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MIND, SELF AND THE DEVIL: SATANIC PRESENCE IN INTERNAL CONVERSATION AMONG CHILEAN PENTECOSTALS

Abstract

Many Chilean Pentecostals regularly express their concern that the Devil is attacking their minds by sending skeptical, inappropriate and confusing thoughts. In this article I draw on phenomenological and pragmatist perspectives on the human self as implying self-distance and self-objectification, as I shed light on Pentecostal experiences and interpretations of spiritual warfare being fought at an intra-subjective level. I argue in particular that George Herbert Mead’s view on internal conversation as a mediating factor between social processes and individual self-awareness is helpful in that it allows us to see the thoughts that Pentecostals interpret as diabolic attacks as internalizations of external confrontations with a largely secular society or – in Pentecostal terminology – a ‘world’ of sin.¹

Key words: pentecostalism, Chile, the self, pragmatism, phenomenology, spiritual warfare

Introduction

Manuel, a young man from the Evangelical Pentecostal Church (EPC) in Valparaíso, Chile once told me, as we were sitting and chatting in the church building one late afternoon, that he was going through a kind of spiritual crisis. When I asked him to be more specific, he first said that he did not want to tell me because I would probably not understand him anyway. But after a while, he eventually started telling me and then remarked: «Well, you understood me perfectly well. It can be good to talk about things sometimes. The enemy says to you: «don’t tell him, he won’t understand you, he will just laugh at you.» But you understood me.»

In Chile, as elsewhere, Pentecostals can be distinguished from mainline Protestants and Catholics by the emphasis they place on spiritual warfare. A favourite Biblical passage in the EPC, Ephesians 6:12, aptly encapsulates the Pentecostal view of who their true enemies are: «For we are not fighting against human beings but against the

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Serious demonic crises when possessed persons scream, vomit and shake violently are a rarity in the EPC as well as in other Chilean Pentecostal churches I have visited. But, like Manuel, who retrospectively ascribed his own anticipation that I would not understand him to the enemy (the Devil) having manipulated his thoughts, many Chilean Pentecostals regularly express their concerns that God’s main opponent is constantly trying to attack their minds. The Devil does so by sending sinful images and sceptical, inappropriate and confusing thoughts. As Pentecostals believe that God holds the upper hand in spiritual warfare, such minor satanic attacks do not inspire panic or paranoia. But they do remind Pentecostals of the need to keep their eyes on God and protect their minds against an external but potentially intruding otherness.

The focus of this article is on Pentecostal understandings and experiences of their own thoughts as an arena of spiritual struggle. I look at how Pentecostals develop a specific awareness of certain aspects of their own thought processes through regular interaction with fellow congregants. For Pentecostals, maintaining a fundamentalist-Christian identity is continuously being challenged by the culture and structures of plausibility of the Chilean society they live within. What I argue in the following is that their focus on spiritual warfare as fought at an intra-subjective level forms a central part of ongoing efforts to cope with this challenge by disciplining a Christian self on an everyday basis.

In order to pursue my analysis of Pentecostal experiences of a diabolic otherness imposing itself on their mental activity, I introduce and discuss phenomenological and pragmatist conceptualisations of the human self as implying self distance and self objectification. Considering that the personal experience of the sacred is a core feature of Pentecostal-charismatic religiosity, it is hardly surprising that phenomenology has been a theoretical favourite in much of the existing scholarly literature. The work of Thomas Csordas (1990, 1994, 1997) on how charismatic Catholic sacred selves are constituted through the religious exploration and objectification of a bodily alterity which he sees as the touchstone of our humanity, has been particularly influential. Other scholars who do not explicitly identify themselves as phenomenologist have also focused on the ways in which experiences of divine presence are effectuated by the mobilisation of the senses and the kinaesthetic, rhythmic engagement in Pentecostal-charismatic worship (Albrecht 1999, Steven 2002). In a similar vein, Csordas as well as other scholars have emphasised how the demonic is sometimes manifested in bodily experience, not just remaining an abstract conceptual framework (Meyer 1998). Thus Dorothy Hodgson (1998) conceives of the possession of Tanzanian Maasai women by diabolic spirits, resulting in different kinds of bodily distress, as an embodiment of the contradictions of modernity, such as increased marginalisation and transformations of gender relationships.

The value of phenomenology and more broadly of a focus on bodily practice and experience for understanding Pentecostal-charismatic religiosity is by no means disputed here. But given the strong emphasis that Pentecostals place on Satan as becoming manifest in thought activity and most notably scepticism, confusion and doubt I suggest that a partial shift in focus from embodiment to questions of language and
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reflective thought is useful. What I hope to demonstrate is that an analysis of Pentecostal experiences of satanic attacks can be enriched by applying a pragmatist conception of the human self as developed by George Herbert Mead (1962). In the work of Mead, internal conversation is presented as a mediating factor between social processes and individual self awareness. I argue that this perspective is helpful in that it allows us to see the kinds of thoughts or self-reflective processes that Pentecostals interpret as diabolic attacks, as an internalisation of external tensions and confrontations between Pentecostals and a largely secular society or – in Pentecostal terminology – a ‘world’ of sin. Finally I suggest that diabologies provide Pentecostals with a language for speaking about the difficulty of making the complete break with the ‘world’, implied in conversion.

Background

This article is based on a total of 17 months of ethnographic field work in Valparaíso, Chile between 1999 and 2009. Most of the data that I present comes from the EPC, but I also refer to research conducted among a youth group in another Pentecostal denomination, the Assembly of God. Pentecostals make up some 14–16 percent of the (otherwise mainly Catholic) population in Chile with the EPC being the second largest and one of the most conservative denominations. It can be distinguished from most other denominations by its reluctance to join interdenominational Evangelical organisations and by its maintenance of strict rules for clothing and hair style (women should wear long skirts, have long hair and wear no cosmetics, whereas men should keep their hair short). While most practicing Pentecostals in Chile share similar views on drinking, smoking, dancing, listening to «worldly» music with sensual rhythms and erotic lyrics, gambling and pre and extra marital sex as all being sinful activities, many members of the EPC, especially among elder generations, further add watching television and going to the cinema and to the beach to the list. Most active members of the EPC in Valparaíso belong to the lower socio-economic sectors of society. However, a generational gap in terms of income and education can be observed as some of the younger «native» congregants are university students or hold degrees and are moving into the middle classes. First generation congregants (mostly ex-Catholics) generally have low levels of education and modest incomes. Many Pentecostal men are either unskilled workers or self-employed in the informal sector. Approximately two thirds of active congregants are women, the majority of whom are housewives or work as domestic servants or vendors in small shops or street markets.

A theological dualism between the life with God and the godless and corrupted ‘world’ is important in many Pentecostal churches in Chile and elsewhere, but it is particularly outspoken in the EPC. This dualism has a temporal dimension as testimonies of salvation generally portray a journey from the ‘world’ to a life with God. And it represents a perceived tension between the children of God and the remaining society with its political and Catholic institutions and decadent mainstream culture. Pentecostals also conceive of the ‘world’ as a state or place of satanic dominance. Demons, the
angels that according to the Bible (Ezekiel 28:14–17, Isaiah 14:13–14) were expelled from Heaven together with Lucifer (later to be known as Satan or the Devil), are mainly referred to as ‘worldly’ spirits (*espiritus del mundo*).

**The sacred authorship of language**

Long ago Durkheim (1995/1915:423) noted that Satan, while both impure and inferior to God, is not a profane being. Satan is an anti-god, but nevertheless a god, who is invested with broad powers. And though they are opponents and have contrasting agendas when interfering in human affairs there are significant similarities between the agency of God and that of Satan. As sacred supernatural others they are understood (by most people who believe in their existence) to possess human-like qualities such as a mind, intentions, motivations, memory, linguistic mastery, etc. It follows that interaction with them is to a large extent informed by the same cognitive schemes and intuitive notions of agency that inform interactions between humans. At the same time God and Satan are invested with counter intuitive properties such as immortality, immateriality, the ability to be in several places at the same time, and of having access to strategic information, for instance about people’s unspoken intentions, motivations, thoughts and desires (Boyer 2001). According to members of the EPC a favourite tactic of Satan is to imitate the work of God in order to create confusion, disorder and divisions among Christians. Thus the emergence of a number of neo-Pentecostal prosperity ministries on the religious scene in Chile, many of which are less ascetically focused than traditional Pentecostal churches, is commonly ascribed to Satan’s talents as an imitator.

Central to much of Pentecostal ritual life are different kinds of speech acts where spoken words are perceived in varying degrees as originating from God rather than from human speakers (see Csordas 1997). Such speech acts include glossolalia, prophecies, witnessing and inspired teaching and preaching. Preachers are mainly seen as messengers of the divine and it is therefore uncommon to congratulate a preacher on a sermon, however beautiful and inspirational it might have been. When members of the audience feel inspired and touched by a sermon, they commonly react with minor outbursts such as ‘that’s right Lord’ or ‘yes Lord’ (rather than ‘that’s right preacher’ or ‘yes preacher’). Many Pentecostals have stories to tell about how God has spoken to them through such instruments of God and/or how they have themselves been used as God’s instruments. The meaning of this is that God uses one Pentecostal to speak to another about a personal matter concerning the listener and of which the speaker could only have gained knowledge through divine inspiration. Pentecostals do not ascribe the ability to produce inspirational and consequential speech to the creativity of human speakers but to divine agency.

Speech is one of several areas in which the interference of God in human affairs resembles that of his opponent. Several Pentecostals told me that a favourite tactic of the Devil is to let himself be heard through the mouth of human instruments. While a certain lack of control of the uttered word characterise both satanic and divine inspiration in speech, there are also important differences between the two. Humans cannot
decide when God should speak through them, but divine inspiration is nevertheless
conditioned by the human will to surrender and openness. The most compelling im-
position of a divine «I» upon a human speaker, for instance in prophecies, glossolalia and
affectively marked performances of sermons and testimonies mostly occur within controlled
ritual contexts and only after an intense ritual atmosphere has been produced by
initial singing and praying. By contrast Pentecostals mostly describe satanic interfer-
ence in human speech in terms of manipulation.

Pentecostals may themselves, in retrospect, detect diabolic control of their own
speech. Marco, a young man from the EPC explained to me that he occasionally argued
with his wife and daughter, and that he would afterwards be shocked when they reminded
him of the ugly words that had come out of his mouth. He was convinced that Satan
or some demon had been controlling his speech. Such accounts are, however, quite
rare. Explaining one’s own behaviour and thoughts in terms of demonic manipulation
is not a way of neglecting personal responsibility, as Pentecostals insist that such mani-
pulation is only possible if a person has failed to stay close to God. The Devil is known
to be a very persistent sacred other, and members of the EPC consider the humble
recognition of one’s own human frailty and imperfection to be a fundamental Christian
virtue. Hence the acknowledgement of occasional diabolic manipulation of unarticu-
lated thoughts and emotions is not only acceptable but to some extent normative (clai-
mings to be totally immune to diabolic attacks can be associated with arrogance). But
admitting diabolic control of speech and other kinds of manifest behaviour is basically
the same as admitting to being a bad Christian. It is more common for Pentecostals to
suspect each other of being used as diabolic instruments (which, similarly, is really the
same as suspecting others of being bad Christians).

But Pentecostals believe that the human instruments through which Satan and his
demons are most easily able to speak are non-Pentecostals, people from the ‘world’. I
once talked about my research with a Chilean Baptist. He explained to me that the EPC
was the worst and most conservative Pentecostal church in Chile and he suggested I
did my research elsewhere. When I later told some members of the EPC about this con-
versation they immediately concluded that the Devil had been speaking directly to me
through the mouth of this Baptist.

I was often told that new converts and especially younger men for whom conver-
sion implies giving up all kinds of ‘worldly’ pleasures such as partying, drinking, drug
abuse, womanising, going to discos and concerts, etc., are particularly vulnerable to
Satanic attacks through non-Pentecostal friends who still live in the ‘world’. Leonardo,
a young man from the church explained to me how ‘worldly’ spirits had tried to keep
him away from God and the church after conversion.

You know, the ‘worldly’ spirits; the legions of Satan are flying in the air, doing what they can to
corrupt people. I played the guitar in a rock band. It was one of these underground circles. But the
Lord saved me. I lived in the ‘world’, in this sub-world. I was blind. I had many friends who drink,
take drugs, have so many vices, and the Lord took me away from these circles. But Satan put
many obstacles in my way. My friends said to me: ‘Hey, how can you leave the band? Are you not
going to play the guitar anymore? What about the concerts? What about the applause of the audi-
Eventually Leonardo lost contact with his old friends and he married a woman from the church. But during his first months as a «saved» Pentecostal, ties to old non-Pentecostal friends were still strong, and in retrospect he ascribes their harshly outspoken lack of comprehension to satanic manipulation.

For many members of the EPC, the sensation of being misunderstood and regarded as fanatic, irrational and too self-righteous by non-Pentecostals from the ‘world’ is a source of some resentment, yet also a fundamental part of an oppositional religious identity. Thus the failure of the people from the ‘world’ — who are often better off financially — to understand and appreciate the spiritual blessings of Pentecostals is a recurring theme in sermons, witnessing and informal conversations.

In Pentecostal terminology, Satan and his spirits are the rulers of the ‘world’. When non-Pentecostals criticise members of the EPC as being too fanatic, narrow-minded and conservative, the former often interpret such criticism as satanic attacks. Consider the following excerpt from a sermon in the EPC:

The enemy tries to disturb us, for instance when we are preaching on the street and we are distracted if people try to sell us things. And the enemy attacks us and tries to make us feel ridiculous. For instance: when people tell us that we are weird and fanatic. The enemy says: «Don’t go to church again, you are too fanatic» or «How can you dress like that, so old fashioned?»

We have seen that Pentecostals ascribe truly inspirational and consequential ritual speech that touches the hearts of listeners to divine inspiration. Similarly, the ability of ‘worldly’ non-Pentecostals to produce negatively consequential speech, that is, speech that has the potential to inspire doubt and question religious doctrines and identities, is often associated with the agency of another sacred other, the Devil.

Satanic attacks on the human mind

Pentecostals further believe that Satan and his demons attack people directly (that is, not via human others) by manipulating with the human mind. On the one hand Pentecostals frequently point out that real spiritual struggles only start after conversion as there is really no need for Satan to bother the people from the ‘world’ who are already under his dominion. Yet they believe that from time to time non-Pentecostals can become victims of serious demonic attacks. Some of the most dramatic testimonies of salvation are stories about strong depressions, suicidal tendencies and other mental disturbances, which — in retrospect — are attributed to demonic manipulation of the mind (see Lindhardt 2009).

Devoted and long-term Pentecostals feel relatively immune to such serious attacks. But they often perceive themselves as targets of minor satanic/demonic disturbances in the form of emotions, inappropriate desires, images and thoughts. The kinds of thoughts most likely to be identified with satanic manipulation of the mind, are nega-
tive, envious and resentful thoughts against other persons — a clear deviation from the Christian ideal of loving one’s neighbour — and, not least, sceptical thoughts that question Pentecostal «truths», values, doctrines and the authenticity of religious experiences.

Though saved by God and empowered by the Holy Spirit, Pentecostals still live in the ‘world’ of sin, saturated with aggressive demonic forces. Attempting to stay close to God in order to gain immunity from spiritual attacks is an important way of disciplining the Christian self on an everyday basis. André, a newly converted young man from the EPC, described his daily struggles with the Devil as follows:

Now I am always trying to keep my eyes on the Lord, not to look at other things that can distance me from him. For instance: if you see a beautiful girl, and your mind starts working immediately. Before, I didn’t realise it, but now I realise that it is impossible for a man to dominate his own thoughts. Because if I am not concentrated, suddenly all these thoughts come upon me, thoughts against other persons. So he is working with the mind. And if the Devil is controlling you, he is constantly injecting all kinds of thoughts in you. That’s what the Devil does, he puts thoughts in you, thoughts that are really not your thoughts. You don’t understand why you are thinking such things, but he injects you with these thoughts.

In a later conversation André elaborated a little further on his internal struggles with diabolic forces.

When you are a servant of God, there is always this internal struggle…to control the thoughts that come to your head. Because the mind is like a battle field, if you don’t control the thoughts, they will turn into vices and habits. So every day you are fighting with these thoughts that are bad for you. And if you fast and pray, it is easier to control these thoughts.

It has been argued more than once by scholars that Pentecostal-charismatic Christians find the Devil and his demons good to think with about a number of issues (Csordas 1994; Meyer 1999; Robbins 2004; Lindhardt 2010). For Chilean Pentecostals the biblical metanarrative about a cosmic war between God, trying to enact his plan of salvation, and Satan, trying to sabotage it, serves as a model of and for reality (Geertz 1973:93) through which meaning is attributed to experience, and possible courses of action are outlined. World historical as well as quite trivial everyday events can be integrated as episodes within this metanarrative. Many Pentecostals see natural disasters such as earth quakes, the global power and expansion of the Catholic Church or the unification of European countries in the EU as signs of satanic control of world history. At the same time they sometimes ascribe minor episodes in everyday life, such as getting stuck in traffic and arriving late for a church meeting or encounters with sceptical non-Pentecostal others to demonic attacks. In the excerpt above we can see how André also perceives this cosmic war as being fought at an intra-subjective level. The only way of keeping the Devil at arm’s length is to seek divine power and protection. It is striking how André describes thoughts and images as having an external origin, as something the Devil puts into his head. Satanic presence is detected when certain
thoughts and images are perceived as both inappropriate and autonomous, as an intruding and uncanny otherness within the self.

How do Pentecostals develop this kind of awareness towards certain aspects of their own thought processes? As noted by Tanya Luhrmann (2006), the emphasis among many contemporary Christians on experiencing God in one’s mind and body creates a problem of discernment. While this problem has a long tradition within Christianity, its theological role has greatly increased in the kind of Christianity in which God’s communication is vivid, real and concrete. Writing on a Californian Vineyard church Luhrmann proposes a simple definition of discernment as the «attempt to distinguish between God’s communications and the congregant’s own ideas» (2006:9). She further notes (though she does not elaborate on that point) that congregants seem to develop familiarity with God and with demonic spirits in a similar way (2006:27).

Unlike the Vineyard church studied by Luhrmann the EPC has no courses on how to search for and identify the presence of sacred others in the everyday flow of awareness. But preachers frequently warn their audience about possible satanic manipulations of the mind. Besides, many congregants are fond of reading Christian books and comics, many of which are produced in the United States (and translated into Spanish) and sold cheaply in Evangelical book shops. Some Evangelical comics vividly illustrate how demons create confusion, doubt and insecurity in Christians.3

The extent to which literature and comics influence the self-awareness of Pentecostal readers is difficult to measure, though I should emphasise that I have noticed a remarkable correspondence between the explanations provided in the comics and the ones given to me by Pentecostals. Nevertheless, I argue here for the relevance of a point made by Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann (1967:153), namely that subjective reality is mainly produced and sustained through conversation with significant others. Berger and Luckmann conceive of religious conversion as a process of alternation in which a new structure of plausibility is acquired and internalised through regular linguistic interaction with significant others within a religious community (1967:157–160). Drawing on these scholars and others I have argued elsewhere that both initial conversion and continuing growth in faith can be seen as processes of narrative self construction in which Pentecostals situate their own life course and particular experiences within a shared biblical metanarrative of a struggle between God and the ‘world’ or the Devil (Lindhardt 2009).

Listening to the narratives of others is an important way of learning to construct narratives, as they are often told in ways that enable the listener to identify with the ‘I’ of the story and imaginatively participate in its exampled world (see Lindhardt 2009:36). Besides, in informal conversation Pentecostals do explicitly help each other out in making sense of previous events and integrating them within coherent story lines. In large part Pentecostal narrative processes consist in discerning the presence and intervention of sacred others in different situations and thus in transforming seemingly mundane incidents into episodes within a biblical metanarrative. For instance God or the Devil is identified as the ultimate link in a causal chain, as when Pentecostals tell themselves, each other and visiting anthropologists that the Devil was
Conversion and growing in faith are also processes of learning to pay attention to emotions, bodily states and streams of consciousness in specific ways. As Luhrmann (2004) argues this process requires the acquisition of new linguistic cognitive knowledge (2004:527) or of specific models for interpreting evidence of sacred presence (2006:28). As Pentecostals become more conscious of possible communication with sacred others – a likely result of participating in worship, praying on a regular basis and listening to the stories of fellow congregants – passing thoughts, intuitions or sensations, which they earlier would have regarded as their own, may be interpreted as external messages. André, who was quoted above, once explained to me how he used to party a lot before converting. When he was partying he would sometimes feel an internal voice was telling him that he was on a wrong path. At the time he identified the voice as his own mind or conscience. But after starting to attend the church and becoming more conscious of possible divine intervention in his life he eventually concluded that it was God who had approached him during parties. As he grew in faith he found himself engaged in internal conversations with God most of the time.

In similar ways Pentecostals learn to look for and identify the presence and voice of the Devil. When constructing their testimony of salvation they may, encouraged or at least inspired by others, start to interpret previous thoughts, emotions, fears and attitudes as signs of diabolic manipulation (see Lindhardt 2009:31–32). The awareness of possible diabolic attacks is also cultivated through gossiping. Like most human communities on the planet Chilean Pentecostal congregations have to deal with different kinds of internal tensions and conflicts. But what struck me during my research was how often tensions were addressed in terms of demonic forces. Thus Pentecostals frequently suspect each other of being manipulated by diabolic forces. Gossip is basically a discourse that addresses the violation of social norms for proper behaviour (Scott 1990:142–43). In the EPC persons who appear to be resentful, envious or aggressive towards others are sometimes suspected of being manipulated by demons, as are persons who are known to be arrogant and seem to feel superior. Persons who appear uncommitted and too sceptical and critical of the rules, values and religious «truths» of the church are also among the most likely suspects.

Gossiping also focuses on the authenticity of spiritual manifestations. Powerful experiences of divine presence, for instance when people start prophesising, speaking in tongues, scream and jump on the spot or dance around the church, are central to Pentecostal ritual life. But the fact that it is often the same few persons in large congregations who start behaving in this way during services makes other congregants question the authenticity of such manifestations. Inauthentic manifestations are often ascribed to satanic imitations of the work of God. Ironically, persons who are too busy questioning the authenticity of manifestations in others can be suspected of being manipulated by one of Satan’s most hardworking servants, the spirit of envy. The circulation of gossip teaches which kinds of conduct are likely to be despised while at the same time providing congregants with a constant incitement to reflect upon their own behaviour,
attitudes and thoughts and with a cognitive model for interpreting certain behaviours, attitudes and thoughts as evidence of satanic presence.

Self and the diabolic other

In order to pursue the analysis of Pentecostal experiences of diabolic attacks a little further I will now introduce certain theoretical perspectives on the human self. What I hope to demonstrate is that the ways in which scholars such as Csordas and in particular Mead have addressed issues such as self-distance, self-reflection and self-objectification can shed some important light on Pentecostal understandings and interpretations of their mental activity as arenas of spiritual struggle.

Drawing on the work of Irvin Hallowell (1955), Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1962) and Pierre Bourdieu (1977) Csordas (1990, 1994) proposes a cultural phenomenological approach to self-processes. He finds Hallowell’s definition of the self as a reflexive self-awareness, the recognition of oneself as an object in a world of objects helpful. Yet Csordas also points out that this definition is confined to the level of the already objectified self. With Merleau-Ponty, he wishes to take a step back and see self-processes as grounded in embodiment. For Merleau-Ponty the human body is not in the first place an object, but an integral part of the perceiving subject. Perception starts pre-objectively with the body in the world, whereas the constitution of objects, including the objectification of the body, of the self and of other humans, is a secondary product of socially shaped reflective thinking. According to Csordas (1990) the goal of a phenomenological anthropology must therefore be to «capture the moment of transcendence in which perception begins, and, in the mist of arbitrariness and indeterminacy, constitutes and is constituted by culture» (1990:7). Quoting Merleau-Ponty, Csordas further stresses that the pre-objective, while pre-abstract, is not pre-cultural as «the social is carried about inseparably before any objectification» (Merleau-Ponty 1962:362; Csordas 1990:10). In order to elaborate on this point Csordas (1990:10–12) turns to the work of Bourdieu (1977) and the concepts of habitus, defined as a «systems of durable transposable dispositions» (1977:72), and the «socially informed body» where the five physical senses, «which never escape the structuring action of social determinisms» are supplemented by the sense of necessity, the sense of beauty, the moral sense, common sense, the sense of the sacred, etc. (1977:124). Csordas finds these concepts particularly helpful in terms of explaining the groundedness of culture in the body and consequently of accounting for commonalities within the pre-objective.

Applying this theoretical framework in a study of demon possession and deliverance among North American Catholic charismatics, Csordas (1990) makes a distinction between demons as culturally reified objects and their experiential manifestations as concrete self-objectifications in religious participants (1990:15). As cultural objects in a behavioural environment, demons are conceptualised as intelligent beings with purposes and functions. At a representational level demonologies can be seen as a negative mirror of the ideal Christian person (Csordas 1994:225). But Csordas argues that persons who are victims of demon attacks do not in the first place perceive a
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demon as a culturally reified object inside themselves. What is sensed is some thought pattern, behaviour, emotion or aspect of one’s personality as being outside of control or as being a controlling factor (1994:225). This pre-objective sense of lack of control—which is not pre-cultural since standards of personal control derive from culture and are inscribed in the habitus—may then secondarily be explored and discerned as demonic presence in religious practice. Csordas presents examples of charismatic healing in which the healer as a specialist in cultural objectification discerns whether or not a given problem is of demonic origin. By contrast my Chilean Pentecostal informants often diagnose their own thoughts, emotions, attitudes and internal images as resulting from satanic manipulation.

According to Csordas (1994) the condition of possibility of sacred (demonic or divine) presence is an alterity of the self that is an essential feature of embodied existence. He notes how the autonomous functioning of our bodies imposes limits on our being and leaves us with a sense inescapable contingency (1994:158). In Csordas’ view the sacred «is an existential encounter with Otherness that is a touchstone of our humanity», and this sense of otherness is itself «phenomenologically grounded in our embodiment» (1994:5). It is the recognition of this essential bodily otherness that may at times be «magnified to cosmological proportions as the uncanny presence of evil spirits» (1994:226).

While the cultural phenomenological approach of Csordas has taken us far in understanding Pentecostal-charismatic religiosity and more specifically the personal experience of the sacred, I will in the following argue that the analysis of such phenomena can be enriched by applying a pragmatist conception of the self, as developed by Mead (1962). The basic premises in the work of Mead are that society is prior to the individual and that the development of the self and the ability to think are shaped by human interaction and by the experience of the social group as a whole. The self develops through social processes, where the individual (child) learns to treat itself as an object by taking the attitudes and responses of others towards him or her. It is when taking the attitudes of others become an essential part of behaviour that the individual appears as a self in his or her own experience (1962:195).

The appropriation of language is crucial for the development of the self in that the child by taking the attitude of others and seeing itself as an object becomes able to carry out an inner conversation with itself. Mead (1962) argues that it is only through linguistic behaviour that the individual can fully become an object to him or herself, as it is by use of language that attitudes of others are internalised and come to form subjective attitudes. Reflective thought takes the form of an internal conversation where «one is talking to one’s self as one would talk to another person» (1962:139) and hence language is prior to thought. It follows that thought can never be entirely personal, but is always socially shaped, in that it relies on a shared language with socially defined meanings, concepts and symbols (1962:147).

The next phase in the development of the self begins as the child learns to organise the different attitudes of particular others as a unity. Mead (1962:154) calls this unified response «the generalized other»). The individual must in his own behaviour respond to the general attitudes of others, not just towards the individual but also towards dif-
ifferent phases or aspects of the common social activity in which people are engaged as members of an organised society (1962:154–155). It is in the form of the generalised other that the community or the social process becomes a determining factor of the individual’s thinking. In thinking the individual may take on the roles of specific others over and against him or herself, but most of the time thinking takes the form of a conversation with the generalised other (1962:288).

Mead (1962) further distinguishes between two sides of the social self, the «I» and the «me». The «me» is the objective presence or the immediate experience of the self, shaped by the attitude of the generalised other, while the «I» is the subjective attitude of response to and reflection upon this experience. The «me» can also be described as the individual, as an object of consciousness, while the «I» is the individual as having consciousness. The «I» and the «me» are intrinsically connected as the subjective feeling of the self only develops when the self becomes an object. Without the distance between the «I» and the «me», the «I» would not be able to reflect upon itself from the perspective of the other. Mead also refers to «I» and «me» as different phases of the self, as the «I» can only become an object to itself when it is self-estranged as a «me» in the past or in an imagined future, but not in the immediacy of an ongoing situation. The inner dialogue of the self is an interaction that takes place when the ‘«I» reacts to the «me» that arises through the taking of attitudes of others’ (1962:174). The «me» belongs to the organisation of the community and mirrors the general values of the group, whereas the response of the «I» constitutes the individual adjustment to the social environment. The self is constituted out of multiple selves as the objectified «me» is identified with a number of past actions and experiences with different others. It is the «I» that creates a unity among different aspects of the self and activates them in different social contexts.

Like Csordas Mead conceives of the self as an ongoing and socially shaped process of reflection, objectification and adjustment to the social, cultural world. But we have seen that Csordas sees the essential otherness of the self (which, he argues, is the condition of the presence of the sacred) as grounded in our embodied existence. For Mead, on the other hand, the otherness that is a prerequisite of self-distancing does not derive from the body but from society, and is constituted as an object of reflection through an internalisation of social processes. Surely neither Csordas nor Merleau-Ponty is blind to the role of others in self-objectification or to the importance of language in the constitution of the self. But I think that the essentially social, linguistic conditioning and dialogical nature of reflective thought are more aptly captured by Mead. According to Pentecostals, the Devil attacks by telling them certain things, by sending them inappropriate and confusing thoughts. Edgardo, an unskilled worker from the EPC gave me the following explanation:

You know, the Devil is trying to tell us things all time, to put all kinds of thoughts into our head. He may say to you: «Come on, do you really think that God is going to keep his promises to you?», or «now you are praying again, it is not necessary to pray so much, you are too fanatic!» Or maybe you are praying and suddenly you receive an image of a naked girl. In that case the only thing to do is to ask God for protection or to read the Bible.
Following Csordas we can say that what happens when Pentecostals like Edgardo and André experience such diabolic attacks is that certain images or thoughts are in the first place sensed as being disturbing or outside of control and secondarily objectified in a culturally specific way. So far so good! But in order to grasp the origin of thoughts that are discerned as demonic presence I think we may be well served by turning to the work of Mead. In Mead’s view reflective thinking always implies an otherness, which is ultimately the presence of society, or the generalised social perspectives of others, within the self. Now, we may compare the first part of Edgardo’s explanation with the last excerpt in the previous section titled «The Sacred Authorship of Language» in which a preacher describes how the Devil works through the commentaries of non-Pentecostal, human others who tell Pentecostals that they are too fanatic (see page 182). The difference is that in Edgardo’s description it is an internal rather than an external flesh and blood other that brings him this disturbing message. This internal other is the internalised generalised response of sceptical non-Pentecostal others. Similarly to how diabolic attacks can be discerned in the responses and negative recognition of external human others, the Devil is here identified with the internal other, the «me» that arises through the taking of attitudes of external others.

Mead’s emphasis on the constitutive role of the attitudes of others for the development of the self has been echoed by the Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor (1994). Challenging views on identity as based primarily on free choice and creative self construction, Taylor argues that to a large extent identities are formed by the ways in which persons or groups are recognised — or non-recognised or misrecognised — by others. But the work of Taylor also provides an important supplement to the theories of Mead as he points out that the extent to which social recognition by others can shape identities is influenced by power relationships and status parameters. The way in which majorities or powerful political actors within a society recognise a religious/ethnic/racial minority may affect identity processes among the latter in significant ways, for instance by fostering minority complexes, resentment and defiant radicalism.

Pentecostalism is a minority religion in Chile and has never enjoyed the same public status as Catholicism. Members of the EPC take pride in belonging to a «traditional» Pentecostal church where a particularly strict discipline prevails. But they are also well aware that both ‘worldly’ others and more moderate Pentecostals regard them as fanatic and extremely conservative. Negative social recognition can be internalised so that members of the EPC start reflecting upon themselves from the perspective of a generalised ‘worldly’ sceptical other. Such reflection and scepticism towards oneself and the norms and standards of the religious community with which one identifies may be experienced as involuntarily confusing and disturbing and hence as representing a threat of fragmentation to the integrity of the self. Because of this perceived threat it is understandable that Pentecostals culturally objectify certain thoughts as demonic attacks.
From time to time Pentecostals find themselves questioning the necessity of religious commitments and the authenticity of religious experiences and manifestations. Such questioning, which is also commonly ascribed to Satanic manipulation of the mind, was mostly but not exclusively reported to me by a younger and more educated generation of congregants. As previously mentioned, some of the youth in the EPC now go to university or hold degrees. During recent field trips in Chile I interviewed 30 members of a youth group of the Assembly of God and assisted at several youth meetings in this church. This group consists of 40–50 persons between 18 and 32. More than 80 percent of them have Pentecostal parents and approximately 75 percent study at universities or professional institutes or hold degrees. While acknowledging theological similarities, these youths perceive themselves as distinct from «traditional Pentecostals.» Unlike the EPC, the Assembly does not have strict dress and hair codes. For this new generation of Pentecostals the theological dualism between the church and the ‘world’ of sin has lost some of its importance.

As university students, Pentecostals who abstain from parties, getting drunk, going to discos, pre-marital sexual relationships, concerts and popular secular music with erotic lyrics feel different from their classmates and they tend to keep their most intimate friendships within the confines of their church. In both the EPC and the Assembly youth meetings on Saturday nights, followed by informal gatherings, provide important alternatives to parties or a night out in town. Yet attitudes towards other aspects of ‘worldly’ culture such as consumerism, fashion, television, going to the beach, politics, or even the occasional consumption of a glass of wine, are more relaxed among the younger and more educated congregants than among the preceding generations. Though generally faithful to the norms and doctrines of their church many of the younger congregants also negotiate their religious identities on a more individual basis by adapting to certain aspects of popular culture and seeking inputs in Christian and secular literature, the mass media, academic studies, etc.

Many of my younger Pentecostal informants reported how Satan sometimes sent them sceptical thoughts. Marcelo, a high school student from the Assembly, recalled how he once stayed up all night preparing for a test on a Friday morning. He performed well but later felt very exhausted when he remembered that he had to prepare for a Sunday school class he was teaching for the children in the church. Then the Devil started manipulating his mind, making him question whether it was really necessary to put the same effort into a religious task. After all, he would receive no grade for his performance in the Sunday school, and his secular career would not depend on it. He finally decided to take the Saturday off and give the material he was supposed to be teaching a quick glance on the bus on his way to church Sunday morning. After giving a poor and uninspired Sunday school lecture he was eventually able to identify the origin of his thoughts. Several young Pentecostals from both churches also explained to me how the Devil sometimes made them wonder whether certain religious experiences such as feelings of warmth and energy streaming through their bodies, divine inspiration in preaching, teaching and testifying, or being used as instruments to give
messages to others, were in fact authentic or should rather be attributed to psychological self deception. Guillermo, a young man from the EPC gave me the following explanation: «You have this experience, the Lord manifests himself, but then the enemy starts manipulating with your mind. He says: «was that really the Lord? Maybe it was just something psychological!»

Guisela, a twenty-nine year old school teacher from the Assembly explained to me how being used as an instrument by God was a beautiful and faith-confirming experience, yet also an open door for satanic attacks. On one occasion God had given her a message to deliver to another member of the youth group, Pablo:

He [Satan] begins to put fear in you, to work with your mind: «no, God did not give you that message, how are you going to deliver to that message to this person, it was not from God, you are just fooling yourself». Well, now I have learned not to pay too much attention to him, but Satan works a lot with these kinds of thoughts. He makes you question things. For instance what happened with Pablo was that God used me as an instrument. But Satan makes you question things. So I hesitated, but when I finally decided to give that message to Pablo, God confirmed that it did indeed come from him.

It has become commonplace to assert that processes of social identity formation can be ambiguous in complex societies as individuals are confronted with different and sometimes contrasting value systems and structures of plausibility. According to Robert Hefner (1993), in the course of their lives individuals develop real or imagined reference groups which serve as anchors for their sense of self and other. In modern society reference group orientations tend to be plural and religious allegiances may very well conflict with other allegiances, leading to forced reflection (1993:25–26). Reference group theorists do not see human identity as wholly socially determined but rather as emerging from ongoing and contingent socio-psychological interactions. The precise effect of culture in the creation of self is always mediated by the dispositions of individuals, that is, by «their dispositions in a particular social world, and their ongoing efforts – never themselves fully culturally programmed – to assess the meaning and value of all that goes on around them» (1993:26). This point is consonant with Mead’s definition of the social self as made up of the «me,» shaped by the attitudes of a generalised other and the «I», the subjective attitude of response to and reflection upon this experience.

Historical research has demonstrated that religious self-doubt and the wish for signs from God to confirm one’s faith stances are not peculiarities of late modern individuals whose inner worlds reflect the complexity and arbitrariness of the external social world. Nevertheless it seems reasonable to relate many of the doubts concerning religious commitments and experiences, as reported by young Pentecostals, and not least their frequent evocation of «psychology» as a possible interpretive framework for explaining such experiences, to their navigation between different reference groups (the church, the school/university, work place). Their identities are never fully determined by the culture or structure of plausibility of a particular group but emerge in ongoing processes of interaction, reflection and negotiation of meaning and «truth». This point does to some extent apply to all or most Pentecostals. But young professio-
nals or students are more likely to develop identities that conflict with Pentecostal identities. It is notable that the defense of Biblical truths is of little concern to older Pentecostals with low levels of education, whereas several younger Pentecostals put a good deal of effort into reconciling religious beliefs with scientific knowledge, for instance by studying creationist science text books. It is when forced reflection results in too much uncertainty and confusion concerning religious commitments and communication with the divine, on which a substantial part of Pentecostal self identity is based that diabolic presence can be discerned.

Conclusion: Making an incomplete break with the ‘world’

*Nosostros estamos en el ‘mundo.’ Que el ‘mundo’ no esté en nostros*
We live/are in the ‘world.’ The ‘world’ should not reside in us

*Nosostros vivimos en el ‘mundo’ pero no pertenecemos al ‘mundo’*
(We live in the ‘world’ but we do not belong to the ‘world’)

These statements, both made during sermons in the EPC, encapsulate the dilemma in which many Chilean Pentecostals find themselves while at the same time expressing an ideal state of affairs that can only be strived towards through daily struggle. On the one hand Pentecostals describe personal salvation as a moment of rupture, a movement away from the ‘world’ and towards the realm of God. On the other hand, they are bound to live and participate in the ‘world’ and to deal with the daily challenges that such participation implies. Rather than a once and for all achieved state, rupture becomes an ongoing and essentially incomplete life project. On one occasion I attended the funeral of an old woman from the EPC. The preacher stated that death should actually be seen as a victory for Pentecostals and added that this was obviously not the way people from the ‘world’ would generally see it. Only now that she had died was the old woman on the safe side, whereas being alive implied an ever-present risk of losing salvation by sliding back into the ‘world’. Reviewing the scholarly literature on global Pentecostal-charismatic Christianity, Joel Robbins (2004) notes that Pentecostals/charismatics tend to ritualise discontinuity in different post-conversion rituals of rupture such as deliverance, healing and spiritual in-filling where disjunction is emphasised (2004:128). In her work on Ghanaian Pentecostalism, Birgit Meyer demonstrates how the diabolic provides converts with a language and set of practices through which they articulate the difficulty of making a complete break with the past. Meyer (1998) found that many Ghanaian Pentecostals were haunted by family spirits, defined as diabolic agents, after conversion. She sees this spiritual ambiguity as corresponding to a conflict between identity in terms of membership of an extended family and the striving for modern individualism (1998:340). By emphasizing the active presence of diabolic forces in human affairs, Pentecostalism, so Meyer (1999) argues, provides «a bridge over which converts can move back and forth and hence discursively and ritually return to their past» (1999:215).
In this article I have illustrated how the Devil comes into the picture when Pentecostals experience ongoing tensions with the ‘world’ of sin. Though conversion implies leaving the ‘world’ behind, the latter is often unwilling to let the convert go. Pentecostals are confronted with the ‘world’ in the form of non-Pentecostal sceptical others, who ridicule them and question their doctrines, beliefs and commitments. They further encounter the ‘world’ in the form of secular structures of plausibility that are contradictive to Pentecostal religious «truths», in the mass media and more generally in a decadent but tempting mainstream culture. Finally, Pentecostals sometimes identify the ‘world’ or the Devil as an internal mental presence.

I further argued that the analysis of Pentecostal experiences and cultural objectifications of the sacred, in this case the Devil, can gain much from a pragmatist perspective on the self and reflective thought. The advantage of this perspective is that it enables us to see the diabolic other that imposes itself on the mind and becomes an uncanny, conflictive and sceptical part of the self, as deriving from wider society or from the ‘world’ that Pentecostals perceive themselves as having a tense and oppositional relationship to. It is when a non-Pentecostal ‘worldly’ society that does not understand and appreciate the spiritual blessings and religious commitments of Pentecostals and does not accept the validity of religious experiences and «truths», enters into the thinking of the individual in the form of the generalised other that satanic presence may be discerned. A Meadian perspective of the self as emerging through the interplay between inter and intra-subjective processes may, in other words, help us understand how the Devil Satan manages to make the passage from society to mind.

Notes
1 I would like to express my thanks to Jacqueline Ryle and an anonymous reviewer for constructive comments on this paper.
2 Field trips, first for my PhD in social anthropology on «traditional» Chilean Pentecostal churches (mainly the EPC) and later post doctoral research on newer Pentecostal churches (including the Assembly of God) were funded by the Danish Research Council for Culture and Communication.
3 Many of the Evangelical comics sold in Chile, are available online. See: http://www.chick.com/reading/tracts/0004/0004_01.asp or http://www.chick.com/reading/tracts/0519/0519_01.asp
4 For a thorough analysis of Pentecostal micro politics, gossip and sources and patterns of intra-church tensions, see Lindhardt 2010.
5 For an intriguing study of religious self doubt among 17th and 18th century puritans in America, see Hall 2004.

References
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