



Who belongs and how – shifting the religious repertoires of academic practice

Timothy Stacey

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Nobody, not even the academic, is ever motivated by rational arguments alone. We are always also driven by feelings, which themselves are carried in myths, rituals, and even magic – what I call religious repertoires. These might, for example, be grand societal myths about how the future as a whole could or should be – myths that influence even us aloof intellectuals. But they could also be specifically academic myths, from the theories that define our fields, to ideas that form our practice, such as that of the genius solo – dare I say male – thinker. They could be day-to-day rituals that are woven into society as a whole – like the handshake – or they could be academic rituals of celebrating certain achievements.

By starting with this assertion, and playing with it, I hope that we can begin to contribute in a small way to the decolonization of academic knowledge, and, through this academic spaces too: not by championing alternative ways of being, which I leave to indigenous scholars and anthropologists. Not by experimenting with creative practice, which I leave to the more artistic among us. But by loosening the very ground on which we stand – blurring the boundaries between knowledge and personal aspirations; and between personal aspiration itself and the stories we have been fed growing up. Once we recognize that we are all subject to religious repertoires of one form or another, we can begin to construct a new “religion” in which the people and ways of belonging are very different. We can, as it were, more easily open the doors to science-skeptical and artistic colleagues.