A Christian plane of immanence?

Contrapuntal reflections on Deleuze and Pentecostal spirituality

Bruno REINHARDT, *Utrecht University*

In this article I revisit current debates on immanence and transcendence in the anthropology of Christianity and promote an encounter between the philosophy of Gilles Deleuze and my fieldwork experience among committed Pentecostals in Ghana. My argument seeks mutual-clarification and oscillates contrapuntally between these two discursive traditions through moments of harmonization and dissonance. The philosophy of radical immanence and Pentecostal spirituality are presented as two lines of flight from the hegemonic "immanent frame" of secular modernity, a shared marginality that facilitates my engagement with Deleuzian notions, such as virtuality, modes, intensity, flow, desire, and refraction, in order to account for the heterogeneous ways whereby the Holy Spirit manifests itself amid the creation. This attempt at reconciliation brings about evident frictions, and I conclude by revisiting some fundamental differences between Deleuze's monistic pluralism and Pentecostals' pluralistic monotheism.

Keywords: Pentecostalism, Ghana, Deleuze, anthropology of Christianity, immanence, and transcendence

This article explores the interplay of transcendence and immanence in Pentecostal Christianity and promotes a series of exchanges between the philosophy of Gilles Deleuze, the anthropology of Christianity, and my fieldwork experience among committed Pentecostals in Ghana. In order to avoid doing epistemological violence to the actors involved, it is important first to establish the terms of this unintuitive encounter. After all, if there is a common thread in Deleuze's evocative writings, it is the primacy of immanence, a dimension of life that thrives within, without seeking references in a transcendental beyond. Books like *Anti-Oedipus*, written

in collaboration with Felix Guattari, convey a libertarian ethos that testifies to a specific epoch (post–May 1968) and way of life openly antagonistic to Christianity. Mark Seems acknowledges this straightforward opposition in the preface to his English translation:

> Christianity taught us to see the eye of the lord looking down upon us. Such forms of knowledge project an image of reality, at the expense of reality itself. They talk figures and icons and signs, but fail to perceive forces and flows. They bind us to other realities, and especially the reality of power as it subjugates us. Their function is to tame, and the result is the fabrication of docile and obedient subjects. (Deleuze and Guattari 1983: xxii)

Driven by a power of negation, Christianity submits vital forces to the transcendental judgment of a dreadful patriarch, producing what Friedrich Nietzsche (1998) has influentially defined as a morality of infinite debt, resentment, and interiorizing guilt. As other poststructuralist thinkers with a Nietzschean inclination, Deleuze and Guattari are actively involved in advancing the project of the "death of God," meaning that secularization should go beyond the erosion of Christianity's religious authority and expiate the theological residues of secular modernity. Indeed, most of Deleuze's concepts I explore below have been crafted with the aim of subverting transcendentalist strategies of absolute definition and control of the human. As a reflex, his philosophy has been a major source of inspiration to scholars engaged either with the counterculture and vanguard of the West (in aesthetics, radical democratic theory, science studies) or with nonmonotheistic traditions, such as animism and religions of possession (Massumi 2002; Hardt and Negri 2009; Jensen and Rodje 2009; Viveiros de Castro 2007; Goldman 2007).

But Christianity comprises its own multiplicities, the most fundamental of them being the mystery of a triune God, a source of both theological specificity and heretic imperatives. This is explicitly the case with Pentecostalism, a Christian spirituality whose missionary and evangelistic zeal has propagated at a global scale an intense desire to experience God's power immanently, as the Holy Spirit. The additional problem of *how* to exercise this capacity authoritatively remains a fundamental factor underpinning the Pentecostal movement's complex history of schism and continuity (Jacobsen 2003).

Having engaged with the vast literature on global Pentecostalism, it was without surprise that I met during my fieldwork in Ghana, communities of faith that attributed a prominent devotional role to the body, the senses, and materiality (Coleman 2009; Meyer 2011; DeWitte 2011; Brahinsky 2012). It was much more counterintuitive though when I realized that, as part of this miraculous everyday, sacred immanence assumed specific designs, often recognized and articulated in practice through a grammar of flows, forces, and desire, thus in frontal disagreement with Seems' rigid characterization above. Pentecostals speak a "Deleuzian" patois, although they never simply oppose these dynamic notions to a docile submission. How to account for this unusual resonance without turning foes into friends?

Different from an attempt to "explain" Pentecostal spirituality through a one-way recourse to Deleuze's conceptual framework, I opted for a contrapuntal analysis, which oscillates between moments of resonance and harmonization as well

as dissonance and incommensurability. I will therefore seek mutual clarification between these two approaches to immanence and transcendence in modernity by recognizing them as part of discursive traditions with both irreducible ethico-political agendas and zones of translatability. Although admittedly exploratory, this reflexive approach, concerned more with tracing connections than with stabilizing identities, is probably the best way of "taking seriously" the truth claims, agencies, sensibilities, and practices of intimate strangers like Christians, whose genealogical proximity with secular epistemology (Milbank 1993; Asad 1993, 2003), including anthropology (Cannell 2005; Klassen 2011), has never simply exhausted their alterity, thus relative autonomy as a form of life (Harding 1991; Robbins 2003).

Reflecting upon the problem of "What difference does Christianity make?" (Cannell 2006), which has oriented much of the anthropology of Christianity in recent years, Ruth Marshall argues for a general analytical shift from "cultural alterity" to "political equality" (Marshall 2014: 349) as the best way of respecting the emic force of Pentecostals' "prescriptive regime" (352) while recognizing the obvious limits imposed by cultural relativism upon axiomatic components of their historicity, such as the unmovable truth of the scriptures, an eschatological temporal horizon, and the immanent company of a "living God." Inspired by Talal Asad's work on religion and secularism, Marshall assumes that normativity should not be taken as the enemy of proper anthropological analysis, since it is the very contentious horizon in which alterity is defined and exercised at historical practice. Sharing this perspective, I understand the anthropology of Christianity as an interstitial project, which examines Christian traditions ethnographically and comparatively across contexts while tracing movements of accommodation and dissociation vis-à-vis alternative lifeworlds and the ideological constellations of secular modernity, from the market and the state to border-knowledges like anthropology itself and its philosophical partners.

Having this in mind, I will start with a basic question: is there an insurmountable gap between Deleuze's philosophy and Christianity? After laying down Deleuze's most explicit—and transcendence-centered—perspective on the Christian inheritance of the West, I strive to detect openings that facilitate a cross-pollination between his work and current debates in the anthropology of Christianity. Following Jon Bialecki (2012), I stress the value of applying to Christianity the sense of potentiality subsumed by the notion virtuality, adding that the philosophy of radical immanence and Pentecostal spirituality do share an important trait: both are at variance with the immanent frame (Taylor 2007) of secular modernity and problematize the hegemonic opposition between ineffable transcendence and mechanical immanence. The analysis of Pentecostal theology as an en-Spirited naturalism (Smith 2010) allows me to recast divine immanence as Pentecostals' vertigo, a place where converts must dive in order to find authentic Christianity, but also where they can easily watch these authoritative boundaries fade. No better context to observe this dynamic process than Ghana, a place that epitomizes the revival's vitality as well as its normative fragility. I summarize the history of expansion of Pentecostals' prescriptive regime in this country as a progressive and sometimes uneven accumulation of norms in time, lending a strong emic traction to the problem of what and who is a Christian (Daswani 2013). Here I expand on Bialecki's original point and argue for the applicability of the virtual/actual dyad not only to the study of transcendence and immanence *across* the Christian spectrum, or difference

between Christian actualizations, but also *within* specific currents. The notion of a Christian plane of immanence will allow me to reconstitute the Pentecostal labor of "spiritual discernment" in Ghana as a methodic dive into divinity in terms of modes, intensities, flows, and refractions of the Holy Spirit. I conclude by returning to a contrastive register and highlight some fundamental differences between Deleuze's godless pluralistic monism and Pentecostals' pluralistic monotheism.

Deleuze and Christianity: An incommensurable divide?

Christianity and other monotheisms are most likely to be defined in Deleuze's work—solo or accompanied—as breeding grounds for "molarity," forces that interrupt bodily intensities, desires, and differences by submitting them to a vertical axis characterized by transcendence, judgment, and identity. The connection between transcendence and judgment figures in *A thousand plateaus* as the "judgment of God" (1987: 44–82). "The judgment of God," Deleuze and Guattari argue, "the system of the judgment of God, the theological system, is precisely the operation of He who makes an organism, an organization of organs called an organism" (158). The "organism" antagonizes in this narrative with the "body without organs," defined as "the field of immanence of desire, the plane of consistency specific to desire" (154). Complementarily, *The logic of sense* develops the relation between transcendence and identity as "the order of God," in which divinity's fundamental identity to itself is metamorphosed into an ordered cosmos by analogy, authorizing, "the identity of the world as the ambient environment, the identity of the person as a well-founded agency, the identities of bodies as base, and finally, the identity of language as the power of denoting everything else" (1990: 292). As expected, the order of God lies upon unstable grounds, "the order of the Antichrist," "characterized by the death of God, the destruction of the world, the dissolution of the person, the disintegration of bodies, and the shifting function of language which now expresses only intensities" (294).

Deleuze's aversion to theology as the realm of absolute judgment and identity can be read as reflecting what Daniel Smith (2007) recognizes as his attempt to rescue ethics from morality, allocating religion flatly into the latter pole. Morality is defined from this stance as a set of constraining rules enshrined in a transcendental moral code. Conversely, ethics is a set of "facilitative rules" embedded in immanent modes of existence, thus closer to the ancient model Michel Foucault (2005) calls therapeutic and aesthetical, a work on the Self through desire and the senses rather than against them. In sum, Deleuze is not only certain that a nonsubjectivist and nonrelativistic ethics is possible after the death of God. He takes secularization as the condition of possibility for the rebirth of an ethics of immanence in the West, thus beyond judgment, identity, and, by default, Christianity.

Against the grain, I would like to make three comments that reduce the apparently incommensurable gap presented above. The first addresses the mode of veridiction of transcendence according to Deleuze. Despite an obvious taste for methodological dualisms (molar/molecular, tree/rhizome, etc.), his allegorical journeys always flow into a monism that dissolves these binaries into a primordial soup. "The organism" and "the body without organs" are made of the same flesh,

thus condemned to mutuality. The genealogy of morality is refashioned as a "geology" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 44–82), the sedimentation of strata over a primary layer that remains active. God, once the transcendental judge, is eventually redefined in *A thousand plateaus* simply as "a lobster, a double pincer, a double bind" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 45). This is far from Carl Schmitt's (2010) glorious sovereign lawgiver, who simultaneously establishes a rule of action and exempts himself from it. Deleuze's "outside" position, the transcendental point from which absolute moral judgment emanates, is a spatial "fold" or a temporal deferral, not ineffability or nonparticipatory externality. Surely, transcendence cannot vanquish, as it is bound to the "plane of immanence." And yet, it cannot be dismissed as illusory either, in a nominalist gesture.

My second point concerns the tight articulation between Christianity and a stable transcendental identity. Various contributors of Mary Bryden's *Deleuze and religion* (2001) stress the theological origins of the very categories of transcendence and immanence, whose centrality in Deleuze's work reveals a subterranean link between his atheism and the ancient and medieval problem of the Being of divinity, especially through Spinoza (Smith 2001). Philip Goodchild (2001) speculates about whether the etymology of immanence would stem not only from the Latin *manere* (to remain) or *manare* (to flow out) (Agamben 1999: 226), but also from the Hebrew messianic name "Immanuel" meaning God-with-Us, as prophesied in Isaiah 7:14 and embraced by New Testament authors to address Christ's ambiguous ontology.[1]

Anthropologists of Christianity have encountered the tension detected by Goodchild while exploring the interplay of Christian transcendence and immanence in lived religion through diverse theoretical and empirical angles, reaching highly divergent conclusions. Joel Robbins emphasizes in his quest for Christianity's "cultural content" (2004: 30–31) in its own sake, the "axial," universalistic and individualistic aspect of this tradition, reflected on an ascetic aversion to materiality and conventionality. Fenella Cannell is critical of the social sciences' "ascetic stereotype," and prefers to emphasize Christianity's specificity among the religions of salvation through the doctrine of incarnation, and the assumption that the flesh is "an essential part of redemption" (Cannell 2005: 8). Webb Keane takes a conciliatory path and depicts the history of Christianity as a variety of answers to a pressing paradox: "one might speculate that one factor that has entered into the production of Christianity's sheer complexity is precisely the recurrent conflict between purifying projects of transcendence and countermovements toward materialization, each provoking the other" (2007: 41). Bialecki (2012) wonders whether these heterogeneous positions would be a reflex of not only scholarly disagreements or the ethnographic privilege conferred to specific denominations but partial actualizations of Christianity as a virtual object.

Deleuze's notion of virtuality allows Bialecki to acknowledge Christianity's capacity to vary according to specific socio-historical contexts and assemblages without being exhausted in its pregnant potentiality. Avoiding the dualism between the ideational and the real, the intelligible and the sensible, which characterizes most

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1.   In Isaiah we read, "Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel" (KJB).

of the Western philosophical tradition, Deleuze finds in the relation between the virtual and the actual more gradational tools for understanding the world as that which is immanently "there" (visible or not) and simultaneously that which is inherently incomplete. The virtual is not an intelligible form awaiting realization, a series of types governing the emergence of identical tokens. It is a set of agencies always already impressed in actuality. By surrounding the actual with "increasingly extensive, remote and diverse virtualities" (Deleuze 2006: 113), the virtual often manifests itself as a differential excess rendering the actual both unfulfilled and reminiscent. Bialecki redefines the task of the anthropologist of Christianity as "to engage in the work of counter-effectuating virtual Christianity, with the further goal of grasping how virtual Christianity's nature as a virtual multiplicity allows it to be actualized in differing manners at differing moments, becoming part of larger social assemblages in diverse ways" (2012: 18). As I will explore later, this approach makes important analytical room for *Christian difference*, that is, difference internal to Christianity as a theological potentiality struggling to flourish in particular ways. In this sense, it avoids both the "continuity thinking" (Robbins 2007) that equates actualizations of Christianity with a flat movement of cultural localization (Christianity in Ghana becoming intrinsically "Ghanaian") and the essentialism implied in the notion of Christianity itself as a bounded culture.[2]

This leads to my third point. Even though Deleuze is mainly concerned with debunking the privilege of transcendence in Western philosophy, his approach to immanence diverges greatly from what Charles Taylor (2007: 539–93) calls the "immanent frame" of secular modernity, that is, impersonal principles keeping a world devoid of God running on its own steam. According to Taylor, the rise of the immanent frame is followed by a shift at the level of personhood from a "premodern" "porous Self," unable to distinguish itself from other forces inhabiting its environment, and a secular modern "buffered Self," grounded on a clear boundary between mind and world (including the body), which implies that morality, religion, and all other forms of (now) "meaningful" action are deemed to dwell in the mind. As shown by William Connolly (2011: 68–92), Deleuze's philosophy

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2. Deleuze's own marginal writings on Christianity legitimize Bialecki's productive analytical move. In an essay on D. H. Lawrence's *Apocalypse*, Deleuze arranges Christianity around three main characters: Jesus; Paul, the Apostle; and John of Patmos, the writer of Revelations. Whereas Jesus is an aristocrat, a "kind of Buddha," who suspends Jewish conventions through the transgressive law of universal love, freeing humanity "from the domination of priests and the ideas of fault, punishment, reward, judgment, death, and what follows death" (1998: 37), Paul holds on to the dying and resurrecting Christ, proposing a new god and a new type of priest. Paul is presented as the analogue of Lenin, an aristocrat "going to the people" with a stable program of salvation. On his turn, John of Patmos is the wild populace, drawing on pagan sources and enthusiasm to produce a terrible machine of war, judgment, and terror, moved by vengeance against the despisers of Christ. Addressing Christianity as a multiplicity, Deleuze concludes, "Christ invented a religion of love (a practice, a way of living, and not a belief), whereas the Apocalypse brings a religion of Power—as belief, a terrible manner of judging. Instead of the gift of Christ, an infinite debt" (1998: 36). Regardless of the interpretation's merits, the essay definitely exposes us to a Deleuze who has moved toward a less static, thus more "virtualist" (not to say "realist") definition of Christianity.

complicates Taylor's dualistic model, presenting us instead to a "world of becoming," whose multiple force-fields do not "fit neatly into either the old enchanted world *or* the disenchanted world generated by the combined forces of nominalism, Calvinism, Newtonian science, and secularization" (70). It is telling that most of the agencies that Taylor considers immanent, since posttheological in terms of authority (Nature, Reason, the state, society, the market), are defined by Deleuze as "abstract machines," thus connected to the plane of transcendence and still theological in their modus operandi. We realize that a general reshaping of the very grammar of immanence and transcendence is required, a project Connolly undertakes by differentiating Deleuze's "radical immanence" from Taylor's "immanent frame."

Here I would like to connect the three caveats above with my own subject of research, Pentecostal spirituality. As much as the philosophy of radical immanence, Pentecostalism can be considered another "minor tradition" (Connolly 2006) of modernity that challenges the stability of the immanent frame, its normative notion of transcendence and immanence, and the place it assigns to religion. Taylor himself admits that, and attributes this transgressive position to Pentecostals' focus on the miraculous, the body, and "the festive" (2007: 554). Nevertheless, and despite its notable status as the fastest growing branch of contemporary Christianity, Pentecostalism never leads Taylor to revise his macrothesis. Instead, his argument simply ejects this contentious spirituality from the domain of "official Christianity," which in his view has been subjected to "an 'excarnation,' a transfer out of embodied, 'enfleshed' forms of religious life, to those which are more 'in the head'" (554).

Although the Spirit of May 1968 and the Holy Spirit remain obviously inimical, we can at least claim that they diverge jointly from the hegemonic tenets of the immanent frame. Are there any commonalities in how they diverge? In order to start answering that, let me first examine some axiomatic assumptions of Pentecostal spirituality.

From lack to excess: Immanence as the vertigo of Pentecostalism

Sacred immanence—desirous, experiential, "enfleshed"—is the joy and affliction of Pentecostalism, representing as much a source of theological specificity as an ongoing threat to its stability. Pentecostal spirituality has an elective affinity with the figure of excess, which makes it quite distinctive from Weberian representations of Protestantism, from which Taylor draws his notion of "official Christianity." Weber (2003) has classically argued that the Reformation undermines the juridical logic of Roman Catholic truth by abstracting and deferring grace, which is evacuated from nature and the church's apparatus of mediation, and attributed to a sovereign transcendental giver, a *Deus absconditus* irresponsive to human agency and unknown in his distributive designs.

Conversely, Pentecostalism democratizes grace by adopting the Arminian soteriology that has characterized evangelical Christianity at least since the Second Great Awakening (Hatch 1989). According to Pentecostals' view of the atonement (Jacobsen 2003), Jesus is an advocate who died on the cross freely on behalf of humanity, succeeding where Adam failed and cleansing man from sin. What he expects in retribution is not necessarily a guilty consciousness, but a chosen docility,

advanced through individual repentance and submission to the Christian life, as expressed by the born-again definition of conversion as the act of "giving one's life to Christ." But Jesus is just one of the Trinitarian players in this account of salvation. Once conversion is triggered, the born-again subject is entitled to claim a series of Biblical promises, among them the infilling of the Holy Spirit, which supports moral sanctification and empowers converts with spiritual gifts, such as speaking in tongues, prophecy, healing, deliverance from evil spirits, et cetera, according to 1 Corinthians 12:8–10. In the so-called charismatic churches my research dealt with, salvation is also understood as a holistic process of "restoration," which includes this-worldly aspects such as health and prosperity, reflecting Pentecostals' approach to the body as a "temple" filled by the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19) and reflecting divine glory amid the unsaved.

Philosopher James Smith addresses the ubiquitous influence of divine presence in Pentecostal spirituality in terms of soteriological grace, intervening miracle, and charismatic empowerment as an "enchanted" or "en-Spirited naturalism" (2010: 97). Different from an "interventionist supernaturalism," a straw man crafted by the scientific upholders of the immanent frame, en-Spirited naturalism not simply adds a "supernatural" layer to the empiricist and disenchanted secular concept of nature, but rejects altogether the notion of a self-sufficient mechanical world. Smith claims that Pentecostalism "charges" nature with grace, which spills over the ontological boundaries separating nature/culture/divinity, rendering God's presence coeval with life itself.

From an anthropological perspective, it is important to ask what is the object of Smith's generalist statements, and Bialecki's model comes in handy here for various reasons. First, it retains a sense of potentiality that resonates with Pentecostals themselves. For a recent convert, the possibility of inhabiting a world saturated by grace, as the one described by Smith, is not a fait accompli but itself a promise, which must be dwelt upon with due expectation and commitment. It is also a capacity that can be lost, decay into inauthenticity, and be predated by demonic forces (Meyer 1999). In sum, more than a stable cultural phenomenology or a self-justified ontology, en-Spirited naturalism is a work in progress amid a set of virtualities, being both teleological and contingent. Closely related to this, Bialecki reframes the conceptual labor of the anthropologist of Christianity as that of tracing movements of "counter-effectuation" of Christianity as a virtual object. This naturally evokes the problem of authority, or how such a murky spirituality is reproduced according to relatively stable norms and associations. These are assemblages in which, according to William Garriott and Kevin O'Neill (2008), the merely analytical problem of "What is a Christian?" (Robbins 2003) becomes a "native" riddle: "Who is a Christian?"

But if the unmaking of boundaries belongs to the essence of en-Spirited naturalism, how to confine its affects to a norm, acknowledging that norms rely primarily on distinctions? Although Smith avoids this genre of questions, I believe there are still discernable operations, in fact, operations of discernment, which insert some degree of expectation in this temporality of surprise. I want to argue that normativity is instilled amid Pentecostal communities of practice through an administration of excess, which organizes experience according to modes, intensities, flows, and refractions of God held together as a Christian plane of immanence. In this

sense, Pentecostal norms are not boundaries per se, but relatively stable ways of overflowing them and accounting for this overflow. If Émile Durkheim has classically associated the sacred to "setting apart," Pentecostal spirituality thrives at the threshold of transcendence and immanence, sacred and profane, divinity and the world, wherein danger lies (Douglas 1966). Deleuze has famously asserted that immanence is the "very vertigo of philosophy" (1992: 180). It seems to me that divine immanence is also the vertigo of Pentecostalism, a place where converts must dwell in order to find themselves anew, always at the verge of missing discernibility. Before introducing the reader to this dynamic process, I would like to situate this spirituality in contemporary Ghana, showing how the problem of discernment has become a candent issue shared by anthropologist and natives alike.

The spread of Pentecostalism in Ghana: Discernment as labor

If in the previous section I dealt with Pentecostalism at the level of theology proper, in this section I move on to its implementation. I will therefore present not a detailed sociological history of the Pentecostal movement as such, but a concise history of Pentecostal norms in Ghana, or what my interlocutors call "doctrine," that is, Biblical scripts for proper understanding, doing, and feeling. As any norm, doctrines are inherently unfulfilled. Orienting reality teleologically, norms reshape contexts while meeting resistances and frictions. Moreover, Pentecostal norms are themselves not without inner tensions, which should become clear as my presentation unfolds.

Historical accounts of Pentecostalism in Ghana have adequately avoided linear narratives of diffusion ("from Azusa street to the world"), opting instead for concepts that accommodate to inner pluralism and multicausality. Emmanuel Larbi (2001) describes the rise of this religious movement in the country as the result of diverse "threads of renewal" weaved together in time, whereas Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu (2005) prefers the watery imagery of a series of accumulative "waves" washing and shaping the local religious field through mimetism but also schism and competition. Both authors start with the so-called Spiritual Churches (Baeta 1962), which stemmed from early twentieth-century West African prophetic movements, and gave great centrality to prayer, healing, prophecy, and more lively worship patterns, breaking with the decorum of mission-originated churches like the Methodists, Presbyterians, and Catholics. Those are theological and liturgical traits still shared by most Pentecostals in Ghana, although they have been submitted to different doctrinal packages as the Spiritual Churches were "demystified" by more recent waves of renewal (Asamoah-Gyadu 2005: 64–96).

The Spiritual Churches were closely followed in time by mission-related but either partially or fully autonomous "classic Pentecostals," such as the Assemblies of God and the Church of Pentecost (Wyllie 1974). More self-consciously global, classic Pentecostals absorbed influences from the holiness and apostolic movements and introduced glossolalia in Ghana, today one of the diacritics of authentic Pentecostalism, which lacked in the Spiritual Churches. They also reformed practices deemed heretic, such as holding food taboos, accepting polygamy, and the marked importance Spiritual Churches attributed to liturgical objects like stones, holy

water, and candles. Their ecclesiology was more dispersed, thus less heavily centered on the charismatic founder and more bureaucratic, although when it comes to Pentecostalism, method is rarely opposed to divine inspiration (Kirsch 2008).

The 1970s saw the increasing popularity of another important actor: global parachurch fellowships like Scripture Union, Women's Aglow, Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship, and others. Originally, their mission was to disseminate the evangelical notion of personal salvation among members of the mainline churches, thus transforming nominal Christians into authentic "born-again" subjects, committed to the periodic practice of spiritual disciplines such as Bible reading, corporate and individual prayer, holiness, and evangelism. These associations eventually experienced the arousal of the Holy Ghost fire and the exercise of spiritual gifts among their members. Due to their equalitarian and capillary structures, fellowships advanced a true "democratization of charisma" (Asamoah-Gyadu 2005: 96–131) in Ghana, and their Pentecostalization had a two-fold effect. On the one hand, by encouraging a nondenominational born-again identity, they wound up stretching the revival into the mainline churches (Omenyo 2002). On the other hand, members unwilling or unable to coordinate their personal transformation with their original churches seceded and converted fellowship networks into Spirit-led churches. This new generation of Pentecostal leaders had been simultaneously influenced by novelties arriving in Ghana during the 1980s through international evangelistic crusades (from America, Europe, but also Nigeria) and print and audio-visual media, especially so-called prosperity theology and Word of Faith Pentecostalism, centered on the performativity of faith-charged utterances, or "declarations." Churches emerging from this new synthesis became popularly known as charismatic churches or ministries (Gifford 2004). Denominations like the pioneer Action Faith International, International Central Gospel Church, Royalhouse Chapel, Lighthouse Chapel International, and others, have become major local references for the movement, consisting today of megachurches with multiple branches across Ghana and abroad.

Charismatic churches introduced another seismic shift in the Pentecostal norm, and their success produced mimetic effects even on classic Pentecostals. Less sectarian vis-à-vis secular lifestyles, charismatics coordinate Pentecostal devotion with a strong investment on media evangelism and values that resonate with the neoliberal epoch, such as entrepreneurship, globality, and innovation. Their dominant use of English, more "up-to-date" notions of the Christian family, and efforts to articulate piety and worldly success, made these denominations especially attractive to the urban youth. Charismatic churches of all sizes have been at the forefront of the recent rise of Pentecostalism to the status of largest Christian subgroup in Ghana.

Such massive dissemination of words of faith and renewal and miraculous "signs and wonders" has generated not only high levels of religious enthusiasm, but also conflict and disorder. Church schisms have become routine, and suspicions about the authenticity of ministers abound (Shipley 2009), even among believers. This dystopian context is normalized but not tamed by Pentecostals' premillenarian sensibility, based on the assumption that we are living in the "end-times," a context marked by an intensification of Holy Ghost-led activity as well as the opposing influence of the devil and false prophets and preachers (Robbins 2004:

157–81). Indiscernibility has also been embraced by the scholarship, which has often characterized African Pentecostalism as losing its Christian distinction from multiple angles, thus becoming-traditional through the transfiguration of pastors into "big men" (Gifford 2004: 185) or becoming-neoliberal through prosperity gospel (Comaroff and Comaroff 2000). Birgit Meyer's work on Pentecostal "sensational forms" provides a more balanced diagnostics, recognizing how this spirituality's strong reliance on esthetics reflects a specifically Christian semiotic ideology (2011) but also propagates a much less bounded "Pentecostalite" style (2004) in Ghana's public sphere and popular culture at large. Similarly, Marleen DeWitte calls attention to the tactile core of Pentecostal devotion (2011) while still acknowledging that, by embedding these Christian affects in commodities and "formatting" charisma technologically, mediatization has suffused the Pentecostal publics in Ghana with a dynamics akin to secular celebrity cultures (2008, 2012).

To be sure, this sense of indiscernibility is the fate of any expansion-driven religious movement, especially one so heavily centered on charisma, mass media, and promises of divine "breakthroughs." Indeed, this fact rarely escaped critical recognition by most of my Pentecostal interlocutors. Although they were keen to remind me that polemic procedures such as prosperity theology's consecration of money offerings as acts of faith or media evangelism have a Biblical basis, they also admitted that material vulnerability and long term popular fascination with the intercessory powers of men of God have made Pentecostalism in Ghana both extremely flamboyant and controversial. There is a general sense amid converts today that, if in the 1980s the Pentecostal movement was a lively countercultural force inviting Christians to abandon their nominalist inertia, it has risen to hegemony at the cost of including in its fold multiple personal agendas and levels of commitment.

Facing such a slippery object of research and uninterested in providing just another narrative about crisis and neoliberal disconnection, I opted for investigating ethnographically during fifteen months of fieldwork in Ghana forms of authoritative transmission of Pentecostal spirituality (Reinhardt 2013) or strategies of actualization, to remain with Bialecki. On the one hand, I was interested in understanding how the felicity of Pentecostal promises of empowerment might become predicated upon the acquisition of ethico-religious competencies of a narrative, devotional, and stylistic nature—the testimony, speaking in tongues, Bible reading, holiness, praise and worship, evangelism, ways of dressing and speaking, etc.—whose performance allows one's "born-againness" to emerge teleologically in practice (Asad 1993; Mahmood, 2005; Hirschkind 2006; Faubion 2011). Sharing a similar perspective, Marshall (2009) pictures the "Pentecostal revolution" in Nigeria primarily as a capillary dispersal of "technologies of Self" among converts, circumscribing this spirituality's ethico-political core without simply sealing it from broader forces shaping the Nigerian present, such as the colonial and missionary overcodification of the African past, the postcolonial "crisis of government," and the rise of new strategies of global extraversion and belonging. By doing so, Marshall situates Pentecostals' cosmopolitics in Nigeria instead of necessarily "localizing" or "indigenizing" it.

As I argued in the introduction, Marshall is able to grant the relative autonomy and resilience of Christianity as a form of life because she recognizes in it a "prescriptive regime." Different from a theological, cultural, or phenomenological

presence, Pentecostals' "political spirituality" appears as an ongoing effort that might misfire empirically in many ways, but whose normative force is not so easily falsified or trivialized. This position is not only theoretically sound. It is corroborated emically by many Pentecostals, who often engage with their cherished truth regime both passionately and critically. After all, "one of the ways in which Pentecostalism defines itself is precisely through staging the problem of the proper concept publicly, debating, even polemicizing about the question 'who is Born-Again'" (Marshall 2014: 346). In this sense, my second major concern was to examine the conditions of possibility for the authoritative flourishing of born-again subjects in Ghana amid relations, associations, and institutional ecologies (Droogers 1994; Kirsch 2008), with special focus on the pastoral project of the charismatic megachurch Lighthouse Chapel International (LCI). Since its foundation, LCI has grown exponentially and orderly, expanding from a small fellowship chapter that seceded in 1987 into a network of more than a thousand church branches covering all regions of Ghana and four continents.[3] How to account for this history of success amid such unlikely authoritative conditions?

The two sets of questions above—Pentecostal subject formation and ecclesiology, or corporate body-making—converge into the problem of discernment, or "How do we know that Christian words and Christian acts really express a Christian spirit?" (Keane 2007: 127). In Ghana, discernment has become as much a desired personal capacity as an asset for church government. Church leaders and zealous members are constantly worried about the pedagogical problem of how to coordinate the impressive quantitative growth of Pentecostalism in the country with what they call "spiritual growth" or "spiritual maturity," a qualitative notion (Reinhardt 2014: 318–22). For example, during a class on church growth at LCI's Bible school, Anagkazo Bible and Ministry Training Center, the reverend-instructor introduced two hundred apprentice ministers to the principle of "catering for group A and group B members." He admitted from the outset that the flock of any large church like LCI is deeply divided into two groups. The "group A" member is reliable and "prayerful." She attends church many times during the week, studies the Bible, practices evangelism, and engages in voluntary church work through small group meetings. Conversely, and quoting from a textbook authored by LCI's founding bishop, Dag Heward-Mills, he defined "group B" members as "once-a-weekers, non-small groups members, early service lovers, short sermon lovers, mind drifters, day dreamers, Bible forgetters, non note-takers, non-tithe payers, clock-watchers and the church-near-me attendees" (Heward-Mills 2007: 209). They will fatally flood any church, and the reverend prescribed to accept them as brothers and sisters, accommodate to their needs, but also pray for their transformation and slowly but actively lead them into a "group A" lifestyle, with the aid of the Holy Spirit. The reverend argued that 80 percent of LCI's growth was due to the work of 20 percent of the church's own flock, thus not the direct effect of powerful ministers. He added that this process of discipleship, in which Christians care for each other's piety, is vital for any church's "health," since group B members are

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3. For a more detailed presentation of LCI's history and structures, including its Bible school, Anagkazo Bible and Ministry Training Center, see Reinhardt (2013, 2014, 2015).

those most likely to display a mere fascination for miracles, being ready to "out-source" their personal relationship with God by putting a blind trust in the words and deeds of any man of God. This is a first step into the webs of false preachers and especially popular prophets, who have recently proliferated in the country. He concluded by stating that group A Christians are "spiritually mature" and have the "Spirit of discernment."

Among pious Pentecostals, discernment appears primarily as one of the gifts of the Spirit: "discernment of spirits" (Corinthians 12:810). But it is also explicitly taken as a competency acquired in practice (Luhrmann 2008) and within Christian networks of discipleship. Those are ministers, fellow believers, companions, friends, instructors, and spiritual guides acting individually or through informal and formal associations in which practical knowledges about the Spirit of God are transmitted. As argues Girish Daswani (2013), the problem of the culturally de-termined nature of Pentecostalism in Africa (global or indigenous?) must be dealt with ethnographically, thus at this level. Moreover, being highly embedded, the distribution of relations and methods of discipleship is also inflected sociologically. One of the most evident signs of the socio-cultural factors at stake in maturation careers is when "immature" converts and ministers are equated with "villagers," be-ing depicted as completely unaware of the global decorum of this religious move-ment: dressing in purple suits, being obsessed with witchcraft, and using strange artifacts during prophetic séances.

I grant that discernment is part of struggles for distinction in Ghana, especially those concerning the rural/urban cleavage (Mamdani 1996). Nevertheless, I would not simply reduce the model I will start developing below to a "middle class" phe-nomenon, not only because class boundaries can be extremely fuzzy in this coun-try or because the influence of charismatic churches on social mobility remains understudied, but especially because the portability of these scripts and the fast convertibility between their written, oral, and audio-visual transmission can make them cross sociological divides. Although predominantly based on my experience at LCI, this model was corroborated in different degrees by ethnographic data I found at other, large and small, city- and town-based, charismatic ministries and Bible schools of Southern Ghana.

I will now explore how the notion of a Christian plane of immanence helps give legibility to the set of agencies and affects involved in Pentecostal discernment, this laborious religious sensibility.

A Christian plane of immanence: Modulating the Spirit of God

During a conversation with pastor Asante, a senior Praise and Worship leader at LCI and an instructor at their Bible school, I was told that in order to properly understand his métier one should pay attention to how God's virtually ubiquitous presence in the world is actualized according to the particular contexts that com-pose a Pentecostal life:

> When it comes to the presence of God, there are three forms of manifestation. First, there's a general presence of God, which is

everywhere. So if you read Psalms, David says: Where can I go from your presence? If I run to the mountains, you're there. If I dive deep into the see, you're there. If I go into the desert, you're there [Psalms 139:7–8]. That presence of God is everywhere. Those who are saved and those who are unsaved can experience it. The second one is the presence of God that is in the believer. That one the unbeliever cannot experience, because the Bible says: In him we live, and move, and have our being [Acts 17:28]. Anyone who gives his or her life to Jesus, the Holy Spirit comes and dwells in that person. Jesus said that if you abide by my word, I'll come and dwell in you, me and my father [Romans 8:9]. Third, there's what we call the manifest presence of God. The scripture says that God inhabits, he sits on the praises and worship of his people [Psalms 22:3]. When the people of God come together for worship, God manifests himself in a new way. Sometimes there's a physical manifestation, like healing, or people crying, kneeling down, falling down, rolling on the floor. Sometimes you're just in the environment and you feel that the whole thing has taken another turn. You feel it in the air. God can manifest himself when there's preaching and teaching of the Bible, but the reason why most times you see him manifesting during praise and worship sections is because during praise and worship people's hearts and minds are opened up by the spiritual songs. We are all moving together, singing in one voice, whereas the preacher tends to be separated from the congregation. So when we sing, the Spirit "hits" on us at the same time, and it comes more powerfully.

Careful not to fracture the singleness and sovereignty of monotheistic transcendence, Pastor Asante introduced me to a field of immanent expression of the Holy Spirit organized around genres of revelation, which I would like to consider as "modes," a term Deleuze retains from Baruch Spinoza. Spinoza (1996) establishes that divinity manifests in the order of Nature (*Deus siva Natura*) as a substance, which he defines as "what is in itself and is conceived by itself, that is, that whose concept does not require the concept of another thing, from which it must be formed" (1). Complementarily, modes are "the affections of a substance, that which is in another through which it is also conceived" (1). In this monistic system, plants, animals, and men are emanations of a single primordial substance, whereas their differences are measured in terms of degrees of power (*conatus*) and intensity.

The question of the "univocity of Being" (Smith 2001), and the paradox of divinity as single and heterogeneous has been placed at the heart of Christianity by Trinitarianism, understood as a divine economy of persons or *hypostasis*. This notion also evokes, albeit differently from Spinoza, an "underlying substance" with a threefold design, often compared pedagogically by my interlocutors in Ghana to water, vapor, and ice. What I find fascinating about the emic model presented by pastor Asante is how much self-difference (Viveiros de Castro 2007) can be absorbed by a single person of the Trinity: the Holy Spirit.[4]

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4.   The question of divinity's singleness and multiplicity might be applied to a vast range of religious traditions, problematizing the stability of dualistic categories such as "monotheism" and "polytheism," whose genealogy remains underexplored. Here however I will focus only on Pentecostalism, but see Bialecki (forthcoming) for a more exhaustive argument on religion and virtuality.

Considering the virtual unity of the field presented above, see Figure 1 for a visual representation of some of its modes:
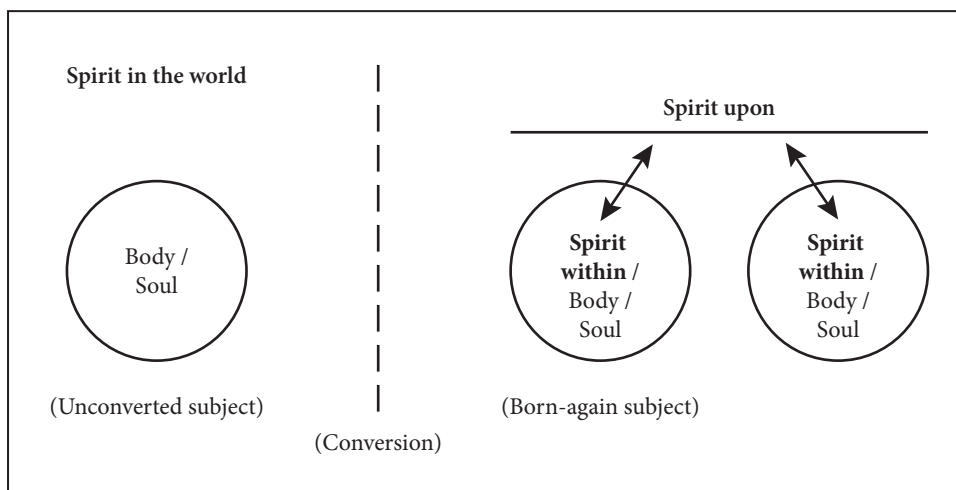

Figure 1: Unfolding divine presence into modes: The Spirit in the World, the Spirit within, and the Spirit upon.

We realize that en-Spirit naturalism is not without distinctions. The limits of presence within the Pentecostal lifeworld are not objectively settled either by an internal authoritative component (the monopoly of a church or leader to define it) or by a clear-cut distinction between a transcendental God and a disenchanted nature. Things are held together in a single plan as a set of forces and potentialities saturated by divine agency, which is actualized in heterogeneous albeit noncontradictory ways.

The *Spirit in the world* is akin to God's omnipresence and omnipotence. Here divinity appears either in a position of omniscient observation and moral surveillance (as in the Biblical scene with David) or divine intervention on nature and history. The *Spirit in the world* grants that divine affects are not exclusive to converts. The fact that Pentecostal healing, prophecies, and other miraculous events move people to convert confirms that this mode pertains to the whole of creation, saved and unsaved. Pentecostal crusades are often welcomed even in Muslim towns in Ghana, and one of the common complaints reproduced in Bible schools referred to the need of healing evangelists, deliverance ministers, and prophets to condition these miraculous affects to conversion, persuading their audiences that without spiritual rebirth one cannot "hold" one's healing and deliverance or fulfill personal prophecies. They inevitably noticed that the *Spirit in the world* can be a dangerous line of flight, which blurs their religion's boundaries while attracting individuals interested in the bonus of spiritual intercession, but not ready to pay the onus of personal submission. This Pentecostal "free rider" (Asamoah-Gyadu 2005: 89) finds a variety of nomenclatures. If a church member, she is a "church goer" or an "immature Christian"; if not even committed to church membership, she is officially called a "visitor."

Conversion represents the possibility of establishing a personal relationship with God through the *Spirit within*. As shown in the graph, the Pentecostal person is a triadic entity (Csordas 1994). One might call it an assemblage, due to the active presence of an other within the bodily temple that still retains its transcendental externality, as a fold. Although sovereignly given, these divine affects require a cultivated receptivity in order to flourish in actuality, since, as Josh Brahinsky argues, "sensations, sensory propensities, and the religious doctrines that form reciprocally with them all emerge from lengthy processes of winnowing, cultivating, and training, often with a careful eye to dialogue with a coconstitutive outside" (2012: 219). In consonance, many of my interlocutors referred to their personal relationship with the Spirit as a dynamic "fellowship," a term also used interchangeably to address the human relationality of Christian gatherings. Maturing Christians fellowship with the *Spirit within* through personal revivals known in Ghana as "quiet time," methodic forms of dispossession. Silent prayer, focused reading and memorization of scriptures, imagination exercises, and inner attention, are the means deployed to foster the capacity of "hearing God" and recognizing the "prompts" of the Spirit through inner testimony (Luhrmann 2012). The *Spirit within* carries its own affective vertigo and assumes different somatic expressions and semiotic inscriptions: inner voices, imaginations, dreams, visions, feelings like love and joy, as well as volitional states like "boldness," very common during evangelism and preaching.

If the *Spirit within* modulates presence according to a line of enchanted individuation and intimacy, the *Spirit upon* finds expression during events of corporate prayer, praise and worship, and "sensational" (Meyer 2011) gatherings, as testified by the general Pentecostal taste for crowds and multitudes. Praise and worship sessions, the contexts highlighted by pastor Asante, are inaugurated by slow tempo "praise songs" that express thankfulness for Christ's redemptive work on the cross, whereas fast tempo "worship songs" glorify God's power and greatness. The use of different divine names in the lyrics follows the shift of addressee that characterizes the ceremony, from the intimate and loving Emmanuel to the glorious El-Shadai and Adonai. Pastor Asante stressed how music is not "causing" the Spirit to manifest, but setting the congregation ready to receive it. His careful wording depicted the practice as a form of seduction, whereby subjects make themselves available to the *Spirit upon* without assuming the role of primary agent. In this sense, he would accept the claim that human fellowship attracts presence, but he would find Durkheim's (1995) enthronement of "collective effervescence" as a self-generative God fetishistic, as it confuses divinity with its context of apparition.

An additional aspect to be extracted from pastor Asante's description is that these gatherings rely not on long-lasting horizontal sociality, but on a joint experience of God, which is his job to facilitate. This is indicated in the graph by the intentional lack of a horizontal line between those made subject of/by the *Spirit upon*. Instead of a Durkheimian sacralization of the social, which reenergizes a previously given structure, the Pentecostal being-together is a coperformance (Robbins 2009) and a shared experience of an other, which is already in and out, but which falls upon with greater intensity, assembling the Pentecostal social episodically. In comparison with the *Spirit within*, this line of ecstasy is definitely centrifugal (Bialecki 2011) and has an affinity with the figure of the crowd, but it is not necessarily collectivizing, in the sense of shaping a durable identity.

I am not claiming that Pentecostal spirituality is allergic to communitarian links. I could testify during my fieldwork that, by taking an active and daily role in church life, "group A" Christians inevitably became entangled in networks of solidarity where friendship, marriage, and Christian mentorship take place. But considering the verticality of the worship scene described above, one may still ask: if a church has no longer an enduring role in mediating transcendental immanence, what holds a deterritorialized corporate body like LCI's together? Should we assume that these are merely loose ritual assemblages of individuals-in-relation-to-God (Dumont 1985)? The nondenominational vein of Pentecostalism appears to confirm that. However, it is important to bear in mind that what I addressed above as the line of individuation of Pentecostal immanence and subject formation should not be confused with "self-possessive individualism," nor reduced to a mere mystification of secular reflexivity. A way of tackling both questions together, that of Pentecostal personhood and human relationality, is by taking a closer look at an important mid-range player, situated between God and the congregant, the charismatic leader, whose agency resonates more productively with Gabriel Tarde's sociology of "social influence," embraced by Deleuze as one of his major inspirations (Deleuze 1994: 307–8n15), than Durkheim's theory of collective representations and pregiven identities reanimated by ritual practice. But what is a Pentecostal minister?

Adding depth and horizontality: Intensities, flows, and refractions of God

According to the egalitarian tenets of the priesthood of all believers (Asamoah-Gyadu 2005: 96–131), every born-again Christian is a potential leader. And yet, ministers have gone through additional steps and experiences that ushered them into fulltime ministry. First, they were called and received a specific mission, defined by their "office."[5] LCI, for instance, is the project of an apostle, Bishop Dag Heward-Mills. The Pentecostal apostolate is indeed a metaoffice, as it accumulates a variety of capacities embodied by other ministers, such as exhortative "preaching" (pastor), highly analytic "teaching" (teacher), and salvation-oriented "evangelism" (evangelist). What makes him an apostle is precisely his vocation to channel all these diverse functions toward a paramount purpose: to produce other Christian leaders in his likeness, as Paul, the arch-apostle, did with Timothy and others (Castelli 1991). Apostles are shepherds of shepherds, and the heads of large and complex institutions, which grow and reproduce into branches by ushering converts into forms of Christian relationality with a pedagogical inflection.

Second, ministers are "mature Christians," converts who, by having submitted more intensely to the disciplines of fasting, prayer, holiness, and Bible studies, straightened their relations with the Spirit. The leader's intensified connectivity with the Spirit becomes an asset for public practices of intercession, such as praying on behalf of others, delivering personal prophecies, healing, and casting out

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5. According to the Pauline script of the "five-fold ministry," God calls minsters to specific offices endowed with particular missions: apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers (Ephesians 4:11).

demons. Although conversion as "spiritual rebirth" implies that God has adopted all converts equally, thus transfiguring them into brothers and sisters "in Christ," what my interlocutors called "age in Christ" still matters. In this sense, whereas recent converts have their slippages pardoned by receiving the paternalistic label of "spiritual babies," ministers, elders, and lay leaders are "men" and "women" of God, receiving greater respect and reverence, along with additional responsibilities. These diverse levels of maturation become mutually entangled in Ghana through relations of spiritual kinship (Klaits 2010; Reinhardt 2013, 2014, 2015). In order to grow spiritually, it is vital to have a spiritual father or mother, that is, a personal mentor one should "follow" along maturation. Bishop Dag is the spiritual father of LCI, and, as an apostle, he is the father of many fathers and mothers in Christ transmitting Christian norms within the denomination's capillary networks.

The hierarchical dimension condensed in the lexicon of spiritual maturation finds a counterpart in the "anointing." In this sense, a third characteristic of Pentecostal men and women of God is that they have been "anointed" by God in greater measure. The notion refers to the Old Testament practice of consecrating Jewish kings by anointing their heads with oil. It allows Pentecostals to engage in forms of grace-recognition that evade the binary presence-absence, typical of the grammar of spiritual "gifts." Whereas a gift can be received or not, grace is "liquefied" by the anointing, borrowing from the oil the sensible quality of gradation (Meneley 2008). During a class about "Hearing from God" in Central Bible College, another Ghanaian Bible school where I was able to spend time, the instructor reproduced the following scheme on the blackboard, entitled "Levels of Anointing." It depicts the born-again body as a vessel progressively filled by the Sprit:

> Anointing [1] – Ankle
> Anointing [2] – Knees
> Anointing [3] – Waist
> Anointing [4] – Swimming/Overflow

The bodily parts and the process of saturating oneself with divinity reproduce the liquid allegory of Ezekiel 47, in which presence rises until it fully saturates the Jewish prophet. The system was articulated to particular spiritual "tastes" experienced by the joyful container—[1] milk; [2] fish; [3] meat; [4] honey—and complemented by teachings on disciplines through which one "feeds" oneself spiritually: prayer, fasting, reading and memorizing the Word, holiness, praise and worship, service [church work], fellowship, giving alms, tithes, and offerings.

Similar to the organic lexicon of spiritual maturation, the liquid materiality of the anointing modulates presence according to *intensity*, and gives depth to the still flat plane of transcendental immanence I have been presenting thus far. The anointing also *flows* across vessels when intensified, and allows ministers to add to their pedagogical functions the role of conduits for grace (Coleman 2009). By giving depth and transversality to Pentecostal immanence, spiritual maturity and the anointing also lend intelligibility to one of the assemblages my fieldwork research was particularly concerned with, Bible schools, described by their students as places to seek spiritual maturity by bonding with spiritual parents and empowerment by "catching" or "tapping into" their anointing. The process of inheriting the charismatically infused skills of a parent in Christ is called "impartation," which

gives analytical access to another mode of Pentecostal presence omitted by pastor Asante, one in which human alterity is central: the *Spirit across*.
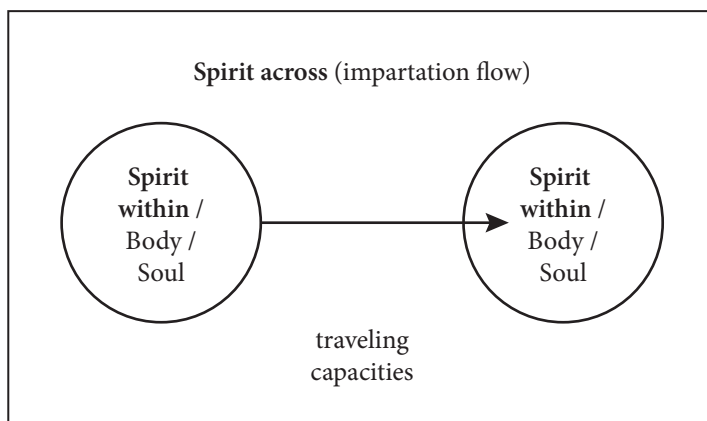

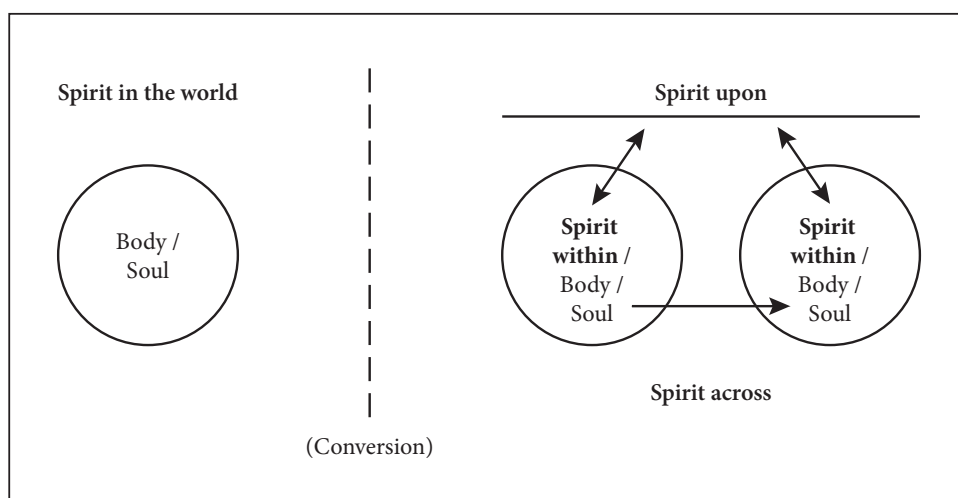**Figure 2:** Impartation: Transferring spiritual capacities through a trans-personal flow of presence.

Figure 3: Four spiritual modes: The Spirit in the world, the Spirit within, the Spirit upon, and the Spirit across.

LCI's Anagkazo Bible and Ministry Training Center presented to me the most explicit access to the pedagogical potential of actualizing the *Spirit across* through discipleship. In previous articles (Reinhardt 2014, 2015), I investigated the notion, widely shared in this institution, that the anointing "rubs on you" and "comes with association," and showed how the students inherit the anointing of LCI's founder, bishop Dag Heward-Mills, while making themselves "saturated" by the flow of the Spirit of God and the frames provided by the apostle's glosses on the Bible. A major effect of the anointing transference recognized by Anagkazo students was

mimetism, and my personal interviews became instances where they witnessed, not without surprise, about how their time at the institution has made them think, preach, pray, and even walk in the pulpit like Bishop Dag. The evidence of becoming-like-the-spiritual-father or "catching" his anointing grants the efficacy of impartation in Anagkazo. Normativity is therefore successfully instilled amid apprentice ministers at the school mainly through the juxtaposition of Christian discipleship and the flow of the *Spirit across*, thus animating LCI's bureaucratic structures with a deep sense of loyalty and family belonging.

Contrasting the dynamics of charismatic leadership in a Pentecostal Church in Zambia with Weber's theory of charisma, Thomas Kirsch (2008) argues that, different from "routinization," he observed a "dispersion" of charisma (183–200) able to empower church cadres through a division of labor. LCI does make extensive use of similar strategies, which I do not have space to tackle here;[6] impartation however is a different case, being a matter of transmitting charisma across generations. Respecting the transcendental origins attributed to Bishop Dag's anointing as it flows across vessels in Anagkazo, I prefer to argue that his charisma is *refracted* through relations of discipleship. In a passage of *Laws of imitation*, Tarde defines the apostles as "refractory individuals" (Tarde 2009: 72), poles of imitativeness that inflect the original, Christ, with specific styles. Implicit in Tarde's approach is that a refractory individual is not exactly a "mediator," a term that tends to be understood either in a semiotic or political sense of "representation": as sign or proxy. A refractory agent grants access to the original by transporting its force into the present, instead of simply "standing for" it in its absence. This optic metaphor therefore retains the possibility of rethinking impartation as a dive into the vital origins of charismatic authority through the Pentecostal apostle, considered by his followers a mere conduit, but one that nevertheless endows the flow of the *Spirit across* with a distinctive signature.

Another virtue of the notion of refraction is that it allows us to understand how diverse refractory agents can be juxtaposed recursively in time and space without necessarily obfuscating the originary force that propagates through them. By refracting the same exogenous flow, they are assembled into a single "imitative radiation" (Tarde 2009). I was surprised at first to note that Bishop Dag's disciples in Anagkazo never felt any need to justify his singular position in Ghana's Pentecostal scene by stressing his unique place in the eyes of God or how he had been "set apart" from others. Quite the opposite: they constantly called my attention to how his extraordinary influence was due exactly to his intensified social connectivity.[7] This was made explicit by the following comment from Ebenezer, a 32-year-old student coming from Northern Ghana:

> If you watch carefully the history of the Revival, you can actually trace the anointing flow. When you take someone like Kathryn Kuhlman [USA, 1907–76], you can see how she behaves like Smith Wigglesworth

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6. The doctrine of the five-fold ministry, mentioned above, is one of the major sources authorizing the dispersal of charisma among Ghanaian churches, since it specifies ministerial callings and encourages interdependence among them.

7. On singularity as the effect of increased connectivity, not the opposite, see Helene Miallet's (2012) ethnography about Stephen Hawking as a "distributed centered-subject."

[England, 1859–1957]. When she operates on the healing anointing . . . we have Aimee McPherson [USA, 1890–1944]! You know where she is coming from. And that same anointing passed on to Benny Himn [Israel/Canada, 1952–]. When I watch the bishop preaching, I see Kenneth Hagin [USA, 1917–2003]. When he prays, I see Duncan-Williams [pioneer of the charismatic revival in Ghana, 1952–]. Duncan-Williams was his personal mentor. He is also an apostle, just like Idahosa [pioneer of the charismatic movement in Nigeria, 1938–98], who was Duncan-William's spiritual father. When you see Bishop Dag on a crusade, operating as a healing evangelist, he flows exactly like Reinhard Bonke [Germany, 1940–].

Ebenezer's correspondences demonstrate well the theopolitical role played by the "oil" and its inheritance in charismatic sociality. Apostles are not only fathers or mothers of many parents in Christ. They are also sons and daughters. In consonance, they are not the recipients of a unique anointing from God but open tributaries of a common flow. In sum, apostles are network nodes and mystical vessels who transport local actors and contexts into the broader recursive veins of global Pentecostalism. As dense concentrations of grace, we might say that these famous men and women of God perform a role analogous to the one attributed by Peter Brown to tombs and relics of saints in Late Ancient Christianity. They are "privileged places, where the contrasted poles of Heaven and Earth meet," and "centers of the ecclesiastical life of their region" (Brown 1982: 3). Specific to the Pentecostal case though is how these leaders' privileged relation to transcendental immanence, the "source" of their spiritual power, is refracted through spiritual lineages with a global reach, tributaries of a flow of grace and mimesis that Ebenezer can easily reconstruct by simply taking a glimpse at Bishop Dag's verbal and bodily behavior. By condensing and dispersing spiritual power downward, global ministers also condense a history of discourse and connectivity. In a contentious "open-source" religious ecology like Pentecostalism, these lineages are also tools of exemplarity and discernment justifying the authority of specific pastoral projects by suffusing them with the interpersonal moves of the *Spirit across*. Again, human relatedness and divine immanence are never merely alienated from each other for belonging to alternative plans of reality, and that is why Tarde's post-Social approach to connectivity (Candea 2010; Viveiros de Castro and Goldman 2012) lends good legibility to the spiritually saturated dimension of Pentecostal sociality.

How to flee from the immanent frame: Deleuze's atheistic monism and Pentecostalism's monotheistic pluralism

In the first section, I argued that, as ideological formations advancing specific ethics, politics, and sensibilities, Deleuze's philosophy of radical immanence and Pentecostal spirituality can be read as two lines of flight from the hegemonic secular dyad between ineffable transcendence and disenchanted immanence. The sections that followed explored how Pentecostals' fascination with sacred immanence might gain in translatability through an encounter with Deleuze's conceptual repertoire. Here, I shift back to a comparative register and qualify these commonalities by readdressing the specificity of Deleuze's monistic pluralism and Pentecostalism's pluralistic monotheism.

In *What is philosophy?* Deleuze and Guattari define the plane of immanence as follows:

> We will say that THE plane of immanence is, at the same time, that which must be thought and that which cannot be thought. It is the nonthought within though. It is the basis of all planes, immanent to every thinkable plane that does not succeed in thinking it. It is the most intimate within thought and yet the absolute outside—an outside more distant than any external world because it is inside deeper than any internal world. (1994: 59)

Their argument strives to locate the Being of immanence at the limits of intelligibility, as both its condition of possibility and a frictional and affective force that undermines strategies of overcodification. As a real vertigo, immanence crosses conventional boundaries at both infinitesimal and infinite levels, intimate and cosmic, within and without. The plane of immanence entails a radical impossibility of "solving" the singularities of life into transcendental points of ascription: divinity, the subject, reason, language, or mechanical and organic models of nature and society. In a late essay that bears a strong vitalism, what Deleuze (2001) calls the "transcendental field" is rendered coeval to the plane of immanence, being coextensive to the world and consciousness and yet irreducible to either of them. Deleuze needs an externality to grant the unity of what he calls in this opportunity "A LIFE." And yet this ontological principle is nothing but a difference that differs and a repetition that resists language, habit, and memory (Deleuze 1994). In this atheistic monism, flows, intensities, and modes are mostly expressions of transgression accessed in their fullness only through limit-experiences.

Let us compare this to Pentecostalism's plane of transcendental immanence, which problematizes the strong duality of the immanent frame as much as the synonymy between transcendence, judgment, and morality established by Deleuze's dominant characterization of Christianity. First, notions of flow, intensity, and desire are evoked by Pentecostals as manifestations of enthusiasm and limit-experiences, but also as strategies of normalization. These distributive operations arrange an excess of divine presence in the world as a field of forces, therefore without abandoning the plane where they are actualized. Practices and experiences are attached to modes of the Spirit, which allow actors to recognize divine immanence's inner distinctions in terms of directionalities, distributions of agency, and intensities. As a result, the affects of the Spirit are unequally accessed and reclaimed within episodic and enduring assemblages composed by individuals with distinctive levels of submission, power, prestige, and credibility.

Second, in order to organize enthusiasm immanently, Pentecostalism produces a shift from asceticism to *askesis* (Foucault 2005; Reinhardt 2014: 322–30), that is, from moral disciplines understood as repression or deferral of worldly desires to spiritual and ethical disciplines understood as expressions of desire for God, often overreaching the condemnatory language of guilt and resentment. Commenting on Pentecostal praise and worship, James Smith argues that: "Changes in a way of life will not take place until that affective core is reached. And that is exactly what the tactile, visceral, and emotional nature of Pentecostal worship is to effect" (2010: 77). My committed interlocutors frequently alluded to the pleasure elicited by long prayer sessions, mentioning how their desire to pray has grown exponentially along their spiritual

maturation. Another field in which desire plays a major role are spiritual gifts, according to the precepts of 1 Corinthians 14:1 to "Follow the way of love and eagerly desire gifts of the Spirit." In Anagkazo, students were explicit about their desire to "receive from God what he has given to the bishop," somebody they "loved" dearly. Submissive to God and, by refraction, to their spiritual father, students would unapologetically claim that they wanted to be "like him." Desirous emulation of Christ's ministers plays a major role in Pentecostal social influence, both inside and outside of Bible schools.

Deleuze himself tackles this ambiguous relation between desire and submission as follows:

> To the question "How can desire desire its own repression, how can it desire its slavery," we reply that the powers which crush desire, or which subjugate it, themselves already form part of assemblages of desire: it is sufficient for desire to follow this particular line, for it to find itself caught, like a boat, in this particular wind. There is no desire *for* revolution, as there is no desire *for* power, desire *to* oppress or *to* be oppressed; but revolution, oppression, power, etc. are the actual component lines of a given assemblage (2006: 100).

Attention to the compositional nature of desire stressed by Deleuze requires a shift in the notion of judgment and morality that undergirds his own flat definition of Christianity, which stems from Nietzsche and has been popularized in the social sciences through Weber's opposition between asceticism and mysticism (cf. Bynum 1991: 53–78). Pentecostalism is as much a desire-repressing as a desire-producing machine, which envelops Christian docility and ecstasy into a single libidinal economy, wherein lies much of its power.

Third, I want to point out how normativity is inscribed in this field through two major meta-operations of discernment: ethical homeostasis and non-substitutability.
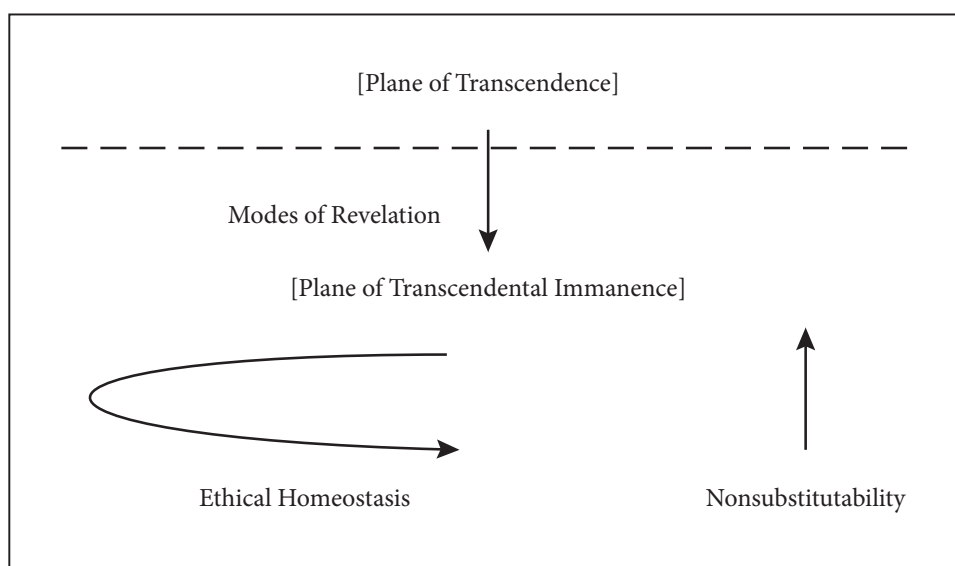

Figure 4: Two meta-operations of spiritual discernment: Ethical homeostasis and nonsubstitutability.

According to the virtualist model I have advanced, much of the inner hetero-geneity of the Pentecostal movement results from the multiple ways whereby particular denominations manage a field of forces inflected by a tension between a line of individuation, centered on an intimate attunement to the rhythms of the *Spirit within*, and a line of ecstatic opening, in which presence is summoned by synchronized crowds and powerful charismatic leaders, the *Spirit upon* and *across*. The first tendency individualizes authority and underlines spiritual autonomy, whereas the latter leans toward heteronomy through reliance on corporate meetings, spiritual intercession, denominationalism, and mentorship. Both trends might be at odds and are current among Ghanaian churches, being arranged according to specific pastoral strategies and with different degrees of success.

Hailed from multiple directions, a "mature Christian" was defined by my interlocutors as someone "well balanced" in her spiritual diet. Different from self-possessed "autonomy," "maturity" is the virtue and capacity of "weighting" one's public exposition to divine affects according to the scale provided by the *Spirit within*, as well as the counseling of others by taking part in communities of witnessing. Excessive dependence upon deliverance, prophecy, and other forms of intercession was often presented as a sign of immaturity, thus lack of a personal relationship with God. After being exposed to a prophecy, for instance, one should seek "confirmation" from God by "praying about it," seeking inner testimony, and the counseling of "other vessels." We realize how the lack of a dominant institutional source of authoritative discernment requires a norm performed through homeostatic forms of judgment and critique that oscillate reflexively across different ethical stances (Keane 2010), thus folding a tradition and its agencies upon themselves. In this sense, the pedagogical spread of adequate methods of spiritual nurturance and the shaping of face-to-face communities of practices able to embed discernment are the main challenges for Pentecostal flourishing in Ghana, whose history is not solely one of defeats.

This point leads me to spell out why I defined the Pentecostal lifeworld as a *Christian* plane of immanence or a plane of *transcendental* immanence. Because a mature Christian is also someone who knows how to contextually disentangle divine presence from the bodies, words, objects, and practices it saturates by "reaching out" strategically to transcendence. This aspect becomes visible when Pentecostals ask a negative question: What is not the Spirit? Pastor Asante, for instance, claimed, during our interview, "people should know that the presence of God is not their emotions." Tears, joy, and even laughter are publicly acknowledged affects of the *Spirit upon*, not a self-producing God. The same is valid for the *Spirit within*, and classes on hearing God stressed the importance of differentiating the voice of God from your own mind or demonic utterances.[8] During

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8. The devil has been a protagonist in the literature on Pentecostalism in Africa, one of the reasons I opted for focusing mostly on the Holy Spirit at this opportunity. It suffices to acknowledge here that, as a virtuality, demonic forces inhabit every corner of Pentecostals' plan of transcendental immanence, operating as a multifarious force of countereffectuation that threatens to break the singleness of the Pentecostal lifeworld into a dualism. Analogously to the Holy Spirit, the devil is "in the world" and can affect anyone directly or through his hordes, conversion equipping committed born-again

exercises of "waiting" in Central Bible College, in which prayer in tongues was performed for long hours, being followed by collective silence and attention to the inner prompts of the Spirit, students were pushed by the instructors to share their inner testimonies even when they had been "slain" and fallen down in ecstasy. The practice was based on the Pauline axiom: "The spirits of prophets are subject to the control of prophets" (I Corinthians 14:32). On a similar vein, in the opening class of Prophet Sam's small School of Prophetic Excellence, he gave us a long sermon on how the Holy Spirit "is not a fetish spirit," as the vessel retains consciousness and remains accountable for the way revelations are delivered to the congregation. The same is valid for intercessory actualizations of the *Spirit across*. During a meeting where she was led by the Spirit to anoint her flock with oil, prophetess Vera, a Church of Pentecost lay leader in the neighborhood of Darkuman, Accra, warned her audience: "The anointing is not the oil!" All these pedagogical operations share the purpose of dissociating the fullness of God's presence from its immanent manifestations while establishing that, as a transcendental entity, divinity is ultimately *nonsubstitutable* for the affects, means of transport, and assemblages it animates. Lack of competency to purify and the resulting slippage into reification are mistakes immature Christians and "churchgoers" share with romantic individualists, Durkheimian collectivists, and scholars ready to "symmetrize" the agency of things.

An akin dynamic is applied to one of God's major points of immanent actualization in Anagkazo: Bishop Dag Heward-Mills. Ebenezer depicted the bishop as the tributary of a long flow of grace crossing space and time through other vessels. Nonetheless, none of the men and women of God mentioned by Ebenezer "owns" the slippery oil they transport. We realize that transcendence here has moved from nonparticipation (ineffability) to an intense participation amid persons and things closely followed by a norm of nonappropriation. The anointing flow can be channeled or ideologically framed, as in Anagkazo, but never fully objectified or retained. Whereas the immanent presence of the anointing smears loyalties and refracts charisma in Bible schools through learning and communication, its transcendental origin prevents disciples from mixing transport with substitution. This ongoing possibility facilitates emulation but may also induce detachment and schism from spiritual lineages, since the authority of particular nodes is never adamant.

Christians with effective weapons to fight "the opposer." It attacks the inner domain through sinful suggestions and arises to the bodily surface along with the *Spirit upon* and *across* during the power struggles staged during deliverance séances. Finally, the devil also acts interpersonally when its predatory agency is transmitted through polluted foods, gifts, and "generational curses." So-called deliverance ministries, fully specialized in exorcism, had their apex in Ghana during the 1990s, and were overshadowed since then by a prophetic wave. But the relevance of demonic agencies for Pentecostal spirituality remains, varying in intensity and form according to specific ecclesiastical projects and being a constant topic of debate and dissent among converts. See Meyer (1999) for the most detailed, historically grounded account of this subject in Ghana.

Conclusion: Sacred immanence unleashed, transcendence held still, for now . . .

We conclude that, as an ideally controlled dive into the vertigo of sacred immanence, Pentecostalism retains the possibility of being "pulled up" toward transcendence by the hand of God, the most fundamental area of incommensurability between its pluralistic monotheism and Deleuze's monistic pluralism. The philosophical challenge posed by Deleuze's radical immanence is to remain in a flow of difference without reaching out to a pregiven generality, thus populating existence with singularities. The ethical and spiritual challenge posed by Pentecostalism is to embrace the Self, the other, and the world as stages where the sovereign and yet immanent affects of a transcendental God have been dispersed and can be experienced as habit and surprise. The result is a Christianity at risk, a machine fed by desire for God and regulated by an interstitial norm, which paradoxically struggles to define proper ways of overflowing boundaries. The importance of holding transcendence still while navigating this dangerous method of cultivated transgression indicates that one should never lose sight that, as humans—animated or not, spiritually dead or reborn—we remain constrained by the old boundaries of a world that has fallen from grace and that expects, in vigil, God's glorious eschatological return. Ultimate "restoration" therefore belongs to the end of times, not to the end-times, when we will finally see the loving and terrible face of God, in whose mysterious temporality the very dualism of immanence and transcendence will expire.

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Un plan d'immanence chrétien?: Réflexion en contrepoint sur Deleuze et la spiritualité pentecôtiste

Résumé : Dans cet article je revisite les débats actuels sur l'immanence et la transcendance dans l'anthropologie du christianisme et propose une rencontre entre la philosophie de Gilles Deleuze et mon expérience à l'occasion d'une terrain mené auprès de pentecôtistes au Ghana. Mon raisonnement établit un contrepoint éclairant entre ces deux traditions, à travers des moments d'harmonisation et de dissonance. La philosophie immanente radicale et la spiritualité pentecôtiste sont présentées comme deux lignes de fuite du "cadre d'immanence" de la modernité sécularisée hégémonique, une marginalité partagée qui facilite mon engagement avec les notions deleuziennes de virtualité, de mode, d'intensité, de flux, de désir, et de réfraction, afin de prendre en compte les formes de manifestation hétérogènes du Saint Esprit dans la Création. Cette tentative de réconciliation souligne des points de tension; et je conclus cet article en revisitant des différences fondamentales entre le pluralisme moniste de Deleuze et le monothéisme pluraliste des pentecôtistes.

Bruno REINHARDT holds a PhD in anthropology from the University of California, Berkeley. He is a postdoctoral research fellow in the Department of Philosophy

and Religious Studies at Utrecht University. He is author of *Espelho ante espelho: A troca e a guerra entre o neopentecostalismo e os cultos Afro-Brasileiros em Salvador* (Attar/Pronex, 2007) and has published articles on anthropological theory and the anthropology of religion and secularism.

Bruno Reinhardt
Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies
Utrecht University
Janskerkhof 13, 3512 BL, Utrecht
Netherlands
B.M.N.Reinhardt@uu.nl