic self: from cohesive in space and continuous in time, to coherence across constituents over space-time as regimented by the attitudes of others who are distributed in space-time; from sensation and movement (or awareness and initiative) to interpretation and signification (or appropriateness and effectiveness); from psychological and metaphysical to social and semiotic; and from vague and impressionist to precise and empirically tractable. In short, while the autarchic self – as captivating as selves come and as old as Aristotle's *anima* – still leaves its persistent trace in the self as temporality of semiosis, the modes of theoretical engagement have radically changed.

Finally, to relate all this to William James (1985 [1892]): the self is that ensemble of all that one may (or must) call one's own – one's alienable and inalienable items of possession, whether in the guise of social and intentional statuses, or the roles that enact them and the attitudes that regiment them. And, for James, just as desire is directed at either expanding the self or staving off its contraction, affect (qua positive or negative moods and emotions) is the embodied register of this expansion and contraction. *Value*, then, turns on securing the regimenting attitudes of temporally, spatially, and socially distal others towards one's statuses as evinced in and/or caused by the enactment of one's roles. Standing at the intersection of meaning and modality, it is the ground of motivation: we act both by means of (retention), and for the sake of (protention), securing intersubjective recognition of our commitments and entitlements to signify and interpret. Capital is only its greedy, dimwitted younger brother. In short, and making no claims as to the proper unit of accountability, be it as small as the individual or as large as humanity, selfhood qua temporally-unfolding intersubjectivity is the original form of self-expanding value. Kockelman (2007) offers an ethnographic example of this process.

7. MODERNITY – A CONCLUSION?

Putting all the ideas from the foregoing sections together, we may reinterpret Maine's celebrated phrase *from status to contract*. What Maine is clearly pointing to is a phase transition in sociality, or a qualitatively distinct kind of social relation, that is in some sense concomitant with 'modernity'. In the terms of Sections 5 and 6, it is a historical transformation in the semiosis of temporality that affects the selfhood of all members within a particular sign-community; or, that differentially affects certain types of social relations, or domains of practice, within any sign-community. What follows, then, is

essentially a review of the foregoing distinctions, and it should be understood not so much as an ideal type but as a pragmatic typology: a multidimensional space of key modes of sociality, relative to which one may plot a particularly salient historical trajectory. It must be emphasized that as a pragmatic typology (if not a fantasy), every claim ushers in a score of caveats, any one of which is more interesting than the claim itself.

As seen in Section 2, the pole of modality went from obligation (responsibility, commitment) to permission (right, entitlement). The mode of regimentation went from norm (or habit) to law (or code). The mode of sanctioning went from punishment to discipline (and, more generally, from negative causal sanctions to positive normative sanctions). And the unit of accountability went from the family (or corporate entity more generally) to the individual.

As seen in Section 3, the type of status went from ascribed to achieved. Community, or social relations grounded in blood and contact, went to society, or social relations grounded in abstract and ultimately arbitrary forms of monetary exchange with strangers. And a focus on social statuses went to a focus on intentional statuses.

As seen in Section 4, various types of possession (alienable versus inalienable, *res nec mancipi* versus *res mancipi*, moveable versus inmoveable) went to one form of private property. Modes of economy based in redistribution, reciprocation, and autarchy went to a market. And, more generally, long-distance and local markets became internal markets. Qualitative and particular entitlements and commitments went to quantitative and abstract rights and responsibilities – as embodied in money, and credit and debt more generally. And the ceremony of transfer (of status) became streamlined: from ornate to austere, from ostentatious to efficacious.

As seen in Section 5, economic processes became more and more detached. Both items transacted and the ends of transaction became quantified. There was greater displacement between actions within a transaction, and between transactions within a circuit. And there was an embedding of multiple transactions, and a decomposition of transactors.

As intimated in Section 6, there may be a larger range of statuses one can inhabit during the course of a life (biographically); there may be a greater rate of transformation in statuses available to members of a community (historically); and there may even be greater control over our species' capacity for semiosis (evolutionary). Moreover, there may have been a movement from many incommensurable space-time-person manifolds, through an ensemble of commensurable manifolds, to a single manifold (Bernstein and Kockelman, under review).

And finally, in regards to offering a different genealogy for various aspects of modern subjectivity, note that the modern focus on death as the ground of meaning, and Heideggerian *Angstlichkeit* more generally, elides the fact that death was not an issue, in the same way, for communities in which the unit of accountability was not the individual: indeed, the ancients conquered death so far as the corporation, say the lineage, lived on irrespective of the biological lives of its members (cf. Maine, 2002: 126–7; and Mauss, 1985). Moreover, *pace* Foucault's argument that madness is the alter ego of modernity because of its antithesis to the putative rationality of the enlightenment, one might argue rather that madness is the alter ego of modernity because of its undercutting of the conditions of possibility for contract. As Maine sees it, such persons as children and madmen 'are subject to extrinsic control on the single ground that they do

not possess the faculty of forming a judgment in their own interests; in other words, they are wanting in the first essential of an engagement by Contract' (Maine, 2002: 170). In this way, madness should not be understood as the absence of a faculty of reason, but rather as the absence of a contractual facility.

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Notes

1 That is, normative sanctions are essentially new obligations and permissions that arise if one follows or violates old obligations and permissions.

2 As Maine sees it:

> If the community sins, its guilt is much more than the sum of the offences committed by its members; the crime is a corporate act, and extends in its consequences to many more persons than have shared in its actual perpetration. If, on the other hand, the individual is conspicuously guilty, it is his children, his kinsfolk, his tribesmen, or his fellow-citizens, who suffer with him, and sometimes for him. (Maine, 2002: 126)

3 This idea is really coming from Maine, who uses the term *universitas juris* to mean: 'a collection of rights and duties united by the single circumstance of their having belonged at one time to some one person. It is, as it were, the legal clothing of some given individual' (2002: 178).

4 Indeed, a role is to a status as a sign is to an object. Furthermore, so as not to complicate matters, I am treating meaning as if it is a relation between a sign and an object, not a relation between a sign, object, and interpretant. To be more precise, one would introduce Mead's notion of an *attitude*, as the interpretant of a role-status relation. That is, an attitude is just another's interpretant of one's status by way of having perceived one's roles: I know you are afraid of dogs, as an intentional status, insofar as I have seen you act like someone afraid of dogs; and as a function of this knowledge (of your status through your role), I come to expect you to act in certain ways – and perhaps sanction your behavior as a function of those expectations (Kockelman, 2005).

5 No doubt, each perspective is equivalent to the other, like the two faces of a Necker Cube. And, no doubt, even when focusing on the statuses of possessors, one can still emphasize the social, semiotic, psychological, biological, chemical, and physical properties of the items of possession: from daughters and kidneys to names and titles, from ancestors and progeny to memories and beliefs, from steam engines and silicon chips to songs and ideas. Indeed, such properties of items of possession enable and constrain various properties of the statuses of their possessors.

6 The quantification and abstraction of modality goes hand in hand with the collateral relationality of meaning (Kockelman, 2006: 85–7).

7 Marx makes a distinction between impersonal and (personal) power: while the former is 'based on the personal relations of dominion and servitude . . . that is conferred by landed property', the latter is 'given by money' (1967: 145). Here is where different modes of power are mapped onto status and contract.

8 In short, sign events (such as a wedding ceremony or contractual procedure) are only appropriate if certain statuses already exist, and are only effective if certain statuses subsequently exist. Such already and subsequently existing statuses – social, intentional, possessional – may be more or less distal from the sign event itself. That is, any sign event both enables and constrains, and is enabled and constrained by, statuses that are more or less distal to it in space, time and person. Within such a framework, one way to characterize power, or agency, is the degree to which an action (qua sign event) may affect distal statuses, and not be affected by distal statuses. Munn has gone so far as to characterize value (for the Gawanese) in terms of 'an act's relative capacity to extend *intersubjective spacetime* – a spacetime of self–other relationships formed in and through acts and practices' (1992: 9).

9 Long before Austin lectured on performative utterances, or Wittgenstein wondered about language games, Hobbes (1994: 82–3) was busy articulating the relationship between language and action in his accounting for contracts and covenants.

10 Graeber has recently made a distinction between 'the power to act directly on others (a potential that can only be realized in the future) and the power to move others to action by displaying evidence of how one's self has been treated in the past' (2001: 114). Notice how this idea may be grounded in Aristotle and Marx: indeed, if by 'power' we mean value, and if we widen labor to include action more generally, it is in some sense the personification of dead and living labor, respectively.

11 To Aristotle, this is a distinction between the proper (or primary) usage of a thing, and the improper (or secondary) usage of a thing. The naturalness of an economy is really a function of whether an end has a limit: quantity is without limit, and hence when quantity becomes an end, the processes that lead to it are unnatural. It is also a function of whether an object is produced for that purpose: thus, in a capitalist economy when all products are commodities (use-values produced for the sake of their exchange-values), then having exchange-value as an end is not necessarily unnatural.

12 Clearly, any commodity may go through any number of transactions on its way from production to consumption. What is at issue in interrelated transactions, however, is that a single transactor is involved in each of the transactions – for Marx, in one transaction as buyer, and in the next transaction as seller.

13 There are really two potential perspectives here: whether from the standpoint of a single UV, tracking transactions in which it is implicated, from production to consumption; or from the standpoint of a single transactor, tracking the number of transactions in which he or she is implicated from initial sale to final purchase.

14 Compare Goffman (1981) and Hobbes (1994: 102).

15 And, one may inquire into the conditions and consequences of greater degrees of detachment: (1) harder to pin any particular economic process down to one actor; (2) harder for any actor to understand the entire process. One may also note that detachment is not just a circulation-internal process. There is also detachment within production, as Marx takes up via notions like cooperation, the division of labor, the

introduction of industrial technology, and so forth (1967: 173–80, 296–401). And there is detachment, understood as fetishization, between the sphere of production and the sphere of exchange (1967: 77–8; 172). Finally, degrees of economic detachment may also be used to examine many 'pre-capitalist' economies: Nuer wedding ceremonies, in which one lineage gives cows for the male offspring of a marriage with another lineage's daughters, involve (at least) the last four modes of economic detachment (Evans-Pritchard, 1990).

16 Distance is here being treated in terms of a multi-dimensional space, whose axes are constituted by features belonging to the domains of time, space, and person. (See also the end of Section 3, in which it was shown how any sign event both enables and constrains, and is enabled and constrained by, statuses that are more or less distal to it in space, time and person.) This, however, is only an approximation, as may be seen by the relevant dimensions underlying *shifters* – such as person (*I/you*), tense (*is/was*), deixis (*here/there*), mood (*permission/obligation*), and epistemic modality (*possibility/necessity*). These grammatical categories allow one to displace the narrated event from the speech event along dimensions such as person, time, space, deontic modality, and epistemic modality (Jakobson, 1991; Kockelman, 2004). Given the relationship between status and deontic modality that was characterized in Section 2, it should be clear why deontic modality, or what linguists call 'mood', is essential. And, given the 'if-then' nature of more complex financial instruments (such as futures, options, and swaps: see Lee and LiPuma, 2002; LiPuma and Lee, 2003) – in which the value conditions of one contract are set in terms of the value consequences of one or more other contracts – it should be clear why epistemic modality is necessary. In short, the *manifold* at issue – i.e. the multi-dimensional framework in which such distance occurs – is not just a temporal, spatial and personal manifold, but a temporal, spatial, personal, deontic and epistemic manifold. With this notion of a time-space-person-modality manifold in hand, the structural and phenomenological perspectives introduced in this paragraph may be understood as either measuring the 'distance' between any two events with an already calibrated manifold, or calibrating the manifold with which the distance between any two events will be subsequently measured.

17 Husserl generalized this, still accounting for temporality in terms of intentionality, but phrasing it in terms of retention and protention. For Husserl, each *now* is fat with its retended past and fertile with its protended future. Heidegger, working out a theory of behavior grounded in meaning rather than mind, and comportment rather than intentionality, turned to the notions of affectedness (*Befindlichkeit*) and understanding (*Verstehen*), or the context in which one finds oneself (or is 'thrown' into) and the context in which one pushes oneself (or is 'projected' into), respectively.

18 Some of these statuses are rapidly changing (say, certain beliefs, or certain participant roles), and others are relatively constant (say, one's status as someone's son, or one's identity as a Christian).

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