THE HANDBOOK OF CONTEMPORARY ANIMISM

EDITED BY GRAHAM HARVEY

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Introduction

Graham Harvey

Animism is a hard-working word. It identifies a range of interesting phenomena but also labels several distinct ways of understanding such matters. *The Handbook of Contemporary Animism* brings together expert contributors to debates in which the term "animism" is now playing a role. It is intended to advance discussion rather than either merely describe its current state or to bring it to a conclusion. It does this by allowing "animism" to continue working hard by referring to more than one thing or theory while also aiding our efforts to understand the meeting-points of shared interest and difference between contributors. One task of this introduction is to say something about that range and to make sense of the use of one word to convey different meanings. It will conclude that diversity provides refreshing perspectives and provokes new ideas and practices by requiring us to test and reconsider (and sometimes defend) our familiar views and approaches. In the most general terms, animism concerns the nature of human-being and the nature of our world – but what animates the contributors to this book is that these large questions are addressed in specific relationships, etiquettes, activities, ideas and encounters. Therefore, a blend of description and theorizing provide the most common ways in which we engage with animism.

WAYS INTO STUDYING ANIMISM

My interest in animism was initiated in ways that are distinctive but not entirely alien to other contributors to this book. I suspect that I first heard of animism in introductory undergraduate lectures about the history of the academic study of religion. The influence of Victorian anthropologists like Edward Tylor (who defined animism as the characteristically religious "belief in spirits") is bound to have been mentioned. This failed to interest me at the time. Postdoctoral research among varied groups of Pagans brought me into contact with people who named themselves "animists". What initially intrigued me was

that the name seemed to be used in two seemingly contrasting ways. Some Pagans identified animism as the part of their religious practice or experience which involved encounters with tree-spirits, river-spirits or ancestor-spirits. This animism was metaphysical and would have been recognized by Tylor. Other Pagans seemed to use "animism" as a shorthand reference to their efforts to re-imagine and redirect human participation in the larger-than-human, multi-species community. This animism was relational, embodied, eco-activist and often "naturalist" rather than metaphysical. In writing about this tension – initially in a journal article about Pagan cosmologies and later in a book-length introduction to contemporary Paganisms (G. Harvey 1993, 2006c) – I contrasted those discourses and rituals involving "spirits" with those that might involve hedgehogs. (I selected hedgehogs as an example of a creature endangered by human lifestyles and therefore as indicative of this-worldly and environmentalist trends among some Pagans.) These really should not be taken as strong contrasts but as exemplary of influential esoteric and animist currents in the ongoing evolution of Pagan thought and behaviour (see G. Harvey 2011a; Jamison 2011; Rountree 2012).

In an early publication about Paganism (1993), I cited Irving Hallowell's (1960) article, "Ojibwa Ontology, Behavior, and World View", primarily in order to use his phrase "other-than-human persons". I also cited Te Pakaka Tawhai's discussion of "Maori Religion" (2002) in which he defines the "purpose of religious activity" (among his people at least) as "doing violence with impunity". He explains that such activity "neither reaches for redemption and salvation, nor conveys messages of praise and thanksgiving, but seeks permission and offers placation" (*ibid.*: 244). It places religious activity firmly in this-worldly interactions between, for example, humans and trees or sweet potatoes. Hallowell and Tawhai have had a major impact on the direction of my research, and the phrases "other-than-human persons" and "doing violence with impunity" have become foundational in my efforts to understand animism and, most recently, to redefine what "religion" might mean (G. Harvey 2013). I soon discovered that Hallowell's article was gaining influence among other scholars – not so much in the study of religions as in anthropology. This inspired me to want to know more about the phenomena, theories and scholarly approaches that were being so vigorously debated. I read Tylor, re-read Hallowell, and followed up various leads to discover what colleagues in different disciplines were writing and researching. Nurit Bird-David's "revisiting" of "animism" (1999), and the responses that followed it, contributed significantly to the ferment of debate.

In addition to reading, I also made efforts to meet people who lived animistically – including Pagans and some indigenous people. Presenting research about shamanic healing traditions at a conference hosted at the Mi'kmaq reserve at Conne River, Newfoundland, provided me with the opportunity to attend the first powwow there in 1995. During the final "honour song" for veterans and elders, an eagle flew a tight circle over the central drum group and was greeted with exclamations of greeting and pleasure. More than a few people told me that although eagles are commonplace there, nesting just across the Conne River, this flight in this style at this moment was an auspicious sign. The eagle was celebrating this Mi'kmaq community's efforts to regain indigenous pride and cultural knowledge. No one spoke about "animism" but several became excited about "tradition". For me, however, this moment has become definitive of the kind of inter-species communication that exemplifies what I have come to think of as the "new animism" in contrast with Tylor's older approach (G. Harvey 2005a/2006a,[1] 2012). In this,

we look for animism "in between", in the relating together of persons (often of different species), rather than "within", in the possession of or by "spirits".

In 1999 curiously circuitous and serendipitous routes took me to a desk in a primary school at an Ojibwe reservation in Wisconsin. By colouring in drawings of various plants, animals and artefacts, the children and I learnt examples of the Ojibwe language's grammatical distinction between animate and inanimate genders. I had been familiar with this from Hallowell's writings and from those of scholars inspired by him. Nonetheless, like Hallowell, I realized that "relationality" is not merely theoretical but strongly pervades this and many indigenous cultures (and not only them). To engage with animism necessarily involves being provoked to think more carefully about what it means to be a person. Many of the following chapters will discuss the understanding that persons always live in relation with others and, in animist communities, are regularly encouraged to act respectfully – especially towards those one intends to eat. That is, this animism is always local and specific. It might not be at all romantic, transcendent or esoteric, but might instead be quite practical or pragmatic as people negotiate everyday needs.

My interest in animism has also influenced my choices of reading, film-watching and festival participation. Reading Harry Garuba's "Explorations in Animist Materialism" (2003) reinforced the realization that my enjoyment of fiction such as the works of Alan Garner (e.g. 1960, 2012), animated films such as Studio Ghibli's *Spirited Away* (2001) and festivals like "Riddu Riddu" is predicated on some degree of animism. In various ways, they explore and experiment with ways of engaging with a larger-than-human world. They also provide accessible entries into the creative thought- and life-world that is animism.

This book is a result of my varied interests in seeking to understand the ramifications of animism and of academic research and debate in relation to it. I invited contributors whose previous publications, lectures or conversations demonstrated expertise in one or more aspects of what can be called animism. Importantly, they do not all agree that one set of phenomena or one approach is most interesting or valuable. There is a debate here that excites us. Some of those I invited had not previously been aware that their work was relevant to animism. They are here because I convinced them (without difficulty) that their expert knowledges about indigenous matters, consciousness, ethology and/or ritual contribute importantly to particular debates. I have been privileged by the positive response of so many colleagues to my invitation to participate in this project. Their previous work is importantly influencing scholarship in many disciplines. This book brings them together to enrich research and teaching by taking this further.

DESCRIBING ANIMISM

By way of orientation to the more descriptive matters that nest under the term "animism", this section surveys the major uses of the term. It illustrates the ferment of new research (about ethnology, history, philosophy, cognition, performance, indigeneity, relationality, ethology, botany, cosmology and much more) that this book is about. This orientation will be followed by one that introduces the theoretical perspectives and approaches entailed in researching and teaching about animism.

It can seem simple or straightforward to state that "animism" can refer to beliefs about spirits or that people who "believe in spirits" are animists. However, major questions

have been asked about what "belief" and "spirit" might mean. How does the activity called "believing" manifest itself? How is it done and how is it recognized by observers? Is believing a kind of thinking or feeling, or is it a specific activity? Is believing radically different from rationally experimenting? Can we escape from the rather bad habit of thinking that "we know" while "they believe"? Since people who talk about "spirits" often allege that such beings cause illnesses or teach facts, we might want to find out how they (the putative "spirits") relate to the "material world"? We certainly should take care not to assume that non- or anti-empiricism is involved in the relevant discourses and/or behaviours. Not only scientists but people everywhere test and experiment with claims, ideas, interpretations, teachings and experiences (Latour 2010).

These are already complex issues, but again there is more at stake. "Spirits" might just be a way in which some people try to convey an idea about their personal relationship with trees, animals, rivers or ancestors that others consider inanimate and inert. Claimed beliefs about spirits can be thought of as addressing questions of what enlivens beings. What is it about persons that makes them "alive" rather than "inanimate"? Do people possess a spirit or a soul? If they do, are there other beings that are similarly animated by souls or spirits? Tylor's encyclopedic *Primitive Culture: Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Art and Custom* (1871) draws together a vast corpus of available information about all kinds of phenomena to support a theory that religion was humanity's pre-scientific attempt to explain the world. According to Tylor, religion's core "belief in spirits", here meaning non-empirical realities, was a mistaken theory or explanation that would be superseded by the more advanced method of modern science.

While Tylor's theory and approach were soon contested and then marginalized in favour of other ways of defining and/or explaining religion or its origins, the claim that people (somewhere) "believe in spirits" kept the term "animism" in circulation. It survived, however, by accepting a limitation on its meaning. That is, in Tylor's work "animism" was synonymous with "religion" and identified what he proposed to be the core fact about all religions: belief in spirits. When it came to mean only *some* religions, that is, those religions that allegedly did not emphasize belief in a single deity but engaged with other "spiritual" beings, it had changed. It no longer drew attention to the defining characteristic of all religions but only to a subset of localized religions. It often implied a lesser degree of development, indicated by a lack of texts, institutions or theologians. It also indicated a view of the local reach of "spirits" over against the global or universal deities of the monotheistic religions. This usage remains current in books that identify some percentage of a nation's population as "Christians", "Muslims" or "animists" (e.g. Jok 2010). This might have made little sense to Tylor, for whom all religious people were animists, but it serves the purpose of drawing attention to people who maintain "traditional" practices. This changing usage underlies discussion in Chapters 4 and 5, while the acceptance of "animism" as a self-identification by some West African people is noted in Chapters 5 and 18.

On the surface, the identification (by themselves or those who study them) of an increasing number of Pagans as "animists" or of a facet of their religion as "animism" seems similar. This is noted in Chapters 26, 32 and 34 (but also see G. Harvey 2005b, 2011a; Rountree 2012). The didactic novels of Daniel Quinn (1995, 1996, 1997, 1999) and some creative literature (as discussed in Part VII; but for other examples see Justice 2011 and Garner 2012) illustrate the broader reach and attraction of using "animism" to identify

an environmentalist or radically emplaced spirituality. Perhaps too the fans of Japanese *animé* (animated films), discussed in Chapter 38, might be this kind of animist. It is not, however, so straightforward. While there is reference in these religious movements and cultural products to putative "beliefs in spirits" or to the animation of the world by "spiritual" beings (e.g. "nature spirits"), an alternative trend is evident. This resonates with a use of the term "animism" associated more with Hallowell than with Tylor. This animism refers to ways of living that assume that the world is a community of living persons, all deserving respect, and therefore to ways of inculcating good relations between persons of different species. Hallowell's writings (especially Hallowell 1960) are among the most frequently cited references in this book and in works concerned with "the new animism" (G. Harvey 2005a, 2006a).

Hallowell's ideas were shaped by learning among the Ojibwe or Anishinaabeg of Manitoba, Canada. A first step in understanding this can be made by appreciating that in the Ojibwe and related Algonkian languages there is a pervasive grammatical distinction between animate and inanimate nouns and related parts of speech. (See the online *Ojibwe People's Dictionary*, http://ojibwe.lib.umn.edu/, with its search tool and its "key to Ojibwe parts of speech".) Rocks, for example, are deemed to belong to the "animate gender". In a now classic and widely discussed question, Hallowell asked a respected elder, "Are all the rocks we see around us here alive?" In Ojibwe grammar rocks are animate just as tables are grammatically feminine in the French language. So it is legitimate to ask whether such ways of speaking reveal anything distinctive about the wider culture. Hallowell learnt that rocks can indeed be treated in various locally and culturally specific ways as animate persons. The implications of this observation have been foundational for much of the contemporary debate about animism. Hallowell, therefore, is discussed in many of the following chapters. For now, in this orientation to the descriptive roles played by the term "animism", it is enough to note that the putative personhood of rocks is one feature of the animated, relational cosmos of traditional Ojibwe people.

When animism is taken to mean "beliefs about spirits" another set of phenomena has been considered to exemplify it. Dramatic rituals to deal with unwanted "possession" by "spirits" have attracted considerable scholarly attention. Some chapters in Part V focus on possession and those who deal with it, especially shamans and mediums, promising to enliven studies of relevant activities and ideas. These have not always attended to the wider cultural context but have sometimes focused on dramatic rituals or experiences (e.g. of "trance") but things are changing (see G. Harvey 2010; Schmidt & Huskinson 2010). Similarly, but also with significant differences, when animism is taken to mean "treating the world as a community", it can entail unwelcome aggression by "other-than-human persons" (Hallowell's term for a larger community, not to be mistaken for a reference only to "non-empirical" postulations). Many chapters, especially in Parts II and III, engage with the fraught relationships entailed in hunting and consuming animate beings. Sometimes people aver the need to converse with or mollify the otherworldly "owners" of prey species. In such contexts, "animism" might label hunter-gatherer inter-species etiquette as well as their ontological and/or epistemological concerns.

A related range of possibilities for considering what the term "animism" and ideas about "spirit possession" might identify or describe is that they are about cognition, consciousness and/or the attribution of agency. The psychologist Jean Piaget proposed (1929, 1932, 1933, 1952, 1954) that animism is a standard phase in childhood development

in which every experience is assumed to be the result of someone's deliberate act. However, many adults continue to do animistic things even in cultures that do not vigorously encourage them to do so. Naming cars and swearing at recalcitrant computers are common examples of the personalizing of the world – even if, when pressed, people insist they do not really expect a positive response from inanimate machines. Chapters in Part IV re-examine the possibilities that emerge from attention to lively roles of things, objects or materials in animating human lives. Similarly, Chapter 27 uses examples of the widespread attribution of agency or intentionality or the projection of animacy or anthropomorphism to consider current issues in the field of cognitive studies. Whether all this demonstrates that we "moderns" continue the "primitive" mistake alleged by Tylor or whether it illustrates a different style of personalism (closer to that theorized by Hallowell perhaps) remains open to question.

Research concerned with developmental processes is not the only kind to be interested in consciousness and cognition. Part VI features chapters that discuss not only the various ways in which humans know (or act as if they know) the world but also how animals and plants know and act knowledgeably. Some but not all of these chapters could be read as suggesting that perhaps humans do, after all, share something that could be called "soul" or "spirit" with other species. Alternatively, perhaps all living species share a thoroughly material consciousness rooted in brains and bodies but arising out of the inherently aware matter of the universe. If so, "animism" might usefully label the recognition of matter's consciousness (something also identified as "panpsychism").

What all this amounts to is that "animism" has been, and continues to be, used as a label for a range of phenomena. It can identify definitive characteristics of religion or of specific religions. It can point to putatively interior components of living beings or to cognitive mechanisms arising in the deep evolutionary past but continuing to affect contemporary behaviours. In such cases, the term resonates with its etymological predecessor, *anima*, to suggest some enlivening aspect (soul or spirit) within persons. Alternatively, it can direct attention towards the continuous interrelation of all beings or of matter itself. Then "animism" describes performative acts in which people engage with other species or with material things. In all these cases, animism points to scholarly and popular efforts to understand what activates, energizes and motivates the ways in which lives are lived – either as individuals or with others. In short, a range of cultural phenomena are brought into view by the word "animism". Whether they are all one thing is debateable. Bringing them all together could advance a contest to establish which definition or usage is most helpful or convincing. More excitingly, what is proposed here is that setting diverse phenomena and approaches alongside each other invites interpreters and theorists to look again and think again. Even rejected theories and falsified data can provoke new perspectives and new openings for further discussion.

THEORIZING ANIMISM

Animism does more than label phenomena and, just like other human activities, research is not complete when it has identified and described or labelled. We want to know how one fact relates to others, how one act affects others, how one perspective challenges others. We seek to interrogate facts for meaning, relevance, application and value.

Animism is currently a topic of considerable debate among more than a few disciplines – sometimes crossing the boundaries between arts, humanities and sciences and provoking the thought that these insert unhelpful divisions between related matters. Indeed, more than a few contributors argue cogently for the necessity of these rich interdisciplinary conversations. For one thing, a list of the people who might be labelled "animist" in one way or another includes all of us. All humans, indeed all animals, have the propensity to respond to events as if they were intentional and personal. For some analysts this is animism. It seems likely that all humans are tempted to personalize even the artefacts with which they live: if they do not ask "fetishes" to guide them or amulets to protect them, they are likely to name their vehicles or weapons (from spears to atomic bombs). Many of us treat particular animals as members of our families. These personal engagements can be considered to be kinds of animism. Most humans remain enchanted, to some degree, rather than entirely rationalist. Even scientists speak of "sunrise" and "sunset" as if they lived in a world around which the sun travelled. They may not make offerings to the sun, but linguistically they seem to dwell still in an animist cosmos. Examples could be multiplied to reinforce the only partly humorous claim that we are all animists of one kind or another. The point is that such facts require explanation. "Animism" does not label only one explanation but identifies competing efforts to understand the world. There are not, despite my reference to "old" and "new" animisms, only two kinds of explanation. The chapters that follow open up some different approaches, perspectives and interpretations of the varied phenomena of interest. Some even want to rise to the challenge not merely of describing and theorizing but also of changing particular human behaviours.

Linda Hogan's opening essay recognizes something vitally important in this new scholarly interest in animism. She sees at least the beginning of a more respectful approach to previously marginalized cultural knowledges. Danny Naveh and Nurit Bird-David carefully correct an elision of animist knowledges with conservationist approaches to "nature". The late Ken Morrison's chapter reaches for a post-Cartesian way of doing anthropology which takes up the challenge to focus on the "who-ness" rather than the "what-ness" of the world without "primitivizing" indigenous animists. Robert Segal and Martin Stringer approach the foundational writings of Edward Tylor to test their application in varied contexts, including that of academic theorizing.

In Part II others examine the still prevalent but frequently contested dichotomy of "nature" and "culture". Again, what is at stake here is not "simply" (as if such a thing were simple) the description and analysis of "other cultures", but the value of deeply rooted, generative notions in the now dominant "modern culture". If we were to take that challenge to heart (or to our writing) how would the previous sentence read? It is easy enough to attend to the constructedness or non-naturalness of "modern culture" but if we experimentally cease using culture/nature to distinguish human acts from those of animals, plants or planets (as some animists are alleged to do), how will we conduct ourselves as "social scientists" or "natural scientists"? To what discrete facts and divisions do "social" and "natural" refer? Is there a limit to taking others seriously? Should we resist or insist on relativism or some other way of engaging with those who share the world but not worldviews? Animism is playing a significant role in raising and clarifying the issues here. Indeed, if Viveiros de Castro's emphasis on Amazonian "perspectivism", "multinaturalism" and "monoculturalism" is persuasive (which is not to say that it is, as

several contributors here demonstrate), then the world might seem a very different place (also see Latour 2009b; Halbmayer 2012a).

Part III casts these issues into sharp relief by considering human–animal relationships and relatedness. Darwin's influence should be so securely embedded in our thought and performance of human living that our kinship and dwelling with other animals should be more radically influential than it arguably is. This part of the book approaches a range of ontological and epistemological issues by examining what we might call animist anthropology, ethology and a wider-than-human ethnology. That is, questions about humans and animals are asked (by animists and by scholars interested in animism) in light of a notion of society or community that includes more species than is common in normative sociologies. Again, however, remember that these chapters present debate. Animists and scholars (and those who are both) ask questions about humans and animals because social activities include predation and consumption. People (of one species or another) get eaten by others. What, then, can be made of human–animal kinship? What do the facts of death tell us about animism, and vice versa? All this, as if it were not enough on its own, is made more stark by the intimations of global environmental changes that are already making some species extinct.

Parts IV–VI confront us with further challenges in considering both the nature of the world and also of ourselves as humans. All our lives are lived with things. Humans are sometimes distinguished from other animals on the grounds of our tool use – even though chimpanzees, Caledonian crows and many other species are also tool users to some degree. Many people insist that what others call "non-empirical realities" or "spirits" have considerable, quantifiable and observable impact on physical realities. It seems legitimate to ask why "mind" and "agency" are commonly accepted as legitimate attributes of animate beings whereas "spirit" or "soul" are commonly relegated to the suspect category of "religious beliefs". Questions about how people (human or other-than-human) "know" place animism in the arena of proliferating arguments about consciousness. They invite conversations between those of us interested in human cultures, religions or performances and those of us interested in the ways in which bodies, plants, animals and matter itself "know". These brief indicators of the interests of some of the following chapters will be expanded upon in the introductions to the different parts but should already reveal the important contribution animism can make to vital contemporary debates.

Chapters in the final part of the book reflect on some of the ways in which animism is performed and how different types of performance (especially literature, film, dance and ritual) involve animist issues. Expertise in approaches and methods produces both analyses of specific activities and, sometimes, further provocative incitement to change the ways in which academics make the world. As editor and contributor, my hope is that readers will enjoy considering the issues presented under the dynamic heading of "animism". Agreement or disagreement is a less interesting consequence of study than developing more carefully and critically considered understandings and more skilfully performed and lived responses to the world we discover and make in each moment. Performance, therefore, brings these issues into stark relief.

WRITING AND READING

There are some things that it is worth remembering about the writing and the reading of the following parts and chapters. Having embarked upon a project to bring together as many as possible of the leading thinkers and writers interested in different kinds of animism, I have tried to fulfil my ambition to produce as complete a book as possible. I have made sure that the main forms of what different people call animism are discussed. I have included writers interested in history because they provide a longer view of the phenomena but also because they ponder whether theories proposed in the nineteenth century remain valid and/or useful in relation to phenomena observable today. I have included ethnographers who write about contemporary indigenous "animisms" (in someone's terms at least) from all over the globe. Certainly this is not a complete coverage of every animistic nation or group. Because animism seems entangled or, to be more positive, embraided with questions about animals, plants, things or artefacts, and "spirits" – and not only but especially those questions that concern human inter-species relationships – I have invited experts about these species (if I can use this term to include "things" as well as "beings") to contribute. Colleagues interested in "consciousness" (to use one word where dozens are probably required) among or within animals, plants and matter itself have also contributed. Because "animism" is expressed and performed in literatures and media of many kinds, and in actions as various as ritual and activism, there are contributions that focus on such matters. All of the authors are (or have been) scholarly, if not institutionally employed academics. Because animism has permeable boundaries and creative provocations, I have welcomed creative but never less than careful and thoughtful writing. I have, in short, tried to make sure that all manner of things related to contemporary animism, and contemporary debates about animism, are included.

It will become evident that many of the chapters refer to works by authors of other chapters. Additionally, some colleagues who could not contribute (most noticeably the Amazonianist Eduardo Viveiros de Castro) because of other commitments are often cited. This is not because animism is of interest only to an incestuous cabal. Rather, it arises from and demonstrates the definitive feature and most valuable practice of academia: continuous debate. In reading these chapters you will be listening to an ongoing debate. Authors will set out what they mean by "animism" or they will give their assessment of other writers (e.g. Tylor, Hallowell or Viveiros de Castro). Sometimes they will disagree. It is possible that one of more of us is wrong about matters of more or less importance. Debates will continue. We will clarify our arguments or change our minds (and actions). There will be other books about animism. This will not only take place in academic venues but also in performance and exhibition spaces – or fusions between these, as exemplified in those organized or discussed by Descola (2005), Latour and Weibel (2005), Halbmayer (2012b), Karadimas (2012), Kapfhammer (2012) and Franke (2012). Research and theorization arising in one location will fertilize or problematize work done elsewhere – as exemplified by vibrant conversations between Amazonianists and Siberianists (e.g. in Brightman *et al.* 2012). The vitality of animism debates means that publications and venues for reflection and dialogue will continue proliferating. Each of us will be challenged again. We will listen again to each other and to people who identify themselves or may be identified (willingly or not) as animists. Perhaps we will not only improve our understanding and analysis but we might also learn better ways to be human, better ways to live in the world.

If we do not hope for something like that it seems to me that we ought not to be taking up so much of other people's time with our questions and our stories (G. Harvey 2011b).

As befits any focused conversation or intense debate, there are some difficult words and some curious turns of phrase in some chapters. As if it was not enough that "animism" does not have one clear reference or usage, some chapters discuss perspectivism, totemism, fetishism, shamanism, anthropomorphism and multinaturalism. Perhaps Hallowell's term "other-than-human persons" seems odd. When you follow up works cited here you will also encounter Marilyn Strathern's (1988) term "dividual" and Halbmayer's (2010, 2012c) "multividuals" and "multiply partible persons" (all parts of his "mereology" of Amazonian understandings of human ontology). Indeed, words like "ontology" and "epistemology" are rife in what follows. All of these are deemed necessary because they force us to think hard about what constitutes persons and their relations with the world. Some derive from the languages of animist cultures (e.g. "totem" originated as an Ojibwe word for a "clan", understood as a multi-species kinship group), from intercultural encounters (e.g. "fetish" comes from Portuguese merchants' perception of how some West Africans treated objects) and others from the technical languages evolving within academic disciplines (e.g. "ontology" is the "study of being" and "mereology" is "study of parts"). These terms will repay some thinking if you are unfamiliar with them. They are required because the topic that interests us here is not necessarily self-evident. If we are to understand the implications of animistic world- and person-making discourses and practices we should expect to encounter some potentially mind-bending and perspective-shifting thoughts and words. However, if chapter authors fail to explain their use of terms, you are encouraged to follow the index to other locations for possible enlightenment. Failing that, there is always the internet (always good for information if not always for wisdom).

Meanwhile, then, readers have a task too. Precisely because the contributors to this book are discussing various ideas together, it is open to readers (if it is not compulsory) to participate. You do that by attentive reading, careful consideration and clear response. But you also do that by choosing how to read. While I have grouped the chapters together in seven "parts" that bring together related chapters, there are other ways of organizing chapters. All the chapters are about different kinds of animism and could therefore have been grouped together – perhaps under the more cumbersome plural "animisms". Many chapters concern hunting or other ways of engaging with animals and could be read together. Almost every chapter contributes something to thinking (again) about consciousness or performance, and could come under different headings. Most particularly, questions about "spirits" could invite a detailed engagement with Tylor's animism while debates about "relationality" could invite a different structuring of the chapters. It is possible to read chapters that focus on a geographical or cultural areas (e.g. Amazonia, Siberia or Algonkian territories). Readers might, therefore, wish to ignore the book's grouping of chapters and use the index to identity and follow some other path through what follows. Certainly you are invited to make connections and pursue contradictions and the tracks of riddles that emerge when different authors treat similar and different topics.

You do not have to agree with everyone – or anyone (though this seems less likely). You do not have to be provoked into reading novels or performing rituals. While you will not escape acting in the world in relation to objects (e.g. the text you are holding) or other persons (e.g. those you are reading) and so on, you do not have to agree that "animism" is a useful label for every kind of action – whether cognitively hard-wired into brains or

learnt in enchanting performances. It is hoped, however, that beyond seeking information and understanding, you will – in vigorous conversation with what you read – engage more fully with a world that might seem somewhat more diverse, somewhat more rich and, in some sense, somewhat more animated.

CONCLUSION

At stake in this *Handbook of Contemporary Animism* are big questions everyone might ask. All the animisms we introduce, examine and debate in this book constellate around the questions "What is the world like?", "What makes us human?" and "How do humans live in the world?" There are other questions of importance such as "How do bodies and matter itself relate to consciousness?" and "In which sense is a person an individual when they are made up of many non-human organisms and are also formed of shifting relationships?" (Millions of bacteria of many species live in the crook of your elbow, and your relationships to other beings might take you quite a while to list once you start.) Simultaneously, even if they are not always explicitly spoken about, all the debates and theorizing in this book involve important questions about the ways in which we conduct ourselves as researchers and authors.

It can seem surprising that "animism" is now provoking so much discussion. Not long ago it seemed almost entirely obsolete. Lectures on superseded nineteenth-century theories about religion or on minority traditions in West Africa might mention animism or animists. Now, however, an unruly plethora of theories approach quite distinct phenomena. The innermost workings of the brains of humans, frogs and dogs (among others) might be examined for "animistic" cognitive mechanisms that benefit beings evolving in a world full of surprises, enemies and potential dinners. The elaborate gift-sharing economies and/or multi-species kinship structures of specific indigenous communities can generate intense theorizing about ontological and/or epistemological knowledges. This book promises to engage with a fascinating range of material.

In 1993 Bruno Latour famously asserted that "we have never been modern". His claim has been quoted, debated, tinkered with or opposed. Given the range of things that have been called "animism" it might be tempting to think that if we have not been modern perhaps we have always been animists. Perhaps not all the kinds of things interpreted as animism are part of our lives. Perhaps, for instance, you resolutely do not believe in spirits. Perhaps you have trained yourself not to respond to shadows as if they might hide hungry predators. You might still hold conversations with cats or computers in ways that suggest you expect them to respond appropriately (telling you which food they'd like or actually printing the chapter you have just completed). When you encounter some of the things identified as fetishism or totemism you may be even more tempted to think that you have seen or indulged in some kind of animism. Manuel Vásquez (2011) has described Brazilian football, mega-churches and Oprah Winfrey as examples "of a global polymorphous hyper-animism that is emerging out of the ruins of Western modernity, particularly out of the crisis of overproduction and overconsumption in contemporary 'casino capitalism'".

Just when it begins to look like everything might be animism, however, Isabelle Stengers forcefully argues that:

> nobody has ever been animist because one is never animist "in general," always in the terms of an assemblage that produces or enhances metamorphic (magic) transformation in our capacity to affect and be affected – that is also to feel, think, and imagine. Animism may, however, be a name for reclaiming these assemblages because it lures us into feeling that their efficacy is not ours to claim. Against the insistent poisoned passion of dismembering and demystifying, it affirms what it is they all require in order not to devour us – that we are not alone in the world.
> (2012: 9)

In the chapters that follow, debates about the nature of the world and about humanity come into view because the word "animism" stands as a signpost to exciting possibilities. This is a topic of rich and varied academic and more-than-academic interest and it is just beginning.

NOTE

1. The UK and North American editions of this book came out in different years but are substantially identical.

I

Different animisms

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INTRODUCTION

Stars, ancestors, antelopes and ducks frame Linda Hogan's opening essay. She places the myriad relations of our planetary life in the widest context of a life-giving universe and in the smallest context of intimate kinship. Hogan, a Chickasaw poet, novelist, essayist and scholar, draws on her rich understanding of varied North American indigenous knowledges and life-ways to present a cautious welcome to renewed academic interest in animism. She recognizes attempts to engage respectfully with what she prefers to call "tradition". In her estimation this interest in animism "counts for something. Its importance can't be overstated" – and she tells us why. Nonetheless, despite celebrating the growing interest in the larger-than-human relationships to which "animism" can point, she challenges us to face the violent history that has diminished or destroyed many lives.

Hogan's essay "We Call it *Tradition*" opens this book because it fuses celebration and challenge. It does not survey all the kinds of phenomena that are labelled "animism" but initiates a reconsideration of contemporary and historical indigenous life-ways and knowledges. By inviting us to engage, to relate, to participate, it offers a powerful foundation for the recognition (honoured in many later chapters) that the study of animism is more than the collection, description and analysis of facts about other lives. The approaches to learning and teaching which we adopt and perform are important elements of the relationships we have with the larger community (the world). Studies of animism entail provocative re-evaluations of all ways of being, acting, thinking and relating.

Nurit Bird-David's essay "'Animism' Revisited: Personhood, Environment and Relational Epistemology" (1999) has served as a milestone in the journey of many scholars. It clearly set out what earlier scholarship about animism had achieved and presaged the changing direction scholars had begun to take. Now, in "Animism, Conservation and Immediacy", Danny Naveh and Nurit Bird-David further develop their arguments which reflect on fieldwork among the Nayaka of South India. Having established the centrality of relationality in the epistemology of people who can be called "animists", here they provide a clarification about the importance of intimacy. In contrast with dominant models of conservation (illustrated here by a UNESCO project in India's Nilgiris hills), they insist that animist relationality is not something vague, diffuse or theoretical, but entails intimate acts of knowing specific local "others". Just as the Ojibwe elder interviewed by Irving Hallowell (1960) demonstrated that the important question is not whether all rocks are alive but whether specific humans relate appropriately (respectfully) with specific rocks, so for the Nayaka it is important to know how one might act appropriately towards particular elephants. Cultural or religious ecologies continue to be a significant topic for debate in many disciplines – and are embedded in the even larger topic of the use and value of terms like "nature" and "culture".

In Chapter 3 we have the summation of the late Ken Morrison's academic career: a programmatic proposal for a post-Cartesian anthropology. Following conversations with Morrison prior to his untimely death, and in consultation with his notes, David Shorter was able to add the finishing touches to the chapter. This sets out the ways in which indigenous animists and those who research among them (or the historical record of ancestral lives and ideas) may contribute to a revision in the ways in which scholarly activities are pursued. Inspired by Irving Hallowell and what he learnt among his Ojibwe hosts – and attending to Hallowell's evolving learning and practice – and drawing on his own research

about European and indigenous encounters in northeastern North America, Morrison begins with the question "Are they human?" He traces answers (whether conflicting or compatible) proffered by anthropologists, indigenous peoples, enlightenment ideologues and theists. Morrison sets out the implications for an anthropology that respects relationality as definitive not only for the worldviews of "others" but especially for future ways of gaining and valuing knowledge everywhere.

Edward Tylor's nineteenth-century account of animism sometimes appears as a foil against which more recent scholars test their approaches and theories. It deserves consideration both because such a wealth of data requires explanation – whether or not this is in agreement with Tylor – and because Tylor's theory of religion continues to influence many of our contemporaries. In Chapter 4, Robert Segal expertly delineates what Tylor proposed and achieved. In particular, he sets out Tylor's ideas about the relationship between religion and science. He asks whether the kind of thing Tylor called animism and the kind of theory he proposed survive today and what such survivals might mean. In the following chapter, Martin Stringer also seeks to know whether Tylor's kind of animism exists today. He is interested in the specific possibility of finding animism in popular or vernacular religiosity in Sierra Leone and in Britain. How do people speak about and engage with those who have died? How do the ways in which people cope with life and death draw on, but not always precisely match, official formulations of a culture's ideas?

These opening chapters raise issues and present arguments about people who might be identified as animists and about practices and ideas that might be described as animism. They do not pretend to cover every possible variation, but focus on some of the main ways in which kinds of animism can be approached, presented and/or understood. They not only set the scene for what follows but also encapsulate much of the excitement and importance surrounding animism.

1

We call it *tradition*

Linda Hogan

All over the earth the faces of all living things have been
created by Mother earth with great tenderness.
Luther Standing Bear (cited in DeMallie 1985: 288)

At night, outside, I watch the constellations move across the curve of black sky. The Great Hand moves toward the horizon. This is the hand that offers help for the souls of the dead to step on the path commonly called the Milky Way, or the way of nurturance. This is where they begin their journey along this Path of Spirits to the world of souls. In Greek astronomy this hand would be a part of the constellation called Orion, but we have many different skies, all held with equal respect. I like the compassion offered by the Hand to the dead.

Indigenous astronomies vary for different indigenous nations. My Navajo sister, Nancy Mary Boy, uses a travelling planetarium to teach others the Navajo sky world. What is most fascinating to me in her stories of the night sky is the constellation called The Feather. When The Feather touches earth, lightning strikes. Lightning wakes the beetles, the bears, every sleeping creature dwelling inside their dens of winter earth. They emerge into the time of rising plants. Farther north, people say two constellations must come together to create this same lightning that opens the season of spring.

Our astronomies come from our own environments and ways of comprehending the world through knowledge systems and mythologies, and through many thousands of years of sky observances. All of these are based on the unique ecosystems of each nation of people, and sometimes from stories shared with our friends and allies as we journeyed long distances by water and across land. With the many indigenous habitats, numerous ways of knowing and storying exist. Indigenous knowledge is also an authentic science gained from direct observation and relationship with the world around us.

This night, as the sky seems to cross this spinning, tilted world, I think about the word, *animism*, and what this newly accepted area of study means to those of us whose cognitive and spiritual worlds are already created by our rivers, mountains and forests. For those who have always prayed with, to, and for the waters, and known our intimate relatives, the plant people, the animals, insects, and all our special relations, the field of animism is a belated study. It has not gone unnoticed that without these relationships, a great pain

and absence has been suffered by humanity, an absence and loss we ourselves have felt as a result of the determinations of the Western mind to separate us from our homelands, and which has created great destruction to the living body of the continent. We know our own pain as we have been forced, often through violent means by the governing politics, to take up values vastly different from our own.

As a descendent of the mound-builders of the Southeastern United States, I stand in awe that along bends in the rivers, on flood plains and other regions, our ancestors created thousands of earthworks. Each effigy mound, burial site or pyramid took many hundreds of years and many generations of people to create. Our ancestors were people who loved the sky and creatures of the world so deeply that they expressed their care over time and space, using their own hands to carry baskets of clay from riverbanks to make mounds and pyramids, some white clay on one side, red on the other. With an extraordinary knowledge of geometry, the world has been shaped into the forms of frog and turtle and even the water spider in one region, all animals who dwell in two elements, land and water. The habitation of more than one realm is significant to a culture which takes notes of both the sky world and that beneath water, worships both sunlight and the night sky. In other locations mounds are shaped as birds with smaller birds flying beneath the wings of those larger. Bear mound effigies have been created not far from the mountain lion and deer. No species has gone unnoticed. The Great Serpent Mound, based on solar, lunar and other cosmic knowledge, continues to astound the tourists who visit, as does Cahokia and other remains of America's early cities or ceremonial centres which were as large as London or Paris in earlier times.

I call these earthworks a literature which remains as testimony of our presence, each a letter to the sky, a statement of earth love. These mounds were created by a people in constant observance in the ecosystem and stories of every angle of light, movement of life across the land. The mounds that haven't been overly explored, dismantled, numbered and reconstructed are still felt sites of living power and energy. These places of special energy on the earth reveal an evolved consciousness at work in creation, the accumulation of knowledge, spirituality and myth we do not often recollect today because the history of the country has transpired in the loss of such qualities.

Other earthworks have been found in Peru with the intriguing Nazca lines, in the Amazon basin, and numerous other places, even those unremembered by us in the Northern Plains of our own country. The cosmic worlds of indigenous peoples on all continents are yet to be revealed and perhaps best kept in secret since many of these have unfortunately been discovered as forests and other water-preserving environments have been destroyed.

Animism is the word scholars now use to define the worldview and intelligence that went into such creations and that "begins" to understand other than Western ways of knowing. However, it is not a term traditional indigenous peoples would use to describe our relationship with, and love for, the world around us. Nor is it a word that fully defines the complexity of knowledge systems we have had of the world around us. At least on the surface of its new territory, the study doesn't yet take in the thousands of centuries of historical relationships and intimate kinship with the land and our companion species. Nor does it consider how diverse indigenous languages contain and hold within them the embedded knowledge and deep science of our natural habitats, some containing more meanings in a single word than could be held in ideas written in a book in the English

language, others with more verbs and ways of using them than the entire number of words that exist in the entire vocabulary of other languages.

For tribal peoples, our relationships and kinship with the alive world is simply called *tradition.* We are either traditionally minded or we are still in the process of decolonizing ourselves, in various locations of the stage of learning where we have been in this long history. Some of us are still shedding the long and violent process of acculturation. Some have not yet begun. Many of the numerous losses we have had are due to Christianity. We had little choice but to be converted, and the Papal Bull called for the annihilation of many millions of Native peoples. Other losses are due to stolen lands with which we kept our knowledge, and to the many forms Western education took, none of which any of us have escaped, and which is part of the same world now teaching classes called "animism".

These invasions, not just of the land, body and spirit, but the cognitive invasions, are what Yupiaq Oscar Kawagley (2006) calls "cognitive imperialism". In his book *A Yupiaq Worldview*, he says that the people's consciousness has allowed them to survive in a good way for centuries and asks why outsiders should try to change that thinking.

The traditional knowledge of the environment, history and language, and relationships in all of their intricacies must be taken into the new animism, and its roots continue to grow. For indigenous people on all continents, these worldviews have been a way of cultural and physical survival, each one a way so complex that it might be a lifetime of study. Our sisters and brothers around the world have been participants within these worldviews long before European contact or other invasions which we were not meant to survive. Nevertheless, throughout all the changes in the world our relationships of equality, our values toward other species are remembered as much as has been possible throughout the fur trades and other times when we broke with our own traditions.

This beautiful way of seeing was recalled in words spoken by Onondaga elder, Oren Lyons, at the first meeting of international indigenous peoples with the United Nations NGOs in the 1970s when he said in Geneva, "I see no seat for the eagles". Nor did he see a place for the rest of creation, and since their voices were not heard, his words were a reminder that we humans stand somewhere between the "mountain and the ant, there and only there, as part and parcel of creation". How greatly we have overvalued ourselves and ignored the other intelligences around us.

Our realities were established in the long ago and our relationship with the other life forms has held together the worlds of those who are traditional. Our care for the land is a non-negotiable treaty. It is natural law and one that requires spiritual responsibilities as well as a way of being with the land, on the rivers, the ocean, our treatment of each life. As a writer, I consider it part of my work to re-member[1] all this, to even state how the world knows us, the human people. The animals and even the insects see us. The panther, one of our own Chickasaw clan animals, is the focus of my novel *Power* (1999). One section, reproduced here with some editing, is seen through the eyes of Sisa, the most endangered species, the Florida panther. Sisa sees the other species lost, a world changed, places of loss and destruction due to agriculture, ranching, golf courses, and the new ways of the people:

> The panther misses its companions, the blue-green crocodile, the many silver-sided fish, bear, and the delicate wood stork, all nearly gone. It wants to believe they will return. Sisa sees now that in place of the red wolf, the damp fur of the

> bear, the world has given way to cleared and empty space where the poor awkward cattle have no sheltering shade to lie down in but their own; they are clasped to the ground and along with their human-bred shadows they are eight-legged creatures of doubleness. Sisa knows that to eat them, even when she is hungry, is to be killed, but nevertheless they are food, nothing more.

The world has grown small where Sisa lives. It has lost its power and given way to highways and streets of towns where once there were woods and fens and bodies of water. The world is made less by these losses. Because of this, humans have lost the chance to be whole and joyous, reverent and alive. They live in square lots apart even from one another. What they've forgotten is large and immense, and what they remember is only a small, narrow hopelessness.

The panther remembers when humans were so beautiful and whole that her own people admired the way the two-legged people stood beneath trees with leaves leaning down over them as they picked ripe fruits, how their eyes were fully open. How straight they walked! How beautiful the beads around their necks, the dresses women made in fabric that was the dark green of trees and the colours of flowers. How good they were at devising ways to catch fish with simple bone. They stood so gracefully and full of themselves, they sang so beautifully, it remembers all this, how they sang. The whole world rejoiced with their voices. They were her little brothers and sisters.

The human story is the same as that of the natural world with its animals, water, the movement of the sky, rising plants, and even, as evidenced in our diverse artwork and ceremonies, the mountain and the ant.

About mountains: many mountains throughout the world are sacred sites. These great earth creations are visited regularly. In their majestic being, they are the boundaries of worlds, nations and memories. Dogen, a monk, wrote in *The Mountain and Rivers Sutra* that the mountains walk, it is just that they walk in their own time, not ours. This is a wisdom to be daily remembered about the world around us.

Long before the people of China suffered their movement from village life into the despair of Chinese capitalism with its overly long hours of repetitive factory labour for the production of cheap goods, there was once a time when it was thought that different gods lived in each part of the human body. Each human was sacred. It was, and in places it still is, thought that mountains were immortals. As they are.

The Tibetan Buddhists recognize their mother mountain, a sacred site, one climbed often in order to deliver prayers and prayer flags of red, yellow, blue, a rainbow of prayers, language and song on the mountain. Yet now the mountains are melting at a rapid rate due to global climate change. As the snow melts more rapidly it flows down the river toward the sea, and, like our own Mississippi River, it picks up agricultural chemicals, human waste, trash and illegally dumped toxins. It rushes through and past Cambodia into the ocean where all these toxins combine to create a dead zone in the great ocean, only one of many dead zones, each a place with no oxygen where not even the smallest form of life can survive.

On our continent, we have the same problems with every river that flows into the ocean, but as for the mountains, over four hundred mountains have been bombed in the Appalachians to reach coal seams to continue our form of energy use. One of the sacred mountains in the Southwest has become a recreational ski area using recycled sewage as

snow, another has a well-travelled road to an observatory that would have been better placed elsewhere. This is where our way of learning has taken us.

About the ants: some of us care about the small, the minute, such as the beloved water spider made into a mound on the earth, or the ant. These are significant parts of creation. Ceremonies such as the Red Antway of the Navajo attest to the importance of this insect with great oratory, prayer, song, accounts of tribal history and myth. The sand paintings that accompany this one ceremony are in themselves works of significant art. It was a copy of one of these that directed me into a study of the Navajo Chantway itself. Years later, in Australia, I met the head of the Red Ant clan, and we spoke a bit about the Ant Dreaming that exists on that continent. I had already studied the Honey Ant Dreaming and read about the Green Ant Dreaming, but I know dreamtime is a way of understanding the world so complex that it would take a lifetime to comprehend, to make the true leap into a cognitive structure so vastly different than what outsiders have learned. In a small way, Werner Herzog's film, *Where the Green Ants Dream* (1984), is a study in this cognitive difference between the Western mind and the indigenous. In the film, the Native persons understand the qualities of a living place on earth, the significance of the Green Ant, and their relationship to something the outsiders see as mere object. In contrast, the HydroQuebec Energy company sees the James Bay land not as a rich, living place but as vacant space. They therefore felt empowered to remove the indigenous people from their homes quite unexpectedly one morning, waking them while bulldozers waited outside their door.

And all of these, mining, the changing of rivers, the dumping of toxins, have added to the climate change. Where I live, with my interest in ants, I find that fire ants have made their way into Oklahoma from South America because of global warming, just as the pine beetle has also moved north. A swarm of the tiny, almost invisible, fire ants can kill a small animal or a child by covering them quickly and intelligently signal one another to sting all at the same time, creating toxic shock syndrome.

It is because of this that we need the new animists. We need change.

A cognitive dissonance exists in our world, the corporations, the people, one often founded on nothing more than beliefs. We already know which view has dominated since the invasion of the Western way of thought; that is the very reason we need the new areas of study for learners. Environmental education should begin with the very young, because, in truth, we really do stand somewhere between the mountain and the ant in a world coming undone.

The introduction of the studies of animism to academe was a surprise to me. I left university to work for my own tribal nation, for the people and for the land. Since then, classes in Paganism and animism have been offered in universities. Hearing this for the first time at a conference, I was horrified. We were killed in great numbers for being called Pagans and animists. Now one of the very institutions that disavowed our original relationships with the environment has studies in its return. Those of us who suffered from the colonizing forces in our lives, and from "cognitive imperialism", are now no longer the ostracized. What once victimized us is now a special area of religious studies. And yet to know that any small part of our knowledge is being taught in colleges and universities is significant, even if it is only a small portion of the intellectual knowledge of our traditionalists. It is, in some way, the fulfilment of the circle of life, as painful as it may feel to many of us.

Yet considering the great store of knowledge held by Native "keepers", there is still a problem with the two minds, Western and indigenous. Although occasional bridges are made, the two have not yet come together. With the recognition and the acceptance that our knowledge is important and valuable, we have more of a chance to uphold the continuation of this world. We live in a time of rapid human-created changes in the climate and on land. This new old view will, we hope, create a new generation of thinkers and activists who will be policy-changers. As a part of the intellectual tradition of universities, we can include the fields of science and medicine which too often have studied things out of their natural contexts and also have seemed to believe animals suffered no pain, even while using them for pain research. Perhaps those who protest animal vivisection will no longer be considered "terrorists" and humane opposition to suffering will become a well-established value. Perhaps as these fields come to understand that all matter has life, spirit, and even consciousness, as quantum physics maintains, ours will no longer be a "primitive" way of looking at the world. The new animism, the notion that all earth is living, and that it is perhaps even a singular organism, now even matters to world economies. Morris Berman points out in his book *The Reenchantment of the World* (1981) that we must concern ourselves with continuing ecologies for the sake of economics. When once it was heresy, he says, to take up the notion of earth or the universe as alive, now it is necessity. World economies of the past depended on a dead and unfeeling world, but in the present, to continue our world trades we are increasingly dependent on the survival of each environment we are in danger of losing. Animism, where every particle in the universe is alive, is implicit in all our work for future survival.

I am grateful for the new animism, because it counts for something. Its importance cannot be overstated. It is a beginning, even without the history and aboriginal connection to this land. It says the human is searching and with a need to be in touch with this land, or other lands of origins in a time when the world is so achingly distressed.

As for the individual human in his or her own spiritual work, the words which state best what we all seek are the Navajo word for balance and harmony, *Hozho*, or our own (Chickasaw) word *Tish*, which means not only peace, but the same harmony and state of being in right relation with the cosmos. For most aboriginal people this balance is kept in check through ceremonies that are intricate and have existed here for uncountable centuries, passed down to men and women with special care and ability. Balance or healing follows elaborate ceremonies, some through days of dancing, reenactment of mythologies, or singing of place, story or history, at times even including Western religious traditions. The most significant part of any ritual or gathering is language, whether it be song, prayer, the recitation of long myths, or statements of thanksgiving. Often herbal medicines are given at the gatherings. Herbal medicines depend on those who know the plants, know when to harvest them, what season, what time of day, and from which location. Remembering place is significant, and that includes each visitor to a place, insect, plant, animal, or the passing shadow of a cloud in golden sunlight. All of this may be included to return the human to his or her place within the natural world, the human community, and the universe, a balance so much more complex than that found in European traditions so that in the past it has converted priests to indigenous ways.

Many people now belong to meditation groups to find a special state of being or a oneness with the world. Some find it by accident and become seekers, searching again for that connection. Jesus went into the wilderness for forty days. Some fast on a mountain,

although Buddha discovered that he didn't have to fast to be whole and in balance, but sought to alleviate the pain and suffering in the world, even though it is one truth of our lives. Still others commit themselves to participation in the Sundance or follow the peyote path. Lao Tzu wrote that he once had to excuse himself from a town where he was asked for assistance in returning the place to balance because it was so out of balance that it affected him. After a time away, he returned and helped the people. With many methods we are all reaching for the same thing, not power, not riches, but re-cognition of our place in the whole of creation. We know that a healthy-minded human, a healthy community, yearns toward the love and care for earth and all earth's creations. It matters little about one's notion of God. What matters is the sacred that is present in everything, everyone. This contributes the most toward humanity and creation. This requires an act of attention, an acknowledgement that all are sentient beings and of the smallness of our own being in this world of the living, ongoing, life force. Able to participate with that creation, we may make it more whole and even assist its growing and being. We are part of the ongoing process of life that is still taking place, this verb that surrounds us at every moment in its formation. Most importantly, this formation, it is hoped, includes the development of compassionate hearts.

All our literatures, not just ceremonial, have played a part in this development and in creations of important change. Ernesto Cardenal, Nicaraguan priest and poet, had no choice but to take up the cause of the Sandinistas against the tortuous regime of Somoza with its missing people and destroyed villages. He wrote that the revolution in Nicaragua was not only for the people but for the liberation of the lakes and the liberation of the plants. In another of his poems I recall that the revolutionaries in the jungle opened the cages of parrots being carried by truck to sell to wealthy Americans in the United States. They freed the birds back into the jungle from which they had come.

We can't underestimate the power of language, poetry and ceremony. The poet and thinker Octavio Paz wrote about the indigenous relationship to language where the word is not an abstract but is the thing itself; there is no abyss between what is said and what it materially represents. Then too, in most of the world creation stories all things are brought into being by words, dreams, or songs. Even the Bible begins the creation with the words "Let there be".

Language is also used to communicate with animals and to sing plants through their stages of growth. In the Papago corn-growing songs, one is offered for every stage of the plant's splendid development, as Ruth Underhill documented in her book, *Singing for Power* (1938). Her informant, Maria Chona, told her the songs are so short because we know so much and that each night a man walks through the corn singing to it:

The corn comes up
It comes up green
Here upon our field
White tassels unfold

In the many pueblos in the Southwest, throughout the time of planting to the end of harvest, corn dances and songs are performed weekly for the growth of the corn; these are serious dances, the energy of humans given to the earth. And I have remembered for almost twenty years the words spoken by a Northern Cheyenne man who said that some

of their songs were lost during the times when the Americans chased Black Kettle's band back and forth across the continent for so many years as they tried to escape removal into Indian Territory, now Oklahoma, a place the US planned to send all the tribal peoples and then wall them in to keep them from their plans for our lands. But, he said, the songs of those they lost during those painful times were held in trust for them by the wolves who taught them back to the people. It is a mystery, but we never know where our songs, our knowledge, our plants, are stored in trust, waiting for our return.

The Southern Utes continue the Bear Dance and the Hopi still have the sacred Snake Dance, no longer open to those outside their own community, not even to other tribal nations. It is fortunate that there are those who remember, are taught, and are born to their old ways. Sometimes it even happens that a child is born as a traditional person, or for the Yaqui, each year a man of integrity becomes designated as the deer dancer, the one who enters the enchanted world which began in a time of magical spring when a deer with flowers in his antlers walked out of the forest where they once lived. This is only one song from the long, many-storied literature of the Deer Dance, the man and animal in worlds between the world:

> Over there, I, in the center
> of the flower-covered opening,
> as I was walking,
> here in the open green water,
> as I was walking,
> so he is the deer person,
> so he is the real deer person.
>
> Felipe S. Molina (Evers & Molina 1987: 71)

Words used in song, prayer, ritual, are a source of divinity. The word *God*, itself, means "to invoke, to call out". We are fortunate that over the centuries we have these aboriginal literatures that reveal a world all working together, all alive and worthy, all in motion together. Language and song is the inner fuse of our life.

Despite centuries of attempted acculturation and the many techniques of assimilation practised by a government which financially supported churches and educational systems, the indigenous perspective continues its long and persistent lineage of existence. This, I think, distinguishes our traditions from most of the new, returned *animism*, which is nevertheless a fresh perspective and way of knowing, grasping at last that we are all of a piece.

If what we call tradition is animism, what could be better than to renew a care for the land that we have always loved, with our old knowledge of a region's every plant. Animism is a field that has no choice but to recognize our relationship with the trees that has existed for so many years that it is an intimate one, as if we know and remember the history of each insect that set down its fragile feet on a leaf, each butterfly that opened its first wings from underneath, each bird that entered the green leaves that curve upward before the rain to capture each drop of water. It is important to remember that the Navajo know the prairie dogs call down that rain. While this sounds like a thought from folklore, when we study this keystone species we discover it anew as "scientific" truth. In addition, new studies have learned that the prairie dogs not only have a language with a syntax,

but that the holes they dig for living and journeying underground really *are* significant to the aquifer, just as trees attract rain, hold it and preserve it for the dry times. These are now facts of science, which means our old knowledge is no longer just anecdotal information. It is now "truth", but what has this truth meant yet to the animals so vulnerable to sharpshooters, poisoners and land developers who never think or care that what they kill is an intelligence with such defined brilliance? The future of the animals is for the new young animists to determine. Our Native and sovereign legal treaties, our protests, our televised statements have held little weight in what has become the world of the newcomers, even though we know that the smallest species, the least of these, may be a necessity to our own survival.

Those of us who know the history of words now understand *anima* as the animating force, at times meaning, in Jungian terms, the energy of female spirit, perhaps mother earth, or Sophia, the mother of God who arranged and planned the life of this earth; *anima* is the animating force of life, the fire of being that moves everything, even the constantly birthing universe, to life. In this single word, we see a large scope of different visions and meanings. It gives me great hope to think of human beings respecting all the great diversity and divinity in the world, the morning light, the first dew, the stars of a clear sky, the visit of the deer near the mosses or standing new in a wash of trees by the river, stepping out of the enchanted forest with spring flowers in its antlers. These are special gifts, as significant as that of the many kinds of maize was to North America. The soul has its needs and one of them is that we acknowledge that the human spirit lives not just inside our bodies and thought systems but in the world outside of us. As hard as philosophers and religious thinkers have tried to define what the soul is, they have tried equally to determine its location. It has never been situated in any one place within the physical body, because it can't. And yet we rarely read the territory around us as ourselves or unfold the human map to find the region extends beyond the longitudes and latitudes of skin. Our flesh has never been a boundary for the human being. We only reach out from there to occupy the space around us. Even more significantly, it occupies us.

Traditionalist Dennis Martinez calls our work in the world kincentric. The cosmology and relationship to nature is one of equality. At a recent meeting he reminded us that, "Humans don't even have the moral authority to extend ethics or law to the land community." We are not that superior. And yet, because of our now precarious situation here, we must, and especially because we are permeable.

As a traditional thinker, which is what we Indian people call ourselves when we accept the long conventions of respect for the world, for the animals as beings equal to us, and for living in a way that is conscious of the lives of plants and endangered insects, we have work to do. We have watched the destruction of this body of earth through deforestation, mining, operations such as the greatly devastating and even unyielding violence to the tar sands of Alberta, the destruction of our water, our air filled with pollutants, and the often denied global heating, we must work to care for the earth. But we must also recognize the cruelty to our own species. That is one thing we have too often neglected in a field of animism neglect: the rights of humans, even though our rights are being denied in the suffering inflicted on the land. But if we have a spiritual responsibility to protect this living world, we also have the responsibility to work toward protecting the other humans, who have been forgotten by so many. It goes without saying that language and literature have long served that purpose; in fact, it serves both the

human world and the rest of nature. We need to extend our compassion to one another, to the thirsty countries, the child gold miners who are enslaved for jewellery for other countries, those without trees, food, safety from even their own, all part of this same beautiful world, all separated from the knowledge that allows them to keep their own environments safe and whole.

Living in a rural Conservative Christian part of the country, I was relieved to hear a Creek man recently speak about how Christianity is not our Native way. The creation gave us our own ways, he said. This is not true for many people who live around me and do not look to our own manner of being. If so, we would have a vastly different environment, different relationships all around. Our original way is not a belief system. It is a lived way of life, being a participant within the whole of the living world. Even the spoken word is alive, or has the potential to bring to life, to *re-mind* us. Everything exists in its own right. In a world of broken lives, forests, mountains, oceans, we cannot only think about ourselves, but must, at least part of the time, weave from ourselves like a spider mending the web of broken strands of connection if we are to hold to the force of the living energy with which we connect and wherein we dwell.

In the Haudenosaunee gatherings, the first words spoken are a thanksgiving address, with gratitude to the earth, wind, rain, the animal and plant lives, the ancestors, not to a world only of abstract spirit or a singular creator but an entire creation. Thinking of our moral obligations to the earth is a part of our place as co-creators with this world. Our alliance with nature is a two-way thing. It is not simply there for our enjoyment. It is up to us to take care of it. We need this gratitude for a world that, even damaged, has sustained us, and waits for us to help heal it.

In his great "Memory of Fire" trilogy (1998) Eduardo Galeano translates from a book by Lydia Cabrera (1983), a history of the Ceiba tree that protects fugitives from injustice and racism. Anyone striking it with an axe feels it in his or her own body. A person should not walk in its shade without asking permission, but it opens when asked for shelter. For fugitives it grows thorns for their protection and grows them suddenly. It is a tree with a consciousness. But then, aren't they all?

Thinking again about the night sky, I first considered the many individual astronomies of the Native people years ago when I came across the Skidi Pawnee star bundle (a collection of sacred objects wrapped together in decorated leather) in a museum in Chicago. It is decorated with constellations, that take in the living world around, the people, antelope, swimming ducks, as if uniting the universe with the earth on which we live, our one special planet in this universe of constant change and motion of its own, still unknown to us, but with nurseries of stars and new life forming.

NOTE

1. As Meridel LeSueur frequently said, "re-membering the dis-membered". See LeSueur (1990).

2

Animism, conservation and immediacy

Danny Naveh and Nurit Bird-David

In this chapter we highlight the importance of immediacy for understanding the phenomenon framed as "animism", elaborating on previous arguments about animist ontologies, relational epistemologies and conservation (see Bird-David 1999, 2006; Naveh 2007; Bird-David & Naveh 2008). While "animism" and related terms such as "animist" and "animic" are evidently used to refer to diverse phenomena, the primacy of immediacy derived from the relational and local nature of indigenous animisms is sometimes obscured by discussions utilizing the term as a universalizing category. In this chapter we would like to reiterate the necessity of a twofold move, like that of a knight in a chess game (Bird-David & Naveh 2008: 57–8). The first stage of the move is made in many studies of indigenous animisms. In this, the Cartesian subject/object dualism (of a world full of objects opposed to and observed by subjects) is exorcized from indigenous cosmoses "full of subjects". Nonetheless, the second stage is rarely followed through. Studies continue to describe indigenous *universes* of interrelated *subjects* and are still tethered to a modern concern with a *total* universe, and to an overarching formal category, "the subject", as a means for mapping its diversity. Instead, a full recognition of the working of relationality requires careful attention to diverse, local, specific and immediate acts of relating. Animism, as we utilize the term, is about a world full of immediate relational beings.

In a previous work (Bird-David & Naveh 2008) we asked, "What do the Nayaka try to conserve?" while comparing their attitude with modern conservation agendas. The question provides a way to more clearly see and to contrast different kinds of conservation efforts and, thereby, different understandings of the world. Our conclusion emphasized the importance of immediacy in Nayaka's mindful engagement with and perception of forest animals. In this chapter we wish to further explore the factor of immediacy in this arena, showing, among other things, that when such engagements are not characterized by immediacy, plants and animals are not "animated" (Western perspective), nor are they approached as co-forest dwellers who have to be properly engaged with (local perspective), and we cannot speak of a responsible conservationist approach, not even as a by-product.

NAYAKA AND THE MAB PROGRAMME

Nayaka are forest dwellers who live in the Wynaad area of the Nilgiris hills, in South India, in the border area of Tamil Nadu, Kernataka and Kerala. They were first studied by Bird-David in 1978 and 1979, followed by revisits in 1989 and 2001. Naveh studied them during 2003 and 2004, following a preliminary visit in 2001. These Nayaka traditionally subsisted by gathering and hunting, which they combined with trade in minor forest produce; later paid work and, increasingly, cultivation and animal husbandry replaced the former gathering, hunting and trade. At the same time, they have been involved in clearing forest tracts either as casual wage labourers for agricultural neighbours (many of them Hindu) and corporate plantations or, increasingly, for themselves in order to make their own small tea and coffee plots. Yet, Naveh found that the relational animistic epistemology which Bird-David had observed in the late 1970s has survived the economic diversification in many contexts of Nayaka life.

The Nayaka live in an area which adds a comparative analytical edge to our arguments about relationality, conservation ideologies and practices and immediacy. The location of the Nayaka in the Nilgiris hills places them at the heart of a regional and global ecological development. The Nilgiris were India's first biosphere reserve under the ambitious Man and the Biosphere (MAB) programme launched by UNESCO in the early 1970s. In 1979 the MAB concept came into practice in India with the establishment of the Indian MAB Committee. In 1986, the Nilgiris was designated a biosphere reserve (Siroli Shekhar 2001). It now ranks among the twenty-five globally identified biodiversity hotspots (Daniels 2006). It is described in the MAB directory[1] as the habitat for probably the largest South Indian populations of tigers (*Panthera tigris*), elephants (*Elephas maximus*) and other large mammals. Its aims also include enhanced attention to local livelihoods, local social, economic and cultural conditions, and local indigenous knowledge. It also commends the reserve for being the habitat of "the only surviving hunter-gatherers of the Indian subcontinent, the Cholanaikans who concentrate in the Nilambur area". The Cholanaikans are closely related to the Nayaka on whom we focus: one of Naveh's fieldwork sites was inhabited by people both of Cholanaikan and KattuNayaka origins, both of whom are referred to in our study as Nayaka.

NAYAKA RELATIONAL EPISTEMOLOGY

In her "'Animism' Revisited: Personhood, Environment, and Relational Epistemology", Bird-David (1999) argued that regarding as animate that which in Western terms is inanimate (e.g. hills, trees and stones), as is often done among the Nayaka and other similar indigenous groups, is far from a misunderstanding. This widespread indigenous practice is not the result of an incorrect ascription of human personhood to objects. Rather, in the indigenous culture, another sense of personhood is ascribed to what in Western terms are inanimate objects. The capacity to be with others, share a place with them, and responsibly engage with them is the critical attribute of the local sense of "personhood", which is also extended to the non-human, the animate, and the inanimate (see also Bird-David 2006; Bird-David & Naveh 2008). The indigenous animation is an instrument of knowledge. Personifying something in the local terms directs inquisitive concerns to the

being-together of oneself and the other and to learning mutualities within the *pluralities* that *are* in the world. Instead of framing one's target of study as a separate object, here it is framed as a subject co-living with the learner. The learner focuses on their joint selves and how each one affects and is affected by the other. This epistemology generates knowledge which inheres in, grows from and supports social engagement, and it authorizes viewing "what" as a social "who" for the sake of learning about and knowing it. For example, a tree would be regarded as a being who is influenced and who influences others. Its behaviour within mutual relations would be studied more than what it is made of. The tree would be perceived and considered along with its relations, not as existing outside of them.

This animistic epistemology privileges knowing how to behave within relations in order to nourish these relations more than knowing things in and for themselves as objects separate from the knower. However, it is not the Nayaka's only perspective on the world. This is their traditional approach to understanding. Their relational epistemology is a favoured method of understanding the world as much as it is a description of what the world *is* for them. In terms of the previous example, trees as such may be animated, not animated, or regarded as objects, depending on what *actually* happens between them and their Nayaka interlocutors. When trees are engaged with and become the subject of attention and study, then they are perceived as animated. Other trees can be cut down in a utilitarian way for building or for wages (when working, for example, on forest estates). Distant trees, which are not present and available to be engaged with, can be referred to without animating them, for example, when asking the ethnographer whether trees grow in her home-place and of what kind. The local expression of animism is inseparable from *living jointly with the animated* and seeks to understand the local life in its plurality and mutuality. Let us turn to some more detailed and concrete examples in order to further illustrate these arguments.

In previous work (e.g. Bird-David 1999, 2006; Bird-David & Naveh 2008) we have shown how various game animals are viewed by the Nayaka as forest co-dwellers, each with its own idiosyncratic personality, not least in terms of their wisdom and attentiveness to others. So far we have focused mainly on examples showing how the idiosyncratic personality of one single particular animal gets to be revealed in the framework of Nayaka relational epistemology. Here we wish to further explore this theme from a slightly different angle, this time by dwelling on examples revealing personhood in Nayaka engagement with groups of elephants.

Like humans and other forest dwellers, elephants are understood by the Nayaka we studied to act with or without "*budi*", which may be understood as the ability to interact wisely with others (see Bird-David 2004: 332). Different elephants are understood to have different extents of *budi*. Their understandings depend on such idiosyncratic and contextual factors as individual life experiences, qualities of their "heart", and type of personality (Bird-David & Naveh 2008: 65). Thus, they can act wisely towards others in a way that pre-empts unnecessary conflicts, but they may act at other times without *budi*, especially when they are angry. Nayaka were often empathetic to elephants that they perceived as justifiably hurt or angry, even when the elephants damaged their houses or even killed people considered as relatives (see e.g. *ibid.*: 65). In such instances they often theorized and speculated about what the elephants felt in those particular situations. Let us examine the cases below, which further demonstrate these points.

After midnight on 5 November 2003, a group of nine elephants (two of which were calves) entered KK.[2] They knocked down two houses and substantially damaged plots that the Nayaka had recently started cultivating. This group of elephants was first sighted in this area only three month earlier. Unlike another well-known group of seven elephants and various other elephants that roamed singly in the forest (or sometimes in pairs), this group was still fairly unfamiliar to KK people and therefore attracted extra attention. In less than three weeks, this group had destroyed seven houses in that area. Four nights previously, while raiding another Nayaka village, an old blind Nayaka man was caught within a house that was surrounded and trampled down by elephants from this group. He was only just rescued by a young man who, in doing so, took an indisputable risk with his own life.

To the people's amazement, the elephants were acting in a pattern previously unknown to them. Adult elephants approached the houses and, with their trunks, pulled out a few of the supporting posts. By doing so, they enabled the group's two calves to enter and eat what was inside, while the adult elephants remained nearby – eating cultivated plants found in the vicinity. The calves ate the leftovers from the metal vessels inside the house which were later smashed – probably by an adult elephant. In addition, they ate uncooked edibles such as rice, lentils, salt and chilli powder. The elephants even ate shirts and *lungis* (cloth wraps), and a chunk of soap used for the washing of clothes.

This incident was the subject of lively debate in many KK houses during the days that followed. People were sharing ideas, theories and possible explanations in multi-participant conversations. Their theories revolved around the following questions: Where did these elephants pick up the idea of entering in such a manner into people's houses? What drove them to do so in the first place? Why did they also eat the non-edible items? Another issue much discussed was "Now that they 'got the taste' would they go on with this kind of visit? As in other similar incidents, the village people tried to engage with the elephants in many ways, one of which was by trying to speak with them. Thus, while some of the men tried to chase the elephants away from Maren's house by using drums and fire, others came closer to the elephants and, expressing their anger and frustration, reproached them, saying, "Are you coming here to disturb us? Disturb us by taking our *kulu* [cooked rice – here in the sense of basic food]? Go away from here! We tell you to go away from here! Hmm!? Otherwise we beat you."

Now, that night, unlike in various other incidents, the elephants showed no signs of response to this kind of approach. This behaviour pattern and the lack of response to the demands were understood by different men and women in the village in various ways. Some understood it to be a consequence of these elephants' emotional state as they entered KK. For example:

> These elephants are not without *budi*. Already before they came here that night they were troubled by *kaka* [Muslim] men. These *kaka* were throwing fire crackers at them. These elephants came here so angry. So angry, it was impossible to talk with them. These people, [the *kaka*] they are not like us – they have no *budi*, they don't know to cooperate with elephants.

Others saw this ill behaviour as simply emanating from this group's ignorance of local conventions referred to as "the walking of this place" (in the sense of "the accepted way to be and act in this place"), for instance:

> These elephants came from that side [pointing towards Kerala] only three or four moons ago. They are not from here. These elephants have no *budi*. They don't know the walking of this place. That is why they wander like this. The elephants from here, like that elephant that was walking near the *deva mane* and Masigane's house, they know the walking, they will not make difficulties like this.

We can see how these Nayaka allow for the possibility that elephants, just like human persons, may act out of anger or temporary ignorance. As in other similar encounters, they even attempted to touch the elephants' conscience by trying to bring about feelings of guilt. In addition, these examples, though differing in various respects, illustrate that both human and elephant persons may act with or without *budi*. We can also see that *budi* is not a thing, such as a piece of information, which may be utilized by its "holder" wherever he goes (in contrast to some modern understandings of "education"). Instead, *budi* involves the skill to behave properly within a particular context. In the second example, the elephants that do not have enough experience of the "walks" of the area into which they have moved, make various *tapu* (mistakes, in the sense of social mistakes *vis-à-vis* others). *Budi* has not yet "grown" in them. *Budi*, as we can learn from this case, grows out of getting to know one's present surroundings. "Surroundings" here should be read in the most inclusive sense of the word, that is, without distinction between the physical environment, the various beings that live there and local norms. The modern term "neighbourhood" may serve as a good metaphor. Here also the blocks of buildings, the people and local norms are quite inseparable from each other. Returning to this group of elephants, like newcomers to a neighbourhood, they still lack *budi* in the sense of the right way to act in this particular locality. *Budi* emanates out of engagement; it is not pre-given to situated relations.

When joining the Nayaka in their efforts to encourage/persuade groups of elephants to leave their villages Naveh often noticed that they tried to recognize and focus on one or two elephants with whom it was most likely that their efforts would bear positive fruit. On one instance, shortly after the elephants had left, after doing relatively little harm, Naveh curiously asked two men about this tendency. Reflecting about it one of them maintained that:

> If three of us are standing here, and one of us is getting angry then the other two will not let him do any harm to anybody. Like that with elephants' *kotta* [group – the same term is used for people], there are angry elephants without *budi* and there are others with *budi*. Sometime those who have *budi* hold back the elephants that don't have *budi*. But sometimes when an elephant is "touched by anything", this elephant will destroy anything in his way.

This example illustrates how the idiosyncratic personality of a particular elephant is considered to be of greater importance – *within the immediate situation* – than its general "elephant-ness". Like humans, some have *budi*, that is, they are capable of the correct behaviour ("doing the right thing") in situations where they interact with others, and there are others without *budi*. Elephants, as well as other kinds of animals, can act wisely with others – a way that avoids unnecessary conflict – but they may also act without *budi*. Though angry, some elephants (those who have *budi*) may react and may become

conciliatory when spoken to, rather than allow themselves to be controlled by their anger. Being able to contain one's anger, and not acting out according to it, is a highly esteemed personality trait among the Nayaka with whom we lived. Elephants, again like humans, are understood to be capable of influencing each other's behaviour (although, again like humans, they may try and fail). The dynamic within an elephant's *kotta* (group) is believed to be similar to the dynamic that prevails in a human *kotta*.

DEPARTURE FROM IMMEDIACY

The cases presented above demonstrate the importance of recognizing the factor of immediate quality – in the sense of particular performances in particular situations – in what might be regarded in the literature as "Nayaka animism". Now we turn to those instances in which Nayaka engagement with other forest dwellers is not characterized by immediacy. In such instances, as we will show, there is little trace of the tendency to regard and approach animals and plants as forest co-dwellers who should be properly engaged with. Instances in which Nayaka engagement with forest animals is not characterized by immediacy are fairly rare, at least among those communities within which we lived. When hunted, animals are usually consumed within the same day or the day after. Nayaka do not tend to hunt beyond immediate needs for meat. Equally important, Nayaka hunters – again among those communities within which we lived – rarely hunt in order to sell their lot. Thus, consumers are the hunters themselves and of course those who are currently living with them. We thus choose to concentrate on the engagement with and perception of forest plants which in some instances is characterized by immediacy, and in others, especially when gathered and collected in the forest for selling, may be characterized by a departure from immediacy. Later on we shall focus on additional examples from other communities of hunter-gatherers in other parts of the world which demonstrate the difference in the way in which wild animals are perceived and engaged with according to immediate and non-immediate considerations.

Throughout his fieldwork, Naveh noticed that the Nayaka he lived with mostly refrained from chopping down non-dry branches from forest trees *as long as the wood obtained from forest trees was chopped for self and immediate use*. Most of the people we lived with considered chopping such branches as *tapu* (which, in this context, means a mistake in one's conduct toward others; see Bird-David 2004: 332–4). Many of them see this act as one that "hurts" the tree that "like us has a soul". As one man related to Naveh: "Every [forest] tree is a living being, a tree has a soul. Like people have blood, trees have water."[3] However, when they went to the forest in order to gather firewood for selling, they did not refrain from cutting wet (but already usable) branches. Moreover, in a few cases that Naveh came to know about, Nayaka men indiscriminately chopped down forest trees when non-Nayaka neighbours, who were in need of timber, paid them to do so. Similarly with bamboo plants: as long as it was intended for their own use, they carefully examined which bamboo pole they could cut down and which should be left untouched. However, when they went to cut bamboo poles for selling there was little hint, if any, of a similar consideration. In two instances Naveh saw Nayaka men set fire to a portion of a bamboo cluster (at ground level); they then pulled out two or three poles, which could be sold, leaving the rest to hang rootless in the air.[4] Likewise with

medicine plants, his Nayaka interlocutors usually showed particular mindfulness and care when picking forest plants for their own medical use or for those considered relatives. However, when harvesting medicine plants commissioned via local non-Nayaka dealers by Indian Ayurvedic companies (and some Nayaka admitted to having no idea as to the use of these plants), the same men and women took part in over- and sometimes brutal harvesting which resulted in the eradication of these plants in a radius of one or two days' walk around several Nayaka villages. This shows that with a utilitarian approach extending beyond immediate needs, forest plants could be treated in a manner that in other circumstances would be considered as a *tapu* (see Endicott 2005: 81 for a case of intensified harvesting among the Batek in response to outside market demands, and Hart 1978: 327, 343 about over-hunting of antelopes as a result of the intensification of hunting for the purpose of selling). It should be noted that a similar and even far more extreme pattern is clearly shown in the Nayaka approach towards their newly domesticated animals and plants – relationships which are characterized by an even greater departure from immediacy.[5]

Similar tendencies can be recognized in the approach of Baka hunters to gorillas, chimpanzees and elephants; and in the North Alaskan Eskimo understanding of their dogs. Writing about the Baka, Axel Köhler (2005) shows how they approach gorillas, chimpanzees and elephants differently depending on whether they are hunting for their own consumption to satisfy immediate needs or for sale. Baka – like the Nayaka (see Bird-David 1990) – perceive themselves as "children of the forest", and see the forest as their home, in marked contrast to their neighbours. In their perception, according to Köhler, "the forest is shared with other agents, fellow humans, animals, plants, and spirits, all of which engage in specific forms of subsistence" (Köhler 2005: 424). Köhler notes that Baka men generally refrain from hunting gorillas and chimpanzees (*ibid.*: 417), and the reason they give for this is that these animals are similar to themselves in the way they move and behave. Köhler stresses that, in such circumstances, Baka would say something like:

> "Just look at the way gorillas and chimpanzees stand upright and move about, and the way they eat. That is the way of a person!" Or: "Look at their body, their face and their hands; they bear the features of a person!" And when showing me the leafy beds of gorillas, Baka acquaintances commented, "Only a person makes a bed like that to sleep in." (*Ibid.*)

At the same time, Baka hunters *do* hunt gorillas and chimpanzees, when they work for their Bantu patrons, who pay them with imported goods and cash. Köhler notes a similar pattern with regard to Baka elephant hunting. The Baka approach elephants as "persons" who share the forest with them. They value elephant meat and fat as a "welcome change from a more regular diet of small and medium-sized game" (*ibid.*) and therefore occasionally hunt elephants for their own consumption. Hunting in this case, which is limited in scope, occurs while the elephants are still engaged with as co-dwellers of the forest. Yet, alongside this moderate hunting, Baka engaged in another more murderous kind of hunting that almost brought elephants, in some parts of the forest, to the brink of extinction during the early years of the twentieth century (see Bahuchet & Guillaume 1982: 200–201 for a similar dynamic with regard to the Aka). Köhler reports:

> Baka involvement in ivory trading as producers of this valuable commodity thus presents a different side of their engagement with the forest environment. Elephants represent ancestral figures of the forest and are salient in Baka ritual and eco-cosmology. However, in spite of the elephants' ancestral status, the positive effects of their ecological agency, and the perceived links between humans and elephants in mythical, spiritual, and cosmological relations, Baka got involved in a murderous trade of elephant products. (Köhler 2005: 423)

These cases illustrate the dynamic in which economic engagement which is no longer characterized by immediacy pushes aside or at least temporarily masks conventions with respect to the need for proper conduct towards forest game. Once these animals are hunted on a large scale for money, rather than for self-consumption shaped by immediate needs for meat, their perception as *vivid* persons is concealed by a utilitarian perspective; and this takes place even when the animals are personified and, furthermore, are regarded as mythical beings.

Another example comes from Robert F. Spencer's study of North Alaskan Eskimo in the early 1950s (1959: 264–77). Spencer notes that these people regard animals as creatures who have souls. However, he points out that dogs are an exception, that dogs are believed to "lack souls" (*ibid.*: 289, 301, 465–7). Spencer mentions this as a fact, without giving any additional explanation. Now, dogs, like no other animal, are utilized by North Alaskan Eskimo in various different contexts, the most important of which is as a means of transport. In the past, some groups also raised puppies for food and clothing. Relating to our argument, Spencer notes that dogs may be tied up for long periods: "Useless in the summer, the teams [of dogs] are underfed and watered infrequently. In the winter, however, when the team is again necessary for transport, greater care is given. A team is staked down when not in use in summer or in winter" (*ibid.*: 467).

Being tied up for long periods, dogs are organized to be an available means for transport. As such, they are fed and watered according to utilitarian considerations. Our suggestion is that the people's enduring utilitarian approach towards their dogs plays a crucial role in the formation of their belief that dogs, unlike other animals, lack souls (cf. Ingold 1987: 255–60). It is indeed easier, more coherent and justifiable to sustain a setting of a long-term utilitarian, and often offensive, relationship with animals provided that they are not approached as persons with souls.

DISCUSSION

How we get to know things is embedded within culture and practice and takes multiple forms. When acting according to immediate concerns, Nayaka relationally frame what they are concerned about as their authoritative way of getting to know things. They seek to understand relatedness from a related point of view within the shifting horizons of the related viewer. Their relational epistemology, their study of how things-in-situations relate to the actor-perceiver and, from the actor-perceiver's point of view, to each other, is embodied in the practices that Tylor termed "primitive animism". These practices are articulated with a relational personhood concept and a relational perception of the environment. Earlier theories of animism, taking modernist personhood concepts and

perceptions of the environment as universal, have grossly misunderstood animism as simple religion and a failed epistemology.

Within the objectivist paradigm informing previous attempts to resolve the "animism" problem, it is hard to make sense of people's "talking with" things, or singing, dancing, or socializing in other ways, for which "talking" is used here as a form of shorthand. According to this paradigm, learning involves acquiring knowledge *of* things through the separation of knower and known and often, furthermore, by breaking the known down into its parts in order to know it. To study, say, the tropical forest – or the kind of forest in which the Nayaka live – botanists of this persuasion cut down a strip of trees with machetes, sort out the fallen vegetation into kinds, place characteristic bits and pieces of each kind in small bags, and take them out of the forest to a herbarium for botanical classification (see W. Richards 1952). Compared with their method, "talking with" forest game or trees seems a ritual with no possible connection to the serious business of acquiring knowledge of them.

If the object of modernist epistemology is a totalizing scheme of separated essences, approached ideally from a separated viewpoint, the object of this animistic knowledge is understanding relatedness from a related point of view within the shifting horizons of the related viewer. Knowledge in the first case is having, acquiring, applying and improving representations of things in-the-world (see Rorty 1980). Knowledge in the second case is developing the skills of being in-the-world with other things, making one's awareness of one's immediate environment and one's self finer, broader, deeper and richer. Knowing, in the second case, grows from and *is* about maintaining relatedness with neighbouring others. It involves distinguishing between diverse aspects of the environment rather than dichotomizing it. Its concern is in turning attention to "we-ness", which absorbs and blurs differences, rather than to "otherness", which highlights differences and eclipses commonalities (Bird-David 1999). Against materialistic framing of the environment as discrete things stands a relationality which frames the environment as nested relatednesses. Both ways are real and valid in certain contexts. Each has its limits and its strengths.

In this context we would like to ask: what is it that the Nayaka try to conserve? It is not so much elephants (in general) but proper relations with real "elephants-we-live-with". Examples noted earlier (and in Bird-David & Naveh 2008) show that the idiosyncratic personality and circumstances of particular elephants are considered within the immediate situation more important by Nayaka than their "elephantness". The Nayaka "relational epistemology" model stands out sharply against the backdrop of the "conservation" model employed in the UNESCO-initiated MAB project which, though implemented in their area, emerged from a far-away place, far beyond Nayaka knowledge and imagination. Not only the place but also the terms in which the programme was launched were far removed from Nayaka relational perspectives. Their "relational epistemology" model is concerned with engaging particular beings, which particular Nayaka meet, at a particular time and place, in the forest, or near their homes. A concrete individual elephant that the Nayaka are concerned with is almost transparent in MAB's terms. Underscoring MAB's aims is an accountant-like view of a stock of items, listed and catalogued in a uniform way. Thus, MAB's declared interest in biodiversity is described in terms of the number and names of different flora and fauna species in the biosphere reserve, and in terms of the major habitats and land-cover types. In contrast, the Nayaka are concerned with particular beings, considered as co-dwellers, and in some cases – including (but not only) ritual

ones – as relatives. The local concern is to live and let live jointly in the shared forest. The temporal horizons of MAB stretch far into the future. Far from referring to the next immediate day, "tomorrow" in the MAB's statement refers to a far-away future, imagined in terms of tens, hundreds, and even thousands of years ahead. The temporal horizons of the Nayaka model are the immediate "today" and "tomorrow". Engaging with forest beings – whether in the forest or in the trance gathering – is personal. It is embedded in and is inseparable from actual immediate ongoing corporeal togetherness, negotiation and sharing. The engagement involves empathy, rather than managerial control, and it is moved by concern not for "rational use" as much as for sustained conviviality (Overing & Passes 2000). For the latter cause, it is vital to pre-empt anger and interpersonal tension in relations with other-than-human beings.

We have emphasized that it is important to recognize the immediate quality of indigenous animism. In the Nayaka case, this immediacy means that the reverence and care which are shown to the environment and the details of particular performances are specific to particular situations, and not universal. Furthermore, these features do not express commitment to, or even concern with, conservation. Nor are they about intimacy with all beings. They are the epiphenomenon of an altogether different cultural and epistemological model, in which the main concern lies with keeping good relations with co-dwellers in the shared environment in order, among other things, to pre-empt certain illnesses and misfortunes (Bird-David 2004). This concern has indeed some *conservationist effects as a by-product.* But these effects are limited in scope and space: Nayaka are not concerned with protecting forest beings or conserving the diversity of species in the environment. Their main concern is to avoid hurting fellow beings in the forest unnecessarily. In other words, it can be said that *conservation happens* but not because conservation is cognized beforehand and then executed. More so, we have shown that when Nayaka themselves engage with forest plants according to non-immediate considerations, their approach can no longer be regarded as *conversationalist*, not even as a by-product (see more below).

One may misread from the analysis that "relational epistemology" surpasses "biodiversity conservation" as a model for studying, understanding and living with the environment. But it must be stressed that "relational epistemology" has limitations, which do not afflict the "biodiversity conservation" model. Immediacy sets limits on the organizational scope of "relational epistemology". Immediacy *ipso facto* precludes exporting the model globally, in the way in which MAB works. Immediacy, in the phenomenological sense specified above, even sets limits on the extent to which the model can be applied locally: it is restricted to particular situations of actual, personal dyadic engagements. "Relational epistemology", in other words, as a model is not equipped to handle the problem of accelerating broad environmental depletion which, in its current state, is on a scale far beyond the immediate horizons. Undoubtedly, there is a need for the kind of global, international and political mobilization of environmental conservation which MAB leads.

These cases illustrate our general hypothesis that deviation from immediate economic engagement operates as a kind of exit from the world of related co-subjects. We propose that in those economic engagements that are no longer characterized by immediacy, Nayaka shift their focus of attention from sensitive mutual responsiveness with the perceived to a utilitarian gaze and a utilitarian understanding. The Nayaka case and the other cases selected and presented here point to the intimate link between personification, responsible and sensitive conduct with animals and plants – which from an external

perspective may be regarded as a conserving tendency – and engagement characterized by immediacy. This leads us to ask why it is that sensitive conduct with others and personification occurs along with immediacy in the first place. We suggest (while borrowing from Heidegger's idea [[1953] 1978: 332] about the dynamic of concealment, yet adjusting it to a different context) that when one's mind is available for direct perception, without being intensely immersed in non-immediate considerations, things/persons can indeed *expose* themselves in their outmost idiosyncratic uniqueness. Adjusting Schutz's (1970: 322–3) terminology to this context, we may say that when things/persons are perceived in that way they can expose themselves in their outmost vivid presence. Thus, it is no surprise that the same forest tree may appear to the Nayaka once as a person who has to be responsively engaged with while on another occasion it may appear to them as a mere object to be utilized. In sum, what may *appear* as a "thing" to a mind infused with "typificatory schemes" and non-immediate considerations may *appear* more as a "person" than a "thing" to a mind available to perceive it in its outmost vividness.

Finally, we wish to shift attention to relevant repercussions concerning the environmental crisis that the world now faces. So-called "primitive animism", once it is better understood in the way we suggest, can open another way of looking that can help us think about the environmental crisis. The cases presented above suggest that in engaging with things/persons according to non-immediate considerations, perceptions of the environment converge into a utilitarian and objectifying understanding which often involves harming the interlocutors. If this is indeed so, it is an articulation of the strengths of programmes such as MAB and the strengths of perspectives such as animism that can help in dealing with the environmental crisis. There is a growing need to re-educate ourselves and to educate our children to see those things/persons we engage with (also) as they vividly reveal themselves to us in the immediate situation. This, we believe, will not only enrich our lived-experience in the world but, furthermore, counteract the current destructive tendency to understand and engage with things/persons according to a utilitarian understanding.

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NOTES

1. See www.unesco.org/mabdb/br/brdir/directory/biores.asp?code=IND+01&mode=all (accessed 1 October 2012).
2. KK is a Nayaka village located about two hours walk northwest of Gudalur (the main town in the lower parts of the Nilgiris district).
3. See Guenther (1988: 198–201), who argues that "sameness with humans", which is one of the main prisms through which Kalahari Bushmen perceive animals, works to militate against over-hunting.
4. Poles in a bamboo cluster may be tightly entangled one to the other. Poles that were chopped down at their base level may still stand upright for years unless they are firmly pulled out from the cluster.
5. Expansion and development of this argument will be pursued in an article in the *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*.

3

Animism and a proposal for a post-Cartesian anthropology

Kenneth M. Morrison

"Are they human?" From first contact, this anthropological question has driven the exploration, colonization, religious controversy and social upheaval that paralleled the emergence of Cartesian science, anthropology, technology, politics and finance. In the so-called Age of Discovery, Europeans answered the question in intellectually and religiously confused ways that continue to this day. Explorers and exploiters followed an ethnocentric logic: indigenous peoples lacked culture. They had no religion, no kings, no laws and no money. Such was the institutional, objectivated rationale for both European political and religious anthropology and the colonialism it engendered.

Ironically, the same observers held that "American" indigenous peoples[1] had achieved such a startling social harmony without European-style institutions that they surely lived the life of the Golden Age, when humans and "beast" were one and the same. The problem was to explain how uncivilized, irrational "savages" could also be socially and morally discerning (K. M. Morrison 1984). Utopian dreams constituted a romantic impulse to "spiritualize" both nature and indigenous peoples, and might be dismissed, as animism has been, as unreal fantasy. But, romantic, theological, idealization and Cartesian rationalism are not different things. The concepts are in fact a dualism that holds objectivity and subjectivity as diametrically opposed, when the concepts are actually mutually constituting. In what follows, I call this confusion "categorical slippage" to identify apparently discrete phenomena that cannot be explained only as oppositions (objectivity/subjectivity, for example). I will show that such oppositions must be understood in relation to each other, and as dualisms, which exclude other explanations (the subjectivity of rationality, and the rationality of subjectivity, for example). In focusing on conceptual slippage as one source of ethnological misinterpretation, I highlight how we have misunderstood our own, as well as indigenous, cosmologies.

Native Americans framed a more coherent anthropological answer that creates the paradigmatic shift that organizes how this essay describes, first, the conceptual problem and, second, its hypothetical resolution. Native Americans asked: "Are these newcomers

[Europeans] persons?" and so highlighted the possibility of mutual, ethical engagement. Their answer – "Probably not" – was precise given the violence they experienced in post-contact life; people are known, after all, from their actions. This answer also expressed a confidence that has served the peoples well. European-Americans, the Navajo continue to say, "act as though they have no relatives". This essay engages this relational answer to critique the interpretive trajectory of American ethnology from the early to the mid-twentieth century. The dissonance between these questions – "What are they?" and "Who are they?" – continues to generate widespread misunderstanding.

The post-Cartesian reappraisal of animism drives the human sciences in new directions because it engages indigenous explanations with a relational epistemology in mind. Much of this literature responds positively to anthropologist Nurit Bird-David's extension of A. Irving Hallowell's insights (Hallowell 1960; Bird-David 1999): indigenous life is organized around the existence of persons, human and otherwise, rather than around materiality, functionality and abstraction. Bird-David shows that the dismissal of indigenous intelligence derives from philosopher Rene Descartes and his influence on scientific (objectivist) thought: "I think, therefore I am." In this anthropological position, Descartes engendered the dualisms that atomize what should be understood as the unified modalities of human life: objectivity/subjectivity, matter/spirit, science/religion (among many others). One reason for the conceptual slippage in these dualisms is that Cartesian science always values the first term of each dualism, and marginalizes the second. I argue that, because they overlap in life, these dualisms are not merely imprecise. They also impede interpretive self-reflexivity.

Extending Hallowell, Bird-David describes alternative, indigenous ways of being and knowing that are relational, rather than simply cognitive or emotional. In her analysis, indigenous peoples respond ontologically to the world by replying: "I relate, therefore I am." Such an answer provokes the post-Cartesian shift: the cognitive and subjective Cartesian self, bounded at the skin and isolated from others, constitutes a psychology that indigenous people do not share (although even Cartesians have been known to relate). The indigenous answer stresses an interactive self, who Bird-David describes both as an abstract noun, "dividual", and as a stative verb, "to dividuate". Indigenous people dividuate identity in interaction, rather than as a matter of abstract thought, role, status, social position and authority: "We relate, and therefore we are." Bird-David and I follow Hallowell in asserting the primacy of sociality in both indigenous thought and everyday life.

In what follows, I initially survey the conceptual impediments Franz Boas, founder of academic anthropology in the US, faced in engaging American Indian social life. Boas detailed his Cartesian ethnological methodology, and unconsciously imposed theological assumptions on his cultural descriptions. I then show that Hallowell (as a Boasian ethnologist) went beyond Boas to confront psychologically the interpersonal character of indigenous life. Hallowell's difficult effort leads to understanding why and how social scientists still struggle to assess qualitative differences between objectivist (What?), and intersubjectivist (Who?) ways of being, knowing and valuing. I also contrast Hallowell's ethnology with Martin Buber's philosophical anthropology. Buber explains how Cartesians limited the meaning of "social" to their own abstract, impersonal and reified representations, rather than engage how people live their lives. With these discriminations in mind, I then outline hypotheses for a post-Cartesian anthropology.

Recognizing that interpersonal give-and-take situates non-theistic religious meaning, I am interested in a dividuating anthropology (K. M. Morrison 2002), rather than a methodology that separates self and other. Dividuating can be seen in those social processes psychologists call introjection and projection. American Indian dividuating includes introjection by attending to and internalizing bodily processes like breathing, drinking, eating, smoking, all modes of being-with other bodies-in-the-world (Classen 1993). Other-oriented, projective activities are equally prominent in indigenous life: dream encounters, greetings, praise songs, give-aways and the relational logic of all ritual. Dividuating also includes normative processes that combine introjection and projection to mediate between the self and other: metamorphosis, vision quests, adoptions, friend-making, religious specialists serving their people, gifting, reincarnation and "animal" dancing. Likewise, dividuating emerges in Native American creation stories in both externalizing and internalizing modes. These stories reveal principled thinking about the challenge of otherness in the everyday world. They expose an individuating existentialism (a dangerous subjectivity) that subverts sociality: the selfishness, isolation, disrespectfulness and rampant sexuality that disrupt the people's collective life in illness and discord, and addressed by curing. The creation stories also ponder dividuating processes as existential solutions to this cosmic problem of otherness. They reflect on ways to achieve solidarity: cooperation, sharing and self-sacrifice. Cartesian anthropology has described these dividuating phenomena, but has missed their negotiated, intersubjective character.

Post-Cartesians confront categorical slippages in Cartesian rationalism that have subverted observing and explaining these dividuating modes of sociality. First, the objective/subjective paradigm has led anthropologists to see sociality as objective pattern or structure, or as psychologically subjective. Second, Cartesian anthropologists express unconscious metaphysical assumptions that the paradigm does not account for. Post-Cartesian scholars move toward overcoming such assumptions by recognizing alternative modes of ontology, epistemology, axiology and language. To this paradigm shift, I add the need to recognize the conceptual slippage associated with the social-scientific assumption of supernaturalism, an issue that Hallowell, breaking with his own ethnological theism, put on the table in 1958. These two conditions, the largely uninvestigated nature of indigenous social cosmology, and scholars' unreflexive replication of their own de-socialized and theologized cosmology, impede cross-cultural study.

THE CARTESIAN BLIND SPOT

The scholarly impasse has had a long history. For S. N. Balagangadhara (1994), the problem is that two existential assumptions, among others (see Blackburn 1975), shaped the emerging natural sciences, and later the social sciences. The first postulate holds "religion" as a human universal. The second assumes the universality of a theistic cosmos. Both assumptions turn out to be problematic (K. M. Morrison 2002). Proto-scientists, Balagangadhara holds, self-consciously eliminated Christ as an explanation of natural reality, but retained unconsciously a theistic cosmology: nature, culture and the supernatural as cosmic dimensions. Agreeing with Balagangadhara, I highlight the categorical slippage between these radically different dimensions throughout this essay. I contend

that objectivity as well as theocentrism, itself a form of subjective "belief", are kissing cousins, rather than alternative ways of thinking about the cosmos.

Franz Boas, who founded American academic anthropology, epitomizes both the Cartesian rationalism and its blind spots about religious life that Balagangadhara examines. Boas sustains Balagangadhara's thesis that monotheism remained the implicit agenda of both the natural and social sciences. Boas remained adamant about the whatness of the world, and of the human capacity to discipline the mind to fit that objectivity. Boas disdained subjectivity (in which he collapsed both the personal and the interpersonal) as rampant emotionalism. In this commitment, Boas was certainly not alone. Still, his extended essay, *The Mind of Primitive Man* ([1911] 1938), deplored the foundational irrational subjectivity of the human species. While Boas demolished the then current evolutionary scheme that placed humans on a unilinear trajectory from savagery to civilization, he did not critique the doctrine of primitivism that sustained claims of cultural hierarchy, superiority and progress. Boas did not dismiss indigenous intelligence alone. He also condemned the subjective mindlessness of non-Indian women, children and lower-class immigrants. For Boas, indigenous peoples gave unfettered play to emotionality. Boas held that indigenous life participated in emotion gone wild, especially as expressed in mindless mythology, custom and ceremony. Although admirably reflexive about his objective and subjective categories, Boas was entirely unreflexive about the religious categories he attributed to indigenous peoples. The same case can be made for many of his students, and I will use Hallowell's ethnography to illustrate the interpretive challenge.

Boas did not investigate the alternative rationality of indigenous peoples' oral traditions, made no attempt to listen to their accounts of the world's origin, and did not appreciate their understanding of the world as emerging from and between interacting beings. Instead, Boas imposed his own, unconscious, monotheistic ontological assumptions. Although a secular Jew, he assumed that nature, culture and the supernatural constituted universal cosmological categories. He described indigenous peoples' non-human persons as "deities", not noticing that supernaturalism failed to fit either their ontological conception or religious practice. Boas's ontology (including hierarchically differentiated plants, animals, humans and divinity) could not comprehend indigenous life as fundamentally both a *cosmic* and a *social* process. His objectivist/subjectivist paradigm could not encompass both. Emphasizing causal as well as ontological assumptions, he insisted on indigenous servility in their relations with all these entities (particularly, he said, with large and terrifying animals).

For Boas, indigenous peoples' ritual practices expressed supplication and appeasement; but he did not recognize the motivations – needs, desires and expectations – drawing together human and non-human persons. He disdained indigenous healers, reducing their relational theories of illness to unfettered, frenzied and magical ritual. He also reduced respectful behaviours between human and non-human persons to irrational taboos, a concept he used to index fear and anxiety as indigenous peoples propitiated their "deities". Anthony F. C. Wallace – Boas's academic grandson – expressed the intellectual contempt that Cartesian anthropology embodied. "[R]eligion", Wallace opined, "is based on supernaturalistic beliefs about the nature of the world which are not only inconsistent with scientific knowledge but also difficult to relate even to naïve human experience" (1966: vi). Agreeing with Boas, Wallace links supernaturalism and irrational superstition.

THE STRUGGLE WITH CONCEPTUAL SLIPPAGE

Wallace's graduate school mentor, A. Irving Hallowell, eventually questioned the objectivist and theological assumptions that Boasian anthropology unconsciously combined. Hallowell never quite realized the breach he made in Western theology and theologically organized science because his worldview long impeded his contribution to the present, post-Cartesian, moment. He highlighted abstract thought as a Western progressive attainment and as opposed to primitive belief and magic. He also assumed that monotheism was universal. Post-Cartesian anthropologists must move thoughtfully beyond objective reasoning and theological assumption to indigenous understandings of cosmological, social and religious purposes.

Initially, Hallowell accepted Boasian interpretive options. Focusing on circumpolar patterns of bear ceremonialism, Hallowell's 1924 dissertation described a Cartesian choice between "a study of material culture or subjective life" (1924/1926: 1). Unlike Boas, however, Hallowell saw some value in studying "magico-religious beliefs" as constituting "channels of thought which lead [indigenous people] to an interpretation of natural phenomena ... " (*ibid.*: 1–2). Hallowell insisted that such thought "is embellished in their minds with a rich, varied, and, to us, even a fantastic mass of beliefs which are inseparable from it and lead to practices which are curious and even unintelligible without some knowledge of the accompanying philosophy of nature" (*ibid.*: 6). The young Hallowell identified a need to engage an indigenous epistemology that could subvert Western judgements of fantasy, curiosity and unintelligibility. To do so, he would have had to appreciate that the Cartesian construction of the world, as objective "nature" and non-empirical "supernatural", subverted achieving such an alternative.

Hallowell also generalizes about those "philosophical" "beliefs" in ways that reveal the explanatory limits of Cartesian anthropology:

> Animals are believed to have essentially the same sort of animating agency which man possesses. They have a language of their own, can understand what human beings say and do, have forms of social or tribal organization, and live a life which is parallel in other respects to that of human societies. Magical or supernatural powers are also at the disposal of certain species; they may metamorphize themselves into other creatures or, upon occasion, into human form; some of them may utilize their powers to aid man in his pursuits; others may be hostile. Dreams may become a specialized means of communication between man and animals, or by the interpretation of the cries or movements of certain creatures, man may be able to guide his destiny for good or ill. Animals may become deities on their own account, or the temporary or permanent abode of "gods" or "spirits," or for other reasons come to assume an especially sacred character. They may also become the messengers of a deity, play the role of "guardian spirits" to man, become culture heroes or a demiurge. On the other hand, a belief in the transmigration of human souls into animal form may prevail. Frequently, too, animals appear in the ancestral tree of man or become the eponyms of social units. (*Ibid.*: 8–9)

These observations define Hallowell's ethnological struggle. He faced the problem of categorical slippage: when Hallowell characterizes indigenous distinctions as

philosophical and as beliefs, he unconsciously relegates thought to subjective irrationality as the Cartesian dualism requires. Hallowell compares "folkloristic" belief (which he says subverts the objectivity of individual observation) against the categories of "rational" thought. Hallowell emphasizes that "magico-religious beliefs" are "rich" and "varied", and observes that such beliefs seem "fantastic" (Needham 1972). Magic (whatever causal system that might encompass [Styers 2004]) becomes curious and even unintelligible. Moreover, Hallowell has "animals" slipping from nature into both the cultural and the supernatural categories: they also become humans, deities, heroes and demiurges. Not perceiving that slippage, Hallowell assumes that indigenous people recognize the world's "sacred character", and so the cosmos elicits "human veneration".

Equally revealing of this unconscious Boasian theism, Hallowell does not note, as he later would, that his evidence points to a principle I call ontological similarity between humans and "animals". Ontological similarity means that indigenous peoples do not recognize nature, culture and the supernatural at all, let alone as separate cosmological domains. Even in 1924, Hallowell's circumpolar evidence shows that both humans and "animals" possess agency, language, understanding, sociality, communication, cooperation (and not), and they are genealogically related. Instead of studying these modes of sociality, Hallowell holds fast to the European Great Chain of Being, hierarchically organized from the least rational, animals, through epistemologically impaired human beings, to the highest being/knowledge in divinity. In this and later work, Hallowell imposed these categories on indigenous peoples, and in ways that he would later discard, though without explaining his interpretive shift. In 1924, he expressed a keen sense of conceptual challenge:

> If we are to understand or interpret the *Weltanschaunng* of peoples who entertain such notions, therefore, we must rebuild the specific content of these categories *upon the foundation of their beliefs, not ours*. The truth or falsity of the categories is not at issue but *simply the inapplicability of our concepts* of them as a point of departure for a comprehension of primitive thought. (1924: 9–10, emphasis added)

Over the years, Hallowell restated these ethnological conditions, yet pursued Cartesian methodologies that prevented real engagement with indigenous thought.

While Hallowell sometimes questioned anthropological assumptions, Cartesian science remained theoretically central to his ethnology. He treated Saulteaux/Ojibwa/Anishnaabe religiosity as epistemologically grounded in empirical observation (1934), and so could be said to have begun the post-Cartesian perspective that indigenous "beliefs" are rooted in an everyday, relational epistemology. Nevertheless, nature, culture and the supernatural remained his interpretive tropes until he tersely repudiated them in the late 1950s. Before then, his work explored Cartesian reifications, rather than indigenous epistemologies. Hallowell addressed ethnological issues (oral tradition, illness and curing, fear and anxiety, sexuality, ritual performance) only in ways that tested and extended anthropological categories (using objectivist techniques like the Rorschach protocol, and applying Freudian and other Cartesian theory). These disciplinary commitments actually undercut Hallowell's ability to understand indigenous peoples' rationality by relegating their mindfulness to an unconscious rationale. Throughout those years, Hallowell ascribed "religion" to spiritualism, magic and emotionality, characterizing Saulteaux relations with "superhumans" or "supernaturals" as subservient supplication. Reification and theism constitute the warp

and woof of Hallowell's scientism. Space does not permit even an outline of Hallowell's Cartesian objectivist and theistic commitments, or how they undercut his own desired intent to prioritize actual indigenous realities. A chronological extraction of his emerging insights can, nevertheless, identify the conceptual slippage with which he struggled.

As early as 1934, Hallowell articulated interpretive goals that might guide a post-Cartesian ethnology. He wrote:

> What I wish to do is to present the religious philosophy of the Pigeon Indians [Ojibwa] as a living reality, as a relatively coherent and self-contained system of beliefs and customs and particularly to indicate what measure the knowledge and personal experiences of individuals reared in this cultural milieu lend rational support to their religious beliefs and practices. (1934: 389)

Significantly, Hallowell slips beyond the objectivist/subjectivist paradigm when he describes religion as "religious philosophy", "a living reality" and "rational".

Eight years later, Hallowell tersely expressed another stance useful to post-Cartesian anthropology: "No one is more aware than the ethnologist that human beings always live in a meaningful universe, not in a world of bare physical objects and events" ([1942] 1971: 1). Apparently, Hallowell recognized that an existential dimension needs investigation, a dimension he glimpsed as social. Hallowell states that a "socialization process" (that we can now understand as ethical processes of dividuating interactions) provides the individual a cultural frame. In this way, Hallowell seems to identify a sociality that highlights the interpersonal as teaching, learning, engaging and negotiating meaning. At the time, however, Hallowell saw socialization only as an act of objectivation, a cognitive framing device. In the same work, Hallowell strikes a note that would emerge again in 1958 and 1960. He observed that science, the world of meaning of "educated men", constituted a biased provincialism. Anthropological comprehension, he insisted, "remains on the intellectual level. We never learn to feel and act as they [indigenous people] do. Consequently we never fully penetrate their behavioral world. We never *wear* their culturally tinted spectacles; the best we can do is to try them on" (*ibid.*: 3, original emphasis). In 1947, Hallowell again expressed the advantage of considering "the attitude of the people themselves" over "more 'objective' classifications" (*ibid.*: 547).

By 1954, Hallowell's reflections critiqued Cartesian reification:

> The traditional approach of cultural anthropology, having as one of its primary goals a reliable account of differential modes of life found among the peoples of the world, has not been directly concerned with the behavior of individuals. It has been culture-centered, rather than behavior-centered.

As a result, he observes, anthropological analysis presents only:

> the standpoint of an outside observer ... The language of a people, as objectively described and analyzed in terms of its formal categories, is not the language that exists for the individual who uses it as a means of communication, in reflective thought, or as a mode of verbal self-expression ... It [language] is neither "objective" nor "subjective"'. (1955: 88)

This paradigm-shifting conclusion radically departs from his earlier interpretation, derived from Ernst Cassirer, that language essentially constitutes objectifying or symbolizing (1947: 550). Hallowell still does not engage the difference between communication, on the one hand, and objective thought and subjective self-expression, on the other. For sure, Hallowell's terms highlight the epistemology of psychological agency – in modes of experiencing, thinking, motivating and satisfying. But Hallowell also identifies agency's ethical and socially purposeful trajectory: communication, reflection and self-expression.

In 1958, Hallowell moved beyond his Cartesian paradigm, though haltingly, given his essay's title: "Ojibwa *Meta*physics of *Being* and the Perception of Persons". He states the conceptual shift tersely: "The concept 'social,' like the concept 'person,' needs reformulation when considered in the context of different behavioral environments" (1958: 64). Hallowell here stresses that behaviour has a social meaning that must be engaged. He also retains his theistic assumption that "religion" refers to the non-empirical (the meta), rather than the everyday empiricism he had long since emphasized. As in his famous essay "Ojibwa Ontology" (1960), which republished the ethnographic core of "Ojibwa Metaphysics of Being", Hallowell mustered data in 1958 that subverted Cartesian science. The animate/inanimate linguistic distinction "leaves a door open that on dogmatic grounds our naturalistic orientations keeps shut tight" (1958: 65). An ethnology of mutual engagement, rather than belief, might emerge from that open door, but for Hallowell remained only a matter of "thinking, observation, and behavior" (*ibid.*: 66). Similarly, he found that the animate beings of "mythology" move beyond "fiction" (see Hallowell 1947), to the status of "living entities", although he also said that some of them were "purely conceptualized reifications", a categorical slippage from life to concept that he repeated in "Ojibwa Ontology" (1960). Upon this reified reading of living, communicative orality, Hallowell repudiates the "natural" and "supernatural" categories of Cartesian cosmology, and with them the psychological dismissal of cosmic life as projective personification (1958: 68) and human servility. Hallowell rejects anthropomorphism as a "naturalistic" (*ibid.*: 69, 79) explanation of the Ojibwa's orientations to other-than-human persons (*ibid.*: 68–72), even while he calls these entities "spiritual" (*ibid.*: 76). Aware that other-than-human persons embody power (and are causally central), Hallowell also acknowledges that some human beings are "*elevated* to the same level of power" (*ibid.*: 76, emphasis added), an elevation that, in effect, confounds the Cartesian separation between culture and the supernatural.

"Ojibwa Metaphysics" concludes with a section, "Psychological Theory and Anthropological Data", in which Hallowell argues that social psychology displaces impersonal, objectivist/subjectivist causal explanations. Tellingly, he connects social psychology and Ojibwa principles of causation:

> In the Ojibwa material there are others facets of their cognitive orientation I have not dealt with here ... Their concept of person, for instance is directly related to their notions of causation. They make no essential use of any concept of impersonal forces as determinants of events. There is a "set" which directs the reasoning of the individual toward explanations of events in "personalistic" terms. *Who* did it, *who* is responsible, is always the central question to be answered.
>
> (*Ibid.*: 80, original emphasis)

"Ojibwa Ontology" (1960) deletes this theoretical section connecting social psychology with Ojibwa epistemology. Instead, it substitutes an equally provocative section that might be taken as a post-Cartesian challenge to understand the relation between social ontology and ethics, namely the Ojibwa concept *pimadaziwin*. "Ojibwa Ontology" consolidates hard-won conclusions but without fanfare: Ojibwa life must be understood as a "unified cognitive outlook": their worldview has perceptual, cognitive, behavioural (tentatively read as social) and ethical coherence.

AN ANTHROPOLOGY OF ENGAGEMENT

Hallowell was not alone in struggling against the categorical commitments of Cartesian ethnology. Our reification "animism" resisted explanation because anthropologists have been poorly positioned to understand sociality in either indigenous or Western lives. Throughout the twentieth century, philosophers recognized this problem, but described sociality in the unfortunate phrase "concrete life", a phrase that constitutes another form of conceptual slippage. Unfortunately, "concrete" evokes the substantial, the static, the fixed and the enduring. In these senses, "concrete" is an objectivist trope and stresses an essentialist, rather than an emergent, understanding of reality. "Concrete" highlights something real about life, but does not define what that something might be. This imprecision is telling. Life may be lived in both objectivist and subjectivist modes, but neither mode can account for social phenomena unless objectivity and subjectivity are themselves understood intersubjectively.

Martin Buber's philosophical anthropology achieves such a paradigm-shifting understanding ([1923] 1958). Buber explores a metalinguistic theory of human nature that gives technical precision to Hallowell's call to attend to the meaning of "social", and an understanding that all life, including its objectivist and subjectivist forms in the West, is intersubjectively emergent. At the outset, Buber hardwires human beings with two attitudes that people express in what Buber calls "primary *words*". I italicize words to emphasize Buber's insistence that primary words are not necessarily units of sound/symbol/meaning, though they may be expressed in speech. Unlike Cartesian science – a pre-ecological concern for objects on their own, individual terms (and so producing hyphenated, slippery concepts such as Hallowell's magio-religious, and psycho-social) – Buber defines an intersubjective language. Primary words are *socially* existential in Buber's thought because they are *combined words*.

Combined words link speakers, objects and subjects. Whether they achieve intimacy, communication, solidarity (or not), combined words are relational, emergent, self-revealing (or not), mutually engaging (or not), negotiations of meaning (or not). Primary words are *combined* words because they link the person to (a) objects, I–It modes of intersubjectivity, and (b) to persons as persons, I–Thou modes of intersubjectivity, (c) to other persons as objects, and (d) to objects and socially objectivated persons, where both are fetishes pretending to be, or treated as, persons (Hornborg 2006a). Buber rejects any focus upon things and persons in and of themselves (one of his critiques of science), and he intersubjectively redefines both sides of the objective/subjective dualism as social phenomena. Buber insists that relations are linguistically neither representative (objective) nor symbolic (subjective), but are rather acts of being that constitute interactive qualities,

one interpersonal, and the other impersonal (he dismisses emotional subjectivity "as fluttering soul birds"). Because Buber identifies primary, combined words as modalities of being, I–It and I–Thou relations comparatively, he raises a theoretical and interpretive challenge to post-Cartesian anthropologists. Hallowell faced the same challenge.

In Buber's discriminations of impersonal, subjective and interpersonal modes of sociality, life must be appreciated either as active, intentional, engaged, dynamic, immediate, mutual and reciprocal, or not. Social life becomes a matter of facedness, or not, and life presents purposefulness as an opportunity to respond, a turning about-face that ethically aims toward trust between persons, or not. Buber thus defines an intersubjective theory of cosmogony and ritual (V. Turner [1969] 1977). Buber reveals that the conceptual history of animism (primitivism as rampant emotionality, fear and anxiety, the irrationality of tradition, the supernatural, superstition, magic and mysticism) has had an incestuous relationship with the Cartesian failure to understand sociality. Anthropologists have not grasped either that the "social" constitutes a paradigmatic alternative to objectivity/subjectivity, or that both sides of the dualism are socially constituted. Buber insists that both I–It and I–Thou relations are acts of being. Intersubjectivity constitutes all reality-engendering stances in the world. Further, anthropologists have not comprehended that social encounter situates two emergent meanings, one impersonal and the other interpersonal.

In addition to his premise that I–It and I–Thou combined words must be understood as existentially generative modes of being, Buber's theory of history identifies a relational trajectory that post-Cartesian anthropology must acknowledge. Buber turns self-congratulatory, objectivist history on its teleological head. Buber insists that an incremental process constitutes history: the cultural world of I–It relations becomes augmented (i.e. objectivated in scientific categories). Stated in this way, Buber's history seems commonsensical; civilizational history celebrates modes of technological, economic and political progress. Because he appreciates that technique, exchange and negotiation are modes of impersonal being, however, Buber identifies history so conceptualized as a process of alienation. The larger the world of I–It relations, he contends, the less able are persons to be, to know, to value and to speak in interpersonal terms. For Buber, cultural progress impedes relational realization and communal life.

The following working hypotheses build a conceptual bridge between the objective and the subjective location of the "social" in Cartesian science and Buber's intersubjectivism. We need to account for Hallowell's proto-relational theory of indigenous life as well as his conceptual slippage, which confounds both (a) subjective belief with philosophical and behavioural integrity, and (b) non-empirical spirituality with empirical experience. We also need Buber's metalinguistic and rigorously relational anthropology. Buber captures what eluded Hallowell: the qualities of the interpersonal, and the intersubjectivity of both objectivity and subjectivity. Together, Hallowell and Buber suggest the hypothetical principles of a comparative, non-relativistic, post-Cartesian anthropology. The hypotheses are of two kinds. The first kind (inscribed as A and B) compares large- and small-scale socialities. The second kind (identified as C) draws interpretive inferences from the A and B comparisons. Both types highlight the need for a revised approach to ethnographic and ethnological investigation, rather than final conclusions.

THE COMPARATIVE HYPOTHESES

Hypothesis 1A: theistic ontology

Scholars have misinterpreted indigenous life because Cartesian and monotheistic ontological assumptions have structured their descriptive strategies and interpretative schemes. These assumptions are categorical commitments to understanding comparative cultures in theistic, hierarchical and their objectivated/subjectivated, ontological terms. The categories include God (gods, goddesses, deities – both theism and polytheism), "natural forces", plants, insects, animals, humans, spirits, ceremonial and celestial "objects", on a scale from irrationality to rationality, from profane to the sacred, from matter to spirit.

Hypothesis 1B: non-theistic ontology

Although indigenous peoples differentiate beings in terms of bodily appearance, intelligence and purposefulness (and so gloss relative power and responsibility), they also incorporate all forms of being within the ontological category person – that is, entities with rational faculties, will, voice, desire, sometimes physical form, and interdependent, existential needs: hunger, thirst and sociability. For them, ontology, epistemology and axiology form an undifferentiated relational field.

Hypothesis 2A: Cartesian causal tropes (power)

Scholars misinterpret indigenous understandings of power because they assume that causality refers either to assumptions about natural and social law (impersonal tropes about nature, i.e. biological "forces", and/or natural forms of causation [geologic, chemical, electrical, mechanical, psychological and social functionalism]), or to the assumption that humans project meaning imaginatively upon the world (as belief and faith, qualities expressed as art, aesthetics, ideology, symbolism, magic, mysticism, spiritualism, supernaturalism). These assumptions play out along two apparently opposed, but actually related, slippery axes: (a) objectivism as progressive rationality (naturalism, materialism, empiricism, quantification) and social-scientific reification (causality attributed to culture and its abstract parts: the family, the economy, politics), and (b) romanticism or idealism (positions that ideology, belief, aesthetics, values have a discernible effect on behaviour). This second axis variously stresses subjective factors: individualism, self-interest, personal autonomy, emotionality, the isolated body, and religion as fear, belief, hope and faith.

The conceptually slippery interaction of these two axes plays out in dualistic ways of thinking about causality: progress/tradition, sacred/profane, mind/body, rational/irrational, male/female, civilized/primitive, ethical/superstitious, among many others.

Hypothesis 2B: indigenous causal principles (power)

Indigenous understandings of causality cannot be described within the objectivist/subjectivist paradigm. Theirs are knowledge systems (not belief systems) that stress the intentional, relational and interpersonal character of reality as both locally grounded and

socially emergent. Indigenous peoples sidestep objective and subjective causal assumptions in intersubjective ways. They stress *who* is dividually, and therefore collectively, acting, rather than *what* causes. They emphasize interdependence, influence, mutuality, responsibility and respect (or not). Embodied power is, therefore, causal because it expresses the peoples' conscious and collective moral choice.

Hypothesis 3A: Cartesian ethics

Within the binary system of objectivism/subjectivism, ethics plays out as (a) situational pragmatism, efficiency and technique and as (b) self-interest, autonomy, self-worth. Both sides of this ethical system stress the value of progress and profit.

Hypothesis 3B: indigenous ethics

Within the interpersonal epistemology of indigenous ethics, morality plays out *positively* in kinship, interpersonal and communal ways that bridge the dividual and others, and *negatively* in individualistic, antisocial ways that isolate the individual from the group, and make the individual a threat to the group.

Hypothesis 4A: Cartesian assumptions about language

Cartesians act intellectually, socially and religiously out of a mostly unconscious and therefore largely unexamined assumption that language is representative. In other words, they assume that the world exists objectively, and that language (more or less successfully) represents, symbolizes, stands for and mirrors a reality that is independent of human agency, except in terms of use value (Ong 1977).

Hypothesis 4B: indigenous assumptions about language

Indigenous people act intellectually and socially out of a mostly unconscious and therefore largely unexamined assumption that language is generative. In other words, they assume that the world emerges from human and other-than-human intentionality and interaction, because expression engages and mediates personal distance, and is thus potentially dangerous and socially disruptive. All that exists not only reveals prior human and other-than-human agency, but also constitutes a latent intentionality in the world which might still become active (Witherspoon 1977).

Hypothesis 5A: theological and objectivist assumptions about "religion"

Cartesians understand "religion" as theistic dominance and natural and cultural dependence, especially as expressed in notions of prayer, sacrifice, offering, propitiation, appeasement and worship. They assume that religion has to do with faith in God's purposefulness (appearing alike in God's word, and the laws of nature and culture). In these instances, religion has an objective institutional focus, sacred texts and creeds, and humans must submit to divine, churchly and scientific authority. As opposed to the worldly instrumentality of rationalism, Cartesian religion traffics in miracles and magic.

Hypothesis 5B: indigenous emphasis on the "religious"

Indigenous peoples have no abstract concept for "religion", and often use the English code word "respect" to express the engaged ethical challenge of everyday life. On the one hand, indigenous peoples do not recognize theistic centricity, sin, guilt or salvation. On the other, they contend that constructive religiousness emerges from dividuating and collective responsibility, and they orient to the needs, desires and purposes of non-human persons with whom they are reciprocally interdependent. In their motivated interactions, human and other-than-human persons dividuate a cosmic reality.

TYPE II: INTERPRETIVE INFERENCES

Hypothesis 6C: cosmogonic sources of reality assumptions

The existential and normative postulates of human cultures (hypotheses 1–5) are established in cosmogonic traditions. As Buber puts it: "In the beginning is [either It or Thou] relation."

Hypothesis 7C: comparative social principles

The foundational hypothesis is that all human worldviews are organized in terms of ontological, epistemological, axiological and linguistic principles that are holistically organized either in impersonal/subjective and/or interpersonal terms. Cartesian rationality ("I think") stresses the separation of these principles (though in slippery ways); indigenous thought ("I/we relate") insists upon the principles' combined effects in shaping social interaction and communal well-being.

Hypothesis 8C: religious history

These cosmic and cultural principles work themselves out in the internal, dividuating and/or individuating histories of particular groups, and in those groups' encounters with carriers of similar or different ontological, epistemological, axiological and linguistic principles.

Hypothesis 9C: a social continuum of worldviews

All cultures exist on a social continuum (interpersonal [dividual], personal [individual], impersonal [non-intentional, except as objectivated modes of use value and reifications that attribute agency to abstractions]) that can be isolated and compared.[2]

A POST-CARTESIAN ANTHROPOLOGY

These hypotheses respond to two concerns that Hallowell expressed, but never engaged. He realized (without recognizing the cognitive effects of the Cartesian *homo sapiens*) that anthropology lacked a (conscious) definition of human and personal nature. Hallowell also expressed dissatisfaction with cultural relativism, suspecting that a personal universalism existed behind cultural differences. These background concerns explain why

Hallowell's cardinal insights are so significant. He came to see, after years of emphasizing individualistic psychology, that identity is, rather, a social phenomenon. In recognizing that the Ojibwa category of person embraces other-than-human entities (disregarding natural, cultural and supernatural dimensions), Hallowell also extended the meaning of sociality to include cosmic interactions. As a result, he came to admit that Cartesian notions of impersonal and reified causality (the objective world and objectified/subjectified thought/value about the world) ignore the interpersonal causality of all life. Hallowell came to understand that indigenous ontological and epistemological integrity emerged from its ethical character: interpersonal relations matter.

Hallowell's ethnographic struggle emerges from the existential character of modernity: social marginalization in individualistic and impersonal modalities of objectivated identity; gender, race, labour, class, ethnicity, religion, and so on. As many have noted, Cartesian science has had its social consequences both in the objectivated and the subjectivated character of Western life (Berger 1967/1969; Poteat 1990). Cartesian anthropology has followed three trajectories that have undercut the interpersonal meaning of the term "social" in the disciplinary claims (and technical jargon) of the "social sciences". First, Cartesian science has made objectivity the be-all and end-all of research; this claim is conceptually slippery because objectivity enshrines impersonality, and ignores the fact that social life is, at least sometimes, interpersonal. Second, Cartesian science contends that any aspect of life that cannot be quantified, made subject to mathematical, empirical and replicable test, exists in a non-empirical, subjective and spiritualized place within human consciousness; if animism is an everyday, empirical and inter-species heritage, this contention is not true. Third, sociality emerged in Cartesian thought only as reifications of intentional human activities: kinship and social organization (the patterns, but not the motivations of social life), oral tradition as merely imaginative and symbolic projections of meaning (as opposed to objective history), ceremonial organizations and the patterns of ritual activities (but not their everyday communicative rationale and efficacy). And, the meaning of being wife, mother, sister, grandmother, aunt, daughter, niece, cousin, the purposeful and enlivening character of stories, and the responsibility expressed in ritual performances – all these have been discussed obliquely, at least until recently (Csordas 1994).

The distinction between abstract representation and the interpersonal event that reification purports to describe – "being-in-the-world" – explains the conceptual dismay that animistic life and thought creates for Cartesians (what we now call the post-modern crisis of representation). I have highlighted Buber's concern to distinguish the objectivated impersonality of "modern" life and thought, and his stance that the interpersonal defies science. I–It and I–Thou socialities constitute, respectively, the intersubjective objectivist/subjectivist impediments to, and the interpersonal conditions of, genuine life (Bachelard 1964/1969; Marcel 1964, [1952] 1967; Ellul 1967). Unlike those who describe animism as an imputation, a projective, personifying anthropomorphism, Hallowell (obliquely) and Buber (precisely) insist that, while some modes of being are projective, life may also be engaging. In highlighting the "interhuman", Buber does not confront the inter-species problems animism raises. Indeed, Buber's first sentence in *I and Thou* must be edited to account for inter-species sociality. Buber writes: "For man the world is twofold in accordance with his twofold attitude" ([1923] 1958: 1). When that sentence is modified as animism requires – for *persons* the world is twofold – then Hallowell's concern for behavioural analysis might proceed.[3]

Because being-in-the-world has always required attention, Buber affirms Alf Hornborg's concern for modern modes of conceptual slippage. Hornborg writes: "it may not so much be an incapacity to relate as such that distinguishes us from the animists, as the incapacity to exercise such 'relatedness' within the dimensions and technical constraints of the professional subcultures which organize *the most significant share of our social agency*" (2006a: 24, emphasis added). For Hornborg as for Buber, Westerners compartmentalize their instrumental relations with objects and functions on the one hand, and their engagement with their gardens and dogs on the other. For both Buber and Hornborg, economic, political and technological complexity displaces those qualities – listening, hearing, empathizing, meeting, valuing – that engage people *as persons* (or not). Unlike Buber, who retains nature, culture and the supernatural, Hornborg insists on erasing the boundaries between them. As a result, Hornborg concludes that "it is incumbent ... to ask why pre-modern, modern, and post-modern people will tend to deal with subject-object relations in such different ways" (*ibid.*: 27). The hypotheses presented above orient toward cross-cultural similarities (the who-ness of the world) and differences (the what-ness of the world), and so aim to take up Hornborg's challenge. Animism compels us to recognize impersonal, subjective *and* interpersonal meanings, and thus the slippery hybridities that/who emerge from cross-cultural encounters (K. M. Morrison 2002; Treat 2003; Cruikshank 2005; Christen 2009; Shorter 2009; Vilaça & Wright 2009; Lokensgard 2010). Scholars have primitivized indigenous peoples because they have depersonalized "nature", have unwittingly spiritualized social realities, and have overlooked worlds of engaged being, relational ways of knowing and other-oriented valuing.

EDITORIAL NOTE

Ken Morrison passed away unexpectedly on 7 January 2012, just months after submitting this essay for the collection. His long-time advisee, Dr David Shorter, completed the final revisions of this chapter and added a few editorial footnotes. Morrison had drafted the original essay in close conversation with Shorter and one of his last doctoral advisees, Alex Ginsburg (whom Shorter also consulted during the final revision). This essay embodies the core lessons that many of Morrison's students learned over three decades of his teaching, first at the University of California Los Angeles (History) and then at Arizona State University (Religious Studies). Although the arguments contained in this essay were a part of his teaching since 1990, the broader academic community never had an opportunity to benefit from his critique. This essay is truly his life's work: Ken Morrison lays out here the theoretical and methodological claims that many of his students have gone on to explore in our respective lives and works.

NOTES

1. Morrison knowingly used the term "indigenous people" regardless of its oversimplification and generalization. He is mostly speaking of indigenous peoples of the Americas, his particular research geography, though we can see his theories work out across the globe.
2. This final hypothetical inference might best be read as a capstone to the larger set. Here, Morrison both postulates that sociality exists on a continuum across cultures and suggests that a post-Cartesian anthropology is the comparative study of sociality.
3. "Persons", according to Hallowell's linguistic category for Ojibwa perceptions of animism, includes agency, will and intention shared between us humans and the other-than-human beings available for relationships. "Persons", then, is a term inclusive of more than simply the term "human".

4

Animism for Tylor

Robert A. Segal

This essay is an admittedly roundabout way of presenting E. B. Tylor's view of animism. I confine myself to that task and do not evaluate his view or consider the supposedly "new" animism. I look at animism, which is Tylor's term for religion *per se*, as a typically nineteenth-century theory of religion.[1] For me, the key question is whether for Tylor animism can still exist in the modern world and, if so, in what form.

I have regularly contrasted nineteenth-century theories of religion to twentieth-century ones. In the nineteenth century, I have argued, religion was assumed to arise to serve the same need as science, which was taken to be a largely, even an exclusively, modern enterprise. In fact, "modern" and "scientific" were synonyms. The nineteenth-century view is epitomized by the theories of not only Tylor, the first edition of whose *Primitive Culture* appeared in 1871, but also J. G. Frazer, the first edition of whose *The Golden Bough* appeared in 1890. Both assume that religion arises and functions either to explain (Tylor) or to control (Frazer) the physical world. Religion is the "primitive" counterpart to either scientific theory (Tylor) or applied science (Frazer).

Where Tylor focuses on religious beliefs, Frazer focuses on religious practices, or rituals. For both, religion ascribes all physical events in the world to either a decision by a god (Tylor) or the effect on the world of the physical state of the god (Frazer). For Tylor, the event can be of any kind, such as the rising and setting of the sun. There is no uniform chief god, such as the sun god. For Frazer, there is one key event: the death and rebirth of crops. For Tylor, crops grow because the god of vegetation, for whatever reason, decides to cause them to grow. For Frazer, the god of vegetation is the chief god of the pantheon, for on the state of the god, who is always male, human survival depends. The crops grow as long as the god is healthy. For both Tylor and Frazer, science, by contrast to religion, attributes the growth of crops to impersonal biological and chemical processes. There are no gods.

Science, it was assumed by Tylor and Frazer alike, renders religion not merely redundant but outright impossible. For the religious as well as the scientific explanation is direct, so that one cannot stack the religious explanation atop the scientific one, with science

providing the direct explanation and religion the indirect one. According to religion, the vegetation god acts not *through* vegetative processes but *in place of* them. One cannot, then, reconcile the explanations and must instead choose between them. But the choice has already been made, for moderns by definition accept science. Our forebears had only religion, so that for them, too, the choice had already been made. Religion in modernity is thereby fated to die out, once moderns recognize the incompatibility of it with science.

The twentieth century, I have continually asserted, rejected the view of the nineteenth century. Now religion was assumed to be compatible with science, on the grounds that it serves a different need from that of science. The need can be for anything – as long as it is for other than that of explaining or controlling the physical world. Religion can cease to be about the world altogether and can instead be about humans, either individually or collectively. Or religion can retain a link to the world, but be about the *experience* of the world rather than about the world itself. Religion can serve, for example, to try to fend off guilt over human sexuality (Freud), to defuse or redirect aggression (Girard, Burkert), to encounter the unconscious (Jung), to reinforce commitment to the group (Durkheim), or to make life meaningful (Weber). Whatever the need postulated, religion and science can coexist, for they go their separate ways.

I grant that this chronological division is simplistic. There are exceptions in both centuries – for example, Nietzsche, a nineteenth-century figure (he died in 1900) who psychologized religion in twentieth-century fashion. But is the division itself wrong? Yes, according to Hans Kippenberg, author of *Rediscovering Religious History in the Modern Age* (2002). Kippenberg argues that not only twentieth-century theories but even nineteenth-century ones sought to reconcile religion with science. He maintains that most of the leading modern theorists of religion, far from rejecting religion for science and modernity, saw religion as surviving in modernity, and surviving not as a mere relic of an outdated past but as a living aspect of culture that transcended the bounds of science.

I will take one of Kippenberg's key cases – that of Tylor – and see whether his claim holds. Tylor might seem to constitute an easy case for Kippenberg, for unlike Frazer, Tylor is most respectful of religion. For him, unlike Frazer, religion is as rational as science. Like science, religion for Tylor gives a systematic and law-like explanation of events: whenever rain falls, the cause is a decision by the rain god, and usually for the same reason. Religion arises in the same scrupulously inductive way as science, in Tylor's by now old-fashioned conception of science.

For Tylor, religion does harbour one fatal flaw: its explanation is incompatible with a scientific explanation. Moderns, who again are scientific by definition, must therefore reject the religious explanation not merely as superfluous but as false – false exactly because it is incompatible with the scientific one, which is assumed to be true. Whether for Tylor moderns must thereby reject religion altogether is the issue of this essay.

Despite the seemingly easier case that Tylor poses for Kippenberg than Frazer does, the case of Tylor is actually harder. For it was Tylor who created the concept of survival and applied it to religion. For Tylor, "survival" means, or seemingly means, mere survival. Religion as a survival makes religion a sheer relic – the characterization of religion for Tylor that Kippenberg is striving to counter. Kippenberg does not downplay the centrality of that concept for the study of religion. On the contrary, he writes elsewhere that "Tylor's 'survival' has had an amazing career. For decennia, it remained the crucial metaphor indicating the presence of past religions in modern society" (Kippenberg 1998: 308).

But Kippenberg finds in the concept a much more positive meaning than is conventionally granted. He does not challenge the conventional view that for Tylor religion in the modern world is the epitome of a survival. He challenges the conventional view that for Tylor religion in the modern world is thereby a mere relic.

Tylor defines a "survival" as the continuing existence of a belief or practice that was once a living part of an earlier culture: survivals "are processes, customs, opinions, and so forth, which have been carried on by force of habit into a new state of society different from that in which they had their original home, and they thus remain as proofs and examples of an older condition of culture out of which a newer one has been evolved" (Tylor [1871] 1958: I, 16). A survival can go back from a generation to thousands of years. To cite some of Tylor's own examples:

> Thus, I know an old Somersetshire woman whose hand-loom dates from the time before the introduction of the "flying shuttle," whose new-fangled appliance she has never even learnt to use ... The ordeal of the Key and Bible, still in use, is a survival; the Midsummer bonfire is a survival; the Breton peasants' All Souls' supper for the spirits of the dead is a survival ... The serious business of ancient society may be seen to sink into the [mere] sport of later generations. (*Ibid.*)

Dreams, funeral rites, ancestor worship, clothing, games, words, sayings, counting and magic are among Tylor's examples of present-day beliefs and practices that, however altered in meaning, hark back to earlier times.[2]

Prior to reading Kippenberg on Tylor, I had innocently assumed that by a "survival" Tylor meant a mere survival. For me, the epitome of a physical survival was an infant born with a tail, and the epitome of a cultural survival was a superstition, such as not walking under a ladder or not opening an umbrella indoors. I had taken for granted that for Tylor survivals were like fossils. They were indispensable for figuring out what had once been alive but what by now was long dead. I had distinguished Darwin's or Huxley's meaning of "survival" – survival of the fittest, of what is most suited to present conditions – from Tylor's meaning – survival of the useless, of what is out of place in the present. I had assumed that for Tylor whatever survives merely survives, and often in a truncated, degenerate, even caricatured form. Tylor himself declares that "Three times out of four superstition is a case of survival" (Tylor 1869: 523), though admittedly he is not thereby claiming that three quarters of all survivals are mere superstitions.

To give an example of what for me had typified Tylor's view of survivals:

> if we want to know why so quaintly cut a garment as the evening dress-coat is worn, the explanation may be found thus. The cutting away at the waist had once the reasonable purpose of preventing the coat skirts from getting in the way in riding, while the pair of useless buttons behind the waist are also relics from the times when such buttons really served the purpose of fastening these skirts behind; ... and the sham cuffs now made with a seam round the wrist are survivals from real cuffs when the sleeve used to be turned back. Thus it seems that the present ceremonial dress-coat owes its peculiarities to being descended from the old-fashioned practical coat in which a man rode and worked.
>
> (Tylor [1881] 1960: 12)

Here survival surely means mere survival.

My understanding of Tylor was not idiosyncratic. In *The Doctrine of Survivals* (1936) Margaret Hodgen distinguishes Darwinian survival from Tylorian as follows:

> Hence, while the concept of survival solved a problem for Darwin, and referred to the living, the new, organically fit, appropriate, consistent and harmonious, survival in a culture remained for Tylor a problem to be solved, and referred to the non-living, the old, the culturally unfit, inappropriate, inconsistent and illogical. (Hodgen 1936: 40)

Spurred by his training in archaeology and geology, Tylor, according to Hodgen,

> was captured by ideas and practices which, like the archaeological fragments, seemed to him to bear the scars of history in their present "dwindled" or "mutilated" condition. He preferred to collect survivals, materials which presented indications of the loss of utility through change, wear and tear, or displacement. (*Ibid.*: 61–2)

Certainly, present-day cultural artefacts can be more than survivals. For example, literary myth-ritualists, beginning with Jane Harrison, have interpreted works of literature as the outgrowth of myths once tied to rituals. But for myth-ritualists, literature is more than a survival. It is alive. It is myth transformed into literature. It represents the transformation of something primitive into something modern rather than the anomalous preservation of something primitive amidst modernity.[3] By contrast, or so I had assumed, a survival for Tylor is just a survival.

What are Kippenberg's arguments against this standard characterization of survival for Tylor? Kippenberg begins by observing that Tylor allows for a variety of forms that the old can take in the new – in Tylor's words, "progress, degradation, survival, revival, modification" (Tylor [1871] 1958: I, 17). As Tylor writes of his own favourite example, spiritualism, "Sometimes old thoughts and practices will burst forth afresh, to the amazement of a world that thought them long since dead or dying; here survival passes into revival, as has lately happened in so remarkable a way in the history of modern spiritualism" (*ibid.*: 16–17). Still, Tylor's allowance for an array of forms of the preservation of the old in the new means only that he allows for *more than* survival but not that survival itself means more than mere survival. Even when, as in spiritualism, survival can become revival, survival itself remains mere survival.

Kippenberg, however, asserts that for Tylor even survival means more. What survives does not merely coexist with the modern but often accounts for it:

> Tylor's survivals were more like fertile shoots than dead fossils. Later criticism of Tylor generally ignored this function ... What to the enlightened thinkers had become incomprehensible in modern society could be classified with ethnological parallels. Tylor did not spare examples here either. If we wanted to know why we toss a coin, we should study the oracle practices of primitive peoples, which teach us that it is supernatural beings who turn coins onto the right side as they fall. (Kippenberg 2002: 62)

But few of the "fertile shoots" that Kippenberg points to in Tylor are found among civilized adults. Many are to be found in children, with whom Tylor commonly parallels "primitives": "The childlike mind which can so attribute to any lifeless object a personal existence ... is indeed in the condition to which the religion and the philosophy of the lower races for the most part evidently belong" (Tylor 1866: 72). Just as children, in growing up, come to abandon their anthropomorphized world, so for Tylor does humanity as a whole, and it does so at the behest of science: "The old and simple theory which explains the world at large as directly animated by a life like our own, or directly resulting from such life, has been for ages at war with an ever-accumulating and ever-encroaching scientific knowledge" (*ibid.*).

Similarly, many of the "fertile shoots" that Kippenberg finds in Tylor are to be found among present-day European peasants, who for Tylor, as for Wilhelm Mannhardt and Frazer, preserve a less advanced stage of culture. For example, "The savage's notion of a ghost corresponds very nearly with that of the English peasant in our own day – it is a thin phantom going from place to place, like the person it belonged to, when it does appear, but often invisible, though capable of knocking and uttering sounds" (Tylor 1867: 87–8). When Tylor compares the primitive notion of ghost with the modern one, he stresses less the continuity than the change, and he attributes the change to the impact of science:

> When we meet with notions of apparitions among more civilized people, it seems that they hold a theory inherited from the full Animism of the lower races, but much damaged in its consistency by the interference of a better knowledge of facts. When the ghost of Hamlet's father appeared, he "wore his beaver up." What beaver? To a European believer in ghosts, it would seem foolish to talk of the ghost of a helmet; but to a North American Indian it is quite reasonable that a helmet should have a ghost as well as the warrior who puts it on his ghostly head. The opinion of the European ghost-seer is no doubt the more scientific, the more affected by knowledge of the facts of nature. (*Ibid.*: 89)

For Tylor, the principles underlying astrology, witchcraft, divination and other "occult sciences" hail ultimately from the primitive "association of ideas", but that linkage of ideas is false wherever it is found, and the occult sciences are "pseudo-scientific systems" that belong "to a period now beginning to pass away". We are studying them "in their last stage of existence, that in which their remnants have lingered on into a period of higher mental culture, and have become survivals, or, as we call them, 'superstitions'" (*ibid.*: 91). For example, the originally primitive doctrine of metempsychosis, or the transmigration of the souls of the dead, "survived into modern Europe" but is "now fallen into contempt" (Tylor 1870a: 374).

Overall, we study primitive beliefs to determine:

> among existing opinions, which are old notions kept up in a modified condition to answer a more modern purpose; in what cases a growing knowledge goes about with the remains of the old philosophy which once clothed it, now hanging in strips and tatters about its back; in what case opinions belonging to a low and early mental state survive into the midst of a higher culture, pretending to be knowledge, and being really superstition. (Tylor 1867: 93)

What remains as true knowledge stems from "the induction of general laws and their correction by the systematic observation of facts" – in other words, stems from "Science" (*ibid.*). For Tylor, what is modern is scientific, and anything else will eventually either be refuted or, like old soldiers for General Douglas MacArthur, just fade away.

Kippenberg argues that for Tylor "the concept of the soul", far from a merely primitive notion, "is a constant in human culture" (Kippenberg 2002: 60). Undeniably, Tylor stresses the continuity of the idea of the human soul from "primitives" to moderns:

> it is evident that ... the conception of the human soul is, as to its most essential nature, continuous from the philosophy of the savage thinker to that of the modern professor of theology ... The theory of the soul is one principal part of a system of religious philosophy which unites, in an unbroken line of mental connexion, the savage fetish-worshipper and the civilized Christian.
>
> (Tylor [1871] 1958: II, 85–6)

Undeniably, Tylor makes the postulation of souls the heart of religion. He even chooses the term "animism" for religion because he derives the belief in gods from the belief in souls ("anima" in Latin means soul). Souls are initially believed to occupy all physical entities, beginning with the bodies of humans. Gods, or "spiritual beings", are souls in all things in the physical world beyond humans, who themselves are not gods.

Undeniably, Tylor uses "animism" for religion *per se* and not just for primitive religion. To quote Tylor, "Animism characterizes tribes very low in the scale of humanity, and thence ascends, deeply modified in its transmission, but from first to last preserving an unbroken continuity, into the midst of high modern culture" (*ibid.*: 10). Put even more explicitly, "Animism is the doctrine of all men who believe in active spiritual beings; ... in some form or another it is the religion of mankind, from the rude savage of the Australian bush or the Brazilian forest, up to the most enlightened Christian" (Tylor 1869: 523).

Undeniably, Tylor parallels religion with science. Both originate from an innate need to explain all experience: "Man's craving to know the causes at work in each event he witnesses, the reasons why each state of things he surveys is such as it is and no other, is no product of high civilization, but a characteristic of his race down to its lowest stages" (Tylor [1871] 1958: I, 368–9). Religion and science originate not only for the same reason but also in the same way: through the processes of observation, hypothesis and generalization. Religion functions to account for events in the physical world as comprehensively and as systematically as science. Tylor respects religion exactly because it is scientific-like in both origin and function.

So close for Tylor are religion and science that I myself have asked why for Tylor religion is unscientific. While Tylor's quick answer would be that religious explanations are personalistic, whereas scientific ones are impersonal, the question would then be why personalistic explanations, which, after all, still prevail in the social sciences, are unscientific.

Elsewhere I consider four possible reasons: that for Tylor personal causes are mental, whereas impersonal causes are physical; that for Tylor personal causes are neither predictable nor testable, whereas impersonal causes are both predictable and testable; that for Tylor personal causes are particularistic, whereas impersonal causes are generalizable; and that for Tylor personal causes are final, or teleological, whereas impersonal causes

are efficient. But I find none of these reasons plausible and so cannot explain why for Tylor personal causes of physical events are unscientific.[4]

Undeniably, Tylor acknowledges that animism remains in modernity, even in the wake of science. As Kippenberg puts it, "animism [for Tylor] would never be completely dispensable" (Kippenberg 2002: 61). Kippenberg cites Tylor's preoccupation with the contemporary battle between animism and "materialism". To quote Tylor, "The divisions which have separated the great religions of the world into intolerant and hostile sects are for the most part superficial in comparison with the deepest of all religious schisms, that which divides Animism from Materialism" (Tylor [1871] 1958: II, 86).

Some of these arguments for Tylor's finding a home for religion in modernity Kippenberg himself makes, and the others he could make. But all these arguments have rejoinders. To begin with, the parallel that Tylor draws is not between religion and science but between *primitive* religion and science. Tylor subsumes both religion and science under philosophy, which he divides into two categories: "primitive" and "modern". Primitive philosophy is identical with primitive religion. There is no primitive science. Modern philosophy, by contrast, has two divisions: religion and science. Of the two, science is by far the more important and is the modern counterpart to primitive religion. Modern religion is composed of two elements – metaphysics and ethics – neither of which is present in primitive religion. Metaphysics deals with non-physical entities, of which "primitives" have no conception. Ethics is not absent from primitive culture, but it falls outside primitive religion. Tylor rejects easy, anachronistic parallels between primitive religion and modern, such as the supposed presence of monotheism among "primitives" (see Tylor 1892).

Primitive religion is the primitive counterpart to science because both are explanations of the physical world. Tylor thus characterizes primitive religion as "savage biology" (Tylor [1871] 1958: II, 20) and maintains that "mechanical astronomy gradually superseded the animistic astronomy of the lower races" and that today "biological pathology gradually supersedes animistic pathology" (*ibid.*: 229). The natural sciences as a whole have replaced religion as the explanation of the physical world, so that "animistic astronomy" and "animistic pathology" refer only to primitive, not modern, animism. Modern religion has surrendered the physical world to science and has retreated to the immaterial world, especially to the realm of life after death – that is, of life after the death of the body:

> Where in primitive religion souls are deemed material, in modern religion they are deemed immaterial and are limited to human beings: In our own day and country, the notion of souls of beasts is to be seen dying out. Animism, indeed, seems to be drawing in its outposts, and concentrating itself on its first and main position, the doctrine of the human soul. This doctrine has undergone extreme modification in the course of culture ... The soul has given up its ethereal substance, and become an immaterial entity, "the shadow of a shade." Its theory is becoming separated from the investigations of biology and mental science, which now discuss the phenomena of life and thought, the senses and the intellect, the emotions and the will, on a ground-work of pure experience. There has arisen an intellectual product whose very existence is of the deepest significance, a "psychology" which has no longer anything to do with "soul." The soul's place in modern thought is in the metaphysics of religion, and its especial office there is that of furnishing an intellectual side to the religious doctrine of the future life. (*Ibid.*: 85)

In other words, while Tylor does indeed grant that religion continues to exist in modernity and is far more than a mere survival, it continues to exist only by undergoing retraining. Modern religion operates not *alongside* science but *removed from* science, and can continue to exist only in so far as it does so. Yes, the soul remains, but it is no longer material and no longer accounts for human behaviour, let alone for the behaviour of the external world. The soul is now cut off from the world that gave rise to it. Kippenberg's continual stress on the "constancy" of the human soul in Tylor seems constancy in name only.

For Tylor, the realm of the soul has been not just reconceived but marginalized. Kippenberg acknowledges that for Tylor, "as civilization progresses, the territory claimed by animism gradually became smaller and finally shrank" to what Kippenberg calls "the principle of human subjectivity". But, continues Kippenberg, "this could not be reduced any further and remains valid in modern culture" (Kippenberg 2002: 61–2). How big, however, is the present domain of the soul? For Tylor, religion flourishes exactly when it serves to explain the physical world. In modern religion gods, like souls, cease to operate in the physical world. They are relocated to the social world. They become models for humans. One now reads the Bible for the Ten Commandments, not for the story of creation. Jesus is to be emulated as the ideal human, not as a miracle worker. Anyone who thinks that religion as morality is for Tylor as worthy as religion as explanation should consider Tylor's tirade against those who turn myth into moral allegory (see Segal 1999: 1–12).

Tylor's nevertheless irenic position is like that of the evolutionary biologist Stephen Jay Gould, for whom science, above all evolution, is compatible with religion because the two run askew. For Gould, science explains the physical world; religion prescribes ethics and gives meaning to life: "Science tries to document the factual character of the natural world, and to develop theories that co-ordinate and explain these facts. Religion, on the other hand, operates in the equally important, but utterly different, realm of human purposes, meanings, and values" (Gould [1999] 2002: 4). But there is a difference between Gould's harmonious view and Tylor's. Where for Gould religion has *always* served a function different from that of science, for Tylor religion has been forced to retrain upon having been made compulsorily redundant by science. And its present task is a demotion. Tylor is closer to biologist Richard Dawkins, though Dawkins, unlike Tylor, is unprepared to grant religion even a lesser function in the wake of science.

In short, for Tylor, as for Frazer, science spells the end, if not, as for Frazer, of religion altogether, at least of religion as it had been intended to be. Religion arose to serve the need of explaining the physical world and nothing else. Now it is forced to find other needs to be able to continue to exist. It is not that these needs are themselves new – as if previously there were no ethics or even metaphysics. What is new is the serving of these needs by religion. Ethics for Tylor is presumably as old as religion. Metaphysics is far more recent, but Tylor is surely not assuming that metaphysics began with modern religion. At the same time Tylor neglects to discuss the importance of modern religion *vis-à-vis* secular ethics and metaphysics, so that even here religion may for him face competition.

Kippenberg argues that by "materialism" Tylor means the explanation of not just some things but all things by science. The war between materialism and animism was not "a struggle between science and the Church. It was rather a struggle between the advocates and the opponents of a total scientific claim. The opponents of such an excessive claim vigorously challenged the assertion that, like everything else, the human mind was also

under the control of natural laws" (Kippenberg 2002: 61). Kippenberg concedes that in this struggle "Tylor's position ... was strangely ambivalent" (*ibid.*).

But was it? First of all, primitive religion for Tylor is wholly materialist, so that materialism for him is hardly a modern concept. Rather, immateriality is. Tylor contrasts the primitive religious conception of the soul as *material* to the modern religious conception of it as immaterial. Souls for "primitives" are "substantial material beings" (Tylor [1871] 1958: II, 37). The term "soul" does not spell immateriality, whether for Tylor or for, say, Homer. For "primitives", even gods are material: "the lower races are apt to ascribe to spirits in general that kind of ethereal materiality which we have seen they attribute to souls" (*ibid.*: 284). Tylor goes as far as to declare that "the later metaphysical notion of immateriality could scarcely have conveyed any meaning to a savage" (*ibid.*: 41).

In short, primitive religion for Tylor is no less materialist than science. The clash between primitive religion and science is thus anything but a fight between spirituality and materialism. It is a clash between one materialist account of the external world and another. There is no clash in the modern world precisely because modern religion has retreated from the material domain to the immaterial one. The modern twain never meet. Tylor never even considers any linkage between the mind and the body, such as interactionism. For him, physical effects have exclusively physical causes.

Admittedly, Tylor does sharply contrast animism to "materialism". He even defines animism as "the deep-lying doctrine of Spiritual Beings, which embodies the very essence of Spiritualistic as opposed to Materialistic philosophy" (*ibid.*: 9). But by materialism he likely means the belief in bodies alone. The souls and "spiritual beings" in primitive animism may themselves be material, but they are still more than bodies, which, indeed, they "animate". Since the belief in spiritual beings is Tylor's "minimum definition" of religion (*ibid.*: 8), by the "religious schism" that pits animism against materialism he must, to be consistent, mean the schism *between* religion *per se* and science. But why assume that he is allowing for a tamer view of science that permits other than bodies, and why assume that in the clash between religion and science he is even possibly taking the side of religion?

Kippenberg appeals most dramatically to Tylor's indisputable fascination with the spiritualist craze in his day. Back in 1969, the American historian of anthropology George Stocking discovered a diary of Tylor's in Oxford's Pitt Rivers Museum, where the surviving papers of Tylor lie. That diary, dated November 1872, records Tylor's month-long visits to spiritualists in London. Stocking published Tylor's "Notes on Spiritualism" in 1971 (see Stocking 1971; 2001: 116–46), and Kippenberg is familiar with it. In fact, he cites spiritualism as Tylor's clearest example of not merely the survival but the renewal of animism in its fight with materialism, and suggests that it was "the great modern movement of spiritualism" that "led Tylor to grant belief in the soul such a paramount place in human history" (Kippenberg 2002: 63). Stocking himself comments that the "tone" of the diary is "strikingly different from the debunking dismissal of spiritualism in *Primitive Culture*" (Stocking 2001: 118).

Obviously, Tylor need not himself have believed in spiritualism to have been able to employ it as evidence of the revival of animism in the modern world. But Kippenberg recognizes that if Tylor himself dismissed spiritualism as delusional or fraudulent, he, Tylor, would surely expect it, like astrology and witchcraft, to be debunked and so to die out. On the plausibility of spiritualism for Tylor himself thus partly rests the plausibility of the revival of animism for Tylor.

Kippenberg quotes the last entry in the diary, written upon Tylor's return home to Somerset from London:

> What I have seen & heard fails to convince me that there is a genuine residue[. I]t all might have been legerdemain, & was so in great measure[,] except that legerté is too complimentary for the clumsiness of many of the obvious imposters. The weight of the argument lies in testimony of other witnesses ... My judgment is in abeyance[.] I admit a prima facie case on evidence, & will not deny that there may be a psychic force causing raps, movements, levitations[,] etc. But it has not proved itself by evidence of my senses, and I distinctly think the case weaker than written documents led me to think. (Quoted in Stocking 1971: 100)

Kippenberg (2002: 63) omits the final sentence of the entry: "Seeing has not (to me) been believing, & I propose a new text to define faith[:] 'Blessed are they that have seen, and *yet* have believed'."

To his credit, Kippenberg does not claim that Tylor, who previously had been unambiguously dismissive, had a St Paul-like change of heart. Kippenberg claims only that this last, summary entry "does show a slight wavering of his judgement, indicating a dilemma extremely characteristic of his position" (Kippenberg 2002: 63). Stocking himself concludes much the same (see Stocking 1971: 101–4). I myself would distinguish between Tylor's not ruling out the reality of spirits and his ruling it in.

For me, Tylor, unlike Frazer, does reconcile animism with science, but at a high cost to animism. For Tylor, animism in the modern world is more than a relic but much less than a flourishing enterprise.

NOTES

1. On Tylor's dismissal of the most popular theory of religion of the day – totemism – see R A. Jones (2005: 55–7, 93, 141–6).
2. On survivals, see Tylor (1866; 1867; 1869; 1870a: 375–6; [1881] 1960: 11–18).
3. On the transformation of myth into literature, see Segal (1998: pt V).
4. See Segal (1999: 8–9; 2002: 20–23). Ironically, Robin Horton, the contemporary theorist of religion so close to Tylor that he has been labelled a "neo-Tylorian", accepts but downplays the personalistic nature of religious explanations of physical events versus the impersonal nature of scientific explanations. For Horton, this difference is simply one of idiom. For him, more important than the *content* of the competing kinds of explanations is the *context*: religious explanations operate in what Horton, following Karl Popper, calls a "closed" society, whereas scientific explanations operate in what Horton, again following Popper, calls an "open" society. On Horton's break with Tylor, see Segal (2002: 38–9).

5

Building on belief: defining animism in Tylor and contemporary society

Martin D. Stringer

In February 2010 I joined a party travelling in Burkina Faso. This was my first time in that country although I have travelled extensively in other parts of East and West Africa. In most other parts of Africa I have noted that the dominant religious discourses are clearly either Christian or Islamic. Most people assert that they follow one or other of these traditions, whatever other beliefs may exist alongside the more formal understanding of the monotheistic religion. In Burkina Faso, however, we were told, both by the guide and by those we met, that a significant proportion of the population were "animists" and we were introduced on more than one occasion to those who defined their own tradition as "animist".

Having been brought up in the English anthropological tradition I found this very disconcerting. Animism was, for me, a word from the origins of the discipline, a word, and a concept, that had been thoroughly discredited and rejected in favour of "traditional African religions" or some such similar phrase. To describe people as "animist" was tantamount to describing them as "savages" and for people to lay claim to this term for themselves appeared degrading. In Burkina Faso, however, with its French traditions, the term "animist" was used widely, and it appeared with pride. Many of the French tourist guides for the area also use the term "*animiste*" as a description of the religion of the people without raising any specific concerns (e.g. De Gonneville *et al.* 2010: 70–71). Spirits were discussed openly throughout the tour and appeared to exist widely within society and beyond. In some areas there were clear signs of syncretism in the traditional accepted sense of that term (Stewart & Shaw 1994). In others, "animist" discourses sat alongside those of Christianity and Islam, as self-professed animists also integrated on a day-to-day basis with those who claimed to be Catholics or Muslims. This was not a world that I was used to inhabiting, either in reality, or intellectually.

In 1999 I wrote a paper for the *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Society* (Stringer 1999) in which I outlined what I understood to be the position of Edward Tylor in his famous book on *Primitive Culture* (1871). My aim in that paper was to show that if we were able to strip away the evolutionary framework within which Tylor clearly conceived the world,

his writing on religion could be reclaimed and reworked to make sense of contemporary religious discourses and traditions. At the heart of Tylor's work was the concept of animism, a word that he borrowed from Stahl when he discovered that spiritualism, his preferred term, was unusable in the context of an academic discussion on religion (1871: I, 384–5; Stringer 1999: 543). Animism for Tylor represented the most fundamental form of religion: that discourse about the non-empirical on which all other religious discourses are built. In a later work I developed this Tylorian concept in relation to an understanding of religion in contemporary Britain and argued that here also there was a fundamental discourse about the non-empirical that was widely shared and acted on by a wide cross-section of society (2008). Following Tylor, albeit with some hesitation, I chose to use the term "animism" to describe what I referred to as the animistic genre of religious discourse (*ibid.*: 107–9). In that work I proposed that such an animistic genre was, in fact, universal, although I did not at that point set out to prove that this was the case.

What is clear, even from this short introduction, is that the content of the term "animism" as used by those who define themselves as "animists" in Burkina Faso, the content of the term as used by Tylor, and the content of the term as used in my own work are very different. The almost coincidental use of the same terminology can only be explained by association and scholarly history. Given, however, that my own claim is that some kind of elementary genre of religious discourse is universal (*ibid.*: 113), and that it has some association, however slender, with Tylor's concept of animism, then what I hope to explore within this chapter is whether the actual content of three uses of the term are in fact as disparate as might appear at first glance, and whether there might be some value in the term itself, value that will, I am sure, be explored much more fully in the other chapters in this volume.

TYLOR

If we go back to Tylor's own work on *Primitive Culture* then we will see that Tylor was actually trying to do two different things with his understanding of the term "animism". As I have already noted, he adapted the term from the German original as used by Stahl, because he was not able to use his preferred term of "spiritualism" (1871: I, 384–5: Stringer 1999: 543). This relates to the first purpose for the word: to flesh out, as it were, the basic definition of religion that he had stated as "belief in spiritual beings" (1871: I, 383). The operative word here is "spiritual" and animism was, in part, an attempt to show what belief in such "spiritual" beings may look like in its most basic and purest form. This, then, relates to the second role for the term in Tylor's analysis: as the base concept, the most fundamental form, of his gradual development of religion over the evolutionary life of the human race. Animism is the starting point for this evolution, the most fundamental form of religion, and hence the clearest statement of what "belief in spiritual beings" might consist of.

I will begin with the first of Tylor's two functions for the term: that is to provide content for his minimal definition of religion. If religion is to be defined as "belief in spiritual beings", then it is important to understand what this may mean in its most basic form. Despite the views of most commentators on Tylor's work, he is not specifically setting out to provide a theory of origins (Stringer 1999: 543–5). His argument is constructed on logical grounds rather than on the basis of the origins of religion. Having

established from empirical evidence that many different peoples from around the world actually have a belief in souls, he then asks whether it is plausible for so many different peoples to believe in "spiritual beings" when it is clear that such things do not exist. His answer is to give the famous illustration of the dream (Tylor 1871: I, 380). When people dream they appear to leave their bodies and engage in other kinds of activities. The same appears to be the case in trances and other "out of body" experiences. It is therefore logical to assume, at least until we know better, that the person is made up of two parts, a physical body and a non-material person, a spirit or soul, that can leave the physical body in certain circumstances. If human beings have such a non-material element then, it could also be logically argued, all other material objects must also have a non-material element (after all, we do also see these objects when we dream).

The basic form of the "spiritual being", therefore, for Tylor, is the soul, the spirit of the individual (1871: I, 385). This is often forgotten by commentators on Tylor's work when, for example, they claim that he would deny Buddhism, in its purest form, to be a religion because there are no "spiritual beings". For Tylor the soul is a spiritual being and hence, if the transmigration of souls is a central tenet of belief, as it is for Buddhism, then that belief is a belief in spiritual beings (*ibid.*: II, 10). It is, however, when the spiritual being is associated with non-human others that most commentators assume that Tylor is talking of animism. So, it is assumed, animism for Tylor is the assumption that all objects have a non-material or spiritual element. This is not quite the position that Tylor himself takes.

In my previous paper I argued that Tylor's ambiguity and uncertainty surrounding the word "spiritual" has to be taken seriously (Stringer 1999). He wanted to describe his most basic form of religion as "spiritualism", and hence the "spiritual" is the fundamental element of religion but, as we have seen, the spiritual itself derives logically from a reflection on the non-physical element of the human person, or the soul. To this extent animism, that which has to do with *anima*, or souls, is perhaps a better, or at least a clearer, term. The problem, however, is that Tylor does not wish to get too tied down by the common assumptions of what spirits or souls actually are. He is thinking in a far more abstract sense, even if he does not have the language to express it, and his discussion of the nature and understanding of myth makes this very clear (Tylor 1871: I, 247–85; Stringer 1999: 548). For Tylor, animism is a kind of primitive philosophy rather than a religious position, as we might understand it today. I argue that, if he was able to feel more comfortable with the term, then something more abstract, such as "non-empirical", makes much more sense of Tylor's concept of the spiritual or the soul than any of the words that he used (Stringer 2008: 105–6). In other words, animism, for Tylor, is not simply the awareness of spirits in the world, the imputing of souls to people, animals and objects, but rather a way of thinking that assumes an engagement with the non-empirical. It is from here, therefore, that we need to move to Tylor's second function for the term "animism".

Having established the term through the logical steps outlined above, Tylor actually uses animism as the base line for his own developmental understanding of religious evolution. Here it is impossible to remove the evolutionary framework, with its associated values, from Tylor's work. He clearly sees human development as evolutionary, from the savage to the barbarian to the civilized. He understands the development of culture as one from simplicity to complexity (in both mental and material forms). Religion is also seen to evolve, from animism, through fetishism, to polytheism, monotheism and ultimately to scientific rationalism. Animism, therefore, is the starting point: that form of religion

that expresses most explicitly the belief in spiritual beings without all the developmental trappings of other forms of religion.

What is interesting, however, and the point I stressed in my previous work, is that the development as outlined by Tylor is not simple and direct (Stringer 1999). Elements of "animism" are retained in contexts where polytheism or monotheism are the dominant forms of religion. In fact, Tylor continues to title the chapters focusing on polytheism and monotheism as "Animism (continued)" and in the final chapter begins to develop the idea of animism as a philosophy of religion, a way of thought that underpins all religion, and even as a philosophy of the universe, an approach to the world that assumes a particular way of thinking. "My task", he says, "has been here not to discuss Religion in all its bearings, but to portray in outline the great doctrine of Animism, as found in what I conceive to be its earliest stages among the lower races of mankind, and to show its transmission along the lines of religious thought" (Tylor 1871: II, 326).

Therefore, if we assume that animism is not a form of religion as such, in the way that Christianity or Islam is a form of religion, but rather a way of being religious, such as monotheism in general, it is clear from Tylor's own analysis that there are elements of animism in all societies, whether or not the dominant form of religion acknowledges them or not. It is not simply a developmental model, therefore, that Tylor is creating. If we take the diachronic or evolutionary element out of his analysis, then we could see the whole structure in synchronic terms and argue that all societies must express elements of fetishism, of polytheism, of monotheism and even of scientific rationalism. If this is the case, then, we need to ask what role animism plays within this schema as a whole. This is what I set out to try to expand on in my book on *Contemporary Western Ethnography and the Definition of Religion* (2008).

CONTEMPORARY BRITAIN

Animism as such is not a central concern of *Contemporary Western Ethnography and the Definition of Religion*. I simply chose to claim the term from Tylor for a specific purpose within my conclusion. The bulk of the book draws on the ethnographic work of my students and myself as we looked at the kind of religious believing and doing that was practised by ordinary people, mostly women, within contemporary Britain. The purpose of the book was to challenge the widely held definitions of religion that I suggest, following others, are based on a Christian, and specifically Protestant, model (*ibid.*: 4). Therefore I set out to show that while many British people do engage with non-empirical others of various kinds, most commonly either dead relatives or God, they do not do this within the context of any systematic framework of beliefs, they do not perceive this other as transcendent in any way, and they use these beliefs and practices to cope with the everyday difficulties of life rather than to transform their lives in any dramatic fashion. I therefore argued that we have to begin a definition of religion from the basis of disparate and unsystematic beliefs, from intimate and immanent relations with the other, and through what I call "coping" as opposed to "transformative" religions (*ibid.*: 100).

It is from this basis that I turned back to Tylor in my final chapter. Having outlined the kind of analysis that I presented above, I suggested that we should understand religions as a series of discourses on the non-empirical within society (*ibid.*: 105–7). These could

consist of dialogues with the non-empirical, such as talking to the dead, or discourses about the nature of the non-empirical and its impact on personal or social life. What is significant, however, is that there does not appear to be only one such discourse within each society, even, I would suggest, in societies that are not traditionally multi-religious. I use Tylor's framework, shorn of its evolutionary context, to suggest a layering of discourses such that individuals could switch between one and another at will, depending on the circumstances that they are facing (*ibid.*: 106–7). Each individual discourse, however, would work with its own logic and make its own assumptions that those using it would normally have to work within.

If seen vertically it is possible to talk about discourses in a Foucaultian sense, a series of discipline-specific sets of words, symbols, associations and understandings that could be associated with one of the major faiths (Foucault 1972; Stringer 2008: 106). In medieval society, for example, across most of Europe, the dominant discourse in this sense was Christian. Within that Christian discourse, however, it was possible to engage with a range of non-empirical others and at a variety of levels, some of which were highly academic and obtuse, some very down to earth and focused on the day-to-day coping of the poor and oppressed (Christian 1981; Stringer 2005). In contemporary Britain this kind of dominant discourse no longer exists, but the layers of engagement with the non-empirical clearly do, and so it is for each individual to draw on the kind of language that suits them to express the different layers of the system, and the coping religions are expressed most commonly, according to our research at least, through conversations with the dead (Stringer 2008: 67–82).

It is this aspect of layering that led me back to animism. I needed some kind of terminology in which to express the kind of multi-layered discourses on, or of, religion that we were identifying. I chose to talk in terms of genres, although I am far from clear that this is the best choice of words (*ibid.*: 107). I was therefore able to talk about a monotheistic genre, perhaps a polytheistic genre, a transformative genre and certainly a coping genre. Each genre, like the genres in literature, would follow its own logic, have its own assumptions and in some ways limit what can and cannot be said or done within that genre. The coping genre that we had identified to be so widespread within British discourses on the non-empirical was, in my view, the fundamental, base genre, the starting point or foundation on which all the other genres and discourses had to be built (*ibid.*: 108). In this sense it served the same purpose in my own construction as animism had served for Tylor in his developmental understanding of religion. The question remains, however, as to whether what I termed, if only in passing, the "animistic genre" of religion has the same content as Tylor's own understanding of animism. Given that, as we have seen, Tylor is somewhat vague as to the content of animism it is not all that easy to answer such a question. In order to do so I want to switch the discussion from the UK to Burkina Faso and see if there are any links between the understandings of religion that Tylor or I have labelled "animism" and the use of the term among the different tribal groups of Burkina Faso.

BURKINA FASO

As I have already indicated, it was clear that both the commentators on the religious situation in Burkina Faso and the people themselves were quite happy to use the term

"animism" to describe a set of beliefs and practices held by, according to the official figures, about a sixth of the population (Ministry of Economy and Finance, Burkina Faso 2008; De Gonneville *et al.* 2010: 70–71). The question, however, is whether this use of the term "animism" shares any of the same content as either the use of the term by Tylor, or that of myself. Unfortunately I do not have the evidence to suggest when and why the term came to be used in Burkina Faso. It is clear that the term "*animiste*" is used much more widely in French discourses generally for indigenous religions, and without the same associations of "primitive" and "savage" as we see in English discourses. As an ex-French colony, this clearly had an impact in Burkina Faso. I have not noted the term to be used quite so widely in other African countries, but then I have not visited a country where a significant percentage of the population wished to be classified as something other than Christian or Muslim. The traditional religious ideas and practices were clearly flourishing in Burkina Faso and the positioning of the country on the boundary between Islamic and Christian missions, as well as its clearly ambiguous colonial history, undoubtedly had something to do with this situation.

If I begin with Tylor's "belief in spiritual beings" then it is very clear that those who defined themselves as animists in Burkina Faso lived in a world that was inhabited by spiritual beings of one kind or another. This was also true of Christians and Muslims. Our guide for the visit told a number of stories pivoting on the differences between Western tourists and the local African beliefs in the presence of spirits and, as an African himself, he found it very difficult to understand the Europeans' position.

Spiritual beings are a fact of life for the vast majority of the people of Burkina Faso, as they are for many other parts of Africa. These beings also engage with the human population and can, at times, inhabit objects. Among the Lobi, for example, in the southwest of the country, statues are made to represent the dead and there is an explicit belief that the ancestral spirits, or *thila*, inhabit the statues that are made for them (Bognolo 2007: 10–14). Protective ancestors, those who have led fruitful lives and died peacefully, are honoured with statues maintained within the houses of the matriclans. Bad ancestors, wandering spirits, those who have died violently are encapsulated in statues maintained in shrines outside of the village. The form of the statue, its calmness, beauty and balance, reflect clearly the type of ancestor associated with it (*ibid.*: 12). We were also shown two large images in the museum which were made to house the spirits of German soldiers killed by Lobi warriors fighting for France in the First World War, spirits that needed to be propitiated by those who were responsible for their deaths.

Among the Bwa, the Bobo, and other related groups in central Burkina Faso, spiritual beings are closely associated with masks and the masking tradition (Dagan 1987). When dances take place, even for tourist events, a sacrifice needs to be made to the spirits who own and inhabit the masks, and the dance itself is seen as a close engagement with the spirits themselves. Spiritual beings, therefore, exist, engage with human societies and can be contained within objects. Many of these spirits are related to the dead, but by no means all. What is more, these spiritual beings are non-empirical, even for the people themselves.

There is a serious ontological debate about what, exactly, is meant by the "non-empirical". What is non-empirical to one society may be perfectly real and concrete to another. Bognolo states the position among the Lobi in a way that would be entirely familiar to Tylor: "most forms of worship are based on belief in the existence of a vital

principle called *thuú* (spirit, double), the prime component of a person" (2007: 10). It is the *thuú* that after death, and through ritual, becomes the *thila* that is either good or evil, and is controlled by being housed within a statue. The *thuú* and the *thila* are clearly spiritual beings, unlike the *kõtórsi*, or rulers of the bush, "veritable local tricksters portrayed as small very hairy creatures, usually capricious and full of frightening pranks" that act as go-betweens between the ritual specialists and the wandering ancestors (*ibid.*: 16).

Lowie (1936: 123) raised the idea of the dwarf to make a similar point in his critique of Tylor. For Tylor those societies that believe in the presence of dwarfs and other creatures (either smaller or larger than the human) living in marginal areas of the territory see such creatures as concrete and real in an empirical sense (1870b: 313). As Lowie says, "among the Crowe the dwarf has all the earmarks of robust non-natural anthropomorphism, he belongs as it were to a distinct and powerful, though stunted branch of the family Hominidae localised near Pryor Creek" (1936: 123). Spirits, however, are of a different order even for those who believe in them and engage with them. They are real, there is no question about that, but their reality is of a different order from that of tables, chairs, people and even dwarfs (Southwold 1983: 150). A spirit cannot be captured, analysed or tested in the way other "empirical" objects can, and so the distinction between the empirical and non-empirical (even if the boundaries can at times be blurred) is one that is widely acknowledged, but it is important to note that this is not a distinction between the real and the unreal.

So, are the spirits and ancestors of Burkina Faso enough to claim that the peoples who engage with them are animists in Tylor's sense of the term? At one level they clearly are; they are spiritual beings, but they probably exist at a level in Tylor's schema that is somewhat above the animistic. It is not the case for the peoples of Burkina Faso that each object has a spiritual element, or that all spirits have some physical or material manifestation, despite their ability to inhabit statues, masks and even crocodiles. These are not "nature spirits" as such, "spirit" in the abstract, or the spiritual element of the material world; they are clearly personified entities, each with their own identity and personality. This is not really "animism" in the sense of the most basic form of the understanding of the spiritual in relation to the material; this is a highly sophisticated form of religious engagement with the non-empirical other.

How far, then, does this kind of tradition relate to my own construction of the basic form of religious genre as identified through our ethnographic work in the UK? I established three principles that I stated were central to the most basic form of religion and which contradicted most accepted definitions (2008: 5–13). I claimed that common religion, animism if that is the term we want to use, was unsystematic, immanent and concerned with coping rather than transforming. If we take these three points in turn then we can assess the so-called "animistic" religions of Burkina Faso against these criteria.

I have to state, first of all, that I was not able to spend enough time with any one group in Burkina Faso to assess whether their religious beliefs formed a systematic whole or not. Evidence from other parts of Africa, however, and a range of critical works that have looked at specific religious structures in Burkina Faso, suggest that these traditions would probably be unsystematic in their belief structure (Bognolo 2007; Calderoli 2010). It is widely accepted, for example, that Evans-Pritchard attempted to provide a structure for the religion of the Nuer that simply was not there (Evans-Pritchard 1956), and while Evans-Pritchard's book became something of model for the understanding of

African religion through the middle years of the last century, much current thinking has rejected his central premise of a clearly systematic and structured set of beliefs. It is generally recognized that ancestors and other spiritual beings are engaged with in relation to specific circumstances and that it is for diviners to assess which spirit is to be chosen from the many that are on offer, in relation to the specific circumstances of the context.

The fact that much of the day-to-day activities of these religious traditions has to do with elements of coping is also generally accepted in contemporary literature, although that is not to deny that there are some elements, in some places, where a more transformative programme is developed. There may be some aspects of the religious traditions of Burkina Faso that are transformative, but it is clear that the vast majority of the activity deals with the coping needs of healing, security, concern with fertility of crops and children, and so on (Bognolo 2007: 17–21). This coping element can also be seen among those who claim a Christian or Islamic heritage. One older Fulani man that we talked to rejected out of hand that he conducted rituals relating to the spirits, although he did acknowledge their existence, but he showed us with pride the charms and amulets that he had made, drawing on verses of the Qu'ran for the protection of his wives, children and grandchildren.

This leaves us, therefore, with the question of immanence as opposed to transcendence. The point I wanted to make in relation to the engagement with the non-empirical in Britain was that in most cases the "other" that British women identified was constructed as approachable, intimate and willing to listen (Stringer 2008: 63). This was true whether that other was a dead relative or God. The idea of a fearful, distant and judgemental "other" was not part of the most basic form of religious activity within the UK. It was on this basis that I talked about the non-empirical others as structural equivalents in grammars of engagement that could sit within what I described as the "animistic genre" of religion (*ibid.*: 108–9). Other authors, including many represented in this book, also emphasize the intimacy inherent in the use of the term "animism", although this is usually expressed in terms of the personification of the world and a particular understanding of relationships with the non-human other, rather than intimacy in the sense I develop it in relation to the dead or with God. The situation in Burkina Faso, however, does not quite match either of these circumstances. The logic of the "intimate other" is not present, and while spiritual beings are perfectly real, and inhabit the space surrounding human society rather than some distant other place, they are not really to be seen as intimate, except in very specific, and usually highly suspect, circumstances such as sorcery and witchcraft.

For many of the peoples of Burkina Faso spiritual beings, including the ancestors, are to be feared and hence avoided. Even when they are encouraged to live within the shrines in the houses of the village they are restricted and encouraged through sacrifices to maintain good relations with the living. Many spiritual beings, however, are to be driven out of the social space, rather than to be encouraged in. The dance, or the libation at the small altar that appears to be part of almost every village we visited, was aimed at propitiating the spirit, calling on their immediate blessing and then encouraging them to leave. It was when the dangerous spirits were too close to the human that illness and other forms of danger existed. Certainly it was important for the mask, or the statue in the case of the Lobi, to contain the spirit or the ancestor, and spiritual beings and humans were expected to share the same space and to engage in some form of ritual communication, but the normal situation was for the spiritual beings and the humans to maintain their

distance. In this case, therefore, the spirits and ancestors are seen as entirely immanent – there was no sense of transcendence, although these spiritual beings did have powers that humans did not – but there was no intimacy, and distance was considered to be the desirable situation.

Can I argue, therefore, that the "animistic" traditions of Burkina Faso are part of the same religious genre as we found to be so widespread in Britain? Obviously, to answer this question most fully would demand the same level of detailed and extended ethnography among the relevant groups within Burkina Faso as we have already undertaken in the UK and I have not had the opportunity to undertake that work. My answer, therefore, can only be sketchy and may be challenged by those who do go on to explore the field data in more detail. However, I would argue that there is a great deal of commonality. The emphasis on coping, on illness, fertility, security and certainty in life is clearly much the same, although the level of uncertainty and the kind of welfare provision in Burkina Faso makes their reliance on religious solutions much higher than those in Britain. I would also argue that the unsystematic nature of both contexts may also be similar, although the form that beliefs take is very different as the underlying discourses have very different assumptions. When it comes to the immanence of the non-empirical other, however, we may be in different worlds. Both societies engage primarily with an immanent other (which is not to suggest that transcendent others do not exist) but the nature of the relationship is very different. For those in the UK the important factor is intimacy, having a close and supportive relationship with the other. For those in Burkina Faso, it is much more important to maintain a distance between the human and the other. We can ask why this might be, although this is not the place to explore this question, but I would argue that this is a significant difference logically within the context of the analysis, but that some level of animistic genre, as I have defined that term, does probably exist in both the UK and in Burkina Faso.

CONCLUSION

If we go back to the main concern of this chapter then we have to ask whether "animism" as a term actually has any common value in the three kinds of analysis that I have been looking at. Is there a common factor that enables us to say that this is what "animism" is? At a superficial level there is probably something common across the three contexts. Each makes reference to the spiritual, to spirits or to the non-empirical other. Each also appears to take animism as the most fundamental, or to use Durkheim's term, the most elementary form of religion ([1912] 1976). Is this, however, enough to justify the use of the term more widely?

One question that is raised by all these contexts is whether we wish to define the term through content or through function. It is easy to say that the three contexts have a similarity of content: they each propose an engagement with spirits, the spiritual or the non-empirical other. However, as we have seen, there is a very clear distinction between the equally immanent, but otherwise very different "others" of the Burkina Faso and the British context. For the British the need is for an other that is intimate, that can be chatted to about everyday concerns and that is understood to listen to and care about our problems. For many groups in Burkina Faso the spirits are to be rejected, feared, and the

whole purpose of libations, dance and ritual is to keep them subdued and to keep them away from human society. The spirits of Burkina Faso and the others of the UK are not of the same kind and, I would probably suggest, do not even inhabit the same logical space within the structures of the religions.

The same could be said of the difference between the spiritual of Tylor's analysis and the spirits of Burkina Faso. For Tylor, in describing animism, it is important that all material objects, and primarily the human, have a spiritual dimension and so the fundamental engagement with the world is understood to be an engagement with the spiritual. For Tylor the question of intimacy, or even immanence, is not really an issue. Tylor's animism sees the spiritual as all pervasive, more strictly philosophical, and not encompassed in any specific "other". To engage with the spiritual is to engage with the world, and with everything in the world, including the self. The moment the spiritual is focused on a specific other, be it a spirit as in Burkina Faso or the dead as in the UK, it has already moved on from the purist form of Tylorian animism.

If content cannot provide the common feature for the definition of animism, then does my solution in *Contemporary Western Ethnography and the Definition of Religion* (2008) provide a way forward? Is animism to be seen as the most basic form of religion within a particular society, or even, as I suggest in the book, the most basic and therefore the most common form of religion across all kinds of society? There are structural similarities between the spirit-based religious traditions of Burkina Faso and the engagement with intimate others in the UK. It is also possible to see unsystematic, situational religious beliefs and practices focused on the need to cope in all societies, either as part of a wider religious discourse or independent of it (Stringer 1996). There are also many other layers of religious belief and activity present in both contexts. Does this, however, suggest that this base layer can be given the term "animism"? Technically it is not this base layer alone that is referred to as "animism" by the peoples of Burkina Faso. Simply by laying claim to the term, and placing it alongside those of Islam and Christianity, they suggest that the animism of Burkina Faso is more than simply a base-line religion. There is far more complexity and layers to these traditions than is suggested by either Tylor or myself for our own uses of the term "animism".

Am I suggesting, therefore, that the term has no purpose and should be rejected? That is perhaps a radical position to take in a book about animism, especially so early in the text. It is not, however, my place to make that step. I have attempted simply to outline and compare three different uses of the term, one the original Tylorian perspective, one modern academic take on the Tylorian position, and one as used in the real world. It is for the reader, having assessed these positions, alongside those of all the other chapters within this volume, to draw their own conclusion on the usefulness, content and function of the term.

II

Dwelling in nature/culture

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INTRODUCTION

Philippe Descola's chapter, "Beyond Nature and Culture", sets up the main theme of Part II by presenting a radical re-examination of human relations with the world. This leads to his anticipation of "a new exciting period of intellectual and political turmoil". The reason for this hope is the view, shared by some (but not all) other contributors to this volume, that although an alleged division between "nature" and "culture" may have triggered "the accomplishments of modernity, it has now outlived its moral and epistemological efficiency". Bruno Latour's discussion of a public debate between Descola and Eduardo Viveiros de Castro about understandings of animism and their deployment in "the task of composing a world that is not yet common" (2009b: 2) illustrates the importance of attention to animism.

Researchers who learn among Amazonian indigenous peoples are, like Descola and Viveiros de Castro, at the forefront of multi- and interdisciplinary debates. The nature of the world, of humans and all life is at stake. It is, then, important that arguments are tested or contested, and improved or replaced by ongoing discussion. In Chapter 7, Laura Rival asks in what distinctive ways lowland South American Indians are animists. She seeks to understand whether there is, despite the insistence of other researchers that *all* Amazonian life is perceived to be "cultural" not "natural", a distinct domain of biological but not animistic knowledge. Excitingly, she reminds us that uncertainty is important – that large cultural complexes are lived out in more experimental and provisional ways in which some relations are closer and more significant than others. In doing so, she enriches descriptive and theoretical approaches to animism, ontological animism and perspectivism.

Signe Howell's chapter opens with the re-telling of a Malaysian Chewong myth about frogs and humans and develops an argument that further addresses core aspects of animism debates. She agrees that the attribution of (more or less anthropomorphic) consciousness to non-humans is globally observable – and therefore agrees that there is a kind of "animism" in many places. Among the Chewong this is identified as *ruwai*. However, Howell demonstrates that the Chewong (among others) are quite certain of the importance of particular embodiments (and especially of the eyes). Since human eyes are not the same as frog eyes, it is vital to attend to both sameness and difference in the fragile relationships between species. Howell's chapter invites more careful thinking about Viveiros de Castro's term "perspectivism" and Descola's "collective analogism", and about nature and culture. It also anticipates the enriched consideration of consciousness continued in later chapters.

Both nature/culture dualism and animist relationships across and between species (and material) boundaries are necessarily worked out in specific places and communities. They take place not only in relatively remote Amazonian villages but also in globalized urban conglomerations. Paul-François Tremlett takes us to selected locations in the Philippines to examine "the ancestral sensorium" of indigenous rural communities and new gated housing developments around Manila. In his insightful discussion Tremlett notes that the celebratory mood of much discourse about both indigenous and urban realms masks acts of enclosure and exclusion that deserve further attention. He is careful to resist and challenge easily imagined dichotomies (e.g. of authenticity and virtuality), noting that *both* kinds of emplaced community are idealized as locations of potentially

harmonious encounter between vibrant, valued "nature" and variously cultured humans. The appreciation of human engagement with other beings in particular "environments" provides a vital entry into fuller understanding of the particular ways (animist and otherwise) in which places and communities are made and performed.

This part concludes with an essay that encourages us to reflect on our own being in the world. David Abram develops his project (initiated in Abram 1997, 2010) of celebrating human embodiment and emplacement – our belonging in our animal bodies and in the social community that is the larger-than-human world. His contribution to challenging the "nature/culture" dichotomy involves honouring the absence of any place other than our bodies and our earthedness from which we can see reality. As among the Chewong, the eyes matter. That is, the delusion of a position outside of the flux of things, experiences and relations – a willed hyperseparated "objectivity" (to anticipate Val Plumwood's chapter) – is seen to have twisted our understanding and acting in the world. There have been benefits but now the dangers of our having sought disconnection are becoming evident. Abram's insistence that there is much that we cannot see is not, then, a romantic fancy but a programmatic experiment concerned with better knowing of "nature" and its culturing acts.

Together, in distinct ways, these chapters contest the universality of European-originated notions of a culture/nature dichotomy. Facts about alternatives to this structuring of important matters (and often of matter itself) can be taken to be challenges to think again. Experiments elsewhere (e.g. in Amazonia or Malaysia) indicate alternative possibilities that carry multiplying invitations to test what has seemed secure knowledge.

6

Beyond nature and culture

Philippe Descola

An anthropological textbook recently published in Cambridge states that "hardly anyone in social anthropology today claims to be a follower of Radcliffe-Brown" (Barnard 2000: 7). It would be hypocritical for a French anthropologist with a structuralist inclination to challenge this kind of opinion, seemingly quite common in the very country of birth of the great scholar whose name this lecture is honouring.[1] On the other hand, the present circumstance affords me perhaps the only appropriate opportunity for confessing that there is at least an aspect of Radcliffe-Brown's work which I found quite stimulating, although it led me astray for a while. Radcliffe-Brown's sociological theory of totemism inspired me some years ago when I was trying to make sense of the peculiar treatment of animals by Amazonian Indians: although actively hunted for food, or feared as predators, animals are nevertheless considered as persons with whom humans can, indeed should, interact according to social rules.

The standard model available at the time for conceptualizing relationships between humans and natural kinds was the Lévi-Straussian theory of totemism, that is, the idea that discontinuities between species function as a mental model for organizing social segmentation among humans. However, that was patently not the case in Amazonia where the differences between humans and non-humans are thought to be of degree, not of nature, thus echoing Radcliffe-Brown's depiction of totemism, in which, to quote his words, "the natural order enters into and becomes part of the social order" (Radcliffe-Brown 1952: 130). According to him, such a conflation is possible because the relations that the Australian Aborigines establish with natural objects and phenomena are similar to those that they establish between themselves, both sets of relations being predicated on their social structures. Here, then, was a straightforward idea that seemed to account quite well for the type of phenomena encountered in Amazonia. But since sociological totemism is not very common there, and is always found combined with forms of individual relationship with animals treated as persons, I constructed a conceptual hybrid, retaining Lévi-Strauss's theory of totemism for cases like Australia, and using

Radcliffe-Brown's theory of totemism to qualify what was in fact a non-totemic relation with natural kinds, which I christened, not very imaginatively, "animism". If, according to Lévi-Strauss, totemism uses discontinuities between natural kinds in order to map social relations between humans, my Radcliffe-Brownian hypothesis was that animism uses the elementary categories shaping social practice to map relations between humans and natural objects (Descola 1992, 1996a).

Unfortunately, I was quite wrong on both counts. Friendly critics first made me aware of what I should have seen by myself, namely that this too neat inversion in fact ratified the distinction between nature and society inherent in both the Lévi-Straussian and the Radcliffe-Brownian interpretations of totemism, thus not rendering justice to Amazonian cosmologies where such a distinction is irrelevant (for instance: Viveiros de Castro 1996; Ingold 2000). I also came to realize that this duality is equally meaningless in the case of totemism, at least Australian totemism, as I will try to show later. Paradoxically, this is a point of view which Lévi-Strauss endorses too, not in *Le Totémisme aujourd'hui*, of course, but in *La Pensée sauvage*, where he writes, by reference to the totemic system of the Menominee and the Chippewa of the Great Lakes, that, in this case, each totemic group has to be taken in itself, as "it tends to form a system, not any more with the other totemic groups, but with certain differential properties conceived as hereditary"; "thus, instead of two images, one social one natural ... what will obtain is a unique but fragmented socio-natural image" (Lévi-Strauss 1962: 154–5, my translation).

Finally it took me some more time to understand that my initial mistake stemmed from the fact that I had attempted to derive ontological properties ascribed to beings in the world, and hence the latter's distribution into categories, from relational processes materialized in institutions, instead of doing the reverse. True, I was in good company: ever since Durkheim, it has been the standard practice of anthropologists to grant an explanatory privilege to social forms. Necessary at the time to carve out for the emerging social sciences a domain of their own, this privilege made it inevitable that religious beliefs, conceptions of the person or cosmologies be ultimately explainable by the social patterns projected onto reality and by the structuring effect of these patterns on the activities thanks to which this reality is objectified and rendered meaningful. By deriving sociological structures from psychological imperatives, Lévi-Strauss was one of the few who tried to escape from this tendency. But the "laws of the mind" he evokes are so vague that this derivation could not but be inductive: except in the analysis of myths, Lévi-Strauss always starts from the study of institutions in order to proceed "towards the intellect", never the reverse. Now a system of relations cannot be understood independently from the elements it connects, provided these elements are taken not as interchangeable individuals or already institutionalized social units, but as entities that are endowed *ab initio* with specific properties that render them able or not to establish certain links between them. This is why I felt the urge to forsake the long-standing sociocentric prejudice and to surmise that social realities – that is, stabilized relational systems – are analytically subordinated to ontological realities – that is, the systems of properties that humans ascribe to beings.[2] My chapter will be devoted to trying to substantiate this heterodox opinion.[3]

My starting point rests on a philosophical intuition corroborated by ethnography, combined with a thought experiment for which I can find no justification except that it bears interesting anthropological fruits. I borrow the intuition from Husserl's idea that if humans try to experience any form of non-self by leaving out of the account the instituted

world and everything it means for them, the only resources that they can avail themselves of are their body and their intentionality (Husserl 1959: 61–4). These twin assets, which I prefer to call physicality (in the sense of dispositions enabling a physical action) and interiority (in the sense of self-reflexive inwardness), are not Western constructs generated by the marriage of Greek philosophy with Christian theology and subsequently raised under the rigorous ferule of a long line of Cartesian tutors. According to developmental psychology, the awareness of this duality is probably innate and specific to the human species (Bloom 2004), a point confirmed by ethnographic and historical accounts: for despite the known diversity of conceptions of the person, notions of physicality and interiority seem to be universally present, although with an infinite variety of modalities of connections and interactions between the two planes. A proof of this would be that there is no known case of a conception of the ordinary living human person that would be based on interiority alone – let us call it a mind without a body – or on physicality alone – a body without a mind – or not at least, in the latter case, until the advent of materialist theories of consciousness of the late twentieth century. Rather than reducing the distinction between interiority and physicality to an ethnocentric prejudice, one should instead apprehend the specific forms this distinction was given in Europe by philosophical and theological theories as local variants of a more general system of elementary contrasts that can be studied comparatively.

The thought experiment derives from the initial intuition. If we agree that every human is aware of being a combination of interiority and physicality, then one can imagine how an entirely hypothetic subject, devoid of any previous information about the world, might use this equipment to chart his environment through a process of identification. By identification, I mean the elementary mechanism through which this subject will detect differences and similarities between himself and the objects in the world by inferring analogies and distinctions of appearance and behaviour between what he experiences as characteristic of his own self and the attributes he ascribes to the entities which surround him. And since the only tools he can rely upon are his interiority and his physicality, his patterning of the world will be based upon the selective attribution or denial of these attributes to other existing things. The range of identifications based on the interplay of interiority and physicality is thus quite limited: when confronted with an as yet unspecified *alter*, whether human or non-human, our hypothetical subject can surmise either that this object possesses elements of physicality and interiority analogous to his, and this I call totemism; or that this object's interiority and physicality are entirely distinct from his own, and this I call analogism; or that the object has a similar interiority and a different physicality, and this I call animism; or that the object is devoid of interiority but possesses a similar kind of physicality, and this I call naturalism. These formulae define four types of ontologies, that is of systems of distributions of properties among existing objects in the world, that in turn provide anchoring points for socio-cosmic forms of aggregation and conceptions of self and non-self.

Let us now examine some properties of these four modes of identification. Animism as a continuity of souls and a discontinuity of bodies is quite common in South and North America, in Siberia and in some parts of Southeast Asia where peoples endow plants, animals and other elements of their physical environment with a subjectivity and establish with these entities all sorts of personal relations, whether of friendship, exchange, seduction, or hostility. In these animic systems, humans and most non-humans are conceived

as having the same type of interiority, and it is because of this common subjectivity that animals and spirits are said to possess social characteristics: they live in villages, abide by kinship rules and ethical codes, engage in ritual activity and barter goods. However, the reference shared by most beings in the world is humanity as a general condition, not man as a species. In other words, humans and all the kinds of non-humans with which humans interact each have different physicalities, in that their identical internal essences are lodged in different types of bodies, often described locally as clothing that can be donned or discarded, the better to underline their autonomy from the interiorities which inhabit them. Non-humans see themselves as humans because they are said to believe that they share with the latter the same kind of soul, and yet they are unlike humans because their bodies are different. Now, as Viveiros de Castro pointed out in the case of Amazonia, these specific clothes often induce contrasted perspectives on the world, in that the physiological and perceptual constraints proper to a type of body impose to each class of being a specific position and point of view in the general ecology of relations (1996: 117). Human and non-human persons have an integrally "cultural" view of their life sphere because they share the same kind of interiority, but the world that all these entities apprehend and use is different, for each employs distinct bodily equipment.

These differences of bodies are morphological, and thus behavioural, rather than substantial. This is hardly surprising as animic ontologies probably borrow part of their operational schema from the model of the trophic chain. Everywhere in the animic archipelago, one finds the same idea that vitality, energy and fecundity constantly circulate between organisms thanks to the capture, the exchange and the consuming of flesh. This constant recycling of tissues and fluids, analogous to the nutritional interdependence in the synecological process, is a clear indication that all these beings who ingest one another cannot be distinguished by the substances they are made of. And this is why, in animic systems, dietary prescriptions and prohibitions are less designed to favour or to prevent the mixing of reputedly heterogeneous substances – as is typically the case in Chinese or Galenic medicine, for instance – than to favour or to prevent the transfer from the prescribed or the proscribed species of certain anatomical features or of certain traits of behaviour reputedly derived from these features. By contrast, the place that each species occupies in the trophic chain is precisely determined by its organic equipment, since this conditions both the milieu accessible to the species and, through the organs of locomotion and of acquisition of food, the type of resources that can be tapped in this milieu. The form of bodies thus amounts to a bundle of differentiated functions; it is the entire biological toolkit that allows a species to occupy a certain habitat and to lead there the type of distinctive lifestyle by which it is identified.

Although many species share the same or a similar interiority, each one of them thus possesses its own physicality under the guise of a particular ethogram that will determine its own *Umwelt*, in the sense of Jakob von Uexküll: that is, the salient features of its environment are those that are geared to its specific bodily tools as instruments of locomotion, of reproduction, of defence, of acquiring food (Uexküll 1956). This is why metamorphosis plays such an important role in animic systems. For metamorphosis is what allows interactions on a common ground between entities with entirely different bodies, when animals and plants reveal their interiority under a human form in order to communicate with humans – in dreams and visions generally, or when humans – usually shamans and ritual specialists – don animal clothing in order to visit animal communities.

Thus, metamorphosis is not an unveiling of the humanity of animal persons, or a way to disguise the humanity of human persons; it is the culminating stage of a relation where everyone, by modifying the position of observation to which he has been confined by his original physicality, strives to coincide with the point of view according to which he presumes that the other term of the relation apprehends himself: a human will not see an animal as he perceives it normally, but as the animal perceives itself, as a human; and a human is seen as he does not perceive himself ordinarily, but as he wishes to be perceived, as an animal. It is an anamorphosis, then, rather than a metamorphosis.

This exchange of perspectives immediately brings to mind what Viveiros de Castro calls "perspectivism", a concept by which he refers to the positional quality of some Amerindian cosmologies; in such cosmologies:

> humans, in normal conditions, see humans as humans, the animals as animals and the spirits (when they see them) as spirits; the (predatory) animals and the spirits see humans as animals (preys), while the (game) animals see humans as spirits or as (predatory) animals. By contrast, animals and spirits see themselves as humans. (Viveiros de Castro 1996: 117, my translation)

Is perspectivism the normal epistemic regime of animism or is it a particular case of it? I favour the latter option for a variety of reasons. In, so to say, "standard" animism, humans say that non-humans see themselves as humans because, in spite of their different forms, they share a similar interiority. To this, perspectivism adds a clause: humans say that some non-humans do not see humans as humans, but as non-humans. It boils down to a simple matter of logical possibility: if humans see themselves with a human form and see non-humans with a non human form, then non-humans who see themselves with a human form should see humans with a non human form. However, this inversion of the points of view which properly characterizes perspectivism is far from being a general feature of all animic systems (it is, for example, conspicuously absent among the Jivaroan Achuar who triggered my initial interest in animism). The most common situation in standard animic regimes is one in which humans just say that non-humans see themselves as humans. But how do non-humans see humans if perspectivism is not operative? The answer that can be inferred from ethnographic accounts is that they see them as humans. This stems from the fact that animals (and the spirits who act as their representatives) generally adopt a human appearance when they want to establish a relationship with humans, an attitude that they certainly would not adopt if they thought that humans were predatory animals. For, if I treat a monkey, whom I think perceives himself as a human, according to the prescribed behaviour between brothers-in-law (as the Achuar do), then I have to expect from him that he will treat me in the same manner, that is in "human code", not in "jaguar code" or in "anaconda code". Otherwise there would be no point in pretending that he is a brother-in-law. True, a non-human could possibly see a human under a non human form and nevertheless surmise that this human sees himself as a human; but this would imply, by reflexive conversion, that the non-human is himself conscious of not being human in spite of the human form under which he perceives himself, a rather implausible hypothesis and one which is not warranted by ethnography.

A new question then arises: if the standard situation in an animic regime is that non-humans see humans as humans, how can they distinguish themselves from humans since

they also perceive themselves as humans? The only answer supported by ethnography is that non-humans distinguish themselves from humans (and between themselves) by the behavioural habits determined by the biological equipment proper to each species, habits which subsist in their bodies even when they perceive them as human. For bodies that might be anatomically similar, nevertheless differ by the dispositions that are lodged within them (such as gregariousness or solitary habits, being diurnal or nocturnal, evasive or predatory ...) as well as by the way they present themselves in motion to the gaze of others (through ornamentation, gestures, the types of weapons and tools used, the languages spoken ...). In other words, the very criteria that an Amerindian would use to distinguish himself from members of a neighbouring tribe, are also used by animals (according to the Indians) to distinguish their species-specific human form (as they perceive it) from the human form of humans. As Viveiros de Castro himself states, "perspectivism is an ethno-epistemological corollary of animism" (1996: 122). By postulating the inverted symmetry of points of view, perspectivism ingeniously exploits the possibility opened by the difference of physicalities on which animism is predicated. But this is a development that many peoples of the animic archipelago have not attempted, perhaps because it introduces an additional level of complexity in a positional ontology where it is already extremely difficult to assign stable identities to the different kinds of beings with whom one interacts daily.

Let us turn now to the second mode of identification, where some beings in the world share sets of physical and moral attributes that seem to cut across the boundaries of species. I call it totemism, but in a very different sense from the one which has been attached to the term since Lévi-Strauss attempted to debunk the "totemic illusion". For totemism is more than a universal classificatory device; it is also, and perhaps foremost, a very original ontology which is best exemplified in Aboriginal Australia. There, the main totem of a group of humans, most often an animal or a plant, and all the human and non-human beings that are affiliated to it, are said to share certain general attributes of physical conformation, substance, temperament and behaviour by virtue of a common origin emplaced in the land. This explains famous counterintuitive statements which hardly fit within the Lévi-Straussian framework, such as the one reported by Spencer and Gillen who, when showing to an Aranda man of the kangaroo totem a photograph they had taken of him, received this response: "This one is exactly like me; as is a kangaroo", leading them to comment "every man considers his totem ... as the same thing as himself" (Spencer & Gillen 1899: 202).

Now, as C. G. von Brandenstein showed in his thorough analysis of the meaning of Australian totem terms, these attributes that cross-cut species boundaries are not derived from what is improperly called the eponym entity, since the word designating the totem in many cases is not the name of a species, that is, a biological taxon, but rather the name of an abstract property which is present in this species as well as in all the beings subsumed under it in a totemic grouping (1982: 54). For instance, the Nungar of Southwest Australia had two totemic moieties, respectively called *maarnetj*, which can be translated as "the catcher", and *waardar*, which means "the watcher", these two terms also being used to designate the totems of these moieties, the White Cockatoo and the Crow (Brandenstein 1977). Here, the names of the totemic classes are terms that denote properties that are also used to designate the totemic species, and not the reverse, that is, names of zoological taxa from which would be inferred the typical attributes of the totemic

classes. It is thus difficult to maintain, at least for Australia, the classificatory interpretation of totemism, since the basic difference is between aggregates of attributes that are common to humans and non-humans within classes designated by abstract terms, not between animal and vegetable species that would provide naturally, by their manifest discontinuities of morphology and behaviour, an analogical template that could be used so as to structure social discontinuities.

And these moral and physical attributes are usually defined with precision. In the case of the Nungar, for instance, humans belonging to the moiety of "the catcher" are said to have a light brown skin, round faces and limbs, curly hair and to be endowed with an impulsive and passionate temperament, while members of the moiety of "the watcher" are said to have a dark and leaden skin, to be very hairy and of a stocky build, with small hands and feet, and to be vindictive, sullen and secretive. Such qualities are not directly inferred from the observation of the White Cockatoo or the Crow; they express, in the domain of moral and physical properties ascribed to humans, repertoires of more abstract, contrasted predicates that these two emblematic species are supposed to express and embody much more clearly than the secondary totem species that are subsumed under them. The two birds are thus prototypes of a kind, not primarily because they are morphologically salient, but because they are the best exemplars of their respective classes in that they allow inferences of properties derived from certain traits of their behaviour and appearance, however tenuous these may be.

As ontologies, animism and totemism evidence contrasting formal features. In animic systems, the continuity of relations between humans and non-humans that is allowed by their common interiority overrides the discontinuity introduced by their physical difference. This explains the relational nature of animic cosmologies and the fact that the identities of human and non-human persons are defined by the positions they occupy in relation to one another. By contrast, Australian totemism is a symmetrical structure characterized by a twofold identity internal to each class of beings – ontological identity of the human and non-human components of the class by virtue of their sharing elements of interiority and physicality, and identity of the relations between them, whether of origin, affiliation, similarity or inherence to the class. Totemism thus places on an equal footing interdependent terms and relations, a motive for puzzlement among anthropologists, and the reason why they have interpreted the phenomenon by favouring either the identity of terms – in the case of Frazer and Levy-Bruhl, for instance – or the homology of relations, as Boas or Lévi-Strauss did.

The third mode of identification, which I call analogism, is predicated on the idea that all the entities in the world are fragmented into a multiplicity of essences, forms and substances separated by minute intervals, often ordered along a graded scale, such as in the Great Chain of Being that served as the main cosmological model during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. This disposition allows for a recombination of the initial contrasts into a dense network of analogies linking the intrinsic properties of each autonomous entity present in the world. What is most striking in such systems is the cleverness with which all the resemblances liable to provide a basis for inferences are actively sought out, especially as these apply to crucial domains of life, particularly the prevention and treatment of illness and misfortune. The obsession with analogies becomes a dominating feature, as in ancient China where, according to Granet, "society, man, the world, are objects of a global knowledge constituted by the sole use of analogy" ([1934] 1968:

297). However, analogy is here only a consequence of the necessity to organize a world composed of a multiplicity of independent elements, such as the Chinese *wan wou*, the 10,000 essences. Analogy becomes possible and thinkable only if the terms that it conjoins are initially distinguished, if the power to detect similarities between things is applied to singularities that are, by this process, partially extracted from their original isolation. Analogism can be seen as a hermeneutic dream of completeness and totalization which proceeds from a dissatisfaction: admitting that all the components of the world are separated by tiny discontinuities, it entertains the hope of weaving these weakly differentiated elements into a canvas of affinities and attractions which would have all the appearances of continuity. But the ordinary state of the world is indeed a multiplicity of reverberating differences, and resemblance is only the expected means to render this fragmented world intelligible and tolerable. This multiplication of the elementary pieces of the world echoing within each of its parts – including humans, divided into numerous components partially located outside of their bodies – is a distinctive feature of analogic ontologies and the best clue for identifying them. Apart from the paradigmatic case of China, this type of ontology is quite common in parts of Asia, in West Africa, or among the native communities of Mesoamerica and the Andes.

The last mode of identification, naturalism, corresponds to the prevalent ontology of modernity. Naturalism is not only the idea that nature exists, that certain entities owe their existence and development to a principle that is extraneous both to chance and to the effects of human will. It does not qualify only the advent, conventionally situated in the seventeenth century, of a specific ontological domain, a place of order and necessity where nothing happens without a cause. Naturalism also implies a counterpart, a world of artifice and free will the complexity of which has progressively emerged under the scrutiny of analysts, until it rendered necessary, in the course of the nineteenth century, the institution of special sciences which were given the task of stabilizing its boundaries and characteristics: that is, the diversity of expressions of the creativity of humans as producers of signs, norms and goods. Now, if one considers naturalism – the coexistence of a single unifying nature and a multiplicity of cultures – not as the all-embracing template that allows us to objectify any reality, but as one among other modes of identification, then its contrasting properties appear more clearly. For instance, naturalism inverts the ontological premises of animism since, instead of claiming an identity of soul and a difference of bodies, it is predicated upon a discontinuity of interiorities and a material continuity.[4] What, for us, distinguishes humans from non-humans is the mind, the soul, subjectivity, a moral conscience, language and so forth, in the same way as human groups are distinguished from one another by a collective internal disposition that used to be called *Volksgeist* but is more familiar to us now under its modern label of "culture". On the other hand, we are all aware, especially since Darwin, that the physical dimension of humans locates them within a material continuum wherein they do not stand out as singularities. The ontological discrimination that excludes from personhood non-human organisms that are biologically very close to us is a clear sign of the privilege granted in our own mode of identification to criteria based on the expression of a purported interiority (language, self-consciousness or theory of mind) rather than those based on material continuity.

I want to make clear that these four modes of identification are not mutually exclusive. Each human may activate any of them according to circumstances, but one of them is

always dominant at a specific time and place in that it gives to persons who acquired skills and knowledge within a same community of practice the main framework through which they perceive and interpret reality. It is this framework that I call an ontology. Now, each ontology also prefigures a specific type of collective more particularly appropriate to the gathering within a common destiny of the kinds of being that this ontology distinguishes. By collective, a concept I borrow from Latour, I mean a way of assembling humans and non-humans in a network of specific relations, by contrast with the traditional notion of society, which only applies, strictly speaking, to the subset of human subjects, thus detached from the fabrics of the relations that they maintain with their non-human environment (Latour 1991).

Taken in that sense, a collective corresponds only very partially to what we usually call a social system. If one takes seriously the various conceptions that peoples have forged of their institutions in the course of history, we have to admit that they seldom isolate the sphere of sociality as a separate regime of existence and norms concerning humans alone. One had to wait for the maturity of naturalism, in the nineteenth century, for a specialized body of disciplines to emerge which would define sociality as its main object of study and attempt as a consequence to detect and objectify this field of practice everywhere, without paying much attention to local conceptions, as if the content and frontiers of this domain were invariably identical to those that we decreed. Now, far from being a founding prerequisite from which everything else is derived, sociality proceeds rather from the process of collecting and assembling into a common whole that each mode of identification predetermines. Thus, the property of being social is not what explains, but what must be explained. If one admits this, if one accepts that the major part of humankind has not, until very recently, made stark distinctions between what is natural and what is social, nor considered that the treatment of humans and the treatment of non-humans belong to entirely different spheres, then one must apprehend the different modes of socio-cosmic organization as a question of patterns of distribution of beings into collectives: who or what is assembled with whom or what, in what way, and for what purpose?

I can only offer a very brief sketch of this patterning and I shall begin with animism. In such systems, all the classes of beings endowed with an interiority similar to that of humans reputedly live in collectives that possess the same kind of structure and properties: they all have chiefs, shamans, rituals, dwellings, techniques, artefacts, they assemble and quarrel, provide for their subsistence and marry according to rules. But these collectives, which are all integrally social and cultural, are also distinguished from one another by the fact that their members have different morphologies and behaviour. Each collective is equivalent to a sort of tribe-species that establishes with other tribes-species relations of sociability of the same type as those that are held legitimate within the given human collective which ascribes its internal organization, its system of values and its mode of life to the collectives of non-humans with which it interacts. The so-called natural and supernatural domains are thus peopled by collectives with which human collectives maintain relations according to norms that are deemed common to all. For although humans and non-humans may exchange perspectives, they also and above all exchange signs, that is, indications that they understand each other in their practical interactions. And these signs can only be interpreted by all parties concerned if they are predicated on common institutions that legitimate them and give them a meaning, thus warranting that the misunderstandings in interspecific communication will be reduced to a minimum.

This is why all the isomorphous collectives of humans and non-humans take as their model a specific human collective.

Although the concept of species provides the template for animic collectives, it is a species which hardly corresponds to the definition of modern systematics. True, in both cases, it amounts to a collection of individuals that conform to a type. However, the natural sciences do not take into account the point of view of the members of a species in the characterization of its attributes and taxonomic boundaries, except perhaps in the basic form of mutual identification that a community of reproduction implies. In the naturalist regime, then, the human species is the only one that has the capacity to objectify itself thanks to the reflexive privilege granted by its interiority, while the members of all the other species remain ignorant of the fact that they belong to an abstract set which has been isolated by the external point of view of the systematician according to his own classificatory criteria. By contrast, the members of an animic species are reputedly conscious that they form a collective of their own, with distinctive attributes of form and behaviour. And this collective self-awareness is reinforced by the notion that the members of other collectives apprehend them with a point of view different from their own, a point of view which they must appropriate in order to experience themselves as fully distinct. In the naturalist classification, species A is distinguished from species B because species C says so in virtue of its human rational capacity, while in animic identification, I experience myself as a member of species A, not only because I differ from members of species B by certain manifest physical features, but also because the very existence of species B allows me to know I am different since its members hold of me a different point of view from the one I hold of myself. The perspective of the putative classifier must then be absorbed by the classified in order for the latter to see himself as entirely specific.

I will not expatiate on the sociological formula of naturalism, since it is the one that is most familiar to us and that we deem, mistakenly, to be universal: humans are distributed within collectives differentiated by their languages, beliefs and institutions – what we call cultures – which exclude everything that exists independently from them, namely nature and artefacts. The paradigm of collectives is here human society, *by contrast* to an anomic nature. Humans associate freely, they elaborate rules and conventions that they can choose to infringe, they transform their environment and share tasks in the procurement of their subsistence, they create signs and values that they exchange; in sum, they do everything that non-human animals do not do. And it is against the background of this fundamental difference that the distinctive properties attributed to human collectives stand out; as Hobbes says with his robust concision: "no covenant with beasts". It is true that social evolutionism has introduced graduations into this original separation from the world of non-humans, graduations that subsist today as prejudices: certain "cultures" are said to be closer to nature (it has now become a positive trait) because they hardly modify their environment and make do without a heavy institutional apparatus. But no one, even among the most stubborn racists, would be prepared to say that these societies borrow their institutions from animals.

While animism and naturalism take human society as general models of collectives, they do it very differently. Animism is extremely liberal in its attribution of sociality to non-humans, while naturalism reserves the privilege of it to everything that is not deemed natural. In the case of animism, a Radcliffe-Brownian anthropologist would say that nature is conceived by analogy with culture since the majority of beings in the world

reputedly live in a cultural regime, and it is mainly through physical attributes – the morphology of bodies and the behaviours associated with them – that collectives are distinguished from one another. In naturalism, by contrast, common philosophical wisdom has it that culture is conceived as what is differentiated from nature; it is qualified by default. Although both conceptions may appear anthropocentric, only naturalism is really so, since non-humans are tautologically defined by their lack of humanity. It is exclusively in humans and their attributes that the paradigm of moral dignity denied to other beings is held to reside. No such thing can be said of animism, since non-humans share the same condition as humans, the latter claiming as their only privilege the ascription to non-humans of institutions that are similar to their own so as to establish with them relations based on shared norms of behaviour. Animism is thus better defined as anthropogenic, in that it contents itself with deriving from humans only what is necessary in order for non-humans to be treated like humans.

The question of totemic collectives is more complex. Traditionally, totemism has been conceptualized as a form of social organization in which humans are distributed in interlocking groups that borrow their distinctive characteristics from the realm of natural kinds, either because these groups are supposed to share certain attributes with a set of non-humans, or because they take as models for patterning their internal differences the contrasts between eponymous species. Now, this broadly sociocentric definition has the disadvantage of introducing an analytical dichotomy between social categories and natural categories that appears to be absent from the ontological premises of those paradigmatic totemists that Australian Aboriginal people are. It is more appropriate in that case to say that humans and non-humans are distributed *jointly* in collectives (totemic classes) which are isomorphous and complementary, by contrast with animism wherein humans and non-humans are distributed *separately* in collectives (tribes-species) which are also isomorphous, but which remain autonomous in relation to each other. To return to the example of the Nungar, in the moiety of "the getter" iconically represented by the White Cockatoo, one does find cockatoos, as well as the human half of the Nungar tribe, but one finds also eagles, pelicans, snakes, mosquitoes, whales; in short an apparently ill-assorted aggregate of species that cannot be matched with any of the groupings of organisms that the environment spontaneously offers to observation. By contrast, an animic collective such as the Achuar tribe of the Upper Amazon is exclusively composed of achuar-persons, while among their non-human neighbours, one finds only peccary-persons in the peccary tribe, tapir-persons in the tapir tribe, toucan-persons in the toucan tribe. If the structure and properties of animic collectives thus derive from those ascribed to human collectives, the structure of totemic collectives is defined by the differentials between bundles of physical and moral attributes that are denoted by non-human emblems (the species illustrating the totems), while the properties ascribed to the members of these collectives do not proceed directly from humans or from non-humans, but rather from a prototypical class of predicates, embodied in Australia in the Beings of Dreamtime, which pre-exist their actualization in specific beings. Although animic collectives differ from one another because of the monospecific recruitment of their members, they are homogeneous as regards their principles of organization: for the Makuna of Colombia, the tapir tribe has the same type of leader, shaman and ritual system as has the peccary tribe, the toucan tribe and, of course, the Makuna tribe (Århem 1996). This is not so with totemic collectives, which are also all different as regards the

composition of their members, but which are furthermore hybrid in their contents and heterogeneous in their principles of composition.

This is particularly the case in Australia where there exists a great variety of totemic groupings and where humans can belong simultaneously to several of them. Here again, the contrast is notable with animic collectives which are, on the contrary, predicated on a species-specific physicality, since the affiliation to each "society" is based on the fact that all its members share the same physical appearance, the same habitat, the same diet and the same mode of reproduction. It is in animism, not in totemism, that the biological species provides a model for the composition of collectives. And this is so because animic collectives, like biological species, are never integrated into a functional whole at a higher level: above the achuar tribe-species, the toucan tribe-species, the peccary tribe-species, there is nothing in common, except this abstract predicate that anthropologists who try to make sense of these arrangements call "culture". No such thing with totemism, where the integrative whole formed by the juxtaposition of the different totemic classes cannot be represented on the basis of the groupings that the natural world proposes: the only available model would be the species, since the genus is a taxonomic fiction, but the species is precisely not liable to be decomposed in contrastive segments that would be analogous to totemic classes. While animism and naturalism take human society as the paradigm of collectives, totemism thus mixes in hybrid sets humans and non-humans that use one another in order to produce social linkage, generic identity and attachment to places. But it does so by fragmenting the constitutive units so that the properties of each of them become complementary and their assemblage dependent upon the differentials that they present. Such a system is not driven by a Lévi-Straussian classificatory logic nor by a Durkheimian sociocentric logic, but by a principle that may be called cosmogenic. As animism is anthropogenic because it borrows from humans what is necessary for non-humans to be treated like humans, so totemism is cosmogenic in that it derives from sets of cosmic attributes – that is, which cannot be referred to a particular species – everything that is needed for some humans and non-humans to be included within a single collective.

The forms of collective allowed by the analogic mode of identification are not so specific: in this kind of ontology, the components of the world are so fragmented into a plurality of elements and determinations that their association can take many different guises. In spite of this diversity, however, humans and non-humans always appear as constitutive elements of a wider collective, coextensive with the world: cosmos and society become truly indistinguishable, whatever the types of internal segmentation that such a totality requires in order to remain efficient. For the analogic collective is always divided into interdependent constitutive units which are structured according to a logic of segmentary nesting: lineages, moieties, castes, descent groups prevail here and expand the connections of humans with other beings from the infraworld to the heavens. Although the exterior of the collective is not entirely ignored, it remains an "out-world" where disorder reigns, a periphery that may be feared, despised, or predestined to join the central core as a new segment that will fit in the slot that has been allocated to it long before: such was the fate of the Amazonian savages bordering the Tawantinsuyu, who, without ever having been subjected to the Lords of Cuzco, belonged to the Anti division of the Inca quadripartition.

Analogic collectives are not necessarily empires or states; some of them are weak in numbers and ignore political stratification and disparities of wealth. They all have

in common, however, that their parts are ordered hierarchically, if only at a symbolic level. The hierarchical distribution is often redoubled within each segment, delimitating subsets which are in the same unequal relation one to the other as the encompassing units. The classical illustration is the Hindu caste system where the general schema of encompassment is repeated within each of the successive levels of subordination: in the sub-castes composing the castes, in the clans composing the sub-castes, in the lineal groups composing the clans. The same structure is found in the organization into endogamous sections, or *kalpul*, of the Tzotzil and Tzeltal of Chiapas, a sort of segment that can hardly be called a moiety, in that certain communities have three or five of them, but that has all the characteristics of it. The *kalpul* are social and cosmic segments mixing humans and non-humans, as well as corporate units exerting a control on land tenure and on the individuals incorporated under their jurisdiction. When there are only two sections, which is the most frequent case, their demarcation follows the gradient of the territory at the level of the village, so that the dominant moiety on the ritual, symbolic and demographic planes is located in the upper part, associated with the mountains and the autochthonous divinities that have their abode there, while the lower moiety is linked to the lowlands, to the abundance of crops, and to the world of demons and whites. The demographic and ceremonial preponderance of the upper moiety is but an expression of a more general pattern of segmentation of the cosmos in pairs of complementary elements, one said to be "elder", the other "younger": each "elder" mountain is thus flanked by a "younger" mountain, each "elder" cavern by a "younger" one, and so on, from fountains to the statues of saints in the village church.

To sum up, the analogic collective is unique, divided into hierarchized segments and in almost exclusive relation with itself, by contrast with the egalitarian and monospecific collectives of animism, and the egalitarian and heterogeneous collectives of totemism that are all bound to enter into relation with each other. It is thus self-sufficient, in that it contains within itself all the relations and determinations that are necessary to its existence and adequate functioning, by contrast with the totemic collective, which is indeed autonomous at the level of its ontological identity, but which requires other collectives of the same kind in order to become functional. For, in an analogic collective, the hierarchy of the elementary segments is contrastive: it is defined exclusively by reciprocal positions. And this is why the segments do not constitute independent collectives as the totemic classes do, since the latter draw from within themselves, from specific sites and prototypical precursors, the physical and moral foundations of their distinctiveness. The moiety of the East only exists because it complements the moiety of the West, while the totemic group of the Kangaroo, even if it may need the totemic group of the Goanna in many situations, draws from the sole circumstances of its emergence the legitimacy of its absolute singularity.

The segments of an analogic collective are thus thoroughly heteronomical in that they only acquire a meaning and a function by reference to the autonomous whole that they jointly form. It is true that animic collectives also admit a degree of heteronomy, but of an entirely different kind since the external specification obtains through a series of identifications to individual and intersubjective alterities of various origins, not through an overdetermination of the elements by the structure which binds them. The enemy whose alterity I absorb by capturing his head or consuming his body proceeds indeed from a different collective; however, his capacity to singularize me is not linked to traits that

would be specific to his own collective, but simply to his position of exteriority regarding myself. The members of the tribe-species A differentiate themselves from the members of the tribe-species B, C or D because they perceive themselves as distinctive entities through the perspective that these other tribe-species activate upon them in the course of certain codified interactions. This is why, in the case of animism, there is no predetermination as to the type of collective liable to serve this function of external specification: it may be, according to context, individuals proceeding from one or various tribe-species of animals, from one or various tribe-species of spirits, from one or various tribe-species of humans, or from a combination of all of these. As for the properly physical incorporation of an external point of view, it becomes an occasional luxury, reserved to a few animic collectives only, as is actual cannibalism the easiest means for achieving that end. In an analogic collective, by contrast, the members of segment A differentiate themselves collectively from members of segment B in that A and B are elements of the hierarchical structure which encompasses them all; in philosophical language, one would say that their positions and relations are the product of an expressive causality. The dependence of the analogic segments on the collective that defines them is thus constitutive of their mode of being; with elements that are intrinsically internal to the collective, they must strive to produce an illusion of exteriority.

In a famous presidential address to the Royal Anthropological Institute, Radcliffe-Brown remarked that "We do not observe a 'culture', since that word denotes, not any concrete reality, but an abstraction" (1940, 1952: 190). Quite true. But the same can be said of most anthropological concepts. We do not observe a "social structure" either, or a kinship system, or the mysterious entelechy that Durkheimians call a *représentation collective*. We only observe what we take as instantiations of what we believe are structured patterns of behaviour and recurrent patterns of thought. Understanding the nature and distribution of these patterns has been our concern for almost a century and a half, whatever our differences as to the level of reality on which they should be found. If, as I surmise, the ambition of anthropology is to contribute with its own methods to the task of elucidating the manner in which humans engage with their surroundings, how they identify and select some properties of the world for their use, and how they transform it by establishing, with elements of it and among themselves, constant or occasional relations of a remarkable but not infinite diversity, then, to pursue such an endeavour, we need to draw up the chart of these relations, to elicit their modes of compatibility and incompatibility, and to examine how they are actualized in ways of being that are immediately distinctive. I found that this task is much easier if one looks at differences rather than resemblances. Not the obvious differences between what we call cultures, the bread and butter of social constructionism, nor the unique mega-difference between humans and non-humans that is used to authenticate all other differences. The differences that count are those that accrue from the network of discontinuities of form, matter, behaviour or function that are offered to our grasp by the movement of the world. Discontinuities that are sometimes straightforward, sometimes barely outlined; discontinuities that we can recognize or ignore, emphasize or minimize, actualize or leave as potentialities; discontinuities which form the framework on which are hooked our relations with what Merleau-Ponty aptly called "the associate bodies" (1964a: 13). I found, in short, that there was no need to presuppose some original fault lines in this network of discontinuities, in particular one that would separate the realm of nature from the abode of speaking

creatures; I found that, however useful this constitutional division may have been in triggering the accomplishments of modernity, it has now outlived its moral and epistemological efficiency, thus making way for what I believe will be a new exciting period of intellectual and political turmoil.

NOTES

1. This chapter is a reprint of the Radcliffe-Brown Lecture I gave at the British Academy in 2005, which was initially published in *Proceedings of the British Academy* 139 (2006), 137–55.
2. True, some non-human species also ascribe properties (at least relational and behavioural features) to humans and other non-humans; but before they can be included in a general theory of ontologies, a lot of ground remains to be covered.
3. I am most grateful to Tim Ingold and Peter Marshall for their insightful comments on an early draft of the original lecture and for their suggestions of stylistic amendments.
4. This is a point that Viveiros de Castro was the first to make (1996: 129).

7

The materiality of life: revisiting the anthropology of nature in Amazonia

Laura Rival

Animism, whatever this term means after almost twenty years of renewed debate,[1] offers an excellent standpoint from which to measure or evaluate how far we have moved towards theorizing nature as locally produced in Amazonian settings. With the benefit of temporal depth, we are now in a better position to appreciate how the academic understanding of animism has evolved over time, and, with it, the use of a number of other key concepts, such as agency, humanity and intentionality (Rival 2012).[2] I am struck by the extent to which analyses of ethnographic materials have, in less than one generation, converged towards a peculiar form of theoretical consensus regarding the discursive production of nature as "after nature". Thinking in terms of "after nature" or "post-humanism" has often led to a more or less happy marriage between the metaphysics of being and the primacy of direct experience, as well as to the avoidance of scientific and objective attempts to understand the world on the ground that such "naturalist" analyses necessarily distort or subvert indigenous ways of knowing (Bird-David 1999; Descola 2005). Eduardo Viveiros de Castro (2004: 468) puts it bluntly: whereas for Amerindian shamans to know is to personify, moderns need to objectify – or de-subjectify – in order to know. Animist worlds, where there are no "things", for "something" is always also "someone", cannot be understood with analytical tools designed to differentiate "knowledge" from "belief".[3] Viveiros de Castro goes further: "A thing or a state of affairs that is not amenable to subjectification ... is shamanistically uninteresting" (Viveiros de Castro 2004: 469–70). Would it be that apart from their metaphysics, and the potential virtualities with which they enrich our repertoire of non-representational ontologies, Amerindian socio-cultural systems have nothing to contribute to anthropological knowledge? What has happened to the Buberian contrast between I–thou and I–it that initially informed perspectivism? Has it led to a new form of dualism that radically differentiates the ontology of the jaguar-shaman-warrior-hunter from all other ways of knowing and being? To what extent do we need to territorialize modes of knowing? On what basis should we define the incommensurability of worldviews?

In his essay on the meaning of life, Tim Ingold (2006) contrasts the dualist thinking of scientists, and modern people in general, with the monist approach of indigenous peoples whose animic ontology he sees as one version of the ontology of dwelling. Ingold's interest in animism starts with a Piagetian question: why do we see lifeless things and events as alive? For Ingold, the only valid way of dissolving the culture/nature dualism is to write ethnographies that restore the original truth and primacy of direct experience. In the phenomenological approach he defends, the subject knows the world through immersion. Life and social relations, like understanding, are emergent properties of interactions between organisms. Given that life is the emergent property of a relational system in which everything is in perpetual flux and movement, it would be wrong to differentiate, as Western scientists do, between organic and non-organic life: "The sun is alive because of the way it moves through the firmament, but so too are the trees because of the particular ways their boughs sway or their leaves flutter in the wind, and because of the sounds they make in doing so" (*ibid.*: 27).

Ingold contrasts this generic animist-cum-dwelling construct with various scientific approaches. To the cognitive psychologist, the author simply says that animism has nothing to do with an innate, unconscious and evolutionary predisposition to act as if inanimate objects were actually alive. He then reminds the plant scientist, bent on attributing life to the tree "because it is a cellular organism whose growth is fuelled by photosynthetic reactions and regulated by DNA in the cell nucleus", that the tree is perceived to be alive because its branches move in the wind. Addressing himself to the cultural anthropologist, he stresses that the relational person does not behave "according to the directions of cultural models or cognitive schemata installed inside his or her head", for action and perception unfold "within a nexus of intertwined relationships". Finally, Ingold reminds the post-humanist sociologist and the material culture theorist that their abstract world is "unbreathable" (Ingold 2007b: 11). His musings on the properties of animation in relation to life nevertheless share a great deal with the conceptual project attempted by Bennett (2010) in *Vibrant Matter*. To both authors, Western dualism must give way to a heterogeneous monism. As the distinction between object and subject gets blurred, "nature" dissipates in an encompassing "environment" composed of humans, non-human persons, material objects and the dynamic relations between all these constitutive elements. The objective and subjective lives of people, species and things form the total dance in which relational subjects "become with". Being human involves the process of becoming with non-humans, and "becoming with" the exploration of the unfolding relatedness of humans with non-humans.

It is indeed difficult to distinguish Ingold's "meshwork" from Bennett's "assemblages". The key to the subtle difference between the two concepts may be found in Bennett's (*ibid.*: 53) claim that we must "reconfigure life away from its mooring in the physiological and the organic". Whereas Ingold calls us to be much more aware of the world around us, in all its historicity and relationality, Bennett declares that there is no nature left at all, everything around us has already become "second nature" (*ibid.*: 115), by which she means that "the very extension of science, technologies and markets has become almost coextensive with material existence" (Latour 2008). It is too late for moderns to relearn how to grow, live and reproduce with plants and animals; they need to emancipate themselves from biology. As long as they *love* the technology they create, moderns can harmlessly continue to invent and innovate (Bennett 2010: 61; see also Latour 2009a). There is

thus a sharp difference between Bennett's "vital materialism" and Ingold's "meshwork of interwoven lines of growth and movement", which has to do with the reality of the world they envisage, as the following quote makes clear:

> Is it primitivist to acknowledge that we inhabit a world of earth, sky, wind and weather, in which the sun shines, rain falls, trees grow and water can turn into ice? Life as we know it depends on all these things. Throughout our lives we breathe the air, more or less as we find it. I am not worried that it would be somehow inauthentic if we ceased to do so. I am worried that we would all be dead.
> (Ingold 2007b: 33)

If Ingold's world is ecologically human, Bennett's is not. In her "onto-tale", "everything is, in a sense, alive". This indicates that she has redefined life as a generative process of creativity emancipated from both God and biology, which she describes as "the uncaused causality that ceaselessly generates new forms" (Bennett 2010: 117). In other words, post-human thinkers need to erase the biological meaning of life to finally achieve the dissolution of the ontological difference between living organisms and things. Ingold, however, is at pains to explain how an ecological awareness of the world can be maintained without *habitus*, collective values, institutionalized norms and explicit rules. If the ontology of dwelling comes close to Rousseau's naturalism, it fails to address the importance of social reproduction, without which natural society, as Rousseau was painfully aware, could not be passed on from one generation to the next.

This brief encounter with perspectivism, direct perception and post-modern vitalism highlights the fact that attributing life to the lifeless takes animism into a sphere of conceptual complexity far more challenging than the mere attribution of personhood or humanity to "other-than-humans" does. In the rest of this chapter, I use ethnographic examples to illustrate the ways in which the Huaorani reason about ecological relations to sustain diverse and dynamic landscapes in the Ecuadorian. I conclude with a discussion of what can be gained by analysing Amazonian societies without assuming from the outset that animist peoples do not reason in terms of ecological properties, or that folkbiology is culturally irrelevant in shamanistic societies.

HUAORANI FOREST SOCIETY

For the Huaorani,[4] the forest is a vital space they call *monito ömè*, "our land". Men, women and children spend a great deal of time slowly exploring the ever evolving network of paths that becomes their homeland for as long as they walk this part of the forest (*ömere gomonipa*), observing with obvious pleasure and equal interest animal movements, the progress of fruit maturation, and vegetation growth. Such routine explorations are guided by numerous ecological distinctions, and forest patches are named according to the age of trees and species composition. The natural and the social worlds are ordered according to processes of maturation and growth, which are not only considered to be key biological phenomena recorded calendrically, but also valued for their aesthetic qualities. However, there are no words in *huao terero* (literally, "the true humans' spoken language") to say nature, ecology, religion, animals or plants. Abstract, reified categories that separate

the body from the mind, belief from perception, or human society from the non-human environment are absent from *huao terero*, as they are from most indigenous languages.

My ethnography of this unique Amazonian culture could have been written using the Ingoldian language of direct perception. Much of Huaorani trekking may be understood as "lines of growth" that get "comprehensively entangled" to form "meshworks" "like the vines and creepers of a dense patch of tropical forest" (Ingold 2006). However, such analytical language, with its narrow focus on the individual experiencing her being entangled along a path of becoming, would not have allowed me to engage fully with the wealth of ecological information exchanged by trekkers as they walk, while also keeping paths open through many small and careful gestures, such as picking up thorny leaves fallen during the night, breaking bending branches, or slashing invasive grasses. Nor would such a language have made it possible for me to convey the fact that trekking through the forest is like walking through a living book in which natural history and human history merge seamlessly. Not only do walkers converse endlessly about the traces left by animals or about the material signs that evoke times long gone (especially deaths and spearing raids), but they also communicate different messages about the world according to context and circumstance. For instance, the same tree may be admired and poetically commented upon for its brand new and shiny leaves one day, only to be feared the next day, when a tempestuous wind animates it with a different, and much more dangerous, kind of energy. However, to analyse the latter as a clear instance of ontological animism that can – and should – be isolated from the rest of the ethnography of trekking, as if the tree was culturally more significant when perceived as dangerous, would be mistaken as well. Knowing the forest through trekking involves various ways of knowing at once, whether these are based on direct, individual perception and experiential learning; derived from conversations about the objective properties of the world; or related to conversations elaborating people's cultural heritage and history.

For similar reasons, I could not bring myself to reduce Huaorani chants and myths to the language of perspectivism. Myths, like ethnographic contexts, are far more complex and idiosyncratic than perspectivism is prepared to allow for. In my analysis of the axis mundi creation myth, I discuss the fact that the giant ceibo tree (*Ceiba pentranda*), container of all life forms, expresses the fundamental characteristics of the Amazon ecosystem, which largely depend on a delicate balance between heat and humidity, and shade and light. According to this myth, all that was alive dwelled in the giant tree. In those times of beginning, living beings, neither animals nor humans, formed one single group. However, there were also birds (doves), the only game available to hunters, and two dangerous individuals, Eagle (raw meat eater) and Condor (eater of rotten flesh), who preyed on people and doves alike. The differentiation between prey and predator thus pre-dated the differentiation between humans and animal species. And it was the attempt by several primordial beings (in particular Squirrel and Spider) to trick and kill the predators that caused the fall of the giant tree and the beginning of the world as it is known today. Although correlating the mythical and the social is far from a straightforward exercise, I have explained why there are grounds for arguing that the Huaorani myth of origin expresses the fundamental characteristics of the Amazon ecosystem. There would be no life on earth without trees, as they provide shade, food and shelter, and prompt rain formation. The primordial tree is a small ecosystem in itself, and the world expands when this perfectly self-contained microcosm collapses, giving birth to a new ecosystem, which

is as integrated and self-generative as the primordial tree. If at the beginning of creation there was only one single giant tree rooted in earth and tied to the sky, its transformation into a great water system and a vast forest landscape through the dynamic interplay of social agency has caused the world to expand and exist with all its differentiation and biocultural diversity. The myth of origin thus articulates a powerful message, one that associates social categories with two distinct natural processes, the aggressive relation between predator and prey on the one hand, and the life-sustaining relation between people and forest plants on the other.

Re-reading versions of this myth today, I also see how it articulates the ritual power inherent in natural fertility and regeneration (see also Hill 2009). Unlike the Wakuenai who invoke nature to create culture as not only an autonomous and abstract world but also, one may add, an entirely fabricated world, the Huaorani celebrate in their myths and poetry the inherent power that biological organisms have to grow themselves and be alive, which is especially visible in new leaves that shine. Today, they say that brightly coloured brand-new clothes shine as young leaves. The power of self-regeneration does not derive from human intentionality, and the vitality and will to live which such a power signals is not necessarily attributed to a spiritual force; in any case, the cosmic force that causes plants and animal and human bodies to grow and live is neither singularized nor anthropomorphized. Another creation myth involving the creative power of Grandfather and Grandmother (his wife) shares even more similarities with the perspectivist cosmological deixis, for it seems to suggest that animals were ex-humans. Yet, the myth's rendering of the act of creative transformation, which requires that Grandfather, having been murdered by his grandchildren, be reborn by his wife, clearly plays on the theme of self-regeneration, while giving it a clear sociological content: gender differences are not only prior to but also indispensable for speciation to take place. Therefore, I am reluctant to argue that the Huaorani see a metaphysical continuity between present-day humans and animal species. Rather than a dualist contrast between two mythologies, one that sees animals as ex-humans, the other that takes humans to be ex-animals (Viveiros de Castro 2004: 465), we have, it seems to me, two systems that attempt to grasp expansion, change and diversification. For the Huaorani, the initial beings from which both contemporary humans and animal species derive were not human; only contemporary Huaorani are humans.

Another myth about the origin of blowpipes and the function of spears further develops the fundamental importance of gender and kinship, this time by showing the double nature of malehood. I have shown in my published work on these issues that Huaorani hunting cannot be satisfactorily analysed through a direct perception, a perspectivist, or an ontological lens alone. Hunting with a blowpipe and with a spear are two entirely different ways of socializing the environment and domesticating nature. More importantly for the argument developed here, these two forms of hunting embody two different ways of engaging with and knowing the forest's ecology, and of using the signs that are internal to biological dynamics (Kohn 2007; Rival 2012). It is for this reason that analysing hunting weapons as mere extensions of the human body or within the partial relational field created by the "mutual constitution of things and persons" (Santos-Granero 2009) seems to me entirely inadequate. By isolating humans and their artefacts from the ecological and symbiotic spaces in which species meet, contributors to *The Occult Life of Things* (*ibid.*) perpetuate human exceptionalism, as identified by Schaeffer (2007). Moreover, they

are left with little else than discussing comparatively mastery and control, that is, the capacity to extract a voluntary action from others (Fausto 2012). As "reactive agents", objects are necessarily reduced to a very low degree of agentivity (Santos-Granero 2009: 20). Culture built out of and against nature can thus triumph again, as the biology of individuals, nuclear families and the whole forest ecosystem gets subsumed and hierarchically encompassed by "society" in the act of social reproduction (T. Turner 2009). It is as if both post-structuralism and neo-Marxism are faced with the same theoretical void in their attempts to overcome the structuralist asymmetrical dichotomy between nature and culture. This is why I continue to view the Huaorani blowpipe as a regulatory instrument inserted in webs of systemic relations through which the reproduction of society and forest is ensured, even if my early analyses would now require some adjustment in the light of the theoretical and ethnological developments that have occurred in the last twelve years.

There are plenty of examples in Huaorani myths, shamanic practices, chants and other cultural expressions to illustrate the importance of predation, which, as the myth of origin discussed above indicates, has always constituted one dimension of the world. However, the call of predation is resisted, and limits are placed on the potential for reversibility between human prey and powerful cannibal attackers. Perceiving themselves as the victims of enemies or evil spirits in the shape of mystical jaguars or harpy eagles who reproduce by continuously snatching their creativity, vitality and life force, the Huaorani live their lives eluding the contagion of contact with those who do not, like them, put the prey at the centre. Moreover, if shamans have the power of making game animals stay close to humans, hence facilitating hunting, it would be wrong to understand shamanic power as more cultural than the forest management practices through which people transform the forest into a giving environment. Furthermore, by paying due attention to the range of more or less intentional management practices through which the organic growth of useful forest plants is encouraged and the forest anthropomorphized, it becomes possible to discern in these practices a wealth of ecological knowledge that forms an intrinsic part of Huaorani culture and of their ecological view of the cosmos. Huaorani ecology should be understood as ecology, as well as symbolic, historical and political ecology.

The fundamental problem with Descola's ontological animism and Viveiros de Castro's perspectivism, as a Huaorani would see it, is that they present the world as a giant cosmic food web (Århem 1996), that is, as it is imagined *by their enemies*. The Huaorani vision of life is not limited fertility, but natural abundance. It is in the nature of trees and other plants of the forest to give continuously to humans without asking anything in return. Far from being a pristine environment external to society, the forest exists as the product of the productive and consumptive activities of past living beings and people. In other words, the forest's natural bounty is understood to result from the interlocking of animal, plant and human life cycles. It is by "doing" (*què*) and "living" (*huè*) in such and such part of the forest that people "make the forest grow" (*ahuene tei tei què*), exactly as people who lived in the past did, and as people in the future will almost certainly do as well. People are vaguely aware that today's activities are making similar activities possible in the future, but such awareness has little to do with planning for the benefit of future generations. Furthermore, the future is never conceptualized in terms of expansion – that is, more growth. The idea that future generations could be wealthier, taller or more numerous

than present-day people is totally alien to the Huaorani, for whom trees offer natural models of life-cycle growth and developmental transformation. A child who learns how to walk, a youth who gets married, a man who kills, a dreamer who lets the jaguar in, an old woman who lets herself die, or a house-group that splits are all irreversibly changed in the process. Of such transformations, only those that are associated with developmental processes are talked about in terms of plant growth, for they ensure that, over time, both the forest and society will be regenerated through the business of ordinary life without need for accumulation, surplus, stealing, or the unequal transfer of life energy from one sphere to another. By living in close association with forest groves, where they grow, reproduce and die along with fruit-bearing trees, birds, monkeys and other species, people can thus forge long-term intergenerational relationships beyond genealogical amnesia (Chaumeil 2007). Contrary to Ingold's (1996a: 22) interpretation, the Huaorani do not transform the forest into a huge garden, for establishing the right ecological conditions for growth requires that humans territorialize their activities over time in a way that respects the continuity of autonomous reproduction of social others, both human and non-human.

In stressing the counter-discursive quality of Huaorani representations of growth, my early work may have given too much importance to people, whether past or present, enemy or kin, hunter-gatherers or horticulturists. I needed to show that by anchoring their society within the forest ecosystem and its cycles of growth, decay and regeneration, the Huaorani had found ways of countering the timeless transformational whirlpool that engulfed their predatory enemies. In the value system I was trying to interpret, the "true humans" or "real people" (literal translation of Huaorani) consciously assume the subjective identity of "prey at the centre" in their continuous battle against those who take rather than give. Today, I would pay more attention to the interweaving of moral and ecological reasoning that underlie the Huaorani's eco-cosmos, in particular when it comes to understanding relations between plant and animal species. As Scott Atran reminds us, the science of ecology is rooted in popular science, or common sense (Atran 1988), and it is at that level that we need to understand cultural particularisms (Atran 1999). This is why the approach I have attempted in more recent publications has fully endorsed a more integrated and holistic anthropology such as that advocated by Roy Ellen, who proposes that we seek "to answer the large questions about human distinctiveness and diversity" without shying away from engaging biology positively and critically, or forgetting that culture must be taken seriously (Ellen 2010: 393). And this is where perhaps my work goes against the grain of the styles of analysis discussed here, for despite real differences in their theoretical approaches, Ingold, Descola and Viveiros de Castro equally agree that whatever animism is, it is antithetical to modern scientific knowledge. Such a rejection of biology disregards the fact that it is oversimplistic to treat science as an objectivist knowledge system predicated on a binary opposition between nature and culture (P. Richards 1993).

CONCLUSION

While accepting that discontinuities between humans and non-humans do not organize just the way people living in different cultures think about life and represent it but also the way in which they experience the world, I have stressed in this chapter the need

to acknowledge that the discontinuities recognized by the Huaorani and other native Amazonians may not be as radically different from our own as they are sometimes portrayed to be. This is an important fact to consider in an era when the contradictions between economic development and the preservation of biological and cultural diversity have become so acute that they not only represent the greatest political challenge of our times, but also call for a cultural revolution in the way we think about nature.

As capitalism reinvents itself and its relation to nature, new speculations about vital processes, animated matter and the living power of the earth are surfacing (Bennett 2010). Such interrogations have led to the fragmentation and the weakening of "naturalism". Monist attempts to blur the distinction between objects and subjects have dissolved "nature" into an all-encompassing "environment" composed of barely differentiated humans, non-human persons, material objects and the dynamic relations between all such constitutive elements. Resulting currents of thought, such as, for instance, "post-humanism", seem undecided as to whether "the very extension of science, technologies and markets has become almost coextensive with material existence" (Latour 2008, 2009a), or whether the twenty-first century will see the constitution of a new covenant to sustain the "human-earth-system" (Chapin *et al.* 2009). In the context of such uncertainty, studies of how marginalized communities around the world envisage life in the land and understand life processes acquire new significance. As the instant success of *La chute du ciel. Paroles d"un chaman yanomami* (Kopenawa & Albert 2010) illustrates, indigenous ontologies of becoming are acquiring an unprecedented political credence. The need to interrogate the longing for "the ecology of others" and to rethink anthropologically the attribution of life, animacy, agency and relationality has thus never been greater.

We therefore need to build upon recent anthropological discussions of animism, personhood and the meaning of life to interrogate the attribution of life and death in a wide range of social and cultural contexts. Animism is the capacity to appraise plants, spirits, objects and animals as other-than-human persons, that is, as volitional, sentient, sensitive, aware and intelligent beings. Much recent ethnography of lowland South America illustrates the creativity and agency of the other-than-human world, as well as the rich communication that takes place between human and other-than-human social persons. However, the limits of extending personhood as a category of humanlike subjectivity to non-humans has also been amply demonstrated (Santos-Granero 2009; Brightman *et al.* 2012). Recent scholarship gives us a good understanding of which objects, animals or plants acquire humanlike qualities, and when; what the relationships between humans and non-humans consist of; or what humanity or subjectivity actually mean as trans-species qualities. However, we know very little about what life qualities humans share with non-humans, or what images, metaphors, techniques or experiences are mobilized to express culturally what organic life is all about. There seems to be enough evidence to suggest that life is often apprehended as a relational process; but what about conceptions of death as a process that regenerates life? Are the indigenous concepts of life and death related to those of animation and non-animation? Which practical actions best describe the workings of vital processes? Can things be alive? Is loss part of life? Is matter lifeless? Is the earth thought about as a living organism? Can there be life or death without transformation? How does biological life relate to human life? Is life a limited good unequally distributed among beings? Do indigenous cultures contrast wild and anthropomorphic landscapes? Is human well-being in any way connected to nature's ecological functions?

In asking and answering such questions, it is extremely important that we bring forth ethnographies that pay equal attention to the level of individual experience and consciousness; the cultural norms and values that give rise to distinct communities; and the invariants of the human condition as they are expressed in the way people in all cultures question human existence, and communicate across cultural boundaries about it. Only then can we hope for a future when the reassuring boundaries between nature and culture will have blurred for good, opening an era when an emerging cosmopolitan human reason will have brought forth new ecological values and shared normative practices.

NOTES

1. While this book offers a general survey of animism in contemporary thought, Amazonianist anthropologists have yet to reflect upon the growing place occupied by perspectivist animism in general anthropological theory and cultural theory.
2. Deconstructing "animism" has led to a multiplicity of new terms to cover every concept involved, as well as slippery synonymy between them. Agent, for instance, has multiplied into agency, actant, agentivity, reactive agent, and so forth. For humanity, we now have terms such as other-than-human, non-human, as well as "person" and "personhood", terms which have renewed our understanding of anthropocentrism and anthropomorphism. Consciousness, a word rarely used today, has become synonymous with mind, mindful, subjectivity, interiority, soul and intentionality.
3. See also Carrithers *et al*. (2010).
4. This section refers to the following published ethnographic works: on Huaorani conception of the forest, Rival (1998b, 2007a,b,c); on their aesthetics of growth, Rival (1998a); on their creation myths, Rival (1997, 2005); on their hunting weapons, Rival (1996); on palm groves, Clement *et al.* (2009).

8

Metamorphosis and identity: Chewong animistic ontology

Signe Howell

I begin by telling an abbreviated version[1] of a Chewong myth about frog people. Chewong is a small group of hunter-gatherers and shifting cultivators who, at the time of my first fieldwork in the late 1970s, lived deep inside the Malaysian tropical rainforest. At the time, they had minimal contact with the outside world and their way of life and understanding of how the world works was a textbook example of animism (I return to this concept below). According to Chewong cosmology, frogs – as well as many other non-human beings and objects in their forest environment – have consciousness (*ruwai*) which makes them persons and subjects. When they are in "their own land", which is also in the jungle but invisible to the hot human eye (see below), they abandon their frog "cloaks" and appear to each other in human shape and behave in a recognizable human rational manner. There is, nevertheless, a unique frog quality which renders them people and frogs at the same time.

BONGSO AND THE FROG WOMAN

Bongso[2] lived alone and was clearing a new swidden. One day, working very hard cutting down trees, he became very thirsty. He picked up a bamboo cylinder and set off to the river to bring some water. A frog woman was in the river. Accidentally Bongso caught her in his bamboo. She leapt out and turned into human shape. She was, however, completely naked, and this made her very shy. She stood with both hands covering her private parts. "Give me your sarong so that I can make a loincloth," she said to Bongso. He threw it to her. The frog woman returned to her house among the stones in the river, and Bongso went home.

The next day she went to Bongso's house and they slept together and she became his wife. One day Bongso was going hunting and he told his wife to thresh

rice while he was away. She did this by rubbing the rice against her thighs. It was very good quality rice and Bongso wanted to take some to his mother who lived some distance away and did not know that he had a wife. She went to visit her son the next evening. When she arrived she heard talking inside the house so she did not enter but returned home and told her husband that she thought Bongso had got a wife.

The next day she went again to Bongso's house and asked him who was living with him. He denied that there was someone, but she insisted saying she had heard talk. "You have a wife, Bongso," she said. Bongso admitted that he did, and his wife came out to meet her mother-in-law. "Where did you meet her, Bongso?" his mother wanted to know. "Oh, she is a jungle woman also," he lied.

Time passed and Bongso and the frog woman had two children. The grandparents moved to live with them. One day when Bongso had gone hunting, his mother and her two grandchildren went to the river to bathe. The river was flooded and dirty, but the children jumped in and swam and frolicked in the water. The grandmother became angry when she saw their behaviour, "Naughty children," she scolded, "You're just like frog children." When the children heard this they became upset. Back home, the mother asked what was up and they told her that the grandmother was angry with them and called them frog children. Hearing this the mother did not want to continue to live there and she and the children changed back to being frogs and returned to the frog house in the river. When he got home and did not see his family, Bongso asked his mother what she had said to them. She told him that she had called the children "frog children". "What, did you not know that my wife was a frog woman?!" exclaimed Bongso. "No," replied the mother. Bongso went to the river, put on a frog cloak and entered the frog house.

When the grandfather went to the river the next day, the frog children called out to him, but he could not see them. He did not have cool eyes.

Being a person with cool eyes, Bongso has shamanistic abilities and is able to travel between the different worlds of sentient non-human beings. This myth is only one of a great number of Chewong myths in which the boundaries between the human world and the many sentient non-human worlds of the forest are far from absolute. The various worlds exist, not only side by side, but also, in many instances, inside each other; invisible to all who do not possess cool eyes. The latter (who are shamans) can travel between the various worlds and put on and off the bodies ("cloaks") of other species. This means that the Chewong natural environment may not be what it at first appears to be to the ordinary Chewong, to other sentient beings in the forest, or to an outsider. It is deceptive to human perception; full of visual fallacies. Knowledge of, and relationship to, the worlds in their landscape find an expression through the agency of Chewong myths, shamanistic songs, prescriptions and proscriptions that guide daily behaviour – which I call cosmo-rules – and are predicated upon cosmological knowledge and ritual activities. Together they are central in establishing an understanding of Chewong reality – the forest in which they live, personhood, relatedness and sociality. Chewong ontology cuts across familiar boundaries erected in Western science between humanity on the one hand, and all other species of so-called living things on the other; between the human habitat and the many non-human ones in the forest.

How should we understand this myth? What we can learn from it and other similar myths from other parts of the world about reality, personhood, identity and the relationship between the human and natural world is far from straightforward. Is the kind of ontological knowledge that Chewong live by of any relevance at all to the contemporary Western world? There has been a tendency in recent years in some Western circles to attribute consciousness to non-human natural kinds, and the argumentation often draws on ethnographic material from societies like that of the Chewong whose metaphysical understanding eschews an existential division between the human and the natural world. But I am critical of a conflation of ontologies. Taken out of its context, and used piecemeal for specific purposes, such an approach is deeply problematic. However, there is, I suggest, an argument to be made that there is a human proclivity to anthropomorphize parts, or all, of the natural environment in which one lives. But this practice is not integral to a modern Western cultural understanding of the world, and it has no legitimate place in the Western scientific tradition. One possible exception is the notion of post-humanism developed by some theoreticians of science. I return to this.

THE ANTHROPOLOGICAL APPROACH TO ANIMISM

The Chewong material evokes memories of early preoccupations within social anthropology. Animism – the belief that non-human beings and natural objects are infused with some spiritual essence – was a central topic for investigation during the second half of the nineteenth century as the new discipline of anthropology established itself in some European and North American universities. Sir Edward Burnett Tylor, one of the founders of anthropology, made the term "animism" central to the new discipline of comparative culture in 1871. The approach was closely linked to an evolutionary paradigm drawing inspiration from Darwin, and those societies found to "believe in animism" were placed toward the bottom of the evolutionary ladder, whereas monotheistic religions, especially Christianity with its clearly defined dualistic metaphysics, were placed at the pinnacle. Drawing on second-hand accounts of primitive peoples, most of which made little attempt to present the beliefs and practices from the natives' point of view, Tylor (1871) argued that many of these attributed a spiritual aspect – or soul – to the animal, vegetable and mineral worlds as well as to thunder and celestial bodies, and that this form of primitive religion might best be thought of as the origin of religious thought in general. Like his contemporaries, Tylor characterized the mental faculties of primitives to be like those of the contemporary child, who cannot distinguish the animate from the inanimate. However, one redeeming feature in their proposition was that although primitive mentality was mistaken and plainly wrong, this was due to lack of scientific knowledge, not to inferior metal capacity as such (cf. Stocking 1987; Bird-David 1999). With the onset of long-term ethnographic fieldwork among "primitive peoples", the idea of a cognitive and social evolution lost all credibility. So also did the concept of animism that was closely linked to it. Whereas ethnographic fieldwork in many parts of the world confirms that the religions of the people studied may indeed be predicated upon an understanding of an animated natural world, positing a great number of sentient non-humans things, usually anthropomorphized, anthropologists were at great pains to distance themselves from any notions of primitive or childlike or, indeed, mistaken or faulty knowledge, and

distanced themselves from the concept of "animism" altogether. Even though I thought that my Chewong material echoed much of what I had read about animism, when writing my PhD thesis (submitted in 1980) I was advised by my supervisor against using the word.

By the late 1990s, however, animism had emerged as one of the more exciting concepts in the anthropology of religion. The theoretical interest in animism lies in the relations that pertain between humans and conscious non-human natural kinds. It is the attempt to analyse the meaning and practice of such relationships that challenges the outside observer. Detailed explications upon actual instances of such ontologies are vital, but particularly difficult given the chasm that exists between observer and observed. In a contribution to the debate on how to define and interpret the slippery category of animism Descola makes a distinction between what he called three types of human interaction with the natural world around them, namely totemism, animism and naturalism (1996a). I find this helpful. Totemism, according to Descola, following Lévi-Strauss, may be understood as a way in which differential relations between natural species are used to confer a conceptual order on society; in Lévi-Strauss's terms "animals are good to think" (1963). Animism brings the natural species into the human world in so far as they (or some of them) are endowed with human dispositions and social attributes. By contrast, the Western scientific tradition that makes a sharp division between nature and culture, Descola characterizes as naturalistic. Descola recently added a fourth mode, namely collective analogism. He characterizes this as "when confronted with an as yet unspecified *alter*, whether human or non-human, our hypothetical subject can surmise ... that this object's interiority and physicality are entirely distinct from his own" (2006: 141). And, further, that "all the entities in the world are fragmented into a multiplicity of essences, forms and substances separated by minute intervals, often ordered along a graded scale, such as in the Great Chain of Being" (*ibid.*: 145). I return to this towards the end. New interest to the comparative investigations was added by Viveiros de Castro's concept of perspectivism (1992, 1998), derived from his study of the Araweté and inspired by Århems's work from the nearby Makuna (1993), which he characterizes as "cosmologies concerning the way in which humans, animals and spirits see both themselves and one another" (Viveiros de Castro 1998a: 469). Despite being located in the Amazon, the perspectivist world of the Amazonian Indians bear a remarkable similarity to what I had tried to demonstrate from my work with the Chewong. Interestingly, our analyses followed a similar path. My concept "relativity in perception" (Howell 1989) displays many similarities to the perspectivism of Viveiros de Castro. But there are also some differences, the most important of which is the idea of metamorphosis that is central to Chewong cosmology and the related significance attributed to the eye. These have been noted in other societies, but implications have not been sufficiently theorized. Analytic focus on metamorphosis throws, I suggest, a new light on the relationship between physicality and consciousness. It also questions the suggestion that animism always be understood as a continuity of souls and a discontinuity of bodies (cf. Descola 2006).

A number of other anthropologists also entered the animistic stage during the past two decades. Bird-David's overview article from 1999 proposed that animism had best be understood as "relational epistemology", only to be opposed by Viveiros de Castro who suggested that "relational ontology" be more appropriate (1999a: S80). When recently these concepts were brought to Siberia and Inner Asia, a number of very detailed and perceptive publications resulted, refining and expanding their meaning and application

(e.g. Pedersen 2001; Willerslev 2007). In the light of all this activity, the time is ripe for a reconsideration of my early work. First, however, I will briefly consider some recent ideas emerging in other disciplines that are related to the anthropological study of animism, namely the broad and disparate category of neo-animism. Finally, I will bring the Chewong material directly to bear on these ideas.

CONTEMPORARY APPROACHES TO "NEO-ANIMISM"

A new-found interest in a more "mystical" side to life is discernible in many Western quarters today. From neo-shamanism, various forms of "eco-mysticism", to contemporary philosophy of science, alternative versions of reality are posited which may broadly be characterized as neo-animistic. For reasons which I hope will become clear, I remain unconvinced by the usefulness of terms such as ecocentric, biocentric, species-centric, or by Pickering's suggested "post-humanist approach" (1999: 1; 2000). Pickering, influential in the theory of science, suggests that the conventional "humanist" approach that places humans in the centre of analysis must be replaced by a post-humanist one whereby we think in terms of a "decentred perspective in which humanity and the material world appear as symmetrically intertwined, with neither constituting a controlling centre" (Franklin 2001: 7). Pickering seems to be arguing that his post-humanistic approach is universally applicable. To my mind, this raises serious epistemological questions as well as definitional problems concerning subject and object, and the meaning of agency, rationality and self-consciousness, as well as of that which is commonly called the natural world, the environment, or, indeed, landscape. I think that his is a difficult position to maintain in our Western scientific understanding (Descola's "naturalist" mode) which insists on clear demarcations between humans and non-human things, that is, natural objects and living things including plants and animals. A post-humanist ideology in the West can easily confuse our approach to understanding alternative ontologies like that of Chewong. Despite many signs to the contrary, I am convinced that their ontology is also human-centric (or more precisely Chewong-centric) although it is predicated upon a world that is "symmetrically intertwined". Post-humanism as an epistemological stance further raises methodological challenges to which I can see no satisfactory solutions. As anthropologists we can try to understand the premises for alien worldviews, but we cannot test their validity. Considering this dilemma, Ingold asks, "Must we then conclude that the anthropological study of indigenous understandings, whatever its intrinsic interest, can tell us nothing about what the world is really like, and that it therefore has no bearing on natural scientific inquiry?" (2000: 95). The question is a good one but, as I shall seek to show, answers are far from obvious or easy to find.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF CHEWONG COSMOLOGICAL KNOWLEDGE

In what follows, I shall pursue these ideas with reference to my research over a thirty-year period with the Chewong and explicate their notions of the relationship between humans and sentient animals and plants in their environment. I shall argue that their metaphysics has little to offer that in which I am acculturated. Chewong ontology and metaphysics

qualifies broadly as an example of the animic mode as characterized by Descola, although I offer some qualifications. I find it useful to interpret their animic world as a system in which all categories of conscious persons recognize their mutual interdependence and interact in a common moral universe. In other words, for the system to make sense, I argue that cross-species sociality carries moral connotations. Animic cosmology brings the animated beings into reciprocal moral relationships that are "life-giving" (cf. Hocart 1970) for all concerned. This is a point that, in my view, is crucial, and that has not been highlighted by most commentators.

When I started my fieldwork with the Chewong my aim was to study their religious beliefs and practices, which turned out to be shamanic and, hence, animistic in a general sense. Shamanism, the ability of some individuals in a social group to communicate with conscious non-human beings in their environment during a dream or induced trance state, is usually part of animic cosmologies. I found that while this was the case among the Chewong, the concepts of shamanism and animism as studied prior to going to the field soon failed to help me in making meaningful interpretation of what I encountered. Several factors contributed to this. First, it became clear that the Chewong did not separate in any straightforward way between what I – and the Lévi-Straussian-inspired structuralist literature that I had read – took to be universal complementary oppositions between nature and culture. But neither was there a complete conflation. Rather, they implicated each other in ways that at times made such a separation irrelevant, and at others meaningful. Second, I struggled throughout the eighteen months of my first fieldwork to comprehend the implications of a semantic collapse between the different species of "true persons" (*bi loy*), also referred to as "people" (*beri*), which include human Chewong and a large number of conscious non-humans. I never stopped asking if a certain animal, plant, fruit, vegetable, river, hill was a true person or not; if it had "soul" or "consciousness" (*ruwai*) or not. People could always provide an answer, but they could not provide an explanation of what this entailed that satisfied my probing. However, their system implied that boundaries do exist. These are between all species of sentient beings, indicating, as I shall argue, a necessary relationship between body and consciousness in each instance, and between natural kinds with and without consciousness.

Returning to my original interpretations, I am pleasantly surprised to find that I still accept my main points, but that I need to fine-tune them in light of recent literature. For example, I shall argue, contra Bird-David (1999) and in broad agreement with Viveiros de Castro (1999a), that animism is better interpreted as being about ontology rather than epistemology – although the two are clearly related. At the time, I thought cosmology and metaphysics were the most appropriate concepts in which to frame my interpretation. Today, I suggest that all four concepts contribute to an understanding of what is going on. I shall also suggest that in analysing existential beliefs and practices that are both elusive and culturally alien to one's own, one has to tread extremely carefully. This applies to anthropologists as much as to members of other disciplines or the general public. It is difficult not to exotify ideas and practices of the culturally other to such a degree that the people who adhere to them emerge as radically different from ourselves. Or, the opposite, namely to decontextualize their ideas and values, suggesting perhaps that theirs are somehow truer or better than our own, and that we must learn from them. Rigorous examination of how alien life-worlds are constituted, and mapping the premises for the practice of interaction with non-human persons in daily activities, are

prerequisites for ethnographic research about religion. Having lived with the Chewong for longer and shorter periods during the past thirty-two years, I have learnt that while their forest is a world of numerous conscious animate beings with whom they maintain proper relationships, this does not in any way prevent them from otherwise acting in a manner perfectly recognizable by any European visitor. Nevertheless, myths, songs and other narratives about the animated cosmos and the behaviour that is predicated upon these must not be understood as symbolic or metaphoric, but as real. The cosmologically constituted knowledge and the named cosmo-rules that guide everyday behaviour do not inhibit the Chewong from hunting and gathering and exploiting the forest to satisfy their wants. It is only in certain contexts that the "people" status of some non-humans becomes relevant.

Chewong live in an inclusive, but bounded, animated environment in which humans, and many (but not all) sentient animals, plants and spirits, constitute a single moral universe. Existentially, humans are not set apart from the other sentient beings in terms of person qualities (Howell 1982, 1989, 1996). They interact according to principles that form the basis for correct behaviour and maintenance of order and which are most clearly expressed in the cosmo-rules. Knowledge of these behavioural rules (or codes for conduct) is essential for individual and social survival in the forest, but its relevance is limited to the Chewong forest world(s). Theirs is a bounded social domain, and it is only within it that the particular Chewong cosmology is operative, that the cosmo-rules are applied.

Chewong symbolic classification is constructed upon a principle of enumeration rather than on hierarchical ordering (Howell 1985, 1989). Ontological principles and socio-cultural practice co-constitute each other. Existentially speaking, all Chewong persons – including the many species of non-human beings mentioned above characterized as "people" (*beri*) – are equal, with identical person attributes and qualities. The acid-test for people status is the possession of consciousness (*ruwai*[3]). I have argued (e.g. 1982, 1989, 1996) that Chewong understanding of the animated world in which they live may be thought of as anthropomorphic, or more precisely, Chewongmorphic. At the same time, each different species of sentient beings not only has a distinctive body, called a cloak, but also live according to the specificity of their own visual interpretation of the world: that is, each species has eyes that that are species-specific. The Chewong adhere to a psychic and cognitive unity of all species of "people" in their forest environment, at the same time as they are species relativists. They know that the "natives' points of view" differ somewhat from each other due to their different species bodies and their different species eyes. These are facts that influence their actual behaviour, so that the animated world around them, arguably, consists of many natures, but only one culture (cf. Descola 1996a, 2006). This composite world of many natures, may, however, be described as one in which the common reference point is not humanity as a species, but the human as a condition. Thus in the myth told at the outset of this chapter the frog woman threshed rice, but she did so as a frog might be expected to do it, by rubbing it against her thighs. The implied information generated by this myth is also that when "in her own world" in the stone house in the river, life is carried out just like that of the human people, but that what actually constitutes a house or rice is different to each species's eyes, and practices are identical in their intention, but differently performed.

WHO AND WHAT IS A "PERSON"?

Chewong conceptions of being and consciousness are thus central to an interpretation of their social world. In theory everything in the forest may reveal itself to be a sentient being with person qualities identical to those of the Chewong. But, although Chewong live in an animistic world in which all species of conscious beings view their own world from their own perspective, they are nevertheless unified through the Chewongmorphic construction of reality, and the law of causality is the same in each case (Howell 2012). Many myths exemplify these points.

Each species has its own special body (cloak) by which it may be recognized. Cloaks may be put on and off by those individuals in each species who have shamanic abilities, that is, cool eyes. They may also, in certain circumstances, take off their own cloak and put on that of another species. This deception is not apparent (*viz.* the frog woman myth) and they are accepted as a *bona fide* until, as in the frog woman story, they behave inappropriately. The myths contain many examples of this. Metamorphosis occurs when a person of one species, clad in the body of another, forgets to behave according to his or her "true" nature, or as in the case of the half-frog children, when they behave as frogs in the world of humans. Being found out, they turned into frogs, henceforth unable to resume their human cloaks and life.

The eyes are profoundly important in distinguishing one species from another. Indeed, perception is relativistic and species-bound. In one sense all species see the same world, and have the same needs; only what makes up the material objects in each world differs. For example, human eyes see a wild pig as potential meat. A gibbon sees certain leaves as meat. A *bas* (group of potentially harmful spirits that are activated to perform a harmful act upon humans following a breach of a cosmo-rule) sees human *ruwai* as meat. There are a number of invisible villages and houses in the forest that belong to the different species of conscious beings. To the ordinary "hot" human eyes they are just clusters of trees or leaves, or rocks. To the species themselves they are houses and fields just like human houses and fields. While they are in "their own land" their well-being is dependent upon the observation of the same prescriptions and proscriptions as those of the Chewong. But again, what actually constitutes the offence – and the effect – is species dependent. Sameness and dissimilarity at the same time characterizes Chewong animism, and extreme caution – informed by esoteric knowledge – must be observed by those who cross the borders between different sentient beings.

The *ruwai*/body relationship of shamans is highly delicate. To inhabit the body of another species for longer periods leads to seeing and behaving as those whose body one is wearing and may finally lead to metamorphosis of the person. Then there is no return to original species identity. Many Chewong myths tell of instances when this takes place. The frog woman and her children still had the ability to resume their frog bodies, but, to judge from similar myths, they are unlikely to be able to put on human cloaks again. Bongso, as shaman, may continue to move between the two worlds.

SOME RECENT WESTERN APPROACHES TO THE UNDERSTANDING OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE HUMAN AND NATURAL WORLDS

According to Descola, a naturalist way of thinking about the natural environment is a clear continuation of the dichotomous thinking that underpins the scientific approach more generally, manifested in the familiar mind/body, thought/feeling, human/animal, nature/culture and other dichotomies. While several of these binary oppositions have been deconstructed and are viewed as mutually constitutive, the nature/culture one is proving resistant, as has been acclaimed by a number of influential thinkers. At the same time, there are, as mentioned at the outset, emerging alternative views in science studies, among philosophers, ecologists, environmentalists, and even some biologists, which argue for a more integrated view of the human and non-human worlds. According to Sale, the more extreme position that "regards the human strictly as an equal participant in the biosphere" is gaining ground (Sale 1988; see also Sale 2000).

It is useful to discern three main directions which broadly may be characterized as neo-animism: ecological mysticism/ecocentrism, post-humanism, and New Age movements that practise shamanism. According to "deep ecology", a Norwegian version of ecological mysticism, animals and plants have intrinsic and inherent value equal to humans. They are persons in their own right (see e.g. Wetlesen 1999). Debates about animal rights and speciesism (*ibid.*) arise out of these preoccupations and assumptions. One important counter-argument based on the Chewong (and many other social groups whose ontologies share similar principles) would be that these forms of neo-animism do not include all natural species. Only some animals and plants are persons, only some have rights – and importantly, responsibilities – and this is so only as a result of them engaging in meaningful relationships with humans. Interestingly, ecocentric arguments fail to take account of the fact that humans have constructed the view in the first place.

The post-humanist approach inspired by Latour and Pickering has many followers. However, Latour's concept of actant (e.g. 1987, 1993) and Pickering's dance of agency cannot, to my mind, be interpreted without attributing intentionality to the non-human elements involved. If what is meant is no more than the suggestion that humans, beings and objects in the environment influence each other, then this is unproblematic. Even that humans and machines stand in some kind of relationship that affects practice, I can accept. However, the famous example of the Mississippi River which overflows the levees that engineers keep constructing in order to contain it is seriously problematic. Pickering argues that there is a dance of agency between the river (the non-human agent) and the engineers (the human agents) because "it turns out the river *wants* to move" (2000: 5, emphasis added). Yes, the river moves, but on what basis can we claim that it *wants* to move, that it has some kind of intentionality? If the Chewong told me this, I would accept it and position the statement within their broader understanding of the relationship between the human and the natural worlds, but not being a fully assimilated Chewong I would not accept it as a valid explanation for what was happening. Serious methodological difficulties arise. Evans-Pritchard (1965) criticized the nineteenth-century theories about the origin of religion, mentioned above, as speculative and employing the "if I were a horse" method. By analogy, this can be paraphrased as the "if I were a river" method.

The question, of course, is how can we be anything but conjoined with the cultural ideas and values of the world in which we live? Our ontological knowledge and our metaphysical

reasoning are the result of interaction with our social and cultural significant others. We do not have access to the views of gibbons, frogs, elephants, dogs, trees or rivers, and cannot enter into meaningful dialogue with them. The "informants" in our ethnographic fieldwork can never be anything other than other humans.

But, what, then, are we to make of the many Western individuals who attend classes in shamanism and claim to have gained access to the world of non-human sentient beings? Many such courses are influenced by the techniques developed by the American anthropologist, Michael Harner. Harner bases his teaching upon what he learnt while studying shamanism during the 1960s among the Jivaro Indians of the Amazon. Having achieved a shamanistic trance state with and without the help of hallucinogenic drugs, he claims to be able to teach anyone the ability to:

> communicate intimately and lovingly with "all our relatives" as the Lakota would say, talking not just with the human people, but also with the animal people, the plant people, and all the elements in the environment, including the soul of the rocks, and the water. In fact, from the shaman's viewpoint, our surroundings are not "environment" but family. (Harner [1980] 1990: xiii)

Harner's view of human nature is that it has the capacity, through an induced state of altered consciousness, to create relationships with the non-human worlds which, according to him, is made up of sentient beings – much as the Chewong understand it. Moreover, his is a truly universalistic claim, because the practice may be engaged in by anyone – independent of social and cultural conditions. In other words, he de-socializes humans. To shamanize becomes an act that is decontextualized and de-cosmologized. An existential encounter occurs between one "empty" human being and the sentient beings in the environment. Harner's and others' methods have been described as "a *smørgårdsbord* of spiritual enlightenment" (Jakobsen 1999: 154). By such an understanding, bits and pieces of beliefs and practices are taken out of their socio-cultural context, removed from particular semantic and moral universes and thrown together ready for the picking. A conceptual collapse occurs between the signifier and the signified. Meaning is not only decontextualized, it is removed altogether. Reality emerges as indisputable, independent of our interpretation of it, but somehow accessible to individuals. It is, nevertheless, indisputable that many humans are able to enter an altered state of consciousness in which they meet with what they insist are non-human sentient beings. Most who participate in courses on shamanism are, however, perhaps not as culturally naked as they may think. They are highly motivated and have read much of the relevant literature, including ethnographic texts. They are open and ready for the experience and their cosmological understanding is waiting to be altered as a result of the experience. As such they are not *tabula rasa*, but mentally focused in a special direction. Probably a high degree of suggestion plays a part – but so it also does among the Chewong. What differs is that to the Chewong, and others like them, the animistic and anthropomorphic worldview is never questioned. There are no alternatives. Society is inseparable from cosmos; signifier and signified not only correspond, but mutually constitute each other.

Let me return to Ingold's question of whether anthropological studies of indigenous understandings such as that of the Chewong can do anything more than add to our

knowledge of human plurality. Are we any closer to an answer? Certainly, we cannot use the Chewong material as an argument for the existence of an animated sentient environment. But to understand Chewong cosmology and personhood may enrich our understanding of human potentiality; what it means to be human in a world within which the idea of a neutral nature is foreign. The mere fact that many of us have no problem in empathizing with the animic and anthropomorphic modes may, by itself, indicate some form of psychic unity of mankind. According to Guthrie, "anthropomorphism has become part of our natural way of perceiving the environment" (in Milton 2002: 21, citing Guthrie 1993). I would go further and suggest that it has never been absent. In that sense "we have never been modern" (Latour 1993). All religions assume a world of some kind of personal non-human agents. This does not mean (*viz.* eco-mystics and neo-shamanists) that this actually is the case. Metaphoric thinking is a human universal. The Chewong also engage in it, although not with regard to the conscious non-human beings who are understood as literal descriptions of reality. We must not be deceived into thinking that identical questions are being asked, nor that identical answers are posited – despite appearances of this being the case.

CONCLUSION

Most anthropologists today who work in societies that may loosely be characterized as animistic eschew any distinction between nature and culture – or nature and society. Rather, they seek alternative ways to understand and interpret the reality that they encounter during their fieldwork among such people: *their* ontology, morality and metaphysics are placed in the centre of the analysis, not preoccupations of our own. But we – as much as they – are caught in the constraints and opportunities of our own language and concepts. These are the challenges that anthropologists such as myself, Descola and Viveiros de Castro are grappling with; and in conclusion I shall briefly assess to what extent their ideas coincide with my own.

Animism raises the perennial question of the relationship between thought and action, between physicality and interiority. From the Chewong epistemological point of view, action is informed by thought and thought informs action – where one begins and the other ends cannot be stated with any degree of certainty. Similarly, for them, bodies cannot exist without a mind and minds cannot exist without a body; the two constitute the identity of a person. According to Chewong thinking, both bodies and minds are species-bound and there is a one-to-one relationship between them. Species-specific *ruwai* needs to be in the correct species-defined cloak. However, as shown, extended inhabitation within another's cloak results, necessarily, in performing practices of the other species, and, once they are experienced as normal, the person's *ruwai* and body are metamorphosed into those of the other. Long residence in an alien body leads to changes of the eyes and when an individual perceives the world around him in the same manner as those whose body he is wearing, metamorphosis has occurred.

Viveiros de Castro's notion of perspectivism corresponds closely, I believe, to what I referred to as "relativity of perception". But I wish to suggest that the significance of the eyes in Chewong cosmology, and the associated phenomenon of metamorphosis, linked to the paradoxical demand of simultaneous connectedness and separation between

dissimilar elements, demand further analysis, and can enhance our understanding of perspectivism.

Descola's fourth mode of characterization of relationships between humans and natural kinds, namely "collective analogism", is described as the Great Chain of Being that "allows for a recombination of the initial contrasts into a dense network of analogies" (2006: 145), and seemed at first sight to fit what I had observed among the Chewong. However, describing analogism as the alter's "interiority and physicality [being] entirely distinct from his own" (*ibid.*: 141) is at odds with Chewong understanding. Moreover, his insistence that a central feature of such a mode is one in which the parts are ordered hierarchically (*ibid.*: 152) renders it irrelevant as far as the egalitarian system (symbolic as well as social) of the Chewong is concerned (Howell 2011). On further reflection, I conclude that the Chewong ordering of their world of conscious beings is not based on a series of analogies, but rather on homologies, giving rise to a relativistic worldview that posits a psychic and cognitive unity of all species of persons. This unity finds its expression in the eyes and a species-determined perception about the natural world. Chewong cosmological understanding results in a composite multifaceted world of equivalences, the parts inexorably linked through mutual dependency for the reproduction of social and individual life. Further, Descola's suggestion that animism is "a continuity of souls and a discontinuity of bodies" (*ibid*: 141) ultimately raises as many questions as it answers. Certainly, Chewong animism questions a straightforward continuity of souls and discontinuity of bodies. *Ruwai* are, in principle, identical regardless of species, and *ruwai* may don and discard their own and others' cloaks, but when the chips are down, there is a necessary relationship between the two that defines each species. This demonstrates that, ultimately, they are better understood as one. The fact of metamorphosis demonstrates this very clearly. The notion of metamorphosis in my interpretation of Chewong animism indicates both sameness and difference, and a fragile relationship between species. It is this, together with the pivotal position of the eyes that, I maintain, both Descola's animism and collective analogism and Viveiros de Castro's perspectivism fail to note. But their work – and that of others – has rekindled a new interest in a dormant anthropological topic.

Empirical studies demonstrate cultural variations which belie a general definition of animism. Nevertheless, one particular conceptualization of the relationship between the human and the non-human worlds, that which attributes consciousness (more or less anthropomorphic) to the latter, may be found widely spread throughout the globe.

NOTES

1. For a full version see Howell (1989).
2. This name indicates that he has shamanistic abilities and, as such, that he has cool eyes and can see through all layers of reality and through all deceptions invisible to ordinary humans who have hot eyes.
3. *Ruwai* is a complex concept that covers several aspects of the spiritual side of humans and other conscious beings as well as being the term for a shaman's spirit guide (Howell 1989).

9

The ancestral sensorium and the city: reflections on religion, environmentalism and citizenship in the Philippines

Paul-François Tremlett

This chapter is based on fieldwork conducted in the Philippines in the summer of 2010 around the problematic of religion, environmentalism and citizenship. The immediate background to the research included the BP oil spill in the US, mudslides in China, floods in Pakistan and a heat wave in Russia that destroyed a significant portion of the wheat harvest. During the period I was conducting the research, Filipino newspapers – like British newspapers – ran a number of stories that questioned whether these phenomena were interrelated, and the role of human beings in causing or contributing to – or not – these events.[1] Moreover, during the period of my research a number of stories appeared in the Filipino press relating to more properly local environmental issues such as opposition to mining and alleged desecration of ancestral burial grounds by cement companies.[2]

To date, much anthropological research around the question of the environment and environmental risk has focused either on exploring local, culturally mediated understandings of said risks as a "presently lived ecological hazard" (Rudiak-Gould 2011: 10) or on the social movements and NGOs that have become the most nationally and internationally visible vehicles of environmental advocacy and protest. While a strict ethnographic focus on local cultural conceptions of the environment and of ecological risks or on social movements and environmental struggle and advocacy are vital, such research is being done effectively by Filipino anthropologists themselves. Following Crate and Nuttall's suggestion that what is needed from anthropologists researching local responses to environmental risks of one form or another is a form of "multi-sited analysis" that examines "the complex interactions of the larger world system that shapes the local" (Crate and Nuttall 2009: 17), and Rudiak-Gould's claim that anthropologists "lack a well-developed understanding of how societies receive, interpret, understand, adopt, reject and utilize" the global scientific discourse about environmental risk (Rudiak-Gould 2011: 8), I have engaged in an analysis of representations and discourses about differing kinds of social spaces that are informed by climate change and which

reflect differential access to resources visible also at the core-periphery scale of the neoliberal "world system".

Religion – or rather animism – occupies a significant space in these reflections. It is the animism of indigenous peoples constructed and mobilized by activists within and outside the Catholic Church as the *sine qua non* of an environmentally ethical life. It is also a critical, secular and citizenizing animism that is alleged to offer a profound resource for rethinking Filipino culture and society. It lies a million miles away from Tylor's imaginary "ancient savage philosophers" (Tylor 1871: 387) gazing out upon the world to try to establish the real relations of cause and effect between phenomena. Rather, it is an animism that assumes the interrelatedness of beings and that knowledge must grow from within those relationships.

I interviewed a number of individuals working with environmental NGOs, most of them Church-affiliated in one way or another, as well as an entrepreneur, academics and a prominent novelist, all based in or close to Manila. I also collected newspaper articles, information from websites, anecdotes and stories from the kinds of random encounters that make fieldwork so unpredictable, collected brochures for new property developments in and around Manila and visited organic farming initiatives, markets and shops selling organic foods and handicrafts, but also gated communities, a sustainable tourism initiative and a recently protected biodiverse mountain area all in the provinces to the south and north of the capital or in the capital itself. The "data" presented here concerns representations of and discourses about places, on the one hand representations of and discourses about so-called ancestral domains by environmental advocates and activists and, on the other, representations of and discourses about new gated housing developments produced by property developers. I have conceptualized these representations and discourses as "place-frames" (D. G. Martin 2003: 733).

In Martin's analysis of neighbourhood organizations in St Paul Minnesota, she claims that local neighbourhood organizations both "draw upon and represent" as well as selectively impute, construct and portray the "experiences of people in a place" as a way of mobilizing neighbourhoods as sites for particular types of social-political action. The "framings" produced by these organizations therefore "represent a powerful ... discourse, one that may be deployed to constitute places and polities at a number of spatial scales" (*ibid.*: 731). Martin goes on to define place-frames in the following terms:

> Place-frames describe common experiences among people in a place, as well as imagining an ideal of how the neighbourhood *ought* to be. Place-frames thus define the scope and scale of the shared neighbourhood of collective concern ... [and] have material consequences both in shaping people's ideas about places and in fostering social action. (*Ibid.*: 733)

In this quote, realist ("place-frames describe"), normative ("how the neighbourhood *ought* to be") and constructivist perspectives ("material consequences ... in shaping people's ideas") are collapsed into another. Martin suggests that this is one of the specific features of place-frames, namely that they include diagnostic frames that purport to identify problems and solutions associated with specific places such as litter, crime and so on. This diagnostic dimension is significant because it plays an important role in constituting a place and its inhabitants in a specific way.

Following Martin, I am going to argue that there are two place-frames in the Philippines (or perhaps better: I am going to focus on two but there may well be others). These place-frames are significant because they offer insight into how Filipinos are currently imagining themselves in relation to one another, in relation to a wider world and in relation to urban and rural spaces and, of course, to "nature" (Macnaghten & Urry 1998). Importantly, these place-frames are also ethically charged discourses of relatedness and connection. Like Martin, then, I assume that these place-frames have – explicitly or otherwise – a diagnostic dimension. I also assume that these place-frames imply a sensorium of the body and its possible co-ordination, engagement and immersion in a world (Thrift 2004).

It should be noted, however, that whereas Martin deals exclusively with place-frames produced by neighbourhood (or activist) organizations, the representations or place-frames that I will be analysing come both from advocacy and academic sources (the two are not always distinct) but also from sales brochures and advertising campaigns. In an obvious sense I am not comparing like with like. Nevertheless, I am comparing representations and discourses about places, and these different representations and discourses are, I would argue, amenable to critical juxtaposition and analysis.

The first of these place-frames contrasts the allegedly alienated and alienating places of urban and certain rural environments with allegedly authentic places such as the ancestral domains of indigenous peoples – peoples that are said to sustain a spiritual or animistic relation with their landscapes and whose life-ways are claimed to embody an ecocentric consciousness of respect for land and nature (Gariguez 2008). Elements within the Catholic Church in the Philippines alongside secular NGOs and POs (People's Organizations, or grass-roots movements) have played a critical role in articulating this place-frame to try to defend or preserve these ancestral forest-places and their allegedly "natural" inhabitants from exploitation by powerful corporations and other interests. By linking groups together for purposes including lobbying for policy change, engaging in more direct forms of protest, and working to develop links between spatially dispersed groups that might otherwise easily be marginalized by politically and economically powerful interests, activists have coalesced into an effective lobbying force that can boast some notable successes including moratoria on mining in a number of provinces (Porio & Taylor 1995; Braganza 1996; Hsiao *et al.* 1999; Magno 1999; Reed 2002; Holden & Jacobsen 2007; Gariguez 2008; Café 2009; Walpole 2010).

The second of these place-frames relates to representations of and discourses about urban, mobile and disciplinary spaces (Foucault 1991). Visible particularly in brochures and newspaper and television advertisements marketing new gated housing developments in and around Manila, this place-frame promises family security and offers a vision of mobile, urban living hand in hand with nature in contrast to the polluted and potentially hazardous urban dwellings located in other parts of the city and its environs.

These different place-frames certainly reflect class and status divisions in Filipino society and, perhaps more abstractly, the schizophrenia of modernity. To the extent that modernity authorizes, simultaneously, nostalgia for a natural or originary and indeed rural co-presence *and* faith in the promise of a sociality discoverable through the application of scientific procedure to the question of social organization, both place-frames presuppose the power of places to generate particular types of relationships and connections: if the ancestral places of the archipelago's indigenous peoples can "magically" produce ecologically sustainable ways of life, then the mobile, disciplinary urban spaces

of Manila's new gated housing developments will "magically" foster the rational life. Each place-frame, therefore, seems to have its "other": the other of the ancestral domain is the rural squatter community, the city, the gated urban community and the mall (Hedman & Sidel 2000). The other of the new gated housing development is the ubiquitous slum-urb and the un-policed and "savage" mountains and forests. Both are also thereby constituted in and through the implicitly reflexive notion of risk (Beck 1996). For the former, it is the existential risk of alienation and the potential extinction of indigenous and even sacred life-ways, whereas the latter invokes risks of noise, pollution, crime and insecurity. For both, the connectedness of people to one another and to "nature" is at issue as is the human body and the styles of its co-ordination and engagement with or immersion in a world.

As such, allow me to suggest the following: places are not *a priori*, natural facts patiently awaiting excavation and scholarly enquiry (Gupta & Ferguson 1997: 4). Rather, places are constituted or fabricated in and through specific imaginaries, representations, discourses and narratives which act as frames which authorize and produce certain types of social relationships and connections. It is through particular representations and articulations of connectedness and relatedness that places come into being. Therefore, in order to understand the problematic of religion, environmentalism and citizenship in the Philippines one must study not places as such or as given, but the representations and discourses through which places are framed, constituted and mobilized as sites for producing particular connectivities, relationships, embodied subjectivities and sensoria. By focusing on place-frames as a means for recognizing and bringing into existence particular kinds of space, and for organizing perceptions of and calling to life specific engagements with said space such that said space becomes a certain kind of place, it becomes possible to critically analyse the place-frame as a mode for interpellating or calling forth particular kinds of embodied subjects and experiences (Althusser 2008). That the two place-frames I have identified and selected for study in this chapter appear to be trying to generate quite different senses of relatedness and quite different kinds of seeing, feeling, hearing and touching, chimes with Thrift's observation that "the constellation of senses and what we may consequently regard as sensations goes through periods of regular redefinition and re-embedding" (Thrift 2004: 595). The ancestral and disciplinary place-frames are, as such, means for mobilizing particular senses for what it means to be. Moreover, by comparing these place-frames it would seem to be apparent that the ancestral domain in the Philippines is quite meaningless until and unless it is juxtaposed with the mobile disciplinary, urban space of the gated housing development. It would seem that it is the relationships and connections between and across these sites or place-frames that is important and, in the "friction" (Tsing 2005) they might generate rubbing against each other, one might then begin to imagine new spaces of "*citizenization*" (Smith & Pangsapa 2008: 58) that promise, in the sense suggested by Beck, the emergence of a society that is becoming self-consciously aware of risks that transgress conventional models of calculation and thereby the emergence of a "risk society" that has become reflexive, that is a society that has "become an issue and a problem to itself" (Beck 1996: 32). However, I will conclude by contending that although the contradictions between the ancestral and mobile disciplinary place-frames certainly present the possibility for a "green" and reflexive citizenry, both of these place-frames constitute instead moves towards enclosure and exclusion.

THE ANCESTRAL PLACE-FRAME

The Philippines has been profoundly transformed as a landscape spatially through colonial and post-colonial projects such as urbanism, intensive agriculture, tourism and resource extraction which can be understood as processes of "unmapping", where landscapes once alive and animated by meaningful relations between peoples, animals, places and secret spots have been reconfigured as empty, disenchanted and "ready to be dismembered" (Tsing 2005: 28–9). If the above claim is taken as a point of departure – and it is indeed a requisite assumption that is constitutive of much environmental advocacy and activism in the Philippines – then the place-frame that structures much contemporary environmental discourse in the Philippines is an explicit attempt by various Church-affiliated NGOs, POs and others to contest the alleged "emptiness" of Filipino landscapes and to assert instead their connective and relational abundance.

This point of departure or assumption purports to be at once a description of a state of affairs and a diagnosis of the problems faced by the archipelago's "natural" environment and Filipino relations with or connections to it. As a diagnosis it follows the contours of a critique long established in European social theory and philosophy from Nietzschean and Heideggerian prophecies *vis-à-vis* the inauthenticity of the highly urbanized many-too-many to Weberian and Marxist anxieties about the dis-enchantment of social life in modernity (compare with Thrift 2004: 596). Fundamental to this critique is the anxiety that nature – both in a quantitative sense that includes objects and entities such as trees, rivers, mountains, oceans and so forth, but also in a qualitative sense that encompasses relationships not just between people but also between people and trees, rivers, mountains and oceans – is being replaced as a co-ordinating dwelling by an artifice of concrete, steel and glass. The textures and relational connectivities that these surfaces enable are understood to be quite un-natural and de-humanizing. As Gariguez argues, "the ecological problem [in the Philippines] is but part of the present alienation of the human person", an alienation that apparently stems from a (Western) "mechanistic and materialistic point of view" that reduces *all* decisions to a "market utilitarian calculus" (Gariguez 2008: 4). The ancestral diagnostic, then, claims that environmental degradation will follow – as surely as night follows day – when and where "the prosperity and security of the greater global economy takes priority over local needs and the personal anxiety of achievement overtakes the integrity of community" (Walpole 2010: iv). Thus there emerges a powerful sense that if (capitalist) development is not humanized and brought under democratic control and accountability then certain "other" (natural) connectivities and relationships will become lost or extinct. To be sure, the prospect of loss and extinction is not to be felt through the lens of any cold evolutionism that merely shrugs its shoulders at an apparent failure to adapt. So what are these other connectivities? And where are they to be found? And why should anyone care about the possibility or indeed likelihood of their demise?

Short answers to the above questions are quite straightforward. First, the other connectivities in question refer to a religious or animist sensibility that accords the environment and its trees, rivers, mountains and oceans a sacred significance. Second, this sensibility is allegedly to be found structuring the life-ways of the archipelago's indigenous peoples who dwell in the so-called "ancestral domains". Third, the extinction of these life-ways would be calamitous not only because it would represent a further diminution of human

cultural variety but, perhaps more importantly, would constitute the disappearance of a form or way of life that, it is alleged, has the potential to renew and revitalize human relationships with the natural environment in general.

A distinctive feature, then, of the ancestral place-frame is its deployment of tropes of "alienation" and "authenticity" specifically in relation to the archipelago's indigenous peoples. These indigenous peoples allegedly represent a vital resource for the re-enchantment of Filipino culture and society precisely because the indigenous peoples have come to function as signifiers of sustainable or "green" life-ways (compare with Marasigan 1985). Moreover, their life-ways are sustainable or "green" precisely because of an animist dimension to those life-ways which allegedly sacralizes human relationships with the "natural" world. In fact, indigenous connectivity with nature – with other species, other humans and the land – is said to be constituted in terms of two practices: first, *buhay ay lupa at lupa ay buhay* and second, *inang kalikasan*. The first means "life is earth and earth is life" while the second means simply "mother nature".

Buhay ay lupa at lupa ay buhay posits an essential connectivity between human life and well-being and the natural environment in which the well-being of humans and the environment is constituted reciprocally and relationally. It constitutes nature as the source of authentic sustenance of all peoples. The earth is a form of sustenance that urban dwellers have allegedly been detached from but which allegedly remains real for indigenous peoples (images of the countryside continue to have powerful resonance in the Philippines: indeed, Filipinos will quite effortlessly declare, over coffee in an air-conditioned mall, that the countryside is the dwelling place of the real or true Filipino [*tunay na Pilipino*]). The well-being of the earth in like fashion depends on what is framed as an ethic of "stewardship" that is said to be practised by indigenous peoples. This ethic of stewardship arises from the idea that the landscape and its trees, rivers, mountains and oceans are inherently sacred. Indeed, according to Gariguez, "the ancestral domain comprises of interacting landscapes of human community, nature ecosystems and the living spirits of the land, which include also the spirits of their ancestors" (Gariguez 2008: 212). The presence of the ancestors in the landscape suggests a temporal dimension to this ethic which stretches backwards in time in a way that renders the living responsible for maintaining the dwelling places of the ancestors which include the same forests, rivers, mountains and oceans that are targets for various forms of resource extraction. This tradition of stewardship can also be projected forwards in time to include the unborn as future inhabitants and custodians of the ancestral dwelling places.

Inang kalikasan suggests that the relationship between nature and human beings is an analogue of the relationship enjoyed between a mother and her children. For Filipinos that relationship is or ought to be defined by respect by juniors for seniors, and for a duty of care between them that creates a cycle of reciprocity between the mother and her offspring. This "folk" theory of connectivity is glossed by Church activists in such a way that it appears to intersect with Catholic theological conceptions of the allegedly proper mode for human relationships with God and to God's creation.

In the interviews I conducted, the idea that the indigenous peoples exemplify an eco-centric consciousness, that the indigenous peoples thereby represent a potential source of renewal for Filipino culture and society as a whole and the idea that this consciousness is profoundly informed by an animistic conception of nature was repeated over and over again. But the ancestral place-frame depends on essentializing strategies – not merely the

essentialization of nature but equally the naturalization of culture, specifically so-called indigenous culture. According to Gariguez:

> ecological spirituality is not a newly-discovered path or perspective. On the contrary, this kind of spirituality that respects the intimate relationship with the earth had been part of the traditions of the indigenous peoples since time immemorial and had been a constitutive motif of their culture, beliefs and their very identity as a people. (Gariguez 2008: 29)

Moreover, "the salvation of our civilization and Christian religious tradition may well depend on our ability to draw insights from the tribal religious experience which will help us recover the presence of God in creation and live lightly on the earth" (*ibid.*: 8). Gariguez is a priest, a scholar and an activist who, it has to be said, has courageously risked his own life in trying to protect the Mangyan-Alangan from irresponsible development. Gariguez frames the Mangyan-Alangan as somehow outside the anxieties of modernity and as bearers of a sacred knowledge that is potentially transformative of the Philippines as a whole (*ibid.*: 16–17). In similar fashion, Café – who has also conducted research among the Mangyan-Alangan of Mindoro – frames the Mangyan-Alangan as a discrete culture threatened by the violence of development. As such, he posits an "unadulterated" Mangyan-Alangan cultural identity which, on being "confronted with etic/global culture" undergoes a "transformation", a process he claims is producing "mutations" (Café 2009: 55).

A specific cultural sensorium, then, is under threat. It is a "natural" sensorium that co-ordinates the individual temporally through ritual acts towards the ancestors, spatially through being able to recognize the dwelling places of the *duende* – the spirits of the forest – and morally through the importance this frame ascribes to the preservation of indigenous traditions and knowledge. However, the strategic essentialization of indigenous culture and the places of indigeneity – the so-called ancestral domains – mask important historical facts. First, indigenous culture, as a discrete, perfectly integrated intersubjectivity and unit of practice and belief existing in harmony with the "natural environment" is an anthropological fiction (Gupta & Ferguson 1997). Second, the idea that such groups have lived immemorially as responsible stewards of the natural environment is – notwithstanding the vital knowledge these peoples have of their environments – a product of the romantic imagination (Stocking 1996). Third, the designation of specific indigenous peoples to specific ancestral domains is a legally enacted fiction of the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act (IPRA) of 1997 which does not necessarily account for a long history of indigenous mobility or conflict between lowlanders and highlanders, highlanders and colonizers, highlanders and missionaries as well as highlanders and, for example, mining corporations. In other words, the framing of authentic place – of the ancestral domain – posits these places as enduring and authentic outposts of indigenous life-ways that allegedly constitute a resource for de-alienating human relationships with the environment and more generally. However, as Alejo (2000) seems to suggest, environmental struggle is not about protecting an ancestral place and a pristine people from the depredations of irresponsible development. Rather, it is through struggle that a place and its people become "ancestral" and "pristine". Fourth, is it even really true that the indigenous peoples live a sustainable way of life in harmony with the natural environment?

They are certainly not entirely trusted as bearers of this "wisdom" by those conducting advocacy on their behalf. I suspect that this anxiety on the part of Manila's NGO, PO and Church elites also reflects ongoing power relations between the political centre of the Philippines and rural areas. Manila, for good or for ill, is not only the political centre of the archipelago, it is also the centre of the advocacy and activist networks. Their relationships with the ancestral periphery are complex, and mirror as much as challenge the centralizing structures of the Church and the state.

THE MOBILE DISCIPLINARY PLACE-FRAME

The second place-frame I want to focus on emerges from the marketing strategies of property developers whose brochures and advertisements combine sensual representations of homes, families, leisure and panoramic views of lakes, mountains and sunrises. I call it the "mobile disciplinary" place-frame. But, in what sense is it a place-frame at all, let alone an ethically charged discourse of relatedness and connection? The images and texts offered for analysis here do not appear to offer moral or normative statements on the Filipino landscape. Or do they? I would argue that these images frame an imagined and desirable community. The apparent other of both the ancestral place-frame and the mobile disciplinary place-frame is the ubiquitous slum-urb. But if the ancestral place-frame yearns for a "natural" authenticity to human relationships and with the "natural" environment, the mobile disciplinary place-frame calls forth the desire for nature objectified and aestheticized and for a science of living where social relationships are mediated by gendered and competitive pursuits such as golf and intelligent machine-systems that keep the air fresh, the temperature cool and the "common" *tao* out.

A distinctive feature of urban development in the Philippines is that one purchases primarily an image or representation. Developers produce simulations (Baudrillard 1983) of what a particular development is projected to resemble once it has been completed. However, that simulation will only be realized if and until sufficient sales have been completed. These simulations invoke a quite different sensorium of place and of human connections with place and nature than that to be found in the place-frame of the ancestral domain. Here the emphasis is on clean, modern living, mobility and connectedness to infrastructural developments such as airports and roads and also to a sculpted and domesticated nature. Some of these developments are in rural areas on Manila's outskirts, others within the city itself, and all emphasize security as against spectral risks of violence, noise, pollution and overcrowding.

For example, Fini Homes offers "an oasis in the heart of the city" with "wide landscaped avenues, sidewalks, underground power and telephone lines and plenty of open spaces and greenery covered by lush gardens, parks and playgrounds. Fini Homes offers freedom of space and time, allowing you to relax and re-connect with nature" and to "have peace of mind with [a] 24-hour security post, roving guards and [a] perimeter fence". Ayala Greenfield Estates promises "24 hour protection from a highly trained team supervised by the Ayala security force" and a "sanctuary ... an environment where nature blends flawlessly with man-made comforts" that includes not just homes but a golf course, a club house as well as a "15-hectare span of forest, birds and rolling terrain ... From hiking, fishing and biking, to reading, writing and meditation, there are unlimited

possibilities for you to explore." "From the moment you settle in", states the brochure, "everyday details are seamlessly orchestrated to keep you worry-free". In similar fashion, Manhattan Garden City promises the opportunity "to savour the beautiful scenes of nature" in the heart of the city in a manner that enhances the "creative and expressive you", while Signa Designer Residences in Manila's busy Ayala Avenue will nevertheless "feel like a million miles from a busy city with its tropical gardens and beautiful landscapes". Sandari Batulao, by contrast, is a "mountainside living" development. It promises "majestic views" of Mount Batulao, Mount Talamitan, Nasugbu Bay and the South China Sea. "Savour crisp, cool mountain air. Thrill to the beauty of spectacular mountain sunsets from the comfort of your own patio. Enjoy ... the rustic charm of the mountainside as you and your family spend quality moments together." Nature and "rustic" local culture have been transformed into a spectacle for aesthetic pleasure, "made better by the convenience of a nearby golf course, leisure centres, churches and schools".

These developments combine the promise of pan-optic technologies – gating, permanent security and perimeter fences – with mobility, stressing infrastructural linkages to the non-places of "super-modernity" – highways, service areas and airports but also schools and churches (Augé 1995). The oblique references to the world of work are complemented by references to family and to family activities. Nature is a central selling point in this respect. Although the emphasis is on nature controlled and subjugated to an aestheticized and disciplined sensorium of walking, cycling, jogging, golfing, tennis and swimming, these activities are offered as ways of imagining families coming together to participate in shared pursuits.

Clearly, the sense of place articulated here is completely at odds with the place-frame of the ancestral domain. These oases and sanctuaries are of course framed and advertised with regard to other, "spectral" places: the impoverished rural town or village, the wild and lawless backwoods and mountains, the logged hillside and polluted river, the chaotic and overcrowded city with its slum-urbs, traffic, pollution and the ever-present fear of violent crime. The sensorium on offer in these gated housing developments is one of isomorphic co-ordination between the de-natured modern dwelling and the rationalized, disenchanted body that at the same time refracts powerful and deeply troubling inequalities in Filipino society. The well-to-do are able, by fair means and foul, to shut themselves off from Manila's Rabelaisian excesses and to secure for themselves a way of life for which nature is only an object of spectacular contemplation and for which social relationships are moral relationships only to the extent that they concern parents and children (the elderly are conspicuous by their absence from the property developer's place-frame images). In this place-frame everything is in the future, and the future, if these images are to be believed, will be comfortable, secure and thereby happy.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have attempted to bring to the problematic of religion, environmentalism and citizenship in the Philippines, an analysis of two Filipino place-frames. I designated the first the "ancestral" place-frame and the second the "mobile disciplinary" place-frame. Whereas the first emerges from the advocacy and activism of Church, Church-affiliated and secular organizations working to try to protect the archipelago's indigenous

peoples, their animist and sacred-relational practices and the ancestral domains themselves from the violence and degradation of unfettered development, the second emerges from the brochures and advertisements of property developers marketing new gated housing developments in and around Manila. I have suggested that these place-frames are ethically and morally inflected and that they imply and call forth quite different connectivities, embodied subjectivities and sensoria. A critical, secular and citizenizing animism has been a persistent presence in these deliberations as a site for mobilizing dispositions and connectivities for which nature is not something out there but for a nature in which we – a "we" that must extend beyond humans – are all involved.

It would be an error to regard me as some kind of passive, neutral observer in the research that went into the writing of this chapter. The Philippines needs more than a legal framework to protect its ever-dwindling natural resources and its peoples, wherever they may be. It also needs the political will to ensure that minority peoples, politicians, police, journalists, judges, activists, courts and lawyers cannot simply be manipulated or intimidated by powerful interests and powerful families. At the present time no such will exists, and good people continue to put their lives at risk simply for standing up against mining, logging and other interests. As a consequence, the Church continues to be practically the only institution Filipinos can trust to speak out against environmental and other abuses. But the Church – and religion in general – offers tricky ground for environmentalists. Is it possible to square an evolutionary account of the origins of the earth and of the human species with a religious account? If it is not possible, where does that leave the climate science that makes clear the role of human behaviour in global warming? Perhaps this is not really the issue at all. Certainly, Fr Walpole's work with the ESSC[3] suggests that there is no necessary contradiction between science and religion. But the claim that the archipelago's indigenous peoples possess a wisdom that constitutes a skeleton key for unlocking the door to a sustainable future is problematic. The complete absence of deer today in Mount Banahaw, for example, could hardly be attributed to the responsible stewardship of locals, and the fact that said deer were hunted out of existence will not be addressed simply by blaming it on migrants to the area. While the "blame" for environmentally unfriendly practices could persuasively be laid at the door (so to speak) of capitalistic imperatives, iniquity and injustice, does or can animism offer a livelihood critique that is at once politically alive to world systemic rather than merely local inequalities *and* the worldliness of human beings alongside myriad forms of life? And, how to escape the surely inexorable conclusion that the *real* reason indigenous peoples live (and lived) apparently sustainable life-ways has nothing to do with religion, animism or anything else, but rather more mundane factors such as population density?

Perhaps the most important consequence of environmental advocacy and protest in the Philippines has been the direct and indirect "*citizenization*" (Smith & Pangsapa 2008: 58) of so many people. From participation in organic farming initiatives to direct confrontation with loggers to fair-trade purchasing at a store selling ecologically sustainable products and everything in between, Filipinos are becoming increasingly aware that their environment is fragile and vulnerable and that their health and well-being are critically intertwined with the health and well-being of their rivers, forests, mountains and oceans. In the gaps and contradictions between the two place-frames identified in this chapter, Filipinos are becoming self-consciously and reflexively aware, in the sense suggested by Beck (1996), of their very own "risk society". The aggregate of such small observations,

and of thoughts, acts and decisions, will not change much by themselves. But if they could be articulated together politically, then real change might be possible.

But I cannot leave my conclusions there because entwined in discussions of citizenships and environmentalisms – discussions that so frequently evoke the post-national and the global in effusive celebration of "openness and ... fluidity" (Shamir 2005: 197) and "mix, blend, [and] fusion" (Cunningham 2004: 346) – there is a darker truth. As such, let me return to the apparent oxymoron, "mobile disciplinary". Following the work of Shamir (2005) and Cunningham (2004), I take it to refer to the idea that the socio-logic of globalization is not the movement or the flow or the network but *enclosure* and *exclusion*, or what Shamir calls the "global mobility regime" (Shamir 2005: 199). It is my contention that both the place-frames I have identified in this chapter constitute instances of enclosure and exclusion. In the epoch of globalization and extant conflicts between the power of states to confer rights, the power of capital to overcome regulatory regimes, the power of global discourses of human, environmental and indigenous rights to provide avenues for social justice and the power of local communities to protect themselves against the violence and depredations of international capital and the state, the ancestral and the mobile disciplinary place-frames constitute, above all, fractured attempts to regulate social space and to enact new practices of enclosure and exclusion. Such acts have uncertain consequences but, if anything, they point to a future much, much darker than that imagined by Beck (1996).

NOTES

1. See, for example, "Is Weather Chaos Linked to Warming?", *Philippine Daily Inquirer* (16 August 2010) and "Floods in Pakistan, Drought in Russia and a Global Wake-Up Call", *Daily Telegraph* (16 August 2010).
2. "Tacloban Mayor Says No to Mining in City" and "Tensions in Benguet Town Due to Mining Exploration", *Philippine Daily Inquirer* (16 August 2010), and "Fight to Keep Burial Ground Sacred Unites Illigan Villagers", *Philippine Daily Inquirer* (20 August 2010).
3. Environmental Science for Social Change, a Jesuit research institute that promotes environmental sustainability and social justice through the integration of scientific methodologies and social processes.

10

The invisibles: toward a phenomenology of the spirits

David Abram

To live is to dance with an unknown partner whose steps we can never wholly predict, to improvise within a field of forces whose shifting qualities we may feel as they play across our skin, or as they pulse between our cells, yet whose ultimate nature we can never grasp or possess in thought. To affirm our own animal existence, and so to awaken inside the world, is to renounce the pretension of a view from outside that might some day finally fathom and figure every aspect of the world's workings. It is to acknowledge the horizon of uncertainty that surrounds any instance of knowledge, to accept that our life is at every point nourished and sustained by the mysterious.

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If we really are corporeally embedded in the cosmos we see and sense around us, carnally situated in the midst of this earthly plenum, than we encounter the real only from within the depths of itself, and hence each aspect that we meet hides other aspects behind it. Sure, there are many facets or forces of the world that we can name – sun, soil and cliff, bear and bird, full moon and sickle moon, cloud, rain, river. Yet the very presence of these beings in the same field that we ourselves inhabit entails that there are aspects of each that we do not see; every visible facet of the world speaks to us of dimensions that are not visible.

It is not necessary to imagine other scales of existence – microscopic or sub-microscopic – in order to notice the world's invisibility. Nor is it necessary to conjure immaterial or supernatural dimensions. It is enough, simply, to attend to the sensuous landscape that materially surrounds you, and to the very ordinary presences that populate that landscape. Consider, for example, the unseen character of that which is hidden *behind* the things that you do see. Each opaque entity occludes the things behind it, and each has its own other side that is concealed from our eyes at this moment. We may alter our position in order to glimpse that other side – but now *different* facets have hidden themselves, and presences that we saw clearly a moment earlier have now vanished, eclipsed by those in

front of them. Wherever we move, and however we contort ourselves, we cannot dispel this strange invisibility of the visible world, the way it hides behind itself, withdrawing from our gaze. In the most close and intimate sense, we encounter this curious concealment in the unseen nature of the back of our own body; in the grandest sense we feel it in the way that the wide horizon of the visible landscape steadily hides, or holds in abeyance, all those lands that lie beyond it.

Yet there is another very basic mode of concealment that lends its mystery to the visible world: that which is hidden *inside* each visible thing. The inside of the many buildings we often pass on our way to school, the woody interior of a young maple tree, the interior density of a stone or a mountain, the internal physiology of a snake whom we've just disturbed, slithering off into the grass – almost all the visible presences that surround us bear a depth that remains hidden to us, an inner depth we cannot see. We experience this second form of invisibility, most intimately, as the concealment of our own bodily interior. Certainly we may sometimes *imagine* this interior, envisioning the inside of our body according to images that we've seen in our anatomy textbooks. Yet there is a sense of spaciousness, and light, in these conjured images that is contrary to the obviously dark and tightly packed nature of one's real interior, of which we have no visible experience. Only the surgeon (and the subsistence hunter, who regularly skins and butchers his prey for food) catches a furtive glimpse of this dark interior that nevertheless remains, while we're alive, almost wholly hidden from view.

In the most public sense, this second mode of invisibility is experienced in the hidden, or unseen, nature of whatever exists under the ground. Here too, while archaeologists may dig down beneath the topsoil in hopes of uncovering traces of prior cultures, and while geologists have learned to decipher the various strata of rock rendered visible by a highway cut or a river canyon, the vast bulk of what subsists at various depths beneath the ground is entirely hidden from our perception.

Each of these modes of invisibility – that which is hidden *behind* the things that we see, and that which is hidden *inside* the things we see – lends a pervasive sense of enigma, and unknowableness, to the everyday world of our direct experience. An intuition that, despite all our accumulated knowledge regarding the workings of the world, we are in continual, felt relationship with unseen realms. It is a sense of the world's mysteriousness – a feeling that is largely forgotten in the modern context, when many of us ponder the earthly world as though we were not entirely a part of this world, as though we were outside of nature, staring at a satellite image of the earth on our computer screens, or gazing at the "scenery" as though it were a flat backdrop. This earthly world loses its mystery when we presume to stand apart from it, when we consider it as a determinate set of objects to be measured and tallied, or as a stock of natural resources to be managed by humankind. Yet as soon as we return to the immediacy of the present moment, and hence to our ongoing, animal experience in the midst of this world, then the flatness dissolves, and the enigmatic depth of the world becomes apparent.

Indeed, the two modes of concealment that we've just noticed have everything to do with depth; in fact, they each reveal a unique meaning of the term "depth". The hiddenness of that which lies *behind* visible things, and ultimately beyond the horizon of the

visible landscape, is a function of horizontal depth, which photographers call "depth of field". It is that deep dimension to which we allude whenever we speak of the relative closeness or distance of perceived things.

Meanwhile, the concealment of that which rests *inside* the visible bodies around us – within the tree trunk, and the stone, and ultimately within the solid earth itself, under the ground of the perceivable landscape – is also a matter of depth, in this case inward, vertical depth: that precipitous dimension that we allude to when we speak of the depth of a dark lake, or the local depth of the bedrock, or the yawning depth of an abyss.

Both of these depths – the enigmatic depth of the distances and the alluring depth of the abyss – become evident and operative only for a creature that is materially embedded in the landscape that he or she perceives, carnally situated in the midst of the sensuous. Each lends its unique mystery to the world, ensuring that there is a recalcitrant otherness to the things we perceive, a certain resistance of the world to our human desires and designs.

Of course there are other unseen dimensions – the unseen character of sounds, for instance, or of smells, or even of thoughts. But while it is quite possible (even simple) to imagine a visible world that lacks these various dimensions – a field of visible things unaccompanied by sounds, or smells, or thoughts – it is impossible to imagine a visible field without the invisible dimensions that we've been discussing. They are entirely necessary to the world's visibility.

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There remains, however, a third form of invisibility that is integral to the visible world, a third mode of concealment entirely necessary to the visual surroundings.

In concert with the unseen presence of what lies, at any moment, *behind* the visible things, as well as the hidden existence of that which dwells *within* those visible bodies, there is also the invisible presence of that which moves *between* the visible things – the unseen atmosphere, the air.

Itself invisible, the air is the medium *through which* we see all visible things. And here as well, this third dimension of invisibility corresponds to a particular aspect of depth. It is the third and most profound meaning of depth: the depth of immersion.

This is the most primordial sense of depth, a dimension to which we refer whenever we say that we are "in the depths" of something – wandering in the depths of a great sadness, or caught up in the depths of an all-consuming task – as thoroughly as fish are immersed in the sea. Or as thoroughly as our breathing bodies are immersed in, and permeated by, the unseen atmosphere of this world.

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The other side of things, the inside of things, and the medium between things: three aspects of depth, each of which corresponds to a unique form of invisibility that haunts the visible world. The secret character of that which lies under the ground; the unknown nature of that which waits beyond the horizon; and the mysteries unfolding within the invisible air itself.

For the human animal, there is no place, no region of the earth that is not triply haunted in this way. Yet the specific quality of these three enigmatic dimensions, and

the precise manner in which they intersect and inform one another, is curiously different in each locale. It is this unique conjunction of invisibles, we might say, that defines the *genius loci*, the particular power of any place.

It is obvious, then, that from the perspective of our gazing bodies, the sensuous world is riddled with uncertainty. Our most immediate experience of the earth around us brings at the same time a felt awareness of obscure and ambiguous realms. Indeed, the very visibility of our world implies, from the first, an array of unseen dimensions whose reality we can sense yet whose enigmatic invisibility simply cannot be overcome.

A feel for the mysterious and the unseen, in other words, is entirely proper to our experience of the material surroundings. Invisibility is not, at first, an attribute of some immaterial or supernatural domain beyond the sensuous, but is integral to our encounter with visible nature itself. While there are, to be sure, many shapely and richly coloured things that we can point to or specify with some precision, the relations between these visible things – the ways that they influence one another, and influence us – remain hidden. We know that plants at a distance from one another nevertheless exchange pollen between themselves, and that they attract insects and other pollinators who approach them from afar – yet the precise vector of these exchanges, or the atmospheric gradients that effect such distant attractions, remain unseen. The abundance of trees in certain regions seems to affect the prevalence and density of the visible clouds that sometimes gather above them, yet the operative tensions and flows that enact this influence remain invisible. So, too, the rains that fall from those clouds upon the ground seem to deepen the green and leafing life of those trees, yet the paths taken by rain once it vanishes into the earth – the precise pathways whereby that water is first drawn into a lattice of rootlets and then up through the thicker roots into the trunk, and finally distributed among those many leaves – are concealed from our blinking eyes. Countless flows, torsions and tensions structure and transform the breathing terrain we inhabit, yet the vast majority of those flows are hidden from our direct apprehension.

Nonetheless, by virtue of our carnal enmeshment in the same field as those trees and those clouds, we can sometimes intuit or feel the pull of these unfoldings as they subtly play across our flesh. Other unseen flows can be sensed only by extending our bodily imagination outward, into the voluminous depths of the living landscape.

Yet while such invisible forces and torsions may make themselves felt, we almost never perceive them directly – and hence we cannot delineate them with any precision, can hardly define or even describe them without violating their ephemeral quality, without falsifying their constitutive invisibility. Although we sense that such enigmatic unfoldings make up a large part of our world, we can allude to them only obliquely, indirectly, wielding figures of speech that are purposely – even playfully – ambiguous.

Such, for instance, are the multiple "intelligences", "powers" and "spirits" that populate the oral discourse of indigenous peoples throughout the world. Every community that lives in close and intimate contact with undomesticated nature – whether hunters

and gatherers, or subsistence horticulturalists – acknowledges the myriad energies that move in the invisible depths of the sensuous, honouring these powers with regular gestures of offering in return for the steady provision of earthly sustenance. Cultures whose reliance upon the animate earth is not, as yet, mediated by a crowd of technologies cannot help but experience the seasonal nourishments upon which they depend as gifts that offer themselves from the unseen heart of the mysterious. The plants we consume for food quietly emerge *from the dark depths underground*; the bison or caribou arrive each year *from distances hidden beyond the horizon*; the water that quenches our throats is replenished by clouds that somehow gather and materialize *from the invisible depths of the medium*.

Only mistakenly, then, do we interpret the unseen "spirits" honoured by indigenous, oral peoples as wholly disembodied, supernatural entities – immaterial phantasms conjured by a naïve and primitive imagination. Are the streams and vortices in the invisible air disembodied? Is there no materiality to these jostling surges and subsidences that compose the fluid expanse in which we're immersed? Or to an unseen cloud of lichen spores riding those currents like a transparent silken cloth? Is the hidden sap rising within the trunk of a Ponderosa pine, or the infection spreading through the body of a young elk, supernatural? The "spirits" or "invisibles" spoken of by oral, indigenous peoples are not aphysical beings, but are a way of acknowledging the myriad dimensions of the sensuous that we cannot see at any moment – a way of honouring the manifold invisibilities moving within the visible landscape – and of keeping oneself and one's culture awake to such unseen and ungraspable aspects of the real. They are a way of holding our senses open to what is necessarily obscured from view, a way of staying in felt relation to the unseen waters that sustain us, to the invisible tides in which we are immersed. As such, an acknowledgment of "the spirits" is part of the practice of humility. It is a practice necessary to avoid endangering one's community – a simple and parsimonious way of remembering our ongoing dependence upon powers we did not create, whose activities we cannot control.

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In truth, it is only we of the literate, technological West who tend to construe "the spirit" as something utterly insubstantial, entirely beyond all sensory ken. It is only literate, Christian civilization that assumes the spirit is something entirely outside of the world that our breathing bodies inhabit. The word "spirit", of course, derives from the Latin *spiritus* – a word that originally signified "wind" and "breath"– an ancestry it plainly shares with the English term "respiration". By severing the term "spirit" from its very palpable, earthly provenance as the wind, alphabetic civilization transformed a mystery that was once simply *invisible* into a mystery that was wholly *intangible* – incapable of being felt by *any* of the bodily senses. By thus pushing the spirit out of the sensuous sphere, civilization divested the material world of its enigmatic depths, of its distances and its concealments. Stripped of its constitutive strangeness, voided of its obscurities and invisibilities, the material world could now be construed as a *pure presence*, a pure *object* capable of being seen, at least in principle, all at once. Capable of being known, at least in principle, in its entirety – without any hindrances or ambiguities. And we, the pure knowers, no longer experienced material reality from within its own depths;

we now hovered apart from the palpable world, surveying this grand object with the impartial gaze of a disembodied intelligence – a pure mind or subject without physical qualities or constraints.

Only when we pretend to look upon the world from this bodiless vantage does the world appear as a wholly determinate and defineable presence, capable of being known in its entirety. Whenever we speak of nature in strictly objective terms, whenever we consider the material world as a compilation of determinate events entirely susceptible to quantitative description, we tacitly lean upon this curious notion of nature as a sheer plenum that can be known from every angle all at once – a plenum from which we, the knowers, are necessarily absent. Sure, our animal bodies may be included within that measureable and mechanical nature, but our conscious, knowing selves are not. We float apart from that nature, pondering the material plenum from outside.

It has proved itself a very useful illusion, this view from outside the world. Yet it is now evident that *by treating* the material world as an object from which we ourselves are absent, we are rapidly wrecking the ability of the biosphere to support our human presence. The topsoils, forced to produce ever more abundantly, are rapidly becoming exhausted, depleted of nutrients. The waters, long a convenient dumpsite for our industrial wastes, have become toxic. The torn atmosphere no longer veils smooth-skinned creatures like us from the incoming fire of the sun. The earth shivers ever more rapidly into a fever, while numerous other species – whole styles of sensitivity and earthly sentience – tumble helter-skelter into the gaping maw of extinction. It will likely not be long before our own clever species follows them.

Unless, that is, we wake ourselves from the long delusion of our detachment from the bodily earth – to find ourselves included, once again, in the breathing body of the world. Unless we begin to engage the land around us as attentive participants within its vast life, letting our actions draw guidance from the other participants – the other *beings* – whose sentience is so richly entangled with ours. Unless we emerge from our technological cocoon, shaking our senses free from their stunned immobility, stretching open our eyes to receive the sun's glint off the wing of a peregrine circling above the city buildings, and opening our ears past the play of words toward the voices of silence.

For it is not just our technological entrancements that hold us aloof from the earthborn world, but ways of speaking and thinking that have arisen in tandem with those technologies, and which now have an inertia all their own. How to hold our intelligence down here in the thick of things when our language keeps dragging us out of the sensuous, when our words and the way we wield them keep freezing the things, deadening their dynamism, closing them up within themselves as fixed and finished commodities?

Each of us has our moments of startling sensorial clarity – moments when the ever-cycling surge of abstract thoughts dissolves into the liquid eloquence of a brook made swollen by new rainfall, its waters frothing and tumbling over the guttural stones. Yet we rarely hold ourselves in such animal alertness; as soon as we turn toward our friends and begin to talk, our tongue seems to tear our awareness out of the foam and flux of the present moment. As literate persons, we're wedded to the protective fold of reflection, wherein our language loops recursively back upon itself – the speaking self dialoguing

inwardly with its own words, verbal thoughts provoking and then playing off of other verbal thoughts, around and around, to the cool exclusion of the wind upon our skin.

If we wish to renew our solidarity with the more-than-human terrian, then we may need to think in some fresh ways. How, for instance, might a renewed awareness of this earthly world's invisibility translate most easily into thought and speech?

It rained long and hard last night. Walking in the old orchard this morning, stepping across bare patches of dirt between the trees, I look close and notice a small, delicate leaf emerging from under a clump, then peering still closer I notice another, abruptly realizing that the ground is full of the tiny green shoots pushing up from the dark earth. So many seeds must have been sleeping within the dry topsoil, waiting so patiently for the magic of rain! I grasp the thick branch of an apple tree and lean back against it. It bends, then flexes back, springing me back to my vertical stance. I reach toward a leafing twig from another branch and gently tug on one of its leaves. The branch arcs toward me for a moment, and then tugs back. I can feel the adamant life in the leaves, the limber muscle of sap-infused wood. As though merely to bend the branch of an apple tree is a simple experience of reciprocity, a casual meeting between two divergent lives.

Later, I hike up the hill behind the house, walking beneath cottonwoods and then picking my way among juniper and pinyon, then finally up among the tall Ponderosas and a small grove of aspens. Across from me is a south-facing hillside thick with juniper and pine, both the shorter-needled pinyons and the long-needled Ponderosas, a deep green blanket punctuated here and there with the brighter foliage of some low deciduous trees. I know well, from my readings, that deciduous leaves have cells on their surface that are sensitive to the entire spectrum of visible light, and I suspect that needles have the same gift. I learned the complex chemistry of photosynthesis back in high school, and studied it much more intently in college, suitably impressed by the elegant efficiency of the process. But still I wonder: what does it *feel* like to be so rooted in a place, sipping minerals through root filaments that extend themselves, by taste, through the dark density underground, while drinking the sunlight, by day, with your needles? What is the sensation of transmuting sunlight into matter? Surely, we don't really believe that such a metamorphosis happens without any concomitant sensation – that there is no experience whatsoever accompanying this transformation!

It seems clear that leafing trees lack a central nervous system, and hence are probably far less centralized than we in their experiencing. Nonetheless, that sensations are not referred to a central experiencer does not negate the likelihood that sensations are being felt in the leaves themselves. Experience, for most plants, is simply a much more distributed and democratic affair than it is for more hierarchically organized entities like us.

We may wish to assume that a cottonwood tree is utterly void of sensation, and hence that a summer sunrise makes no impression within its flesh. We may convince ourselves that there is no feeling within its leaves that might distinguish an afternoon of steady overcast from an afternoon without clouds, no sensation at the tip of its roots when a drenching rain penetrates the soil, or within the woody sheath of the cambium as the sap rises within the trunk, and that indeed all the daily and seasonal shifts within a tree's metabolism unfold according to a purely mechanical causality, without any need of

sensation and indeed in a complete absence of impressions (in a blank, vacant expanse of mute materiality). But such a notion commits us, once again, to the belief that awareness originates outside of the body and the bodily earth.

For it implies that our own capacity for experience is a sudden arrival in the material field. It entails that our sentience cannot be the elaboration of a sensitivity already inherent in organic matter – a responsiveness already present, for instance, in the myriad microbial entities whose activities collectively enable much of the metabolism of plants and animals – and hence must be a power that abruptly breaks into bodily reality from elsewhere.

If, however, I allow that this wild-fluctuating sensibility I call "me" is born of this upright body as it dreams its way through the world – if I allow, for instance, that my sentience is supported by the air streaming in through my nostrils, and by the manifold sensibilities that move within me (by the keen responsiveness of the bacteria in my gut, and the skittishness of each bundled neuron within my spine) – then a new affinity with the sensuous world begins to blossom. For now the other bodies that I see around me, whether blackbirds or blades of grass, or the iridescent beetle currently crawling across my shirt, all give evidence of their own specific sentience. The emerald leaves dangling like wings from the near branch of an aspen attest by their very hue to a kind of ongoing enjoyment along the fluttering periphery of the tree – an exaltation of chlorophyll. As though one's breathing lungs were flattened out and spread across the smooth surface of one's skin, and the day's warmth brought a tingling transmutation along that surface, one's outermost membranes being ravished by the rays, from dawn until dusk.

Looking up, I notice the needled hillside across the valley now as a curving field of sensations – for my skin feels the variegated green of all those trees as a quiet ecstasy riding the hill. It is an ecstasy of which I myself regularly partake by receiving the radiance of that colour within my eyes, a gentle edge of pleasure that has *always* been there for me in the green hue of leaves and of needles – a subtle delectation in the sight of green, felt much more intensely whenever sunlight spills across the visible grasses or the leafing trees – but which I have become fully conscious of only now, *a kind of empathy in the eyes.*

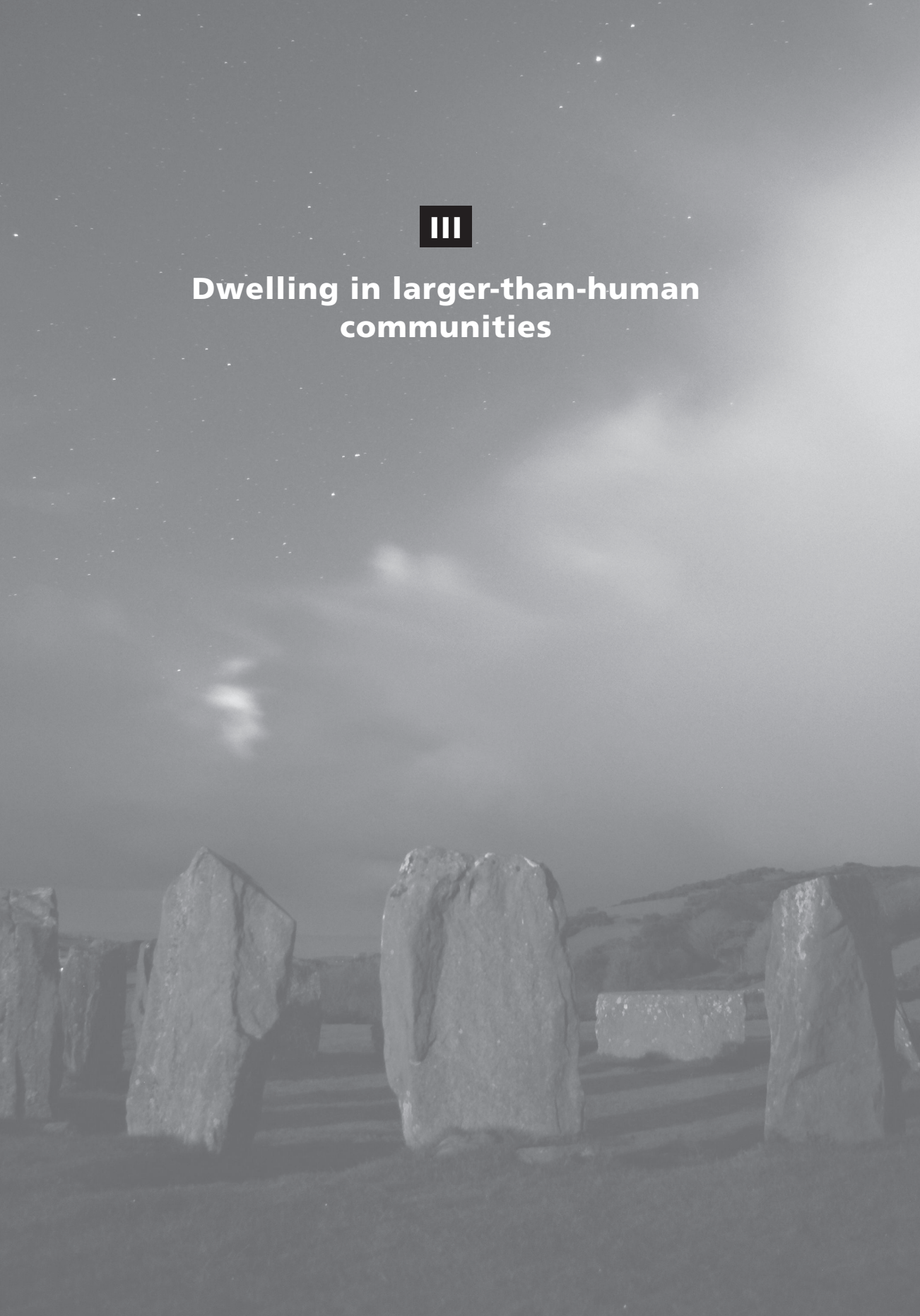
Just where is this empathic contact taking place? Am I slipping out through my eyes and plunging across the valley to meet and feel the pleasure in those needles? Is there some force pouring out from those branches and striding through the thickness of air to meet and join my body here where I stand staring? Somewhere between there and here (perhaps at every point between us), there is contact and a kind of blending. This simple instance of perception, this momentary meeting across the expanse of the valley, cannot help but be influenced by the mood of the medium between us, encouraged or obscured by the many happenings unfolding within that invisible depth – by its local turbulences and eddies, by condensations and warm updraughts and the cool, pellucid calms that briefly open or close within the unseen river of air as it rolls between my body and that breathing hillside.

Our perception of the things around us is everywhere mediated by such invisibles. The reciprocity between our body and the earth is enabled by a host of unseen yet subtly palpable presences, fluid and often fleeting powers whose close-by presence we may feel or whose influence we can intuit yet whose precise contours remain unknown to us. Felt presences whose lives sometimes mesh with or move through us so seamlessly that they cannot be rendered in thought, but only acknowledged. Or honoured with simple gestures of greeting, and sometimes of gratitude.

And so, if we wish to open our awareness to the actual place we inhabit, freeing our senses to perceive the terrestrial reality that so thoroughly enfolds us, it is likely that we will have to welcome *the spirits* back into our speaking.

Whether we allude to them as spirits, or powers, or presences (or even – in keeping with local oral tradition – as gnomes, elves, fairy folk or other "invisibles") it is only by addressing these unseen elementals that we begin to loosen our senses, waking minute sensitivities that have lain dormant for far too long. By allowing such enigmatic phenomena back into our discourse – acknowledging them neither as wholly objective entities nor as purely subjective experiences, but (like whiffs carried on the breeze) as ambiguous realities that move both around us and within us, and sometimes move *through* us – we rejuvenate the participatory sentience of our bodies. By speaking of the invisibles not as random ephemera, nor as determinate forces, but as mysterious and efficacious powers that are sometimes felt in our vicinity, we loosen our capacity for intuition and empathic discernment, unearthing a subtlety of sensation that has long been buried in the modern era.

And it is by means of such subtle sensations that the living land tunes our bodies, coaxing our communities and our cultures into a dynamic, dancing alignment with the breathing earth. The spirits are not intangible; they are not of another world. They are the way the local earth speaks when we step back inside *this* world.



III

Dwelling in larger-than-human communities

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INTRODUCTION

Part III continues pondering what facts "nature" and "culture" reveal, but does so by attending to relations between human- and other-than-human persons. These relations, however they are theorized, are starkly tested by the need to eat. While not all animists are hunters, hunting and other kinds of life-taking are vital arenas for reflection on animism. In the 1920s, Aua, an Iglulik Inuit shaman, told Knud Rasmussen, a Danish explorer and ethnographer, that "The greatest peril of life lies in the fact that human food consists entirely of souls" (Rasmussen 1929: 55–6). More recently, Old Tim Yilngayarri, an Aboriginal Australian culture-teacher, taught Deborah Bird Rose, an ecological humanities scholar, about the effects of Australia's ecocidal war against dingoes on his totemic relationships (D. Rose 2011). Animist notions of the liveliness of the world require a focus on specific relationships as well as on more universal moral claims.

"Totemism" has appeared in previous chapters (especially in relation to Descola's work). In the classic anthropology of Lévi-Strauss, "totemism" was summed up in the phrase "animals are good to think with" (1963: 89): they represent or symbolize kinship structures. Debbie Rose's chapter develops her definition of totemism as positing the "connectedness, mutual interdependence, and the non-negotiable significance of the lives of non-human species" (1998: 8). Animals, in this context, are close relatives. Citing Aboriginal informants and colleagues, she examines various engagements with animals, especially those involving death, dying, bereavement, loss and grief. The animist intuition or assumption of pervasive personhood and permeable interrelationality is tested in the ways in which deaths (of humans, fish, biodiverse places, etc.) are treated verbally, ritually and pragmatically.

In "Hunting animism: human-animal transformations among the Siberian Yukaghirs", Rane Willerslev discusses the complex negotiations required of Yukaghir hunters. Respect requires them to seek permission to kill, and to treat their hunting activities as a kind of seduction. Being watched means that they must behave with caution, care and decorum. However, in order to get physically close to potential food animals they must also get close in other ways, mimicking animal behaviour and trying to gain their perspective on the world. Success carries the danger that the seducer may be seduced, the hunter hunted, as they become enchanted by their transformations. If "respect" sometimes sounds romantic or merely attitudinal, here (and in other chapters) we see how it works in relation to killing and eating.

Colin Scott's research among Cree hunters in Canada complements previous chapters by examining the world-making implications of both animistic and naturalistic (scientific) ontologies. Recognizing that neither Cree animism nor Western modernism are so fixed that terms like "nature" and "culture" are straightforward, he attends to the creative oscillations and transpositions in uses of terms. Specific acts towards the world and other beings in the world, including hunting, cast some doubt on the security of Viveiros de Castro's influential perspectivism argument. Scott's chapter enables us to reflect further not only on animism but also to see modernism as more fluid than it sometimes appears.

Fritz Detwiler's chapter concerns the Tlingit of southeastern Alaska and the question of "ownership" and "property". It is commonly said that indigenous peoples do not own land and therefore cannot treat it as property to be bought, sold, protected or alienated. Since the Tlingit do have a word, *at.óow*, for "something owned", Detwiler set out to

understand how local animist modes of ownership fit with equally evident cultural norms of reciprocity and propriety. Relationship with(in) the larger-than-human community involves responsibilities and rights established on the basis that the universe is a diverse moral community. Detwiler (like Carlos Fausto [2012]) challenges a rethinking of the "no ownership" myth and invites a more critical appraisal of notions of belonging, power, and other relational engagements.

The theme of morality continues in the next chapter as Douglas Ezzy asks, "What matters to wombats?" This is not a whimsy but a way into (re)considering ethics in the light of inter-species relationality. Since being human, wombat, hedgehog or mountain inescapably involves being related, specifically and locally, there are necessary repercussions. Many indigenous people and many ethicists (referenced by Ezzy here) use the word "respect" almost as a flag to demarcate the need for all persons (human and other-than-human) to behave appropriately towards one another. Along with "reciprocity" this is noted in other chapters, but Ezzy addresses the sacrifice or restraint that is required in relationships – whether these are built on commonality or difference, or some of each.

Part III ends with Priscilla Stuckey's questioning of the moral, practical, ontological and epistemological implications of the contrasting stories of relational animism and the West's modernism. The latter, she argues, is individualist, acquisitive and competitive – having as much of an affinity with colonialism and ecocide as the ethic of Protestant Christianity has with the "spirit of capitalism" according to Weber (1958). With some (but not all) other contributors to this *Handbook of Contemporary Animism*, Stuckey encourages us all to seek ways to "tell a story [in concert with the human and other-than-human 'speaking community'] that supports the flourishing of the world".

11

Death and grief in a world of kin

Deborah Bird Rose

Australian Aboriginal totemism is a form of animism as Graham Harvey has eloquently defined the term: the understanding "that the world is full of persons, only some of whom are human, and that life is always lived in relationship to others" (2006a: xi). In addition to being persons, many non-humans are kin. The complexity of Aboriginal kinship systems is well known, and the fact that they include non-humans as well as humans is a further aspect of their complexity. Cross-cutting categories of kin groups generate a system of looped, entangled and enduring moral bonds of care, responsibility, accountability and exchange. In the midst of all this kinship, personhood and responsibility, how can anything be killed? How do people in a kin-based ecology understand and manage their participation in the deaths of animals?

In this reflective essay I address two aspects of what I take to be one of the major issues confronting the world at this time: anthropogenic extinctions. The first aspect is an analysis of totemic groups among the Aboriginal people of the Victoria River region of the Northern Territory of Australia where I have been carrying out research for thirty years. (Much of the ethnographic analysis I present here has been developed in greater depth in a number of publications that include: D. Rose 1996, 2005a, 2009a,b, 2011.) I aim to engage with multi-species kin groups in their organization of responsibility and accountability in relation to animal life and death. The analysis engages with both ethical and unethical killing.

The second aspect brings animism and kinship into dialogue with Western philosophy. The purpose is to consider some of the convergences between philosophical ways of imagining and encompassing the deaths of animals. I conclude with a brief discussion of "philosophical animism" as advocated by the philosopher Val Plumwood (this volume). The analysis is stimulated by the fact that at least one strand of Western philosophy now seeks to meet indigenous philosophy on its own ground, thus giving a new urgency to ethnographic understandings of that ground.

CULTURES

"When the brolga sings out, the catfish start to move", said one of my Aboriginal teachers, Daly Pulkara. We were a small group, all family, and we were sitting on the bank of the Wickham River in the northwest corner of the Northern Territory, chatting over our midday dinner of fish and damper. Daly had heard the call of the brolga, and offered this little story of connectivity. "You didn't know that?" he asked. "That's really culture, that one."

Daly's words about "real culture" became something of a pivot in my learning. Several domains of ecological, social and philosophical significance are signalled by events that took place during that fishing trip. One domain concerns the term "real". As I understand it, this term relates to profound information about how life in country came into being and how it continues. The real connotes the inner workings of creation and continuity. It thus concerns the Dreaming in both aspects: foundational creation, and continuity from day to day, season to season, encounter to encounter.

Dreamings are the great creative beings that emerged from the earth and started singing up everything. The Australian continent is criss-crossed with their tracks as they went walking, slithering, crawling, flying, chasing, hunting, weeping, dying, giving birth. They were performing rituals, distributing plants, making landforms and water, and making relationships between one place and another, one species and another. They were becoming ancestral to particular animals and particular humans (multi-species kin groups, technically known as totemic groups). "Real culture" is knowledge of the relationships that have their origins in Dreaming and that continue through the actions and interactions of everyday creatures in the everyday world of life.

Another domain of significance concerns connectivity. What connects a catfish in the river and a brolga (a large crane) in the sky? Answers go into interactions of seasons and the signs of departures and returns; they signal ecological processes across time and space that are actually how life works. In the context of our fishing trip, for example, Daly's story was addressing the fact that brolgas sing out at about the same time as the channel-billed cuckoo, the rainbird par excellence. They come into this country along with the early rains. They are singing up rain, and their songs sing up catfish. The catfish start to move because the rivers are warming up and the water is beginning to run again after having been confined to waterholes during the long dry season. Brolgas and channel-billed cuckoos tell that the rains are coming, and that means that the hot weather is finally going to be tempered by rain and cloud. Provided the rains keep coming regularly enough, the rivers will start to flow; later the floodwaters will rise, bringing the river out across the land. In sum, ecological connectivities involve patterns that recur; they convey reliable information about what is happening in country and how life continues to come forth.

Yet another domain of significance involves the concept of culture in relation to non-humans. Most of my teachers vigorously assert that other beings have culture, and in this context they use the term not unlike anthropologists do: to indicate a particular way of life. All creatures are said to have their own ways of doing things, and many demonstrably have their own languages and their own ceremonies. Another teacher, Doug Campbell, explained in relation to birds: "Birds got ceremony of their own – brolga, turkey, crow, hawk, white and black cockatoo – all got ceremony, women's side, men's side, ... everything." Plants as well as animals are sentient, and, according to many Aboriginal people,

the earth itself has culture and power within it. In this line of thought, all of us living beings are culture-creatures, we're intelligent, we act with purpose, we communicate and take notice, we participate in a world of multiple purposes. It is a multicultural world from inside the earth right on through the ephemeral life inhabiting water, air and land.

The ecologically sparked-up animist thinking evidenced by Doug, Daly and many others works with a logic of pattern and connection: it asserts relations of mutual interaction, and tells us that communication and intelligence are integral to the flow of life in the world.

COUNTRIES

The term "Dreaming" has captured non-Aboriginal people's imagination, but the term "country" is equally challenging and insightful. In country there is *no* nature/culture divide; one could say that it is all culture, but that misses the more fundamental point that country is primarily a system of pattern, connection and action. Country exists because of the living beings who participate in the life of country, and country flourishes through looped and tangled benefits. Country has a past, a present and a future, it gives and receives life. It is a matrix of communicative interaction, a system of connectivities and benefits, a home on earth.

Country is multi-dimensional – it consists of people, animals, plants, Dreamings; underground, earth, soils, minerals and waters, surface water, and air. There is sea country and land country; in some areas people talk about sky country. Country has origins and a future; it exists both in and through time. Humans were created for each country, and human groups hold the view that they are an extremely important part of the life of their country. It is not possible, however, to contend that a country, or indeed a regional system of countries, is human-centred. To the extent that a country or region can be said to have a central focus, that focus is the interdependent responsibilities by which the continuity of life in the country and the region is ensured. Countries are creature-communities.

KIN GROUPS

Daly had culture on his mind that day by the river because earlier his wife, Mirmir, had caught a dark catfish. She presented it to him with regret. He said that it would be all right to cook and eat it, but he made certain that afterwards the bones were buried in the ground. He himself did not eat. Daly's matrilineal kin group was catfish, and so his kin group included both the catfish in the river and human catfish people; these were all persons whose flesh was catfish because their mother's flesh was catfish, in an ongoing flow of catfish flesh in the world going right back to the beginning, and including humans and fish.[1]

In this region there is a multiplicity of types of totems. Daly's catfish kin are part of the matrilineal system, but let us first examine the more familiar country-based totems that are inherited from one's father's father, mother's father, and mother's mother's brother. These totems link people with land, Dreaming tracks and sites, and the species of those Dreamings. For example, one of Daly's country-based totems (Dreaming, *kuning*)

is Dingo; there is a group of people who are Dingo people through their father's father, mother's father or mother's mother's brother.[2] They have responsibilities toward Dingo sites, and toward dingoes more generally, as well as owning the stories, songs, designs and sites. They are responsible for the flourishing of dingoes in the world, and this means as well that they are responsible for their own flourishing (as Dingo people). Nor are they alone in this responsibility. Dingoes (the animals) also have responsibilities toward them (the humans) but it is fair to say that as a human being one knows the most about human responsibilities. The significant point is that through mutual responsibilities humans and non-humans are included within the realm of law.[3]

A country-based totem is cross-cut in the first instance by the fact that countries are exogamous.[4] Totemic relationships traced through three lines of descent, in system of exogamy, ensure that people will have numerous non-human kin, and will, in effect, be members of several overlapping but not identical kin groups. The Dingo people have other relationships and responsibilities through other lines of descent. Each group is a kin group with a country connection. In addition, because Dingo Dreamings were great travellers, moving through numerous countries, there are numerous Dingo groups, each owning, or belonging to, a country along the track of the ancestral Dreaming Dingoes.

Across much of Australia anthropological research has focused primarily on these clan groups. Clan members own ritual and sacred objects, are responsible for songlines and performance, and are land-owning groups. Much of what clans are concerned with in the world can be reasonably thought of as property, and they have been key social groups in land claims and other matters that involve the Anglo-Australian legal system.

In contrast, the matrilineal kin groups are open to the world. "Matrilineal social totems", as they are generally known in the literature (see, for example, Elkin 1954: 149), are referred to in this region as *ngurlu*. Rather than being country-based, they bring together different parts and processes of ecological life. Brolga, for example, is classed as kulumarrangarna, glossed as "on top" (sky-dweller, according to McConvell & Hagen 1981: 31). Flying foxes and Rainbow Snake are light rain; brolgas and other rainbirds are classed with catfish as dark rain. On the other side are the earth/dry land *ngurlu* – emus and others.

Relationships within and between *ngurlu* open outward to plants, animals, the elements and seasonality. They are organized into the two moieties, one associated with rain, the other with sun. On the rain side of the story, the connections are between water and sky, mediated by rain, and involving numerous creatures including the Rainbow Snake, flying foxes, and catfish. The opposite moiety is related to sun and dry land, and to emus, vegetable foods, honey and certain winds. There is thus a pattern to *ngurlu*: one set signals the dry season, and the opposite set signals the wet season. Together they comprise the totality of the annual cycle and the interactions which make possible continued life on earth. And as each wipes out the other for a while, they subtend understandings of dynamic, shifting balances that are set within a wider pattern of departures and returns.

People of a given *ngurlu* have or are the same flesh or "meat"; they are co-substantial, or mutually indwelling, in Magowan's terms (Magowan 2007: 141). Thus, for example, flying fox people share flesh with flying foxes, emu people with emus, and so on. Dwelling within the same flesh, what happens to one has a bearing on what happens to the other. Indeed, most neither kill nor eat their own flesh; the smell is too much their own, they

say. There are variations, and very little dogma, but there is a clear recognition that the lives of members of these kin groups are enmeshed in perduring, indwelling relationships.

Totemic connectivities entail both vulnerability and resilience. Resilience arises from the fact that responsibilities are widely dispersed, shared and cross-cut in ways that do not allow any singularity to become monological or monocultural. Vulnerability arises because damage to any member of the kin group potentially damages any other member of the group. The person who exists in others, and in whom others exist, is vulnerable to what happens outside their own skin, but that same person finds their power in the relationships which are situated beyond the skin. Thus, duties of care do not parse out as either selfish or altruistic, as Western thought on mutuality might suggest. Rather, kin responsibilities distribute interest and care across species and countries such that one's individual interests are embedded within, and realized most fully in the nurturance of, the interests of those with whom one shares one's being. And while no individual is connected to all others, the overlap of connections sustains a web of interdependencies. In this system, living beings truly stand or fall together. The process of living powerfully in the world is thus based on nurturing the relationships in which one's life indwells. Nurturance is neither infinitely obligatory, nor is it diffuse and undifferentiated.

DEATHS

This brings us to the question: with all these kin, with one's well-being enfolded within the lives of others, human and non-human, how is killing possible? How is it that lives can be taken and injuries caused without relationships turning into hostilities? Can killing be ethical? Graham Harvey (2006a: 115) points out that this question is integral to animism: being a person is no guarantee that an animal won't become food, and in fact most animists are hunters. Answers vary around the world and across the continent of Australia; I will focus primarily on my study region. The problem is encapsulated most succinctly in the idea that nothing is without meaning and purpose in life. Everything that exists is "no more nothing", one of the great old men of the region, Big Mick Kangkinang, explained to me. "No more" is the Aboriginal English term which expresses the concept "absolutely not".

> Before Dreaming, salt water was everywhere. Tide went back, dry time then. No more salt water. All the Dreamings come up. Old people never born yet. Dreamings first ... All the Dreamings travelling in country.
>
> The salt water went back, Dreamings put up all those big hills, rivers ... Tree, everything, sugarbag, tucker, goanna, fish, that no more nothing. All from Dreaming. Everything all from Dreaming.

If nothing is nothing (see also Sutton 1988: 13), it follows that if relationships of responsibility and accountability are to be ethical they must be organized in ways that acknowledge that much that is "something" will become part of human consumption. A perfectly straightforward (but by no means sufficient) answer to my questions about killing is that it is proper, good and right to take care of one's own groups. Part of the care of humans

is feeding them. Inevitably much of the animal food is somebody's kin. This is the nature of the created world.

A more complex and therefore more interesting type of answer looks to responsibilities for non-human others. Increase rituals are a good example.[5] These rituals are performed by members of kin groups with the explicit intention of singing up abundance within a species. The intention is to regain numbers that have been lost and to generate future abundance so that others will be able to continue to hunt without causing depletion and disaster.[6]

Increase ceremonies were (in many areas and many contexts still are) performed by members of each group. Strehlow's description is a classic. Each patrilineal clan, according to Strehlow's analysis of Aranda societies, is associated with a number of totemic beings, with one of which the clan is most intimately associated and for which it bears a central responsibility. Ancestral tracks, or the Dreaming tracks of these beings, link groups along the way:

> each Aranda local group was believed to perform an indispensable economic service not only for itself but for the population around its borders as well. Thus, the Eastern Aranda Purula-Kamara local group of Ujitja was believed to have the responsibility of creating rain for the whole of the surrounding countryside by the performance of the Ujitja rain ceremonies. Other Aranda rain totemic clans ... were credited with performing identical services for the populations in their local areas. In the same way, the members of kangaroo, euro, emu, carpet snake, grass seed and other totemic clans were regarded as having the power of bringing about the increase of their totemic plants or animals not only within their local group areas, but throughout the adjoining regions as well. (Strehlow 1970: 102)

The structure he described in which a regional ritual community is also a community of social and ecological reproduction is entirely characteristic of many regions of Australia.

Matrilineal kin groups also had (or have) increase rituals intended to enhance the species, and thus to benefit the species itself, along with benefiting all the other living beings (human and non-human) that benefit from that species (B. Spencer 1914: 198–9). For example, increase rituals for flying foxes benefit the flying foxes themselves, and their human kin, and all the others who hunt and eat them, including, for example, crocodiles.[7] This system, described briefly but clearly in the early twentieth century, is now in decline in the sense that the rituals are not as consistently performed as they seem to have been at the time of Spencer's documentation. The fundamental relationships he described continue.

I observed and participated in another side of matrilineal responsibility, one that clearly indicates accountability as well. When a senior person dies their matrilineal kin become taboo. For example, when an emu person dies, nobody eats emus until the emu people tell them they can, and the first emu to be killed is treated with special ritual (discussed further in D. Rose 2009a: 84). Similarly when a flying fox person dies nobody eats flying foxes until the right people give permission. In general, people said that at least one wet season must pass; the length of time was treated as a period of mourning during which no further deaths should take place. In fact, the length of time appeared

to be related as well to the perceived abundance of the species, and thus acknowledged that recovery rates vary with animal abundance as with grief.

The particular species with which one's *ngurlu* is identified is called one's *warpiri*. The feelings and behaviour associated with *warpiri* are most intense with animal species, and people observe the hunting taboo in the knowledge that a death is a source of both sorrow and anger. People try not to inflict further losses until those who are bereaved have had time to recover. Likewise, people who are grieving are entitled to interpret predation upon their *warpiri* as an assault on the group and to take action in defence of their own.

Let us go back to that fishing trip when Mirmir brought up a dark catfish and gave it to her husband Daly. The type of catfish that is the *ngurlu* kin is so rare that its death was completely unexpected. After burying the catfish remains, Daly explained that *warpiri* means "biggest sorry". That is, the death of one's *ngurlu* species is the death of kin: one feels sorry (sorrowful), and therefore gives the body special care. The effects of "biggest sorry" ramify across multi-species kin groups. Many creatures are included in the *ngurlu* system, and because the system is linked with seasons and elements, every species is potentially placed within the system. Most creatures that die will be mourned by someone, and many creatures will be exempted from being hunted from time to time. At the same time, no one is implicated in every sorrow, no one holds total control over life-and-death decisions, every boundary is cross-cut, and the fact that life depends on death is true for all creatures.

Thus far I have considered animal deaths and human consumption. There is another matter to be considered, and that is human deaths. It is possible that human deaths mark a type of human exceptionalism in indigenous thought in this region. At death the human person devolves into multiple elements, one of which keeps returning within human families. As far as I have learned, only humans recycle from life through death and back into life in this manner. However, the only way to be reborn is to become animal; human return cannot take place without animals. The usual method by which a person moves from animal to human is when the animal is eaten by the woman who is becoming the mother of the newly returned human person. It is usual as well that the animal is killed by the man who is becoming the baby's father. It follows that any animal a hunter kills may be a human person who died not so long ago, and may become a new member of the family.

Other elements that remain after a person's death are the bones. Formerly, human bones, and some animal bones as well, were taken back to the dead person's country, rubbed with red ochre, and handled ritually from time to time to promote the fertility of country's life. Human deaths, therefore, were turned to the benefit of country that had nurtured the person in life. The relationships between life and death are similar to the seasons that depart and return. Both life and death are understood as mutually implicated, balanced and patterned.

The account presented thus far focuses on ethical killing, by which I mean killing that is responsive to the system of responsibilities and accountabilities. Unethical killing is undertaken outside the system of kin and accountability. It may be a case of killing an animal that is taboo and thus initiating an act of hostility. It may be a case of wanton killing – killing more than can be eaten, or killing and leaving dead bodies to rot. Or it could be a case of overkill – of failing to adjust demand to supply. Any of these types of unethical killing can (and sometimes do) happen when accountabilities and responsibilities are lost,

forgotten, denigrated, or unenforceable. In my experience, however, unethical killing is generally seen to be the kind of action Whitefellows engage in almost all the time. Many of the issues concerning killing come to the fore in debates about the "control" of feral animals (see for example B. Rose 1995; Robinson *et al.* 2005). Increasingly unethical killing is seen (in my conversations about these matters) as evidence of people going crazy.

EXTINCTIONS AND KIN

Country is a creature community, and here in Australia many creatures are not faring well. This continent has the highest rate of mammalian extinctions in the contemporary world. Many of the lost or endangered creatures are totemic kin. In the words of Paul Gordon, an elder from the inland country of New South Wales, the creatures who are dying in these massive waves of extinction are not just flora and fauna, they're family (full quote in D. Rose 2003: 54). The loss of family is a "sorry" that goes far beyond the deaths of individuals through hunting, and it calls up anger as well as grief. It is a loss that goes beyond balanced relationships between life and death. With extinctions there is no return, and death starts to overtake life. Extinction is unethical killing that is tipping into a black hole of death. The more life disappears, the more life disappears.

Aboriginal people's responses to the ongoing anthropogenic violence against animals brings to the fore a number of the issues that are currently being analysed in critical theory and the "question of the animal". These include questions of kinship between humans and other animals, along with ethical probing of the fact that the violence between humans and non-humans is so terribly one-sided. Derrida dedicated a number of rich essays to humans, animals and violence. At the heart of his question was man-made mass death of humans and animals, and he built upon the theme that has been so formative of Western thought. Critical animal studies analysis is showing that the commitment to the idea of an impermeable animal–human boundary has served ontologically to differentiate those, the animals, who can be killed with impunity from those, the humans, who cannot (for example, Agamben 2004). Bringing this fundamental cultural boundary into the context of the Holocaust, Derrida notes that treating humans as animals made the killing more acceptable (2002). More deeply, however, as Dominique Lestel tells us, Derrida is investigating the profound idea that the human/animal binary is not just a way of categorizing the world – it is, rather, a huge metaphysical claim about how the world really is (Lestel 2009). And how the world really is, according to this metaphysical claim, is that it is comprised of those who can be killed with impunity, and those who make the decisions about who can and cannot be so killed. This is the basis, for example, of the Biblical injunction "Thou Shalt Not Kill", an injunction that refers to humans and is set within the context of the necessary, sacrificial deaths of animals (Derrida 2002).

Not only Derrida, but many of the philosophers who treat this issue, say that while humans are not the sort of animal that can be killed with impunity, animals are not that sort of animal either. My Aboriginal teachers would have agreed. "There's no such animal like that in country," I imagine Daly saying, had the conversation included him. There's no such thing as an animal whose life or death doesn't matter. And he probably would have taken it further to say that if "animal" means that which can be killed with impunity, then nothing much on earth or inside the earth is that sort of animal. Because

that sort of animal would be a thing that is nothing, ethically speaking, and life on earth isn't like that. "No more nothing."

On the one hand, there is the matter of all this death – this anthropogenic extinction event that seems likely to reach the magnitude of the last great event sixty-five million years ago when the dinosaurs died out. It seems probable that a metaphysics that holds the deaths of animals to be of no particular ethical import is implicated in the disaster. On the other hand, as Donna Haraway (2008: 71) points out, the nature/culture, mind/matter dualism "should have withered long ago in the light of feminist and many other criticisms, but the fantastic mind/body binary has proved remarkably resilient". The nature–culture binary is articulated extremely effectively though the animal–human contrast, and as we consider how giving life to the binary opens the way for amplifications of death, we might think with Gregory Bateson (1972) that a good way to deal with a double bind is to walk away from it. One way to walk would be toward creature communities founded in kinship and proximity, mutual becoming, and entangled histories and futures.

This is not as improbable a path for Western thought as it might have seemed even a few decades ago. The analysis pouring in from both science and the humanities indicates that kinship *is* the way of life on earth. Testimony comes from the microcosmic (DNA, bacteria: see Margulis & Sagan 2000) and the macrocosmic (Gaia: see Lovelock 1979), and from an "onto-evolutionary" position like that of Paul Shepard (1996: 7),[8] to the mutual becomings proposed by Anna Tsing (cited in Haraway 2008:19), and including philosophical accounts of radically expanded interiority (Mathews 2003; Stephan Harding 2009). At the centre of this thinking is the emerging recognition of continuities across living beings. And along with continuities there is the coming into being of life through relationships. Haraway (2008: 42) has stated the matter concisely: we and others are entangled in a "knot of species co-shaping one another in layers of reciprocating complexity all the way down".

PHILOSOPHICAL ANIMISM

The Australian philosopher Val Plumwood had been developing an analysis of animism as it could be defended within a Western philosophical tradition in the years preceding her untimely death in 2008. At the same time, she was gaining interest in indigenous ecological philosophy. She understood that Aboriginal Australians always do live within a world that is buzzing with multitudes of sentient beings. She thought that a good way to start up the major cultural rethink that she (like many others) believed was necessary would be to talk with people who are now living within the kinds of understandings we are seeking. She was not planning on appropriating anything, and her work explores both the significance of indigenous knowledge today and the kinds of adaptations we would all need to make to engage ethically with contemporary globalized earth systems, including climate change, migration and exchange (2008).

Philosophical animism was Plumwood's term for a stance that would take us into the critical rethink she was calling for. In her words, philosophical animism "can open another door to a richer world, and can begin to negotiate life membership in an ecological community of kindred beings" (Plumwood 2009: 121). She considered animism based in Western philosophy to be a form of enriched materialism that "would spread mind and creativity out much more widely". Her call was to "re-envisage materiality in richer

terms that escape the spirit/matter and mind/matter dualisms". She cited anthropological research (Harvey, Ingold, Rose) that shows how dualistic thinking has misrepresented indigenous animism, and she offered guides for more open engagement (*ibid.*: 124). She concluded this pivotal article, one of the last of her life, by suggesting that the world of poetry and literature may be better suited to communicating a materially enriched world of life (*ibid.*: 125). Equally, she was calling for poetic and literary projects because she thought they had better modes of "making room" for understanding the vivid presence of mindful life on earth.

The project of "making room" surely involves indigenous people and their philosophies. And it should be capable of involving non-human subjects as well. I have approached many of these issues through analysis of the ongoing war against dingoes in Australia (D. Rose 2011), and my main teacher has been Old Tim Yilngayarri. He was the senior Dingo man during the early, formative years of my research, and he was the only person in our area who understood dog language. For that reason, as well as seniority, he was something of a spokesman. He did not make an ontological distinction between dingoes and camp dogs, and he took the interesting view that all humans are descended from dingoes/dogs. I asked Old Tim what dogs said to him and he told me: "We don't come bash up people", they say. "What for people want to bash up us?" Tim's commentary was clear: "We come out of that dog. No good hit them, no good shoot them. Dog's a big boss, you've gotta leave him, no more killing." In his stories the ancestral Dingoes give voice to their sense of lost reciprocity, and to current grievance: "I made them man and woman. Now you've dropped me, put me in the rubbish dump."

The problem includes and exceeds the fact that corpses are being piled up relentlessly, that the rubbish dump grows so rapidly that would it take a dedicated industry of crematoria to process it. It includes and exceeds the fact that dingoes, the great harmonic singers of the Australian night, are being eradicated. It includes and exceeds the fact that Aboriginal people are targeted as damaged and dysfunctional, their knowledge often denigrated and frequently ignored. The problem includes and challenges Western understandings of death – its place, and thus our place too, in the entanglements of life.

This brings us to the matter of witness, which includes and exceeds our capacity to attend to silences that are themselves stories, and to stories that are themselves philosophies. In an ethics of mutuality, we would strive to keep life flourishing not only by defending the lives of all of our kin, but by taking a stand for the meaningfulness of both life and death, and for a world where nothing belongs on the rubbish dump.

NOTES

1. I have not been able to get a scientific identification of the catfish in question. In the course of many fishing trips over many years during which we caught many, many catfish, this rare catfish was brought up only once in my experience.
2. In the literature this type is usually referred to as a patrilineal totem, but as people in this region hold key responsibilities toward their mother's father's totems, country, songs, designs, and so on, and may also hold key responsibilities toward their mother's mother's totem, and so on, the term patrilineal is not quite accurate.
3. I have not sought to include an exhaustive list of totemic relationships. Another category is that of "skin" (subsection). This system differentiates children from their parents, so while skin identity depends on the identity of the mother (father, in some areas), one's identity is not the same as one's

mother. Subsections are also linked to species (as well as to country, in some areas), generating sameness and responsibility. People who share their skin with a species take responsibility for that species, and they have the right to declare it taboo for hunting, meaning that no one in the region is allowed to hunt a particular species if the people who are linked to that species so decree.

4. The term "countrymen", in Aboriginal English, includes women and men, and, of course, is not confined to humans.
5. I focus on rituals for the sake of brevity, but much of the action that is labelled "caring for country", such as cultural fires, depends on knowing when and where to start and knowing when and where to stop in order to ensure that country is inhabitable and hospitable for many species.
6. The kinds of responsibilities I am describing are widespread across the whole continent. There are structures of restraint, management for long-term productivity, control of sanctuaries, protection of permanent waters, refugia, breeding sites, and selective burning for the preservation of certain plant communities and other refuge areas along with rituals of increase. See, for example, D. Rose (1996).
7. The relationships between flying foxes (*Pteropus alecto*) and the flowers of the Melaleuca, Corymbia and eucalyptus trees and shrubs, which are their preferred food, are well understood in the Victoria River region, and are integral to people's articulation of seasonal change (see D. Rose 2005b). It is unclear whether the role of flying foxes as key pollinators was understood in earlier centuries, but their significant relationship with the flourishing of their preferred trees is perfectly clear.
8. I am indebted to Lestel (2009) for this inspired descriptor of Shepard's work.

12

Hunting animism: human–animal transformations among the Siberian Yukaghirs

Rane Willerslev

For the Siberian Yukaghirs the world is animated with living souls in the sense of Tylorian "animism".[1] As Yukaghirs say: "The world is full of vision, full of eyes"; seeing is universal and everything, from animals, rivers, lakes and trees to spirits and even shadows, has a perspective of its own that returns our gaze. If we are to take this seriously, not as a vague intuition but as a fact of vision, then everything is tangled in a web of seeing and being seen and no one is simply an "observer" and nothing just an "object"; there is only a sentient world crowded with eyes.

Living in such a sentient world implies that all beings – humans, animals and spirits – participate in a field of social interaction defined in terms of predation. From the viewpoint of any class of beings, all others are either predators or prey. The human hunter, for example, sees the elk as prey in much the same way as he himself is seen as prey by the spirit of the animal, who is said to hunt him as an elk. Hunting, therefore, is not a one-sided event but fundamentally reciprocal: people are both hunters and hunted just as they are both seeing and seen. Indeed, much of what goes on among Yukaghirs is concerned with this fearsome symmetry of being both subject and object of vision, both predator and prey.

Hunting is not, however, simply conceptualized by the Yukaghirs as an act of predation, but also as an act of "love-making", which is perhaps most clearly expressed in their view of hunting as a process of "sexual seduction": the hunter aims at sexually seducing the animal into "giving itself up" to him in much the same way as he himself risks being seduced by the animal's spiritual being. In either perspective, the victim, the seduced, is said to lose its original species adherence and undergo an irreversible metamorphosis into its predatory counterpart. Predation is thus experienced as a power struggle over identity: a struggle of which the purpose is to take on the appearance and perspective of one's prey and be transformed, but without losing one's own sense of identity in the process of converting the other being into one's own species.

In contrast, in the West it is customary to assume that attributes of personhood, with all this entails in terms of language, intentionality, reasoning and moral awareness,

belong exclusively to human beings, separating them from animals and tangible objects, which are seen as being wholly natural things, whose behaviour is explained as either automatic and instinctive or altogether inert. This assumption, which assumes that qualities of personhood separate human beings from the rest of the world, is totally unfamiliar to the Yukaghirs.

In this chapter, I describe Yukaghir hunting animism, which is characterized by a two-way process that grows out of sensibilities of similarity and difference: one process is concerned with the hunter's attempt to assume the identity of his prey by recreating his body in its image. This is a matter of luring the animal out of the bush so that it can be shot and killed. However, this attempt at bodily transformation is risky and may result in him losing his original species adherence. Within the human encampment, therefore, the process of hunting is matched by a counter-process, encompassing the hunter's attempt to purge otherness from the self and to reconstruct his personhood as belonging to the human kind. In spatial terms, this movement from the forest to encampment and back again thus represents a criss-crossing between the dangerous world of hunting, defined by predation and inter-species transformation, and the safe setting of the campsite, in which the hunter is returned to his original, human state. However, even in this state, the hunter is not just himself in the Western sense of a subject that is bounded and unitary; he is believed to be the incarnation of a particular dead relative, and shares with the deceased his name, personality and repertoire of skills and knowledge. The point I want to stress here is that among the Yukaghirs, no one is ever just himself, but always someone else as well; the idea of maintaining or wanting to maintain a stable personhood is not part of their worldview.

I shall start my account by providing a brief overview of the Yukaghirs: their history, geographical location and social organization.

THE UPPER KOLYMA YUKAGHIRS

The Yukaghirs live in the basin of the Kolyma River, in the northeastern part of the Russian Republic of Sakha (Yakutia). Territorially, they are divided into two groups: the Upper Kolyma Yukaghirs, whose main settlement is the village of Nelemnoye beside the Yasachnaya River in Verhnekolymsk Ulus, and the Lower Kolyma Yukaghirs, who live in the settlements of Andruskino and Kolymskoye, in Niznekolymsk Ulus. The most striking difference between the two groups is that while the Lower Kolyma group keeps herds of domesticated reindeer, members of the Upper Kolyma group have remained hunters and their only domesticated animal is the dog, which they use for drawing sledges and for hunting. It is among the Upper Kolyma Yukaghirs that I have conducted fieldwork, and they will therefore be the focus of this chapter.

The Yukaghir language belongs to the so-called Paleo-Asiatic group and is conventionally considered genetically isolated. However, the language has been under strong pressure from Russian, which is now almost completely dominant (Maslova & Vakhtin 1996: 999). Today, only the oldest generation is competent in the indigenous language (Vakhtin 1991).

At the time of the Russian conquest of northeastern Siberia in the mid-seventeenth century, the Yukaghirs inhabited a huge territory (about 1,500,000 km^2), ranging from

the Lena River in the west to the Anadyr River in the east, and bounded in the south by the Verkhoyansk Range and in the north by the Arctic Ocean. It is estimated that the Yukaghirs at that time numbered about 5,000 in total (Zukova *et al.*: 1993). However, during the following three centuries they underwent a huge decline, to the point of becoming almost extinct (Morin & Saladin d'Anglure 1997: 168). Wars with neighbouring reindeer-herding peoples, such as the Chukchi and the Koryaks, greatly reduced the Yukaghir population as did widespread starvation due to a shortage of game. Even more disastrous was the introduction of diseases by the Russians (Jochelson 1926: 54–5).

Despite centuries of decline, the Yukaghir population has undergone remarkable growth within recent decades. According to the 1989 census, there are a total of 1,112 Yukaghirs, about half of whom belong to the Upper Kolyma group; in striking contrast, the 1979 census gives a figure of only 500 Yukaghirs altogether. This outstanding increase can, however, be easily explained: according to Russian legislation the Yukaghirs enjoy certain economic privileges, such as special hunting and fishing rights. As a result, most children born of mixed parentage are today being registered as Yukaghirs (Derlicki 2003: 123). Today, Nelemnoye's population amounts to 307 inhabitants, among whom 146 are registered as Yukaghirs. Besides a few Eveny the remaining population is, roughly speaking, entirely listed as either Sakha or Russian.

In ancient times Yukaghir hunting was part of a pure subsistence lifestyle, but with the Russian expansion into Siberia in the mid-seventeenth century, their hunting economy took a commercial turn. Wild fur, especially sable, was an unparalleled source of wealth for the Russian state, and the Yukaghirs, as well as being subsistence hunters, also became fur trappers (Willerslev 2000).

The importance of commercial hunting continued during the Soviet period. Yukaghir hunters were provided with "plans" that stated how many sable furs they were expected to deliver to the *sovkhoz* (state farm), in return for which they received hard cash. Although subsistence hunting remained vital until the mid-1960s, with Nelemnoye's ever-increasing incorporation into the Soviet state economy, and with the concomitant increase in cash payments and centralized delivery of consumer goods, hunting for meat came to constitute a supplementary livelihood.

It was also during Soviet rule that Yukaghir gender relations changed radically: traditionally, Yukaghir men and women lived and worked together. However, from the 1960s onwards all this changed: the Soviet authorities made special efforts to sedentarize the women, who were seen as not "directly" involved in hunting and therefore an "unutilised labour resource" (Vitebsky & Wolfe 2001: 84; Willerslev 2010). They were removed to the village of Nelemnoye, where they were given "clean jobs", for instance as cooks, administrators, bookkeepers and teachers. Since then, virtually all women have lived and worked full-time in the village, while the men for the most part spend eight to ten months of the year hunting in the forest.

This gendered division of labour, imposed by the Soviet authorities, has started to change since the collapse of the state farm in 1991, with most people returning to a subsistence-based lifestyle. Virtually no wages have been paid since 1993, while the prices of essentials have risen by several hundred per cent. Consequently, many women are once again forced to take part in subsistence activities, and many of them now join their husbands in the forest during summer and autumn to fish and pick berries. In general, the focus has turned away from hunting for furs to pure subsistence. The Yukaghirs hunt

a wide variety of meat-animals, including brown bears, wild reindeer, geese, ducks and mountain sheep, but the most important game is the elk (*Alces alces*, the Asian counterpart of the American moose); elk meat probably accounts for 50 per cent or more of the total intake of calories in Nelemnoye (Willerslev 2007: 30).

Yukaghir hunting groups are small scale, flexible and highly egalitarian. A hunter is not required to hunt with any specific group of people, but is free to live and work with whichever group he wishes. Therefore, hunting groups are extremely unstable units; they typically involve five or six individuals, many of whom are not genealogically related, and people constantly move in and out of these groups. What is more, while particular families identify themselves and are identified by others with particular riverine territories, they have no greater rights to hunt there than anyone else. People may live and hunt wherever they like, without restriction. The same egalitarian principle is also apparent with regard to leadership. Although there are leaders within the hunting groups, they change frequently, not following any particular order or criteria. The main role of the hunting leader is to oversee an equal distribution of meat. Everyone taking part in a hunt is entitled to get an equal share, irrespective of age and skill. Should the hunting leader exploit his power and fail to fulfil his responsibility to distribute equally, the other hunters will abandon him or another member will start to take authority and sooner or later be recognized as the new leader of the group.

This condition of essential flux is repeated in the relationship between the various classes of beings living in the forest environment. Indeed, there are no fixed boundaries here, only a seamless continuity of transformations. As I shall go on to describe, for the Yukaghirs, one class of beings readily transform into another: humans become animals, animals turn into humans, and the dead convert into the living.

HUMAN–ANIMAL TRANSFORMATIONS

Yukaghir hunters sometimes describe themselves as "people with open bodies" (*otkryt tela*), which is their translation into Russian of "*ongdsjotjunai sjoromok*" [*sic*], or "raw meat" in the Yukaghir language (Willerslev 2007: 163). By this, they are referring to a concept of hunting that is predicated on a skilled and deliberate "dehumanization", where they remove their human bodily qualities and take on a new identity or capacity, reshaped in the image of their animal prey. This involves removing one's human smell by going to the "*banya*" (sauna) the evening before leaving for the forest. Hunters do not use soap but wipe themselves with whisks from birch trees. It is believed that the elk, recognizing the attractive smell of birch leaves, does not flee, but comes closer to the hunter. Moreover, small children, who are said to have a particularly strong human odour, are kept away from the hunters. In this culture, sniffing has the same value as kissing, and affection for children is usually expressed by inhaling the special scent from the nape of the child's neck. However, when a hunter sets off for the forest, he rarely sniffs his offspring; this is in order to avoid contamination with their odour. Another key precondition for success in hunting is sexual abstinence. For at least one day before undertaking a hunting trip, the hunters abstain from sex altogether. This, as I shall describe below, is partly because the hunter's sexual attention should be directed toward the prey animal and its associated spiritual being, but also because sexual intercourse leaves an unmistakable human

odour. The hunters assured me that only those who do not smell of human fluids will attract prey. During the winter, hunters also dress in animal furs, of elk and reindeer. This is not simply a matter of keeping warm, but also of looking and moving like prey. Likewise, the undersides of hunters' skis are covered with smooth elk leg-skins so as to imitate the sound of the animal when moving in snow.

When hunting, Yukaghirs thus cease to be extraneous bodies, alien to the forest world and the animals they hunt. For them, it is inherent in the very nature of hunting that they identify with their prey and attempt to ascertain its mode of perception and action by imitating its bodily movements and smell. We must remember, however, that taking on an animal's identity does not, for the Yukaghirs, imply becoming "natural" as opposed to "cultural". In fact, there is no word corresponding to our term "nature" in the Yukaghir language, nor is there any equivalent of "culture" as a uniquely human attribute (*ibid.*: 85–6). Rather, all beings, whether human, animal or spirit, each within their own sphere of existence, are said to see the world in similar or identical ways, that is, in the way human beings generally do. Eduardo Viveiros de Castro (1998a: 470) calls this ontology "perspectivism". Like the Arawete and other Amazonian groups described by him, the Yukaghirs too regard the subjectivity of humans and non-humans as formally the same because they share the same kinds of souls, *ayibii*, meaning "shadow" in the Yukaghir language, which provides them with a similar or identical viewpoint on the world. Non-humans – animals, trees, spirits and inanimate objects – thus see the world as humans do: they live in households and kin groups similar to those of humans and see themselves as human hunters moving around the landscape hunting for their animal prey. What differentiates the various species' perspectives from one another is the materiality of the body: human beings see the elk as prey to the same extent that the elk sees the human hunter as an evil spirit or predator, because human and animal share the same kind of body. In other words, it is bodies that see and determine what is seen: who you are and how you perceive and construct the world all depends on the kind of body you have.

Yukaghir hunters' attempt at bodily transformation is thus to be understood within this perspectival ontology. By recreating his body in the image of his prey, the hunter reflects back to the elk an image of itself – that is, the hunter exposes as exterior or visible what in reality is interior or invisible: the infra-human perspective of the animal. Thus, what the elk comes to see in the hunter is not an evil spirit or a predator, but its own self-image, its own "humanness". In consequence it is taken in by this image of itself; the elk does not fear the hunter, but draws closer and eventually "gives itself up" to what it perceives to be one of its own. Hunters explain this eagerness of the elk to participate actively in the hunt in terms of a process of sexual seduction. During the hunter's nightly dreams, when his soul, *ayibii*, leaves his body and wanders freely, the animal spirits call to it, inviting it into their forest home to eat and drink and to have sexual intercourse. The feelings of lust and sexual excitement that the *ayibii* arouses in the spirits is then extended to their physical counterpart, the animal prey, so that when the hunter embarks on his task the next morning, it runs towards him in the expectation of experiencing a sexual climax.

HUNTER–PREY DYNAMICS

So, both humans and animals are clearly both hunters and hunted at once. We cannot restrict ourselves to seeing hunting as the predation of animals by humans, since the animal and its associated spiritual being are also engaged in predatory acts against the human hunter. The animal's spirit, Yukaghirs say, will seek to kill the human hunter out of "love" for him so as to drag his *ayibii* back to its household as its "spouse". The elk spirit attempts this by seducing the hunter into believing that what he sees is not an elk but a fellow human. After all, by taking on the animal's body, the hunter also takes on its viewpoint and he is therefore apt to see the elk as it sees itself – that is as a human being. When this happens, a true metamorphosis occurs and the hunter's memories of his past identity are lost. Indeed, we find a number of anxiety-provoking myths in the Yukaghir's repertoire of stories in which the human hunter encounters his prey in the guise of a fellow human and follows it back to its household, never to return to his own human sphere of existence (Willerslev 2004: 634–5). Similarly, it occasionally happens that a hunter becomes so absorbed in some enticing trait or action observed in the elk that he forgets to kill it. Failure of this kind is explained as the hunter "falling in love" with his prey. Consumed by this love, he cannot think about anything else, stops eating and soon after dies. His *ayibii*, hunters say, then goes to live with the animal prey. For the hunter, therefore, killing prey is not only a matter of getting meat, but also a hazardous struggle to secure boundaries, and to preserve his identity as a human.

The act of killing prey, however, does not mark the end of the hunt. Quite the opposite, in fact. Up to the point of the actual kill, the hunt has been essentially non-violent, involving purely positive and non-coercive relations of seduction. Every aspect of violence has been effectively concealed. Even the hunter's rhetoric effectively screens out the reality of being a human predator. The elk, for example, is referred to as "the big one", whereas the bear is called the "bare-footed one". Likewise, the gun is addressed as the "stick" and the "knife" is called the "spoon". Hunters do not say "Let's go hunting for elk", but use coded phrases such as "Let's take a look at the big one" or "I am going for a walk" (see Descola 1996b: 226). Yet, the moment the killing has occurred there is a total shift in meaning: it is now clear to the animal's spirit that what it took to be a "love affair" is in fact a "pack of lies" and that the real intention of the hunter is predatory violence. The spirit will therefore seek to take revenge by striking him with sickness and death (see Kwon 1998: 119).

Hunters employ various tactics of displacement and substitution to conceal the fact that they are the ones responsible for the animal's violent death, and thus avoid being preyed upon in turn. Immediately after killing the elk, they will make a small, roughly carved wooden figure, which they paint with lines using blood from the dead animal. The figure is said to be a miniature model of the "animal's killer". It is hung from a string above the meat and serves to attract the attention of the furious spirit. The spirit, hunters say, will smell the blood of its "child" painted on the figure's body and attack it. Meanwhile, the hunters can safely butcher the entire animal and transport its meat back to the encampment. The wooden figure, however, is left at the site of the kill as a kind of physical representative of the "murderer" and draws in the anger of the spirit.

The ritual performed after killing a bear follows a similar pattern, but it is more elaborate because the danger and fear are greater, and the cost of error more terrifying. Before

removing the skin of the bear hunters will blindfold it or poke its eyes out while croaking like a raven (Willerslev & Pedersen 2010: 270). This will make the bear believe that it was the bird that blinded it. Moreover, they will address the bear, saying: "Big Man! Who did this to you? A Russian [or Sakha/Yakut] killed you" (Willerslev 2007: 130). Thus, by various means of trickery, hunters seek to direct the anger of the animal master-spirits against non-Yukaghirs – humans and non-humans alike.

THE HUNTERS' CAMP

During the short summer, the hunters' encampment consists of tents made from thickly woven cotton, while they largely live in Russian-style log cabins during the long winter. The most important part of the interior of both the tent and the cabin is the small metal stove through which the meat brought back is transformed into food, something that is not pre-given, since the game animal is considered to be a person and not an object (see Fausto 2007). In other words, the animal needs to be "de-subjectified" and the oven's fire is said to bring about this transformation. While its fire converts the problematic meat into less problematic/acceptable/desirable foodstuff, its intense heat also warms up the cabin to sauna-hot temperatures – which is significant because the cabin must be charged with the presence of the human and his odour, especially the smell of human sweat, cooked meat and tobacco smoke. This is in contrast to the hunter's deliberately created persona/aura in the forest, where he takes on an animal identity by dressing and smelling like one. For this reason, hunters always hang their fur clothing outside the cabin.

During and after their meal, they constantly speak about the day's hunt. Hunters' stories could be termed "minimalist" (Rosaldo 1986) in that the sentences are short, uneven and often incomplete. Either the subject or some other part of the sentence is missing, and one has to guess the meaning according to the general context of the story or according to the previous sentences, or by deciphering the bodily gestures of the speaker. Moreover, the storyteller is not guided by any strict chronology, but jumps back and forth between various events that occurred at different times and places during the day. While virtually everyone narrates in the Russian language, senior hunters will occasionally intermix Yukaghir and Sakha phrases, ignoring the fact that most of the others in the group do not understand these languages well.

While hunting in the forest, hunters often go alone in search of prey, but when they are moving in groups to hunt elk or bear, for instance, very often not a word is spoken. If any sound is made, it will be imitative sounds of the animals that they hope to attract. By contrast, hunters' conversational community and the seemingly endless exchange of narratives of the hunt distinguish life in the encampment.

Renato Rosaldo (*ibid.*: 108) has suggested that in small-scale hunting societies, like that of the Ilongot of the northern Philippines, storytellers speak to people with whom they share enormous background knowledge about their hunting practices and their landscape. Consequently, hunting stories can communicate information in "telegraphic shorthand" because the speakers can safely assume their listeners' "depth of background knowledge" (Rosaldo 1993: 129). However, I do not believe that this argument holds good for Yukaghirs. A group of hunters consists of people from many different backgrounds, from those who are experienced resource users, with long-standing relations to

a particular area of hunting, to inexperienced beginners and new members of the group. Hence, the social distribution of knowledge within a group of hunters is necessarily plural, for not every hunter holds the same amount or kind of knowledge. I therefore think it unlikely that their conversational community should be based on some general body of "shared background knowledge" about "the landscape and hunting practices" which the "speakers can safely assume" (Rosaldo 1986: 108). In addition, one might question what value the narratives of senior hunters could possibly have as "knowledge", when they deliberately intermix Yukaghir and Sakha phrases, which are largely unintelligible to many people in the group. If the aim of senior hunters was to communicate and pass on knowledge, they would presumably do so in a language that the others could understand.

As an alternative explanation, I suggest that the importance of the hunters' narrative mode is not as an instrument for exchanging knowledge, but as a kind of magical tool for "humanizing" hunters at the key point of their return across a conceptual line, in the sense of allowing them to withdraw from the dangerous betwixt-and-between state of hunting and reconstruct their more stable and safe identity as human persons back in the camp setting. However, in order to set out the ethnographic groundwork for this alternative interpretation, I need to say something about the Yukaghirs' conceptions of knowledge, which is based on an ontology of knowing and understanding that considers verbal information to be inferior compared with first-hand practical experience.

REBIRTH

Like other indigenous peoples of the Arctic, for example the Inuit, described by Lee Guemple (1991), the Yukaghirs view a newborn child as a returned deceased relative. At a given moment during the pregnancy, the soul, *ayibii*, of the deceased person enters the mother's womb through her vagina and possesses her child, who is about to be born. The two then become, so to speak, one and the same person, and the child shares with the deceased his or her personality, including the same repertoire of skills and knowledge. In brief, all the elements of character and knowledge that we usually understand to be accumulated through a lifetime are received by the child all at once in a bundle, even before it is born.

However, the Yukaghirs say that the moment the child acquires language a failure in its memory occurs. The child's knowledge is not lost as such, but it is no longer explicitly aware of who it is and what it knows. Its knowledge comes to exist in a sort of encapsulated form, which needs to be drawn out through processes of personal rediscovery and practical enskillment, rather than formal training. To engage in everyday types of activities, such as hunting, is thus seen as engaging in acts of remembrance. It follows from this that for Yukaghirs, there is no such being as a child, at least not in the sense in which we understand it, of an empty vessel that needs to be filled up with knowledge (*ibid.*: 135). People know from the very beginning everything they will ever come to know and are therefore, in consequence, not in debt to anybody for their knowledge.

This outlook has major implications for the way in which learning is understood among Yukaghirs. Rather than being an issue of explicitly transmitting information "from the top down", so to speak, it is one of assisting or guiding the person in practical activities through which he himself will come to realize what he is already believed to know. Thus,

I hardly ever saw children or youngsters being told things or having them explained. Instead, children are encouraged to explore the world on their own with minimal interference from adults. In fact, I often witnessed situations, similar to those described by Jean-Guy Goulet (1998: 39–42) among the Dene Tha, where children would play with either fire or alcohol while their parents simply observed silently from a distance. Goulet summarizes this ethos of minimum intervention by writing: "Because Dene consider true knowledge to be personal, firsthand knowledge, they learn in a manner that emphasizes the nonverbal over the verbal, the experimental over the exposition of principles" (*ibid.*: 58).

Carrying forward this emphasis on non-verbal first-hand experiential knowledge over verbal instruction into adult life, the individual Yukaghir hunter's knowledge about hunting is recognized *as such* only when he himself has tested it in practice and seen for himself that it actually holds true or works. Or, as David M. Smith puts it with regard to Chipewyan hunters, and which is equally true for the Yukaghirs, "verbal information is never seen as sufficient; first-hand experimental knowledge is an epistemological *sine qua non*" (1998: 417).

My point is that for the Yukaghirs, as for many other Arctic peoples, what provides knowledge is *not* language but acts of direct perceptual engagement with the world – acts that are believed to occur independently of language itself. For them, knowledge is something that pre-dates language; language is no more than a secondary activity that gives names to things, which the person is believed to already know about. In fact, Yukaghir hunters claim that verbal instruction might even distort peoples' proper understanding of things. Thus, in their view, language is something that obstructs rather than promotes genuine understanding of things.

HUMANIZING ONESELF THROUGH WORDS

It is within this context of hunters' general attitude of mistrust, at times even hostility, towards language and information conveyed in language that I believe that their storytelling is to be understood. These stories do not serve an educational purpose. In fact, they are often unintelligible even to many members of the group. Still, for Yukaghirs, language is, like the human body itself, an inseparable aspect of what it means to be human. This does not mean that language is seen as a uniquely human attribute. In the world of Yukaghirs, humans have nothing of which non-human animals have not at least a vestige, and language is no exception to this. Thus, the various animal species are said to speak in their own languages in much the same way as they are believed to live lives analogous to those of humans: when roaming the forest, they appear in the guise of animal prey and predator (just as human beings do when out hunting) but when they enter their own lands and encampments they too hang up their fur coats and take on human shapes and speak in their own "human" languages. It is exactly with respect to this latter point about language being a marker of "humanity as a condition" (Descola 1986: 120), shared by humans and non-humans alike, that I believe we should understand the hunters' narrative mode.

What talking does is, in effect, to transform beings, humans and non-humans alike, back to their ordinary human mode of existence. The conversational community and the endless exchange of words "humanize" them and the space of the encampment as does the removal of fur clothing and the smell of cooked food and tobacco smoke. Speech and

smell – both of which are seen as identifying markers of one's humanity – are thus to be seen as sort of magical tools for purging a sense of otherness from the self and reconstructing one's identity in a more stable human format. It is not so much the meaning of the words uttered as it is the act of talking itself that is important. Whether the narrator is fully or only partly comprehensible is of secondary importance. The listeners are not expected to attend too closely to his words for meaning. Rather, it is the act of talking that brings about the intended effect; it confronts – almost engulfs – them with the paramount reality of human social life, from which they had previously been withdrawn, and it forces them to examine the hunting event in these terms. To this extent, their narrative mode is directly involved in the promotion of reflexivity. Hunters are, through their engagement in storytelling, provided with the opportunity to reflect back on the day's hunt, to stand apart from their hazardous entry into the in-between world of the hunt and to "look at it" from within the safer human social sphere of the encampment. In this process they are made conscious of their own consciousness (V. Turner 1982: 75). They come to see that they are not elk, but genuine human persons.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have described the symmetrical inversions between humans and non-humans and the living and the dead among the Yukaghirs. As we have seen, species identity is in a constant state of flux, no category of being is ever permanent and anyone can transform into virtually anything else: humans become animals, animals turn into humans, and the dead convert into the living. Indeed, while waiting to be reincarnated, the dead person's soul, *ayibii*, is said to live in the "Land of Shadows" (Yuk. *ayibii-lebie*) or the "Second Moscow", as it is also called. The place itself is believed to be an inversion of this world: the inhabitants live in log cabins and tents, eat and hunt, as they would normally do, yet basic things, such as day and night, winter and summer, are reversed.

Within this framework of continual transformations, I have focused on two different ways of being: the forest and the encampment. When out hunting, Yukaghirs turn themselves into animal prey, taking on its identity and mode of perception. When they get back, the space of the encampment is the symmetrical inversion of forest life in that it serves to humanize hunters and restore their original identity and perspective. The important thing to note, however, is that in both cases the hunter's viewpoint is never uniquely his own, but is always intersected by those of others. In the forest, the hunter sees the world through the eyes of his animal prey whereas within the encampment he sees it with the eyes of the deceased relative of whom he is said to be a reincarnation. In other words, for the Yukaghirs there is no such thing as seeing with one's own eyes. People always see through the eyes of others as well.

This is a far cry from the convention of the individual subject in Western thinking, where the eyes of the person are uniquely his own and his seeing does not intersect with those of others. In a literal sense, the common-sense Western concept of person is egocentric: the world is centred on the spectator, who is also the essence or core of identity. For the Yukaghirs no such centre of identity exists. For them, personhood is not about a class of being or entity; rather it entails *relationships*. There would be no hunters without prey, just as there would be no living without the souls of the dead, because a person only

attains his personhood by virtue of the relationship he has to his previous incarnation or the animal hunted. The Yukaghir person/hunter, therefore, is essentially and inherently relational, having no existence of his own outside or separate from the relationships into which he enters.

NOTE

1. This chapter is based on my *Soul Hunters: Hunting, Animism, and Personhood among the Siberian Yukaghirs* (2007). See also my "Seeing With Others' Eyes: Hunting and Idle Talk in the Landscape of the Siberian Iukaghir" (2011b).

13

Ontology and ethics in Cree hunting: animism, totemism and practical knowledge

Colin Scott

Niichimiichich; niichichaachaakw
You and I have the same flesh (or bodily covering);
you and I have the same spirit (or soul).[1]

The problem of anthropology, it might be said, is how to conduct a conversation among the differences in the world. We are continually drawn to some common ground upon which such conversation may be possible. I want to propose that this is a problem for all thought, that of Cree hunters – whose relationship with animals is summarized in the epigraph – being no exception. For Cree hunters, obviously, the problem is not confined merely to human trans-cultural differences.

The differences between animistic and secular scientific worldviews have been a matter of long-standing concern for anthropology. My point of departure for this chapter is a questioning, suggested by Cree ontology, of ideas about animism and culture–nature duality in Western thought. In one influential view, Viveiros de Castro (1998a: 470) has counterposed Amerindian "multinaturalism" to Western "multiculturalism". The latter assumes the unity of nature founded on the "objective universality of body and substance", together with the plurality of cultures stemming from the "subjective particularity of spirit and meaning". The former, in contrast, "would suppose a spiritual unity and a corporeal diversity", with culture or the subject the form of the universal, and nature or the object the form of the particular. Viveiros de Castro's view resembles in some respects Wagner's (1977, 1981) earlier understanding that, through predominant deliberate attention to figurative signification (whose semiotic flip-side is an assumed relationality), indigenous Papuans precipitate human social relations as the form of the innate, in contrast to scientific thought whose deliberate attention to literal or relational signification precipitates natural objects and "nature" as the assumed (figurative) form of the innate. Both Viveiros de Castro and Wagner echo long-standing anthropological perception of animistic cultures as injecting "nature" with qualities conventionally regarded by Westerners to be the domain of the human ("spirit", intentionality, social communication, etc.).

However, taken at face value, the epigraph from Cree mythology suggests an animism that is not a straightforward inversion of Western cosmology. Cree hunters allege that

humans and animals are fundamentally alike in *both* body and soul, while at the same time every form of life according to its kind has particular qualities of mind and worldly perception, *and* particular bodily manifestations. Each species, they say, has its own gifts of mind and bodily perception. And each has its own place in predator–prey relationships, ideally construed as relations of positive reciprocity. Cree hunters may be said to be simultaneously "multinatural" and "multicultural" in outlook, while perceiving a fundamentally shared ground of body and spirit. Cree thought insists on tacking back and forth between the universal and the particular in both natural and cultural domains.

The process of differentiating and relating living entities in the world involves a ubiquitous and continuous flux between metaphoric and metonymic associations; neither animism nor totemism can be characterized by primary reference to one or the other trope – both modes of signification are continually at play in a two-way traffic. The totemic moment of thought involves a processing of human identity and circumstance with reference to the other-than-human, while the animistic moment involves the converse. This two-way movement precludes categorical division between human and other-than-human domains.

Whatever illusion Westerners may be under about the primacy and universality of "nature" compared with the derivative and relative status of "culture", it is plain to Cree hunters that reality is more supple and recursive. On close inspection, Western "nature" is itself not a field of metonymic contiguities devoid of metaphor (as some philosophers or practitioners of natural science might prefer), nor is animistic "community". Neither cosmology is simply dominated by the metaphoric transposition of the human onto the other-than-human, or vice versa. Rather, knowledge producers make oscillating and creative use of metaphor and metonymy as they differentiate and relate percepts in their worlds of engagement.

The previous paragraph denies a fundamental semiotic distinction between animistic and naturalistic cosmologies, requiring, in the first instance, that we address the problem of universals – what do animism and Western naturalism have in common? Following consideration of that question, we will turn to two consequences of the perspective sketched above. First is the thorough imbrication of fact and value, the mundane and the sacred, in Cree animism. Second and closely related to the first is the continual infusion of abstract (sacred or spiritual categories) with practically grounded experience.

UNIVERSALS

All signification involves three fundamental processes: first, the perception and construction of differences and distinctions; second, the comparison of objects and processes thus distinguished, involving the imputation of similarities as well as differences; and third, the drawing of connections among objects and processes – all these through our active engagement of environment. In other words, the oppositional and the connective, the metaphoric and the metonymic, are present in all thought. This is not a novel observation.

Can we go further than this, to suggest that certain paths of difference-making are found in human society at large? In particular, if the culture/nature opposition is demonstrably not universal, what differences are fundamental to all human-environment thought and perception? Following Roy Willis (1990: 1–24), at least two may be suggested.

First, the differentiation of self from non-self is primary for human organisms, at least from the moment of parturition, if not in utero. For the newborn infant, the world is not merely an undifferentiated continuum, waiting to have its features defined through enculturation; the infant experiences from the outset the raw fact of its separation, as well as its connection, in the frustration and satisfaction of biologically rooted desires. This sense of self expands through enculturation to include the dyadic and more inclusive social envelopes of our being. The architecture of perception is both biologically and socially erected in the context of this awareness.

Willis borrows von Uexküll's (1957) notion of the *umwelt*, a world distinctively perceived and acted upon by each species out of the flux of events comprising its environment, a world constituted according to the perceptions and reactions enabled by its sensory and motor equipment. For humans, however (and presumably to varying degrees for other species that socialize, communicate and learn), the *umwelt* is generated not only through the organism, but trans-individually. And this trans-individuality necessarily entails a sense of collective selfhood within, yet distinguished from, the rest of the environment.

Willis goes on to suggest that "the basic motivation for cosmology construction is to be found in the primal human experience of the self-and-other dyad" (1990: 13). Cosmology construction is a human, cultural way of completing an *umwelt* proper to our species, or proper to a community within our species. I would relate this insight to a second, apparently universal, oppositional dynamic in human thought – the play between the particular and the general in knowledge construction. This dynamic is rooted functionally in the need to condense welters of experiential detail into simplified categories and scenarios, for the sake of communication, if not existential comfort. A cosmology involves paradigms or root metaphors that inform maps, models and rules for instrumental and ethical action, in a world whose complexity and uncertainty would otherwise overwhelm personal and group action. The reduction of complexity necessarily precipitates a sense of latent or hidden truth or underlying principle, as distinct from manifest experience – a sense of the abstract versus the concrete.

The perspective of phenomenology is useful here for its focus on the experience of creatively engaged subjects, as they assimilate crucial features of "pre-categorical" into "categorical" reality. While subjective experience may sometimes tend toward the rote reproduction of earlier categorical products, this is never *all* that takes place. The mutual infusion of the experiential and the categorical is beset by ambiguity, trial and error, and reformulation. Action involves a continual series of creative, interpretive acts; it must include, in Merleau-Ponty's ([1960] 1964b: 95) words, the "leap ... from already available significations to those we are in the process of constructing and acquiring". The world-as-experienced and acted-upon responds in ways that impel ongoing acts of categorical introspection and invention.

Human signification occupies the space between existing orders of meaning, our specific purposes, and our novel experience in a given environmental context. The ambiguous fit of percepts within meaningful orders is part of their significance; they may confirm or contradict existing relations of meaning and conventional outcomes of action. Environmental conditions do not just set limits to what cultural patterns are adaptive, do not merely define the possibilities from among which cultural choices are made; once they enter the field of perception and hence of cultural meaning as signifiers, whatever

intrinsic properties and actions they possess are culturally generative. This I take to be the semiotic corollary of conditions that Ingold (1996b, 2000) refers to as *dwelling* and *engagement*, or that Hornborg (1996) calls *contextualism* – that mind is immanent in its contexts of activity and place, not a cultural overlay on a detached reality (see also Casey 1996).

"Essentialist" representations of cultures as integrated, closed systems have been firmly discredited, but how to represent the meaningful ordering of experience and action in the world, from both personal and collective standpoints, remains an issue. The communication and orchestration of intentions, the endurance of social projects of any kind, rely on such ordering. This ordering involves a striving by subjects for at least a provisional and pragmatic, if not canonical, quality of *coherence* in cultural knowledge and the social practice it informs. In cultural theory, however, reaction to the essentialist fetish of culture can provoke an opposite extreme. Brightman (1993: 3), for example, has stated that:

> Cree representations of the human-animal relationship are profoundly and perhaps necessarily chaotic and disordered. The human and animal categories are themselves continuous rather than discrete, and their interpenetration seems to preclude stable representations of causality or sociality in hunter-prey interactions.

Brightman is surely correct to state that human and animal categories are continuous and interpenetrating. But among Eastern Cree, I find that human and animal categories are both continuous *and* discrete, their differences, similarities and interconnections the objects of a perpetual play of metaphor, impromptu interpretation and sustained relational modelling. Causal and moral representations of hunter–prey interaction, while neither static nor closed, participate in a shifting but enduring order of social knowledge and practice. Certainly, human intentions and experiences pose chronic dissonances and dilemmas *vis-à-vis* cultural predispositions. And certainly, cultural orders achieve variable degrees of coherence, trans-subjective allegiance, stability and hegemonic integration, depending on their histories. But the legacy of deconstruction need not be a chaotic antithesis of order. Rather, it is our recognition of the complexity of possible orderings, of the achievement of *relative* coherence amidst *relative* chaos, and of the constantly shifting ground on which coherence is sought.

RESPECT AND RECIPROCITY, FACT AND VALUE

For Cree hunters, the commonalities and differences are ordered and negotiated as a matter of reciprocity – ideally respectful relationship, or positive reciprocity, though negative reciprocity, or exploitative relationship, is a well-understood corollary. Perception of the world as trans-species society or community is fundamental. Hence, knowledge of the world, and right relationships in the world, are inseparable from this context and from one another. The contextual meanings of respect vary according to the particular circumstances of the species and relationships involved. But respect is the ethical standard for all relationship, with direct entailments for practical knowledge in managing livelihood in the world. More precisely, respectful reciprocity is the ethically approved mode of relationship between hunters and animals.

The theme of reciprocity is a radical truth expressed in many forms. From the standpoint of Cree mythology, it spans cosmological time. Humans received human culture – fire, language, tools – from the animals who originally had them. In the biography of a human lifetime, hunters receive animal gifts throughout their careers, thanks to their relationship with animal persons who were understood, in abstract terms, as the species masters of bears, caribou, geese, and so on. An animal who has been particularly generous to a hunter and with whom the hunter has a special relationship commonly makes an appearance at or near the time of death of the hunter; in symbolic terms, the hunter at death is assimilated to the animal, as the hunter has assimilated the animal throughout his or her life. In all manner of more particular ways, the hunter owes respect to the animals in the daily course of hunting and managing a hunting territory.

Respect, accordingly, has a plethora of meanings and practical applications. There is respect for animal masters, sacred condensations of esteemed partnership in the life-giving reciprocities of hunting and consuming. There is respect for the autonomy and intentionality of the animal, including its capacity to evade or bestow itself upon hunters. It is disrespectful to state with certainty a definite future outcome based on one's own plans and intentions, because what happens will be the product of multiple actors' intentions and choices; indeed such a statement is regarded as a kind of "lie" that invites punitive reaction on the part of the animal or other persons in the world. The animal is always a gift, and respected as such; for no matter how impeccably a hunter may prepare and execute a hunt, success will not occur without the animal's cooperation. As Feit (1992) shows, a hunter's reading of an animal's intentions when it is difficult to catch may translate into a judgement that the animal should be not be hunted at a particular place or time, informing strategies for the management of hunting territories through rotation of hunting places and targeted species.

A consequence of hunters' construal of the world as a community of living entities and relationships is the co-production of fact and value (see Mikkelson & Scott in preparation). In their mode of encountering and engaging the world, the practical, the ethical and the sacred are conjoined. The sacred is the abstract framework for apprehending the particularities of everyday hunting and managing a territory, wherein animal master "spirits" and the form of the "gift" as the ethically endorsed mode of relationship are general categories for keeping one's relationships with animals in order. Dimensions of "fact" and "value" are intimately and transparently co-agentive in orienting knowledge and action. In effect, in imagining and enacting a world, "facts" are continually attuned to "values" in closely recursive criteria of understanding. The responsiveness of the world to human action and intention, framed as reciprocity among a host of mutually communicative persons, human and other-than-human, is never only "technical".

ABSTRACT AND PARTICULAR

Abstract "keys" to the relationality of the world, whether in the guise of theoretical concepts in "natural" sciences or of "spirits" such as the animal masters so familiar in Amerindian cosmologies, are universal. One cosmology makes of nature an object; the other makes of other-than-human agents partners in reciprocity. In both cases, a certain vision of the human and a certain vision of the other-than-human are mutually inflecting.

What claims should be made about Cree knowledge, one example of animistic cosmology, as distinctive from Western scientific knowledge? I am sympathetic to Agrawal's (1995: 418) argument concerning the opposition frequently drawn between indigenous and scientific knowledges; it is problematic to identify differences in the basic modalities of thought, whether topical and substantive, methodological and epistemological, or contextual. Yet there is something particular to animistic outlooks, and the difference inheres, it seems to me, in the figurative divisions and continuities between human selfhood and the rest of the world; in the root metaphors that inform a particular knowledge tradition, and in the actual social practices that instantiate these figurative framings.

Raymond Williams (1980) has pointed out that the idea of nature in European culture is really two ideas: a *state* of nature (that is, nature as beyond and contrasted with the world of humans and their relationships); and nature as the essential *quality* (that is, the inner nature of a thing). He observes that the latter meaning was historically prior, and only later did the idea occur that the multiplicity of things and living processes in the world might be organized around a singular essence, the extension of a quality into a state. This idea was comparable to the emergence of monotheism in religion, the inception of a unitary symbol of divine order and origin. Indeed, it was the singular abstraction of God that prompted the singular abstraction of nature, the creation as distinct from the creator; and which opened the door to the post-Enlightenment separation of science from theology.

This trajectory is distinct from that of cultures developing along animistic lines. There was increasing separation, in Western scientific contexts, of abstract spiritual categories from "theoretical" understandings of, and interventions in, the natural world. The consequences for our ethical treatment of a natural world, evacuated of spirit, have been widely remarked. Gregory Bateson's (1979: 19) declaration is apropos: "we have lost totemism, the sense of parallelism between man's organization and that of the animals and plants. We have lost even the Dying God ... our loss of the sense of aesthetic unity was, quite simply, an epistemological mistake."

The semiotic modality of animal master categories (C. Scott 2006, 2007) and general categories in scientific theory may be fundamentally similar, but Cree knowledge has not separated sacred from empirical vocalities of the sign. Animals and humans are kinds in a nested series of categorical inclusions. The embedding of humans in broader networks of life is neatly reflected in the category *iyiyuu* – which at descending taxonomic levels can apply to any living being, or to a human person as distinct from a non-human person, or to a Cree person as distinct from other humans. This nesting of categories connects Cree selfhood to the broadest extent of a living universe. While acknowledging the necessary ways in which humans are to be differentiated from animals, it simultaneously asserts their root commonality in a continuous world.

Cree mythology demonstrates that for humans to reproduce, they must kill animals for food. One myth underlines the grave ethical responsibility entailed by this relationship, repeatedly evoking the joined yet separate identities of human and animal in the phrase: *niichimiichich; niichaahchaakw* – you and I have the same flesh or covering; you and I have the same spirit. To disrespect the animal would be to disrespect and endanger oneself, yet respect toward animals must obviously be expressed differently than toward other humans. If animals are to be killed, it must be done respectfully, without waste, and in consideration of the well-being of animal populations.

Elsewhere, building on the work of Preston (1976), Tanner (1979) and Feit (1992), and on my own ethnography of Eastern Cree, I have argued that root metaphors of trans-species personhood, communication and agency inform, and are informed by, practical knowledge issues of effective resource use and management (C. Scott 1996, 2006). Practical-empirical knowledge in the concrete and spiritual knowledge in the abstract are not insulated one from the other. A Cree person assimilates an encounter with a black bear within a pre-charged matrix of possible meanings. There is scope for creative interpretation, but what emerges is a partly conventional, partly innovative accommodation between the paradigmatic and the practical-empirical features and implications of the experience.

Animal spirits may invoke veiled or invisible principles and forces that underlie manifest experience, but so do abstract concepts in science. Why then do the former appear mystical to the Western observer, while the latter are deemed a valid and informative expression of reality? It is because we compare the animal master spirit to the evacuated spirits of our own intellectual tradition; but these are not the same sort of spirit. The bear master of animals has retained its connection to the practical-empirical knowledge project of Cree hunters in a way that biblical angels, for example, have not for Westerners. The figure of the bear master is continually subject to transmutations according to its empirical and practical implications for taking care of Crees' relationships with animals on their hunting territories. The non-separation of the sacred and the secular enables Cree mythical and ritual symbolism to furnish vehicles for empirical/instrumental knowledge, an alternative that is ideologically excluded in orthodox Western science.

CONCLUSION

Figurative (mainly metaphoric) and relational (mainly metonymic) processing of engaged experience and practical navigation in the world are oscillating moments of all thought, whether under conventional labels of animism, totemism, or science. Animism and totemism may be seen as converse movements in the figurative use of the human to ponder the other-than-human, and of the other-than-human to ponder the human. But these figurative gestures have their immediate and deliberate relational counterparts in the world of hunting. It is not sufficient to recognize both humans and animals as souls/spirits clothed in bodies; each living entity according to its kind has unique and determinate qualities of mind and body, and precision about the nature of these is obligatory in hunting success. The meanings of communication, sociality, reciprocity, respect, and so on have to be worked out in situational and ecological context. And this working out involves both a series of grounded and specific differentiations among living kinds and their activity, and more precise definition of the relational contexts that prove the validity of this differentiation.

There is no basis for imagining that animistic ontology produces less accurate knowledge of the world than naturalist ontologies of science. Yet the two have important differences in their ways of knowing. The latter insists on separations of the sacred and of value from the purely objective and factual in a way that is simply untenable in a world fundamentally structured by relations of reciprocity. It is not that an anthropocentric metaphor leads animists into incapacity to deal with the empirical relations; rather, reciprocity is

fully informed by the particularities of other-than-human agents in such relations. And questions of ethical obligation are permuted according to the realities and practicalities of human and other-than-human co-participation in the socio-ecology of hunting.

Western scientific culture, for its part, faces undeniable crises stemming from attempted evacuation of values and sacred meaning from its models of objective reality. It is not that "nature" as perceived by Westerners is shaped less by qualities of cultural mind and modalities of social relationship than are animistic communities of other-than-human persons. Rather, for a Western social order that endorses the value and necessity of competition and inequality, other-than-human "nature" becomes the field of radical "otherness" most eligible for technical manipulation as mere object – part and parcel of our societal paradigm. Such a nature is our totem, and objectivism the spirit with which it is infused. Our present and worsening environmental relations indicate that a world constituted of relations of reciprocity is a truer vision, from the standpoint of longer-term adaptation and evolution, than a world of competitive opposition and exploitation.

NOTE

1. From the story of *Chichihp*, narrated to the author by Geordie Georgekish, Wemindji, 1979.

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Moral foundations of Tlingit cosmology

Fritz Detwiler

The Tlingit of southeastern Alaska live in a region of spectacular physical power and beauty. Rugged snow-capped mountains covered with the rich flora of a rainforest make overland travel difficult. Ice floes from glaciers, strong currents and tides hinder ocean travel. The surrounding ocean, forests and streams provide the Tlingit with sufficient material resources for their food, clothing, shelter and transportation. Over the centuries, the Tlingit have developed an intimate knowledge of and a relationship with their environment that enables them to live in balance with the land, the sea and the non-human persons with whom they share their world. Such a lifestyle was and continues to be based on the principles of propriety and reciprocity and proceeds from moral covenants which they establish with the non-human world.[1]

For the past few centuries the traditional Tlingit cultural matrix has undergone significant change. Beginning with the Russian presence in the eighteenth century, traditional Tlingit ways of thinking, speaking and enacting their sacred rituals have been under pressure by Christian missionaries and American government officials. More recently, their clan-based social organization is giving way to a corporate model which is much more in tune with the economic, political and legal requirements of contemporary American society. In response to these changes, many within the Tlingit community are seeking to restore their cultural traditions and recover the basic values upon which traditional Tlingit life was based.

Until recently, most scholars of Tlingit culture have focused on their complex social structure, their rich ceremonial life and their distinctive expressions of material culture which are based on the formline style of art common to Northwest Coast peoples. What these scholars have tended to overlook is the deeper cosmological and ontological foundation of the Tlingit cultural matrix upon which their social organization, ceremonial life and art are based.[2] Contemporary Tlingit elders like Nora Dauenhauer and Rosita Worl understand that cultural restoration requires the restoration of the worldview upon which the culture was traditionally based.

While it is difficult to interpret any culture from the outside, it is even more difficult to understand cultural traditions that either have been lost or are in the process of being lost. Much of what follows rests on the precarious perch of what Thomas Norton-Smith calls "rational reconstruction". It is an approach, first suggested by Vine Deloria, in which scholars engage in intensive research in order to "*project* what the various tribal peoples *probably* meant when they described the world around them" (Norton-Smith 2010: 6). In adopting such an approach, what follows is *my* projection. It is offered in the spirit of Robert Warrior's call for an approach to indigenous studies which moves native interests and assumptions about the world to the centre of scholarly research and welcomes into the dialogue all scholars who are willing to do so (Warrior 2010).

The critical issue addressed here concerns the emphasis the Tlingit place on "ownership" and "property". Do "ownership" and "property" here suggest Western legal and juridical principles or do the terms carry with them other meanings that are more consistent with Native American peoples who embrace a more relational approach based on the principles of "gifting" and "reciprocity"? The resolution of this issue begins with two other Tlingit concepts, *shagóon* ("heritage" and "destiny") and *at.óow* (a thing "owned") – two terms on which I will comment later.

When unpacked, my reading of the materials suggests that the Tlingit worldview provides an important example of the "new animism" in five significant ways. First, the Tlingit extend personhood to include all beings as embodiments of "power" and they are fundamentally concerned with relationships among all persons (cf. G. Harvey 2006a: xiv). Second, their cosmology describes an intersubjective relational worldview in which the world is viewed as fundamentally moral.[3] Third, Tlingit narratives establish the means by which they learn what "respect" requires from the perspective of non-human persons (cf. *ibid.*: 103). Fourth, through moral covenants between humans and non-humans, the Tlingit establish the basis upon which respectful reciprocal relations proceed. Finally, the Tlingit are continually involved in world creation and moral reformation through ritual.

COSMOLOGY

According to the Raven cycle stories of the Tlingit, Raven created the world but it remained dark. During this time, all the beings of the creation lived together in a single community, all related to each other (Welker 2004). Boundaries between humans and non-humans were much more fluid than they are now, with all beings able to communicate and change forms with each other rather easily. In order to bring light into the world and make it a better place to live, Raven opened the Box of the Sun and transformed the world into a much more fertile place. However, the light frightened the human and non-human persons and they dispersed into their own separate communities, with some going to the waters, others to the air, and others to the land (Emmons & de Laguna 1991: 34). It was in this time that Tlingit social structure emerged, with persons divided into clans according to their essential character.

Tlingit elder Rosita Worl concludes that the world settled into an oppositional complementary structure in which various types of beings each had their own interests but cooperated with each other in order to maintain harmony and balance among all beings (1998: 83). From the human perspective, the most basic set of oppositions involved the

separate realms of human persons, on the one hand, and non-human persons on the other. It would be incorrect, however, to stop at that level of generalization. Each type of person (e.g. humans, bears, seals, whales, otters, glaciers, cedar trees, mountains, etc.) lived in their own "communities" or domains. These communities were specific to a type of being living in a specific location: *this* coho salmon family in *this* place, *this* glacier in *this* place.

Not only did each domain have its specific members and location, it also had its own interests and protocols (*ibid.*: 83). Quite often the interests of one domain came into conflict with those of another. The most obvious example of this was the taking of non-human life by humans. Clearly, the life-taking was necessary for the survival of the humans but it was not necessarily in the interests of the salmon, for example, to be the source of human food. *These* coho salmon of *this* place seemed to be aware that the improper taking of their life threatened the existence of their community. Such conflicts of interest reflect the oppositional character of Tlingit cosmology. Complementarity also reflects the ethical basis of the cosmos, whether within a particular family, community, or domain, or in cross-domain encounters. The ethical goal is preserving or restoring harmony by recognizing the legitimacy of the interests of the other and balancing those interests with one's own (*ibid.*). Thus, when hunting these bears in this place, the Tlingit must follow appropriate protocols or risk disrespecting these bears and suffering the consequences of those insults. Tlingit mythology does not include stories about non-human cross-domain interactions. We can assume, however, that because the world seemed to be in overall balance, non-human persons respected each other's interests and protocols.

ONTOLOGY

Tlingit conceptions of personhood extended to all domains of life and included both the living and the dead. All persons, including oceans, glaciers and mountains, possess consciousness, intelligence, volition, agency and language. Non-human persons are intimately aware of themselves and their interactions with humans, are capable of experiencing feelings, and have the capacity to choose how they interact with humans.[4] Following Graham Harvey, these characteristics do not appear to be anthropomorphic projections by humans on to non-humans but, rather, seem to be constituent of being itself (2006a: xviii).

The Tlingit identify the breath (*daseikw* or *x'aseikw*, from *di-saa*, 'to breathe') as the animating force within living beings. Beings also possess a body, non-material elements such as a "ghost" and "soul", a guardian spirit, and a "name" (see de Laguna 1972: 758; Kan 1989: 52; R. Dauenhauer 2000: 163). The physical body is a "container" for the essential material and immaterial components of the self which lay beneath the flesh. In fact, Tlingit stories that have their roots in the distant past suggest that physical appearance was not an essential feature of personhood. In those stories, animals and fish could morph between their common and human forms (Kan 1989: 51). Tlingit stories also suggest that beings tend to view other beings in terms of forms natural to them. Thus, humans living in non-human communities might see their hosts anthropomorphically, while the hosts see humans as similar in form to the hosts.

While the outer form or skin is not that important to the Tlingit, they appear to pay special attention to bones. Kan suggests that eight specific skeletal bones were used to

represent beings on Tlingit crests and other materials such as shamanic paraphernalia. These bones give extension to beings and, according to Kan, "symbolized living beings as a whole" (*ibid.*). Tlingit attention to the respectful treatment of the bones of dead beings further indicates their importance. In Tlingit stories, the bones of animals and fish are reborn with flesh and skin. Even the bones of the dead appear to have personhood since they have the capacity to remember how they were treated by others and could bring those memories with them as they were reincarnated. If humans treated the bones well, the reincarnated beings might show reciprocal respect by offering their flesh to the humans who treated them well while, at the same time, not offering themselves to those who had shown them disrespect. Thus, bones appeared to have moral significance since they are the source from which renewed life emerges. Further, bone designs on ritual and shamanic artefacts may be a means of maintaining ongoing relationships between humans and non-human persons through their close connections with the shaman.

The non-material elements of the self include several different components. The *kaa toowu*, or "mind", is the centre from which thoughts and feelings arise and seem to be related to moral character (*ibid.*: 105). In ceremonial situations, for example, *kaa toowu* appear to be the place from which genuine acts of respect towards others emerged (de Laguna 1972: 758). The *kaa toowu* is unique to every person although the characteristics could be identified with other beings. Kan explains, "the *kaa toowu* could be personified, for example, as a chickadee or a spider spinning its web close to one's head, seen as the loving thoughts of a friend, including those of a deceased one, which were believed to linger near the corpse and could even appear some time after the funeral" (Kan 1989: 52).

The *kaa yakgwaheiyagu* ("ghost") and the *kaa yahaayi* ("spirit") are two other non-material elements of personhood. The first appears to be a soul which remains at the site where the body is buried. Both the "ghost" and "soul" also travel to their lineage house in the distant land of the dead. According to Kan, the "ghost" remained in the land of the dead forever. The "spirit", however, eventually returns as one of the deceased's close matrilineal relatives (see de Laguna 1972: 755–9; Kan 1989: 53–4; Worl 1998: 86). The inheritance also involves behavioural characteristics which are both specific to the individual and, more generally, to the clan.

Every human being also possesses a guardian spirit which, according to Richard Dauenhauer, resides above the person's head. Such a guardian spirit either can come to a person by the spirit's volition or the human can seek it out (Jonaitis 2006: 60). The purpose of the spirit is to grant protection to the human and to grant the human help in a number of ways relating to the well-being and success of the human. However, the aid of the supernatural is conditional. The more the human lives a morally virtuous life, the longer the guardian spirit remains. However, the guardian spirit can also threaten to leave a human who lives an unclean or immoral life (R. Dauenhauer 2000: 163).

Names are specific to clans and to individuals. Deriving from its ancestors, each clan has a limited set of names that are passed on every second or third generation. When individuals are given these names, the person is thought to inherit the ancestor's identity and some of their character. When participating in ceremonies, the named individual embodies the name's lineage and thereby enables the deceased ancestors to continually participate in the life of the clan (Worl 1998: 86). Kan suggests that the persons from whom the names originally derived were the "true members" of the clan rather than the individuals who possessed the names at a given time (Kan 1989: 71).

SOCIETY

Tlingit social structure reflects the structure of the cosmos, particularly in the principles of oppositional complementarity and reciprocity. At the most basic level, the social order is divided into the Raven and the Eagle clans (*naa*) among the coast Tlingit and the Crow and Wolf clans among the interior Tlingit. These clans exist for the purpose of exogamy and do not have any formal leadership or organizational structure. These divisions provide for the stability of the social structure through a complex set of reciprocal interactions that include the material exchange of goods and services and spiritual and emotional support during major ceremonies such as the *koo.éex'* (potlatch) (see Kan 1989: 23; Dauenhauer & Dauenhauer 2004: 254; T. F. Thornton 2008: 39).

Below the level of the clan, the winter house (*taan*) is the basic living level. Each house has a spokesman (*hit s'aati*) who represents the house within the larger Tlingit society. Spokesmen are typically chosen through consensus according to the strength of their character and leadership abilities. When a spokesman dies, the title can be passed on to his sister's oldest son, if that son was of sufficient ability and respected by the other members of the house (Olson 2001: 39–40).

Tlingit society is hierarchical with individuals divided into aristocracy, commoners and, at the time of contact, slaves. Houses are typically ranked against each other in terms of the wealth and success of the house leadership and its members. More importantly, the prestige of the house depends on the degree to which the members of the house fulfil their reciprocal obligations to other houses. As Olson describes it,

> The basic principle of Tlingit social organization was reciprocity. Whatever one clan or lineage did to another was repaid. On the positive side, if a house or lineage helped another house of an individual, those helping were eventually repaid. On the negative side, revenge was quickly taken for any insult or injury to even just one member of a house. (*Ibid.*: 42)

Reciprocity also governs relationships between clans and fulfils the complementary principle upon which traditional Tlingit society functions. Aldona Jonaitis suggests that such reciprocal exchanges provide stability to Tlingit society and reinforce the hierarchical system (Jonaitis 1986: 38).

Clans, sometimes in the form of local houses, lay claim to both material and immaterial resources that are central to their identity and reflect their group's character. Material resources include hunting and fishing places such as streams and areas of the oceans, as well as locations in which the clan gather berries, shellfish, and beaches. Crests, ceremonial regalia and other clan representations also belong to the clan. The immaterial resources include stories, songs and names. Together, these resources provide the foundation for Tlingit identity and character (T. F. Thornton 2008: 46).

The Tlingit use the concepts of "ownership" and "rights" to refer to these claims. This language seems to place the terms within the context of what appears to be Western legal theory in much the same way as earlier anthropological accounts of Pacific Northwest Coast peoples used Western economic theory to explain potlatch ceremonies. Without diminishing the way in which "ownership" and "rights" may function to help support contemporary Tlingit land claims and efforts to re-establish a subsistence lifestyle, it may

be helpful to explore these terms in more depth. I will postpone such a discussion until later in the context of my exploration of the Tlingit concept *at.óow*.

The individual comprises the most basic level of Tlingit society. The ideal individual is a person who gains personal identity from the clan and who contributes to the clan by providing for the clan's well-being. This requires an intimate knowledge of the clan's history and destiny, and is tied to the resources of the area through the moral covenants established by ancestors with non-human persons. Further, success in hunting and fishing is also a consequence of respectful and proper moral behaviour to animals and fish. Good moral actions further enhance the reputation of the clan. They also continually maintain established covenants by respecting the interests of the other (*ibid.*: 365). Individuals who show lack of respect towards other persons can suffer "bad luck" and/or ill health while those who exhibit high moral character generate *laxeitl* or "good luck". Dauenhauer sums up the significance of morality in Tlingit culture: "Thus the nonhuman beings of the world were seen as reciprocating with *laxeitl* in return for respectful treatment by human beings" (R. Dauenhauer 2000: 162). Such aid from the non-human domains is particularly important in a rugged land that is so full of danger.

ANCESTORS

The foundation of the Tlingit society lies in the actions of ancestors to whom the clans trace their lineage. I refer to these stories as "originating narratives" since they provide the clan with their identity and constitute a continuing dialogue among the clan members and their ancestors. The Tlingit consider these narratives to be a part of the history of various clans (*naa*) in every respect, even though they do not fit into the Western concept of "history" (Worl 1998: 85). Because Tlingit trace clan and house claims for ownership rights to lands and resources to these narratives, they are especially important for contemporary Tlingit land rights and resource allocation cases in which courts insist on basing claims on "historical" data.

According to Thomas Thornton, the narratives embody *tlakw* or "eternal time" in which the creative processes extend back to the events of creation and forward to the present and into the future. It is spatial rather than linear time in the sense that these events occur in particular places which are well known to the Tlingit and that the events of these places continue to occur through personal encounters, narratives and ceremonies. As Thornton notes, "the Old Woman of the Tides is not merely a remote mythical figure but a continuing phenomenal presence in the ebb and flow of daily sea tides" (T. F. Thornton 2008: 21).

The originating events and places continue to live as they continue to be told in Tlingit social and ceremonial life. By bringing these stories to life, Tlingits enter into the creative processes of the world and through their actions the cosmos continues to unfold. In other words, when the Tlingit tell their narratives and enact their ceremonies they take part in a continuing evolution of the world, a world which has no permanent form. Thus, in a very real sense, responsibility for the physical and moral world is ongoing and stretches from the past to the present and into the future.

The Tlingit concept *shagóon*, often translated as "heritage and destiny", captures this idea. *Shagóon* is emplaced in the locations referred to in the narratives and continues to

be part of the Tlingit environment (*ibid.*). It is embodied in the ancestors whose stories are told and in the named clan members who continue to shape the world. Further, it brings together two domains of being in communicative action: the particular clans which trace their origins to their originating events and the non-human beings who are involved in those events. As Worl notes, these interactions involve kinship relationships between humans and animals. These special relationships, as she calls them, occur not only in ceremonial settings but in everyday life as well (Worl 1998: 84).

Shuká, the Tlingit word for ancestor, means "that which lies before us ... those born ahead of us who are now behind us, as well as those unborn who wait ahead of us" (Dauenhauer & Dauenhauer 1990: 19). Like *shagóon*, it points to the past, present and future. In terms of the past, *shuká* refers to specific ancestors and their actions. As present, it includes the named people whose actions contribute to the clan's reputation. As future, it points to the world the past and present shape for the future and to the descendents who will carry on the heritage and destiny of the clan. Tlingit clan names usually refer to the lineages of specific clans and houses through suffixes meaning "people of" (Dauenhauer & Dauenhauer 2004: 263).

In *Haa Shuká, Our Ancestors* (1987), Nora Marks Dauenhauer and Richard Dauenhauer provide the narratives of particular clans through the voices of clan members. The Dauenhauers note that clan names often translate into English very poorly, often substituting "Brown Bear", "Killerwhale", "Coho" and "Sockeye" for their Tlingit terms. Lost in this translation is the relational dimension of the clan names (Dauenhauer & Dauenhauer 2004: 263). The stories focus on the interactions and the covenants established between humans and the non-human person, and the Tlingit names reflect those covenants. In this sense, the clan originates in these interactions and the non-human persons are just as much a part of the clan identity as the human ancestors. This relational dimension also is often lost in popular non-Tlingit references to totem poles. As Aldona Jonaitis (2010) insists, the carvings are not "totems" in the sense that the clan comes from the animal, fish, place, or event, rather they stand for elements of the originating stories, the details of which would be clearly understood by members of the clan.

Individual clans typically have a number of originating narratives and, therefore, a number of ancestors, beings, places and events which contribute to the clan's identity. The Tlingit use the term *Haa Shagóon* to refer to "collective body of ancestors" (Worl 1998: 85). This term includes all of the ancestors who have been part of the "heritage, origin, and destiny" of the clan (Kan 1989: 68). Many of them are not remembered by name, but their spirit and character continue to be a part of the clan's identity through rituals in which they are called forth and become present as well as through the clan's crests, stories, songs, animals, resources and places. Because the Tlingit clans ultimately trace their origins back to the formative events in which the present world order developed, *Haa Shagóon* also includes Raven, as creator, and an "impersonal and abstract supreme being" (Kan 1989: 69) who was also involved in the original creation of the world.

Haa Shagóon are clan specific and the clan's head is ultimately responsible for their care and they remain under his control. This includes determining who shall have access to the regalia that depict the clan's *shagóon*, and when, and for passing on ancestral names. In the appropriate settings, he also "wore the most valuable representations of crests himself" (Kan 1989: 94). As Thornton notes, ceremonial oratory which related the clan's

stories, character, history and destiny, and exhibited genuine feelings of respect, imitated the ancestors and brought the clan's *shagóon* to life (2004: 373).

TLINGIT NARRATIVES

Most of the Tlingit originating accounts involve an act of disrespect by humans toward others. In many cases, the offended party is a non-human, but they may also focus on humans who show disrespect toward their relatives. Since they are linked to clans rather than specific individuals, they differ from stories about specialists who deal with spirits in which the "shaman" (*Ixt'*; Olson 2001: 58) procures special powers. According to Richard Dauenhauer, Tlingit origin narratives have several common features. First, a human breaks a taboo and shows disrespect toward a person of a non-human domain. The disrespect may either be intentional or unintentional. The key is not the motive behind the act but the consequence of offending another being by a human action. These offences arise when the actor breaks proper protocol or ignores the other's interests. As a result of the violation, the offended being (e.g. a salmon, bear, glacier, bay, or stream) selects a human from the offender's community to teach the humans how to respect to them (R. Dauenhauer 2010).

In some cases, humans may choose to substitute one human for another but, in all cases, some human accepts responsibility for the offending action. The human then crosses over into the community of the offended being and learns their interests and protocol. The human then returns to their original community and serves as a mediator between the two groups. Since the human has learned the proper lessons, the non-human beings grant humans special prerogatives in hunting, fishing, or using that place to support human interests such as procuring food. The clan then must reciprocate by accepting responsibility for maintaining proper relationships with that being, spirit, or place. As long as the clan fulfils their part of the covenant, the being, spirit, or place will provide for them. Nora Dauenhauer describes this covenant as a kind of "insurance policy".[5] The stories, therefore, link the clans with specific ancestors, events, beings and covenants.

The origination stories seem to have several different themes, although all of them centre on moral actions by humans toward non-humans. "The history of Glacier Bay" links the Chookaneidi clan to a heroic act of an ancestor who sacrifices herself for the good of the rest of the village. "The woman who married the bear" links the Teiweidi clan to an ancestor who is taken to live with a bear family following an incident in which the bear is offended by human disrespect. "The story of the eagle crest of the Nexa'di" describes a young boy who was disrespected by his human family but taken pity upon by an eagle.

In Susie James's version of "The history of Glacier Bay" (Dauenhauer & Dauenhauer 1987: 245–59), the Chookaneidi lived in an ideal village near the glacier where all kinds of salmon ran. At that time, the edge of the glacier was so far up the river valley it could not be seen from the village. As was the tradition, a young girl, Kaasteen, who was beginning her menstruation, was isolated from the rest of the household for a period of three years. During that time, she was instructed in proper behaviour toward other humans as well as the fertility of the place and its animals. At the end of that period, having learned moral responsibility, she would be eligible for marriage.

After two years, she became bored and decided to entertain herself by teasing the glacier by treating it like a dog. She spat on the bones of a sockeye salmon and waved sockeye salmon dryfish at the glacier. She called to the glacier like one would play with a dog, "Glacier, here, here, here." Her young sister, seeing the disrespectful action, asked her, "Hey, why are you saying that?" When the girl ignored her, the young sister went to her mother and reported what her sister was doing. The mother cautioned the young sister to be quiet. The next day the mother went to the young girl and asked her why she was acting in such a fashion. "Don't you know that you can break a taboo? You shouldn't be saying things about anything like that. Why were you saying those things? Don't you say them again."

Meanwhile, hunters had gone up to the edge of the glacier by boat came back and asked, "What's wrong with the glacier? It's growing so much." It was getting closer and closer to the village. They said it was growing faster than a running dog. The glacier continued to grow and the people in the village became afraid. "Wasn't there any way to stop it?" They made songs to try to stop it. The mother told her mother and the grandmother warned them to find an escape route, it was growing so fast. The grandmother, Shaawatséek', knew that a sacrifice would have to be made to the glacier to appease it. She offered to take the place of the offender, Kaasteen.

After she had been sacrified, the maternal uncle then composed a song and asked Kaanaxduwóos', "the one of long ago", to also compose a song. "It wouldn't be right if there might not be anything heard from us as we begin our escape from here." Kaanaxduwóos' agreed. As the glacier pushed them into the sea, the whole village began to panic, packed up the boat and barely made an escape. As they left, they sang the most sacred Chookaneidí song, the cry for the dead. Because of the heroic act of Shaawatséek', Kaasteen was saved and eventually married, bore children, and continued the Chookaneidi lineage. Meanwhile, the spirit of Shaawatséek' remains in the glacier and forever connects the Chookaneidí with Glacier Bay. While Kaasteen insured the biological survival of her family, Shaawatséek' insured their spiritual and social survival (*ibid.*: 408).

The next story illustrates the fluid boundary between humans and non-humans. In "The woman who married the bear" (Dauenhauer & Dauenhauer 1987: 195–217), a group of Teikweidi women went out to collect Indian celery. One of the young women was engaged. As they were walking, the straps broke on the young woman's pack. Later they came across the tracks of a bear who had just gone through there. The young woman slipped and fell on the bear's "leavings". When she stood up the leavings were all over her and, in disgust, she cursed the bear by complaining that the bear had left the droppings in *her* way.

Toward evening she was alone, repairing the straps on her basket, when a bear approached her. To her, the bear looked just like the man to whom she was engaged. The bear-man told her he would marry her and she did not argue since, to her, he looked human. That fall she caught and ate salmon just like bears do although, again, it appeared to her she was doing it like humans would fish and eat. When they had dried the salmon, they packed and went to where the bear wintered. He built a house and they spent many nights there. One night a fox ran in front of the door and warned them that they were camped in the path of humans. So they moved their house up the mountain.

As spring approached her younger (human) brothers set out after her. When they found the bear's den, they tried to kill the bear. The bear protected his wife and told

her to be brave. Finally, the brothers killed the bear but she persuaded them not to eat it because it was their brother-in-law. As they left the mountain, she sang a song about her husband. Because of her experience living with the bear in his house as his wife, she had learned to respect bears by living the way they do. Because she had learned proper protocol and respect, she and her Teikweidi clan were given permission to hunt the bears in that area.

The third narrative illustrates the compassion of non-humans for humans. "The story of the eagle crest of the Nexa'di" (Swanton [1909] 2011) tells of a poor Nexa'di man who was befriended by an eagle, taken into the eagle family and taught how to be a great hunter. The young man was a poor hunter who lived off the largesse of others and, therefore, was viewed as a burden to his community. His mother and brothers were just as poor as he was but they had always taken pity on him and left him food so he could find it.

While he was out fishing one day, an eagle approached him and took him to the eagle's community. He was given plenty to eat and lived with them for a long time, marrying one of the eagle women. The man's eagle brothers-in-law gave him a coat and put it on him. By wearing the coat he became a great fisher and hunter, just like an eagle.

After a long time, his human brothers were out fishing, and saw an eagle working very hard to bring ashore a load of fish. After it had done so, the eagle sat up on a branch and said, "It is I". It told them its name, which was the name of the missing man. It is because a friend of theirs was once among the eagle people that the Nexa'di claim the eagle.

AT.ÓOW

These originating narratives provide the foundation for Tlingit clan identity and claims of "ownership" and "rights" related to geographical places and the food resources they contain. Collectively these claims, in turn, are grounded in the Tlingit concept *at.óow*, which Richard Dauenhauer claims is "the single most important spiritual and cultural concept" in Tlingit oral narratives and that it "underlies all dimensions of Tlingit social structure, oral literature, iconography, and ceremonial life". The term translates literally as a "thing owned or purchased" (Dauenhauer & Dauenhauer 1990: 14).

According to Worl, *at.óow* includes the following components:

> a supernatural event including the natural phenomena, the human and animal ancestors and their spirits who were involved in the encounter; (2) the names, songs and stories associated with the event; (3) the site at which the event occurred; (4) the visual representation of the event and entities; and (5) the physical object on which the event is recorded, i.e., house, house screen, ceremonial clothing and objects. (Worl 1998: 93)

Unpacking Dauenhauer's definition reveals the complexity of the concept. "Thing" here includes both material and immaterial embodiments of power related to the events of the originating narrative. In addition to the physical elements of the story, "things" also include stories, songs, spirits and names (T. F. Thornton 2008: 38). Consistent with the Tlingit emphasis on essence rather than form, in one sense the term "thing" can be misleading. What is of critical importance is the power of the narrative's

components and their contribution to the past, present and future well-being of the clan or house.

In the Tlingit context *at.óow*, as "purchase", originally refers to the sacrificial acts of the clan's ancestors as depicted in their originating stories. The "purchase" typically comes from payment for disrespectful acts as, for example, in "The history of Glacier Bay", in which the grandmother gives her life to balance the offence of her granddaughter toward the glacier, or in "The woman who married the bear" who gains access to a hunting ground by spending time in the bear community and learning their ways. Purchase of a clan's most important *at.óow* usually comes at the price of an ancestor's life (Worl 1998: 93). Once purchased by the ancestor, it is owned by the clan and becomes part of the clan's *shuká*, "heritage and destiny". Ownership can later be transferred by the clan or house (if the *at.óow* is specific to a given house) to another clan or house in exchange or trade, or to satisfy a debt (Dauenhauer & Dauenhauer 1990: 15). In such cases, the decision to transfer must be made by the house or clan with the consent of its members.

At.óow ownership is essential to Tlingit life because it entails exclusive "rights" to the resources of a geographical place including, but not limited to, specific types of fish and animals that inhabit that environment, plants which grow there, its mountains, forests and glaciers, and any other material wealth of the place (T. F. Thornton 2008: 38). The term "rights" may be misleading as well. In some contexts and conversations, Tlingits and non-Tlingit scholars substitute the term "prerogative".[6]

Reflecting the principle of reciprocity, clans or houses permitted other clans or houses access to the material resources of the place upon request. By making such a request, the requesting party acknowledges the opposite clan's claim of ownership. If the resources are abundant, the request morally cannot be refused. To refuse such a request is contrary to oppositional complementarity and is viewed by the denied party as an offence for which payment eventually would have to be made in order to re-establish harmony or balance (Kan 1989: 23). While such permission does not itself grant reciprocal exchange of permission, it usually follows once a request is made.

By examining the process by which elements of the originating story become symbols of "ownership" and "rights" we discover that these concepts are reflective of the underlying moral nature of the Tlingit cosmos while at the same time providing the Tlingit with the basis for their legal claims for the land and their rights to fish and hunt in their ancestral homelands.

THE PROCESS OF BECOMING *AT.ÓOW*

An examination of the process by which something becomes *at.óow* helps us understand Tlingit culture in terms of empowerment. It reveals the deepest significance of *at.óow* at the level of the Tlingit connection to their ancestors, heritage and destiny. Finally, the process reveals the fundamental moral foundation of the Tlingit world and the way in which that moral foundation becomes a living reality in the present time.

The process begins with the originating events and their attending narrative. The process is complete when a clan makes a claim for something as an *at.óow* and the claim is confirmed by the opposite clan in a ceremonial setting (Jonaitis 2006: 134). Through the process, the moral actions which re-establish harmony and balance among all beings

becomes embodied in physical representations of the originating events, the clan's character, prerogatives and identity. The process described below focuses on the creation of a ceremonial Chilkat blanket as a major element in Tlingit ceremonialism.

Again, the stories tell of a disruption in the balance between humans and the non-human domains and a payment to restore harmony. As noted above, this imbalance frequently is a consequence of human ignorance or intentional disrespect. For example, "The woman who married the bear" represents ignorance about the natural domain and actions of bears by the young woman who curses the bear after slipping on the bear's droppings. In this situation, balance was restored when she was taken to live among the bears and learned their protocols and how to respect them. "The history of Glacier Bay" is an example of intentionality. Here the payment of the life is sufficient because all of the humans understood that a protocol was violated (i.e. you do not disrespect a glacier by treating it like a dog).

Once the narrative is part of the heritage and destiny of the clan and the clan decides to host the appropriate ceremony, the clan commissions men from the opposing clan to complete the task of transforming the originating event into a physical representation. This stage of the process involves a number of steps. One person secures the raw materials from land for which the commissioning clan has an established prerogative. Worl notes that those involved in gathering thank the embodied powers of the place for allowing their use. A second man would prepare the materials. In the case described here, that involves seasoning and shaping the wood for a pattern board. After accepting suggestions, the artist draws the representation on the board. An older man from the artist's clan then approves the representation and it is given to the commissioning clan for their acceptance. Approval constitutes acceptance of the work (Worl 1998: 104). The principle of oppositional complementarity is obvious here through the involvement of both clans.

The executed design does not "tell" the story. The Tlingit assume that members of the clan and their opposites are familiar with the details since the stories have been repeated often in family and ceremonial settings. Rather, the designs only depict elements of the story such as the animals and natural features in the manner of the distinctive formline style of the Tlingit and Northwest Coast people in general. Because the Tlingit link the drawings so closely to the stories, the designs also embody the emotions, values, wisdom, knowledge and character of the ancestors and those whom they encountered.

Animals in these formline designs appear "disjointed", with various elements of a bear, for example, drawn separately on different areas of the design. This may have some relationship with the previous discussion of the moral significance of bones and their communicative functionality.[7] In exploring this point, several authors refer to the Tlingit art style as X-ray art (Kan 1989: 50; Malin 1999: 120–21). The Tlingit identify the bones as the essential element of being rather than the flesh or outer form. The bones, at least of salmon, once buried and properly treated, later take on additional flesh and are reincarnated. In the interim, they report to other salmon the moral character of the person who caught and ate them. Such experiences and reports have a direct impact on whether that same hunter later has "good or bad luck".

Thus, the X-ray representation of events and beings on the pattern boards may not only refer to the actions of ancestors who restored balance but are also capable of continually reporting to non-human beings involved in the story as to the ongoing character of the clan. This may account for the importance of songs in the process. As we saw in

two of the stories, songs are also an important element in the originating events. These songs typically recall the heroic actions of the ancestor, their sacrifice, and the restoration of balance. Thus, the songs may be another means of communicative action through which harmony and balance are interwoven with heritage and destiny. The clan's most important songs refer to other *at.óow*, and by extension, to those originating events (Kan 1989: 193).

Once the artist executes the design and the commissioning clan accepts it, the process moves to the weaving of a Chilkat blanket which incorporates the design. This stage involves three steps. First, men from the commissioned clan gather raw materials (Emmons & de Laguna 1991: 224). This involves going into the mountains to procure mountain goat wool and going to red cedar stands to harvest the bark. Women process both the wool and the cedar bark into threads used in the construction of the blanket. While the women spin the wool, they also sing songs (*ibid.*: 224–33). These are songs of empowerment and are related to the originating events. The final task is the weaving of the blanket by the women (Jonaitis 1986, cited in Kan 1989: 23). This can take a year or more since the form-line crest design on the blanket is quite complex and must be an exact replication of the pattern board. The centre of the blanket contains the fullest depiction of the animal while other symbols and forms are woven into the outer thirds of the blanket. When worn, the top of the blanket is drawn around the person in such a way that the wearer embodies the animal and moves beyond the fluid boundary between humans and non-humans. In the ceremonial context, not only does the blanket embody the animal but it also embodies all of the elements of the originating events, the ancestors and non-humans involved in those events, the heritage and destiny of the clan, and the principles of reciprocity and balance upon which the events were based and upon which the character of the clan rests.

The final stage of the process is the presentation of the blanket (or other artefact) at a *koo.éex* or other ceremonial gathering.[8] Although *koo.éex* is commonly translated as "potlatch", it literally means "invite" (T. F. Thornton 2008: 39). The invitation points to an important dynamic related to the process by which something becomes *at.óow*. *Koo.éex* occur when one clan or house sends out invitations to other houses or, more generally, the opposite clan, and those invited decide to attend. The decision to attend has great significance tied to it. In choosing to attend, members of the opposite clan or other houses commit themselves to acknowledging the material items presented as *at.óow* (Worl 1998: 107). This constitutes acceptance of the clan's claims of privilege to hunting and fishing grounds and the material resources of geographical places. Further, since the clan members display the existing *at.óow*, all of the claims associated with that *at.óow* are also recognized by the attending clan or houses.

Unlike the potlatches of other Northwest Coast people, the traditional Tlingit *koo.éex* is a memorial service held in respect for recently deceased aristocracy. As described brilliantly in the Dauenhauers' *Haa Shagóon*, the event involves a complex set of reciprocal actions which include songs, dances, eating and oratory. The oratory, in particular, brings together the emotional dimension of Tlingit culture. They exhibit the moral character of the clans in speeches of sorrow, support and joy, and bring about expressions of compassion, sharing and solidarity, thereby creating harmony (T. F. Thornton 2004: 372). This solidarity also extends to the environment and non-human beings. Speeches also have the power to transport the ritual participants back to the location where the

originating event happened and, thereby, link the participants to the embodied powers of that time and place (Worl 1998: 114). Thus, the process is brought full circle – the present generation participates fully in the originating events from which the clan's heritage and destiny emerge.

CONCLUSION

When I began my study of the Tlingit, I was immediately drawn to the concepts of "ownership" and "rights" the Tlingit used to describe *at.óow*. These terms seemed out of place to me from my previous research in other Native American cultures. In particular, it seemed to invoke a judicial understanding of things where my previous work had led me to see Native worldviews as fundamentally moral in nature. As I gained a deeper understanding of Tlingit cosmology and ontology, the pieces began to fall into place. The Tlingit world does appear to be fundamentally moral in character. The originating events and the stories told from them describe "the moral order of the universe" which continues to be maintained through the communication of a "set of rules for proper thinking, speaking, and behaving, vis-à-vis its nonhuman inhabitants, from the especially powerful spirits to the smallest creatures" (R. Dauenhauer 2000: 163). I believe that the process by which something becomes *at.óow* reveals the principles of reciprocity, harmony and balance that frame their moral universe. If we begin to think of "rights" in the wider meaning of the term, we see that the Tlingit culture intends in the usage of the term to involve propriety, protocol, normative values and performative action (Glass 2004: 294). The Tlingit case may well focus on the fundamental moral processes by which Native Americans frame and execute their moral relations with the entire cosmos.

NOTES

1. Calvin Luther Martin (1999) reports that the idea of moral covenants between humans and nonhuman persons also occurs among several other Northwest Coast and Alaskan peoples.
2. The most notable exceptions are Sergei Kan (1989) and George Thornton Emmons (Emmons & de Laguna 1991). More recently, scholars such as Rosita Worl (1998), Thomas Thornton (2004) and Julie Cruikshank (2005) have focused on these dimensions of Tlingit culture.
3. This theoretical model was first suggested by A. Irving Hallowell in his seminal work (1960) on the Ojibwe. In 1992, the journal *Religion* published a set of articles in which several authors, following Hallowell, described a similar worldview among the Yaqui, Odawa and Oglala. Kenneth Morrison (2000, 2002) expanded Hallowell's idea of intersubjectivity in his more recent work on the Algonkian. Using Hallowell as a foundation, I have suggested that a set of six categories seem to be common to most Native American cultures, adding "kinship/community", "ritual" and "place" to "person", "power" and gift." More recently (2009, 2010), my work has focused on continuing the ethical dimension of Native American cultures using a theoretical model I call "reciprocal relationality".
4. For a discussion of these characteristics as they apply to glaciers, see Cruikshank (2005: 3).
5. Personal comment, Juneau, Alaska, 26 June 2010.
6. Personal conversation with Richard Dauenhauer, Juneau, Alaska, 21 June 2010; see also Kan (1989: 25); T. F. Thornton (2008: 39).
7. Cynthia Jones suggests that small circles on the Chilkat blankets are ball and socket joints. See Cynthia Jones, www.sheldonmuseum.org/Vignettes/chilkatblanket.htm (accessed 31 March 2013).
8. For a fuller description, see Kan (1989); Dauenhauer & Dauenhauer (1990).

15

Embodied morality and performed relationships

Douglas Ezzy

"What matters to wombats?" I still remember clearly the first few months when I began to contemplate this question, and the closely related question of "What matters to hedgehogs?" (G. Harvey 2005a). What I remember about these months of contemplation is a feeling. I felt awkward. The question felt "wrong". This feeling of wrongness did not arise because of any logical inconsistency between the question and other ideas I have about the world. Rather, the sense of "wrongness" was more like the feeling I have when I use a word in a grammatically incorrect way. I cannot explicitly articulate many of the grammatical rules of contemporary Australian English, but I know how to write grammatically correct sentences. The question "What matters to wombats?" felt problematic for me, as an English-speaking Australian of mongrel European heritage, because habit and deeply ingrained etiquettes prohibit such questions in the same way that they proscribe incorrect grammar.

One way to change grammatical practice and the etiquette of relationships is to start doing things differently in public fora. In my PhD, for example, I use "they" as a gender-neutral singular pronoun. My examiners didn't like it, but they didn't ask me to change it. In my lectures to first-year students I began including a discussion of animism, and posing the question "What matters to wombats?" It was a strange, enlightening and transformative experience. The first time I did it, I felt awkward, and the students in the lecture theatre also found it difficult to embrace the question, perhaps partly because of my own discomfort. The more times I spoke publicly about the question "What matters to wombats?", the more confident I began to feel in my performance of the question, and the greater the demands I placed on those who conversed with me to also take it seriously as a question.

This chapter considers three aspects of the grammar of the etiquette of relationships: ethical enmeshing (drawing on Emmanuel Levinas), the embodied sources of moral commitment (drawing on Émile Durkheim), and intersubjective affirmation (drawing on Jessica Benjamin). Each of these social theorists is primarily concerned with human-to-human

relationships. Their ideas can be expanded to consider human to other-than-human relationships. I draw on three sources: my own experiences of relationships with other-than-human Tasmanian people; ethnographies of animist cultures; and contemporary science fiction fantasy novels, notably those of the Australian authors Alison Croggon and Sara Douglass. At the heart of this chapter is the argument that respectful relationships develop out of embodied relationships framed by stories (myths) of performed relationships. All this leads to us taking seriously the question "What matters to wombats?"

PRIMORDIAL ETHICAL ENMESHMENT

I use the phrase "primordial ethical enmeshment" to refer to the idea that ethics is an integral part of being human. It is impossible to be a person without always and already being enmeshed in ethical intersubjectivity. As Zygmunt Bauman (1992: 43) puts it: "Ethics does not follow subjectivity: it is subjectivity that is ethical." It is because we are moral, because we have obligations to others and are inherently intersubjective, that complex social arrangements are formed. Adherence to collective norms does not make us moral. Rather, there is a prior social experience, that of being human, that makes us moral and responsible. Being human is integrally intersubjective and an unavoidably moral act. It demands a concern for the other, and responsibility for the consequences of our actions. Ethics has typically been conceptualized as a secondary feature of being human, coming after, or subsequent to, the development of a cognitive understanding of self and the world. In contrast, I argue for a primordial understanding of ethics, drawing on the work of Emmanuel Levinas (1979).

For Levinas (1979) ethics is not a product of cognitively framed understandings of right and wrong. Rather, a person's ethical nature is a product of how they respond to the encounter with the "other", and whether they respect and take responsibility for the other person, or whether they attempt to control and reduce the other person to a reflection of themselves, making the "other" into "same", to use Levinas's terminology. The ethical responsibility for the other is "there as a given, it is not invited or taken up, nor does it go if it is turned down. I am responsible because of the proximity of the Other" (Bauman 1992: 42). This ethical responsibility is primordial in the sense that it is always and already there, integral with the experience of being a person.

This understanding is consistent with developments in recent social theory about what it is to be human. Humans are not isolated egos, rather they are defined by relationships. The self does not emerge from relationships – as if individuation was a process of separating self. Rather, the self emerges *in* relationships, and we find our selves in the structures, patterns and etiquette of our relationships (Benjamin 1988). According to Benjamin, much of psychology conceives of the self as developing out of relationships. The psychological concept of individuation suggests the need to separate from others in order to mature. In contrast, Benjamin's "intersubjective conception of the self" sees maturation and growth as a process of "becoming more active and sovereign" within relationships (*ibid.*: 18). The person is not a discrete, separate unit. Rather, the self is part of a complex network of relationships. Benjamin (*ibid.*: 205) points out that the idea of relational dependence is typically understood as a weakness if publicly displayed. In contrast, Benjamin argues for a conception of the self developed through a dynamic tension between dependence and difference.

Joanna Macy (1991), from a Buddhist and deep ecological perspective, describes the similar idea of dependent co-arising. She describes how self and the society of which we are a part are mutually causal. "In dependent co-arising, self, society, and world are reciprocally modified by their interaction, as they form relationships and are in turn conditioned by them" (*ibid.*: 99). Levinas's ideas extend this from an ontological enmeshment of being to an ethical enmeshment.

Barbara Davy (2003) develops Levinas's ideas to explicitly focus on a sense of ethical obligation and embeddedness with "all others in the more than human world" (*ibid.*: 5). Davy develops the concept of embeddedness "with/in" the world to indicate the inherently intersubjective nature of personhood: "To be embedded is to participate intimately in the world: to eat, to interact with others, to grow, and to die ... In being with/in I am implicated, and already obligated with/in the more than human world, embodied and embedded in relations with others within the natural world" (*ibid.*: 20). Levinas (1979) explicitly restricts his analysis to human relations, because according to Levinas, only humans can have a "face" that creates ethical obligation. Davy extends Levinas's ideas, highlighting that human relations with the more-than-human world are also relations of mutual obligation.

To be human is to be ethically enmeshed both with other humans and with other-than-human peoples such as wombats, forests and mountains. There are two dimensions to this. First, being human is about being in relationships, not only with other humans, but also with the other-than-human world around us. Ontology, the nature of being, is inherently intersubjective. Second, being human is already and always a moral act. Being human involves being enmeshed in relationships of mutual obligation with both other humans and the other-than-human world. Ethics is primordial, it is integral to being human. Humans are always and inevitably ethically enmeshed with the world.

ETHICAL COMMITMENT DEVELOPS OUT OF EMBODIED PERFORMANCE

Durkheim's ([1912] 1976: 217) account of an Australian Aboriginal corrobbori (a ceremonial gathering) emphasizes the emotional intensity of the experience: dancing, singing, sex and ritual excitement. He argues that the religious idea of a sacred extra-ordinary power that develops out of this effervescent collective ritual is not only a symbol of a religious totemic principle or being, but also a symbol of the clan. "The god of the clan, the totemic principle, can therefore be nothing else than the clan itself, personified and represented to the imagination under the visible form of the animal or vegetable which serves as totem" (*ibid.*: 206). He goes on to emphasize the moral significance of this social process. The totemic principle serves the social function of representing the moral interests of the collective to the individual: "Religious forces ... are moral powers because they are made up entirely of the impressions this moral being, the group, arouses in those other moral beings, its individual members" (*ibid.*: 223).

In other words, Durkheim argues that ethical commitments to goals that transcend egoistic individualism are sustained by the emotions of collective embodied performances. According to Durkheim, for an individual to transcend the morality of self-centred individualism and "animal passions" [*sic*] requires the interests of the group to be represented to the individual. Through their participation in rituals and shared

beliefs about the totem or god, they understand and respect the moral concerns of the social collective.

Durkheim's analysis engages in a sociological reductionism. Specifically, Durkheim's anthropocentrism blinds him to the significance of the totem as also a symbol of the relationship of individuals and the clan to other communities. The totem does symbolize the clan, but it also symbolizes the animal or plant communities which it represents. Durkheim reads the animism of indigenous Australians through the lens of a Judaeo-Christian worldview that focuses on the representation of deity. However, totems are also symbolic of relationships between collectives. More recent studies of animist societies, of which the indigenous Australians studied by Durkheim were an example, have provided a more sophisticated understanding of animism.

Graham Harvey (2005a: xi) argues that: "Animists are people who recognise that the world is full of persons, only some of whom are human, and that life is lived in relationships with others." From this perspective totemism is more than a representation of the interests of the Aboriginal human clan, it is also a symbolic representation of the etiquette of relationships between one group of people and other groups, who may be both human and non-human. This understanding of animism introduces further complexities into what it means to be human and "moral", and a different, relational, epistemology. Totemic rituals provide a practice of the etiquette of relationships with these other communities. Harvey (*ibid.*: 167) quotes Deborah Bird Rose (1998: 8) who, on the basis of ethnographic work with Australian Aboriginals, argues that: "Totemism posits connectedness, mutual interdependence, and the non-negotiable significance of the lives of non-human species." Similar arguments have been developed by Irving Hallowell (1992) in his study of the Ojibwa of the Berens River in Manitoba, Nurit Bird-David (1999) in her study of hunter-gatherer animists, the Nayaka in South India, and Howard Harrod (2000) in his study of the American Indians of the Great Plains.

This rethinking of the significance of totemism suggests a rethinking of Durkheim's analysis of moral culture. In particular, the crucial dimension of collective moral practice as represented by a totem is not limited to how the interests of the social collective are represented to the individual. Rather, collective moral practice is also centrally concerned with the representation and practice of the etiquette of relationships with groups outside of the primary social group of which an individual is a part. This relational morality of indigenous cultures allows them to ask questions such as: "What matters to hedgehogs?", or ravens, or buffalo, or wombats, or trees, or rivers (G. Harvey 2005a). In other words, animist ethics are relational. Animist ethics engage in a form of symbolic representation of the interests and moral concerns of one collective (humans for example) to the interests and moral concerns of other collectives (wombats, buffalo, or ravens). Within the etiquette of a relational ethics that recognizes competing interests, individuals sometimes give of their own wealth, and even their lives, to benefit others. For example, some animists understand that particular animals allow themselves to be hunted if they are treated respectfully (Nelson 1983). Conversely, animists recognize that some animals may want to eat humans, but even so, these animals can be engaged in respectful relationships (G. Harvey 2005a).

Durkheim ([1912] 1976) suggested that it was the embodied performance and emotional intensity of collective ritual that sustained group moral commitment, which may be apparently against the interests of the individual. I suggest that the same process applies

to the relational ethics of collectives. It is not only cognitive understandings of ethical commitments that sustain them. Ethical obligations are sustained through emotions and collective ritual performance. The theory of Carl Einstein (Pan 2001) has many similarities to Durkheim, although Einstein begins with an analysis of the aesthetic experience of art. He argues that ritual and myth have a performative mimetic function, drawing people into the ethics of personal responsibility and relationship. Carl Einstein argues that religion derives its power from the use of aesthetic forms to create sacred experience (*ibid.*). The embodied experience of ritual and the narrative structures of myth shape the way humans engage in relationships with other humans and with the broader world.

Further, the ethics of embodied intersubjective relationships are shaped by the emotional framing of that interaction. Luce Irigaray (2001) differentiates between the predatory gesture and the caress. The predatory gesture, similar to Levinas's analysis of "making the other same", describes relationships that refuse to affirm the other as other. The caress, in contrast, is a moment of contact that awakens me "to you, to me, to us". The embodied performance of the caress awakens us to intersubjectivity and "the caress is a rewakening to the life of my body" (*ibid.*: 25). Irigaray's primary focus is on relationships of erotic intimacy. A similar structure of embodied emotional relationships can also form in ritual and relates to inter-person relationships that transcend human anthropocentrism.

Among the American Indians of the Great Plains, the etiquette of human–animal relations was established through the recounting of myths and the performance of rituals that were often ecstatic and emotionally intense (Harrod 2000). One ritual among the Cheyenne, for example, in which participants were dressed and painted to represent various animals, lasted five days. On the last day the represented animals were ritually hunted and killed by men and the ritual was concluded. While the explicit aim of the ritual was that "hunting activities during the remainder of the year were infused with the power released" (*ibid.*: 87), the ritual also shapes the moral etiquette of relationships with animals such that they are treated with respect. Harrod's (*ibid.*) account of Native American human–animal relationships emphasizes the sense of mutual interdependence that sits at the heart of rituals and relationships between Native Americans and the animals they hunted.

A similar sense of respect and mutual interdependence is described in Nelson's (1983) ethnography of the Koyukon, a people who follow a traditional life of hunting, trapping and fishing in villages in the remote Alaskan forest. Nelson describes the large number of behavioural rules associated with hunting various animals. Behind these rules lies the assumption that the animals are wise and aware of the actions of the humans. If humans are disrespectful, then they have bad luck in hunting, and go without food. The human and natural worlds are tightly interwoven for the Koyukon: "We have respect for the animals. We don't keep them in cages or torture them, because we know the background of animals from the Distant Time. We know that the animal has a spirit – it used to be human – and we know all things it did. It's not just an animal; it's lots more than that" (*ibid.*: 24).

In these ethnographies, animals give up their lives for humans, and humans reciprocate not only with respectful rituals, but also by not hunting certain types of animals, or animals in certain locations, and also accepting the occasional death of humans (when hunting brown bear for example) as part of the reciprocity of relationships. Animals give up their lives for humans, and humans give up their lives sometimes in return.

Nelson (*ibid.*) provides a long list of taboos associated with hunting: words that cannot be spoken, methods of hunting or trapping that are prohibited in certain places and

for certain animals, rules about who may eat what sort of animal or part of the animal. The important point in all these rules, from my perspective, is that they express a deep, embodied, and routinized practice of respectful relationship. Humans are constrained by their relationships with animals in the same way that animals are constrained by their relationships with humans. Nelson (*ibid.*) reports that he discovered that a neighbouring group of traditional people had a different set of rules about hunting practices to that of the Koyukon. He raised this with a Koyukon elder who was unconcerned that practices differ. The point is not that this or that particular set of rules is followed, but that an etiquette of respectful relationships is followed. Respect, as an ethical form of relationship, arises both from cognitive understandings framed by myths and from embodied emotions performed in rituals and the routines of everyday practices.

SELF-ASSERTION, AND ACCEPTANCE OF DIFFERENCE

Levinas (1979) argues that there is an ontological imperialism in Western thought that asserts "the primacy of the self, the Same, the subject or Being" (Davis 1996: 40). The other, alterity, is suppressed or integrated into the project of the self. For Levinas, ethics begins with an attempt to welcome the other as other, and to take responsibility for the other as other. As Kemp (1997: 3) puts it: "He considers ethics as a vision of the Other who makes an appeal to me to take care, and thereby his ethics becomes a questioning of what I can do in order to make possible the good life of the Other."

Levinas pursues an ethics "without foundation, without imperatives or claim to universality" (Davis 1996: 3). Ethics does not emerge through a common harmonious relationship. Nor does ethics emerge through adherence to normative obligations imposed by a social collective. Rather, ethics emerges through relationships that involve respecting the strangeness, the confronting difference, of the other. Further, for Levinas the ethical concern for the other is disruptive of one's own self-understandings and self-sufficiency (Bernasconi 1997). Ethical relationships do not lead to a peaceful sense of one's identity. Rather, they disrupt an individual's sense of self-satisfaction because ethical relationships lead to an "attentiveness to the vulnerability of the other" (*ibid.*: 90). Reading Levinas back into the earlier analysis of collective morality suggests that one of the critical dimensions of collective moral practices is the extent to which they are of a form that suppresses the alterity of others, or allows them to be represented in ways that respect their ethical demands as "others".

The need for "mutual recognition" is central to the intersubjective processes described by Benjamin (1998: 21): "Recognition is the essential response, the constant companion of assertion. The subject declares, 'I am, I do,' and then waits for the response, 'You are, you have done.'" Erotic union is the experience that Benjamin focuses on as a key moment of mutual recognition: "In erotic union we can experience that form of mutual recognition in which both partners lose themselves in each other without loss of self; they lose self-consciousness without loss of awareness" (*ibid.*: 29). The experience of collective ritual can also produce a similar experience of mutual recognition, although with a different tone of intimacy and with a different structure of intensity.

Mutual recognition involves both the acknowledgement of interdependence with the other and the assertion of difference from the other. These two aspects are always in

ongoing tension. The acknowledgement of this tension is at the heart of the etiquette of relationships. "Psychologically, the struggle to know the other whilst still recognizing the other's radical alterity and unknowability has to be formulated not only as one between different identities, but as disagreement and contradiction within identities" (*ibid.*: 101). This sense of self is not seamlessly integrated, nor is it unified. Rather, it is deeply ambivalent, holding different voices and experiences within itself. Benjamin's analysis can be extended to include human relations with other-than-human peoples.

The acknowledgement of the difference of the other is sometimes benign, causing no harm to either party. At other times it is more disruptive to self or other. However, most importantly, it is part of the normal and expected etiquette of relationships. This approach to relational morality involves the acceptance that sometimes my suffering is a product of others simply doing what they do in the pursuit of their authentic selves. I may be soaking wet. my house may suffer water damage, and my loved ones threatened with drowning, but this is an inevitable product of the Thunderstorm simply doing what thunderstorms do. Similarly, in order to live I eat other living beings – plants and, in some cases, animals.

In Nelson's (1983) account of the lives of the Koyukon, hunters accept the animals' gift of their lives. The animal chooses to gift their life to the hunter because they consider the hunter worthy. The animal is affirming the life of the human by their gift. To be human is to assert our difference, and to sometimes kill and consume the other. In the same way that the other, in asserting their identity, may kill and consume humans or, less dramatically, may impoverish humans by, for example, preventing access to a food source, or if termites eat the foundations of a house, or illness puts us in bed for a few days.

Mount Wellington looms behind the city of Hobart, where I grew up and have now returned to live. Sometimes covered with snow, it is heavily wooded and laced with walking tracks. There is a sealed road to the top of Mount Wellington, initially built during the depression years of the 1930s as part of a government plan to provide jobs. I often drove, or was driven to the top of Mount Wellington in my youth. When I returned to Hobart fourteen years ago I decided I would never drive to the top of the mountain again. There is a point about one kilometre from the top beyond which I will not drive. This choice makes the top of the mountain hard to reach for me. It changes the way I feel about the mountain. It is an act of respect that deepens my awareness of the fragility of my own life, and my dependence on a wide range of other-than-human peoples.

Walking in the wild parts of Tasmania is dangerous. This is because of the inherent nature of these wildernesses: the paths are often rocky and uneven or muddy, or poorly marked, they are exposed to extremes of weather; assistance from other humans may take some time to arrive and humans may be hard to contact because mobile phones do not work in many of the wild places of Tasmania. By being defined as World Heritage Areas and making them National Parks, these areas are protected from human interference. Humans affirm their existence as wild places and accept that this restricts human access to them. Some humans do not like this arrangement, wanting instead to log or mine or dam in these areas. Such activities destroy the "otherness" of the wild areas. To use Levinas's terms, they suppress the difference of the "other" to make it (him? her?) "same" by incorporating the wild areas into human purposes.

In a relational world of humans and other-than-human people it is often difficult for anthropocentric humans to understand and feel the value of other-than-human

people. Benjamin's argument is that contradictory purposes and a recognition of different agendas are part of healthy human personhood. This can be extended to include the many and varied purposes of other-than-human people. "Real recognition of the other entails being able to perceive commonality through difference; and true differentiation sustains the balance between separateness and connection in a dynamic tension" (Benjamin 1998: 171).

THE ANIMIST POSSIBILITIES OF SCIENCE FICTION FANTASY

Contemporary science fiction fantasy, I argue, provides a mythology through which many people make sense of their relationship with the other-than-human world. It functions in a very similar way to the sacred stories of many animist cultures. Karen Armstrong (2005: 3) argues that mythology provides a way of enabling people to "live more intensely" within the world. Mythology "in the ancient world" was primarily about human experience in this world, and not about a separate metaphysical world. Mythology and associated rituals, for they nearly always go together, enabled humans to make sense of the transitions in life – birth, puberty and death. More generally, Armstrong (*ibid.*: 136) argues that the role of an "ethically and spiritual informed mythology" is to enable humans to deal with "deep-rooted, unexorcised fears, desires and neuroses". Both animist mythologies and contemporary science fiction fantasy provide humans with narrative resources that enable humans to makes sense of their everyday experiences.

Animist mythologies, of course, are also tied into a community with regularly enacted rituals. Science fiction fantasy does not have such close ties with communities or rituals. However, the recent phenomenal rise of teenage Witchcraft (Berger & Ezzy 2007) demonstrates that popular fiction and the visual mass media can provide people with important narrative resources that they then draw upon to change the way they live. I think the animist mythologies of popular science fiction provide some of the most promising possibilities for a more general transformation of "Western" cultures.

The idea of ethical enmeshment and embodied practice of respect toward other-than-human peoples is central to much of contemporary science fiction fantasy writing. These stories often also contain a discussion of the tensions that arise between people of competing interests and purposes.

In Croggon's (2002) first Pellinor novel *The Gift*, the two central characters, Cadvan and Maerad, stop to spend the night in a small grove of birch trees. Cadvan says: "This is a dingle planted of old by the northern Bards. It is called Irihel, Icehome, and travelling bards would stay here" (*ibid.*: 30). As they prepare to leave the following day:

> He [Cadvan] stood in the middle of the dingle and bowed to the trees, signalling to Maerad to do the same. She scrambled to her feet. "We must thank the trees for their hospitality," he said. "They have been good to us." Then he picked up his pack, and walked out of the dingle. Maerad lingered briefly ... *Thank you*, she said silently, and bowed, feeling the ceremony strangely appropriate ... For a moment she almost felt they were about to speak back to her, and they seemed to rustle a little sadly, as if they were friends waving farewell. (*Ibid.*: 41)

Croggon also provides a fascinating understanding of evil, informed by the thought of the classical Greek poets such as Sappho. Most conceptions of evil understand "the good" as unitary, by which I mean that if I do good, it will also mean that my actions are good for the other. However, in polytheistic Pagan understandings of good and evil, such as those of the Greek tragic poets, doing good from my perspective may have unpleasant consequences for the other person (Nussbaum 1986). This is because "the good" is not unitary. This, of course, closely relates to Benjamin's analysis of self-assertion and the acceptance of difference. For example, in Croggon's Pellinor series there are a category of beings called "Elidhu" or "Elementals". They are powerful spiritual beings linked to various natural phenomena, such as the moon, the rain, a mountain, or a forest. Arkan is an Elidhu that plays a key role in Pellinor and against which Maerad battles to complete her quest. Arkan is also known as "the Ice Witch, the Ice King, or the Winterking" (Croggon 2004: 460). He is portrayed as a close ally of the Nameless One who is the main enemy of Maerad. However:

> The Elidhu Arkan is like to a spirit of winter, in human form, and his beauty is both stormy and still ... Yet cold though he be, he is not unmoved by feeling: he hath both the passions and gentleness of a world, and speaks often with a loving delicacy of many marvellous and strange things which exist in the world. He is a being of unmatchable beauty and charm. (*Ibid.*: 461)

Arkan's attempt to prevent Maerad from completing her quest derives more from his desire to pursue the path that is true to his elemental nature than from a desire to cause Maerad harm and pain. At the end of the story Arkan does not apologise. How can an elemental apologise for being true to itself? Rather, the story turns so that Arkan and Maerad's purposes are drawn alongside each other.

The role of ritual and embodied performance in establishing moral commitment is also examined in science fiction fantasy. Armstrong (2005: 87) describes Confucius as making a point about the inadequacy of cognitive ideas to shape ethical commitment: "Absolute transcendence of selfishness could only be achieved through the alchemy of ritual and music, which, like great art, transfigures human beings at a level that is deeper than the cerebral." Such experiences are often best described in stories, and experienced in ritual.

Faraday is a key character in Sara Douglass's (1995–6) Axis Trilogy. She plays a key role in replanting a sacred forest and willingly gives her own life in order to guarantee the life of another, the lives of her people, and the lives of the Raum, a race of forest-dwelling people that have a close sacred relationship with the deer of the forest. After her human death she lives on in the forest among the Raum as a doe, companion to a magical stag. In this animal form, twice a year she meets with members of her human family in a grove.

The Raum are a despised race. Part of the story of the Axis Trilogy is the rediscovery of respectful relationships between the different human races, but also a rediscovery of respectful relationships between humans and the other-than-human peoples of the forest that the Raum's mythology and practice has maintained. Self-sacrifice is required to re-establish this relationship – most graphically represented in the self-sacrifice of Faraday's life, but also in the ceding of farmland to the Raum to be replanted as forest, as habitat for the Raum people, and for the plants and animals of the forest.

A trembling thrill in embodied performance empowers these respectful relationships. The concept of a "trembling thrill" in relationships derives from Tantra (Odier 2001). This is often expressed through the erotics of sexual tension, but also found in the heroic thrill of shared adventure, the ritual intimacy of the collective dance and joining in the music of the song of life, or the stars. In the narrative fiction of Douglass and Croggon, as also in the American Plains Indians and other indigenous cultures, this erotic trembling thrill crosses species. Faraday becomes a doe and her contact with her human lover, Axis, is laced with a trembling thrill. Douglass describes the interaction between Faraday as a doe and Axis this way:

> She halted a pace away from him, and Axis realised he was trembling himself. Slowly, achingly slowly, Axis raised a hand. Her head wavered, and her dark eyes widened in alarm. He froze, his hand half extended, his fingers reaching out in appeal. He thought his heart was thudding so loudly its beat would be enough in itself to frighten her away. Her head jerked, her eyes white-rimmed with anxiety. Yet her nose continued to edge forward, almost unwillingly ... so near that her warm breath lifted the hairs on the back of his hand. (Douglass 1996: 663)

It is this thrill at the deep sense of intimacy with the world as lover that animates the actions of animists. Codes of law, norms, ethical maxims, are all important, but the greatest of these is love. The thrill of collective ritual parallels that of the thrill of erotic intimacy. Douglass understands the importance of ritual, and sacred relationships with place and people, as the mechanism that generates and sustains the awareness of our ethical enmeshing in the larger whole. Her stories draw us into such a view of the world.

CONCLUSION

Respect for the other and self-sacrifice for the other are integral to animist relations with other-than-human peoples. The willingness to give self, or part of the self, for the other derives from a deep sense of the value of the other. We live as part of a whole, and are enmeshed in ethical relationships of mutual interdependency. Respect and honour develop out of a deep sense of the demands of this "other" or larger whole. The ethical demands this places on our self transcend concerns for ourselves, and lead into a sense of ethical obligation for the other, for the whole. There are three moves here. The first is to understand that relationships are primary, and that being human or wombat means to be enmeshed in relationships. The second move is to emphasize the inherently embodied and emotional nature of these ethical commitments. The third move is to underline in a complex world of mutual interdependence and conflicting purposes that sacrifice is required of all peoples (humans, and other-than-humans) in order to ensure the health of the whole.

And if all this seems a little complex, it can be more simply dealt with by respectfully considering the question: "What matters to wombats?"

16

The animal versus the social: rethinking individual and community in Western cosmology

Priscilla Stuckey

"The truth about stories", writes Cherokee-Greek novelist Thomas King, "is that that's all we are" (T. King 2003: 2). Our world suffers now from the ecological devastations of a warming planet, extinctions of species and degraded soils and waters, and from profound inequalities of race, gender and class within societies and enormous gaps between wealthy and poor countries. If stories are what we are, then the stories we have been telling ourselves must be profoundly broken. The fundamental tale we tell ourselves will need to change.

The origin story of modern Western culture is a tale with roots in both Genesis and Plato that reached its present form in the seventeenth through twentieth centuries in northwest Europe.[1] It is a story rarely told as a single unified tale, which tends both to conceal its existence and to render its authority irrefutable. The story developed across several domains of Western knowledge and weaves them into a conceptual whole, which is why my discussion ranges from theology to anthropology, from economics to philosophy, and from evolutionary theory to sociology.[2]

Providing a contrast to the Western story are the cosmologies of animist cultures, a few of which I highlight here in order to spell out some social and political implications of cosmologies that are relational at their core. My goal is to learn from these animist stories, a process that is fundamentally different from appropriation. Appropriation follows the logic of colonization: seeking control over human or more-than-human others. Learning from stories, by contrast, means using stories not for gain but for loss – for the loss of stable meanings and of foundations that once appeared secure. The hard work of change involves undergoing a "disorienting dilemma" that dismantles mastery and control and results in a transformed worldview (Mezirow 1991: 163).[3] An ethical, or non-colonizing, use of the stories (or worldviews) of others will evidence this receptive mode, this willingness to be acted upon, even disoriented, by the stories of others. It will involve putting stories to work in the service of social transformation and increased justice between humans and with the more-than-human world. A pressing question at this time is: what

can "how others live" teach us in the North and West about "living otherwise ourselves" (Robbins 2006)?

At its simplest, this essay is an inquiry into the modern Western conviction that nature, including human nature, is individualist, acquisitive and competitive, so that what is considered "animal" becomes opposed to what is regarded as "social". This conviction shares the features of all good origin stories: it organizes a people's knowledge about the world; it explains how things came to be this way, thus authorizing the present conceptual and cultural order; and it suggests how people must act (Yanagisako & Delaney 1995: 1–2).[4] But to explore this larger cultural story, I begin with two personal stories.

THE PROBLEM OF DUALISM IN THE MODERN WESTERN STORY

Fifteen years ago, when the following two events took place, I was already an animist, experiencing the members of the more-than-human world as active and communicating subjects, though the scholarly conversations on new animism and panpsychism were only beginning (Viveiros de Castro 1998a; Bird-David 1999; Mathews 2003; Clarke 2004; Skrbina 2005; G. Harvey 2006a,b).

A doctoral student in religious studies, I had been shaped by a feminist analysis of the dualism at the heart of Western cultures. Feminist epistemologists had long argued that even seemingly objective forms of knowledge are inherently subjective (Lugones & Spelman 1983; Haraway 1988; Sandra Harding 1993) and had critiqued the scientific revolution for its reduction of a living earth to mechanical, dead matter (Merchant 1980; Shiva 1989). They had argued that this reductionism relied on a dualism of subject and object, spirit (or mind) and matter, culture and nature stretching from Plato through Descartes and down to our time, and had shown that such dualisms form the bedrock of interlocking systems of privilege and oppression that favoured male over female, white over black, reason over emotion, and human over nature (Ruether 1975; S. Griffin 1978; MacCormack 1980; Merchant 1980; Lloyd 1984; E. F. Keller 1985; Starhawk 1990; Y. King 1990; Plumwood 1993, 2002, 2009).

While writing my dissertation, I participated in two events that I thought much about at the time but could not completely understand. The first took place in an animal rehabilitation facility close to my home in Oakland, California, where I volunteered one afternoon a week feeding orphaned baby birds and caring for injured wildlife. One day a tiny red fox kit, a male, was brought into the centre, whimpering softly. An apparent orphan, he had been found by a well-meaning person who thought she was bringing him to the centre to be cared for and raised to adulthood.

What she didn't know was that just a few years earlier, the state of California, as well as the nation, had enacted laws to steer wildlife policy toward preserving native species. The rehab centre now practised a strict discrimination between native and non-native animals. A baby hummingbird or swift or robin received zealous care, with volunteers spending our daylight shifts dashing frenetically about the bird nursery administering never-ending feedings. But a starling or house sparrow received a different treatment: it was handed over to the staff member on duty, who would take it into the next room, place it in the blue plastic tub with two tubes leading to a tank, and turn on the gas. As European species, these birds could not be released again into the wild because they would

compete with native species for resources, and all such competition was to be removed to help the natives flourish.

So when the red fox kit was brought in that afternoon, a member of a species who belonged historically in the eastern half of the county – introduced to the West Coast in the late 1800s to boost the fur trade and now competing with the native, and more ecologically fragile, gray foxes – the staffperson on duty was required to call the Department of Fish and Game. Within minutes, a van would arrive.

That day the staffperson was a young woman who clearly loved the animals, and so I was taken aback when she ordered me to leave the fox alone. The pup's crying was pitiful, soft but incessant. I could not listen without responding. I stepped past her and scooped the kit gently into my arms, petting him softly, amazed as I always was to be holding a wild animal – and this one an infant red fox with puppy-soft fur. He settled into my arms, his mewing slowly quieting to stillness.

The van arrived; a man from Fish and Game got out. He strode into the building and entered the next room. The young staffer looked at me with a warning in her eyes. I handed her the now-quiet baby, and she took him into the next room and closed the door. The switch was turned.

I understood the intent of the law, and still I felt shaken: what was this ease in snuffing out a life?

The ironies of course were glaring: a law to preserve native animals of this land had been passed by a government that had attempted genocide on the native humans of that same land. The conservation law was designed to protect wildlife yet did so by managing animals as if they were parts of a machine, switched on and off at human whim. The law mandated snuffing an individual's life in order to save a species, albeit a different one, and such disregard for individual life, enforced in the very animal nursery where we worked so feverishly to preserve the tiniest lives, grated harshly on the heart.

I was aware of the critique presented by animal rights theorists that a preference for species over individuals is enshrined in conservation policy; animal rights theorists have long criticized environmental ethics on this point (Hargrove 1991; Kheel 2008). But what exactly lay behind that conflict? Beyond noting the ironies, I could not make sense of what had taken place, and so after doing my own private grieving for the red fox kit, I moved on.

At about that same time, I attended a workshop led by a couple from West Africa, Malidoma Somé and Sobonfu Somé, of the Dagara people of Burkina Faso. The workshop centred on nature-based rituals of grief. About a hundred of us worked in small groups for much of the day to create altars to the elements of nature from simple objects such as stones and leaves and branches. In the corner devoted to fire, my group fashioned a structure blazing with votive candles, aluminium foil and orange scarves. Then the roomful of us sang simple African chants and danced to the beat of drumming that lingered through the afternoon as each of us presented our own griefs at the altars of nature, supported by the presence of the community.

What I remember most clearly is what Malidoma and Sobonfu said at the start when they explained why we were going to spend so much time that day building community among ourselves. When a woman becomes pregnant in their village, they explained, everyone looks around and wonders, Who is this person coming to join us? Villagers assume that the child is being sent from the ancestors to deliver gifts the village needs, and they speculate excitedly on what those gifts might be. Before the baby is born, elders of the

village meet with the pregnant woman, place her in a trance, and ask: Why is this person coming to join the community? Through her, the village learns which gifts the person will bring to the community. Perhaps she will have the fire of the ancestors burning brightly in her so that she can inspire others. Perhaps he will flow like water to smooth the rocky places between people.

It then becomes the job of the community to remember the child's gifts once she is born. The community exists, said Sobonfu and Malidoma, to help individuals remember their purpose.

I could not have been more astonished. This was a view of community alien to my experience, unimaginable. I was used to the American bootstrap mentality, where individuals are largely on their own to figure things out for themselves. Such extreme individualism makes for weak or sporadic communal ties, especially among urban dwellers. Individualism with its accompanying fear of communal authority reigns also at the level of national politics, where both major parties paint themselves as the champions of individual rights against the tyrannies of the other side.

I had experienced a different valuing of community in the Mennonite settings where I was raised, but this conception seemed no less problematic. Traditions of mutual aid were strong among my people, and in one progressive Mennonite congregation I participated in, young people received a great deal of support for developing and expressing their gifts. Yet that same group spoke of the purpose of community as "accountability", which seemed to lay bare the bones of the issue: that a group was needed to enforce individual goodness. Mennonite history was replete with stories of authoritarian church discipline – the boundary between church and world at times so strictly policed that an individual might be asked to sacrifice intimate or familial relationships, and to obey dictates of elders down to the length of sleeves on a woman's dress, to remain in good standing with the group.[5] The authoritarianism, rather than being at odds with American individualism, struck me as the other side of the same social coin. The larger problem was conceptions of individual and community that set the two in opposition to each other, fighting an endless battle.

I could hardly fathom a social order that organized itself otherwise, where community exists to nourish its members. Sobonfu described what it looks like in practice: in the village, when a child enters the room, the body of every adult turns toward her to welcome her and give her their full attention. Children need this complete attention, she emphasized, if they are to learn to honour their own gifts and share them with others.

This philosophy is outlined also by the Ghanaian-Canadian educator George Sefa Dei, who notes the absence in Afrocentric perspectives of the Western dichotomy between individual and community. "In the indigenous African view, the concept of *individual* makes sense only within the concept of *community*." Many Africans cannot identify with the Western view; to them, "the dichotomy is not between the *individual* and community but between the *competitive individual* isolated from his or her community and the *cooperative individual* enriched by community" (Dei 1994: 12, original emphasis). In the traditional village, connection and belonging are paramount, with exchanges of gifts and services intended to increase the sense of interdependence among community members. Individuals' responsibilities to the community are matched by the community's responsibility to nurture individuals. Nourishment flows in both directions – from the individual to others and back again.

Hearing Malidoma and Sobonfu speak of a concept of community that held little of the tensions characterizing my experiences induced a moment of "disorienting dilemma". Being confronted by the stories of people whose culture arranged itself differently made real the possibility of alternative social patterns. It seemed no accident that I had been alerted to the individual–community facet of the dualistic problem by people from an animist culture, and it also seemed no accident that it took place close to the time I met the red fox kit. But exactly how the events were connected was a problem I did not return to for many years.

THE ANIMAL VERSUS THE SOCIAL: INDIVIDUAL–COMMUNITY DUALISM

It was Aldo Leopold's famous essay, "The Land Ethic", that brought the problem back into focus. Reading it for the first time, I discovered Leopold's ecocentrism, his call to move "from conqueror of the land-community to plain member and citizen of it" (Leopold [1949] 1968: 204). Leopold urged respect for all other inhabitants of the land, which he suggested would mean extending our human sense of social obligation to the rest of the natural world. Farmers who once implemented only those ecological practices that yielded an immediate profit to themselves would need to implement practices that served the community but did not necessarily deliver personal profit. Ecology as a whole would have to move beyond enlightened self-interest as the motivation for action. Ecology, in other words, needed ethics.

Leopold's ecocentric standard for ethics is well known: "A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise" (*ibid.*: 224–5). But what did he mean by *ethics?* A paragraph near the beginning of the essay struck what seemed to me an odd note: "An ethic, ecologically, is a limitation on freedom of action in the struggle for existence. An ethic, philosophically, is a differentiation of social from antisocial conduct. These are two definitions of one thing" (*ibid.*: 202). In the theological conversations with which I was familiar, ethics were guidelines on how to act, of course, but the word *limitation* rarely arose. Neither did *antisocial*. A different conversation was guiding Leopold's thinking.

The latter half of the paragraph revealed its genealogy: "Politics and economics are advanced symbioses in which the original free-for-all competition has been replaced, in part, by co-operative mechanisms with an ethical content" (*ibid.*). Shades of Hobbes were unmistakable, with his assumption that the natural human state is antisocial, a war "of every man against every man" resulting in a life that is "solitary, poore, nasty, brutish, and short" (Hobbes [1651] 1985). Leopold was, as Callicott says, reading nature through Darwinian eyes, especially a Darwinianism "uncritically tainted with Hobbesian elements" (Callicott 1989: 86).[6] The implications of Leopold's thinking seemed dire: if ethics is the result of evolution, then cooperative behaviour is not innate to all but belongs only to the later stages of evolution. This would mean that nature in its origins is antisocial and that community is not natural; one has to override instincts to make it happen.

It was time to take a closer look at Darwin.

DARWIN'S STORYTELLERS: HOBBES AND MALTHUS

In 1862 Marx scoffed in a private letter to Engels:

> It is remarkable how Darwin recognizes among beasts and plants his English society with its division of labor, competition, opening up of new markets, "inventions," and the Malthusian "struggle for existence." It is Hobbes's "bellum omnium contra omnes" ... [I]n Darwin the animal kingdom figures as civil society.
>
> (Quoted in Sahlins 1976b: 101–2)

Marx was only the first of many to recognize that Hobbes and Malthus, struggling with the gritty realities of English society during its transformation into a market economy, were theorists who deeply influenced Darwin.

Thomas Hobbes, shaped by the chaotic seventeenth century in England, was more frightened of social unrest than tyranny of a king, and he wrote his magnum opus, *Leviathan*, to argue for strong central government. The "state of nature" is terrifying; without some central and absolute authority, chaos rules because human nature cannot be trusted. Or rather, individuals can be trusted only to lust for power: "a perpetuall and restlesse desire of Power after power that ceaseth onely at death" (Hobbes [1651] 1985: 161). Peaceful coexistence is impossible without central authority. "Againe, men have no pleasure, (but on the contrary a great deale of griefe) in keeping company, where there is no power able to over-awe them all" (*ibid.*: 185). It is not just the actual violence that constitutes the state of perpetual war; it is "the known disposition thereto" (*ibid.*: 186).

A grimmer, more jaundiced view of human nature can hardly be imagined. It begins in a cosmology of atomism, with reality made up of discrete individuals who can act only competitively. The individual precedes society in Hobbes's story; disconnection lies at the core of his universe, as it did that of the mechanical philosophers whose beliefs Hobbes was seeking to reconcile with religion (Martinich 1992: 15). The ruthlessness he found at the core of human nature was only too obvious during his lifetime, as the long tradition of English individualism (Macfarlane 1978) intensified during England's transition to a market economy, with more competition for jobs, greater competition among merchants for positions in the world market, famines, and political and religious upheavals. Manorial landowners were enclosing lands formerly farmed by tenants or serfs and converting them to pasture for the sheep whose wool was valuable to a suddenly opening foreign market. Displacement from land had resulted in higher rates of theft and violence. The England of Hobbes's time was rife with struggles for survival.

But the sense Hobbes made of it all was theological. And here is the irony of his life: that though he despised the Puritans for bringing about political anarchy and fled their revolution to live in exile with the royal family, Hobbes would promulgate the most basic tenet of the Puritan Calvinist faith, the idea that human nature is fallen. His "state of nature" was equivalent to the Calvinist view of Adam and Eve after being expelled from the garden: they lived a cursed existence, powerless to improve their lot, and passed their depravity on to all their descendants. Whatever his expressed doubts about religion, Hobbes was a thoroughgoing Calvinist (Martinich 1992; Gorski 2003).[7] His vision never deviated from the pessimistic view of the human soul "burdened with vices", as Calvin had taught, and "utterly devoid of all good" (quoted in Martinich 1992: 4).

Calvin (and Luther too) had learned his pessimism from Augustine, who had insisted on the total depravity of humans after the fall. The irony of the Reformers is thus that they could separate themselves from the late medieval Church (in their emphasis on grace for all) only by reviving that pillar of the early medieval Church, Augustine. As Sahlins rightly perceives, Augustine lies at the heart of the Western story of nature. In particular, Augustine's insistence on the corruption of human nature and, by extension, the corruption of the natural world as well, has been determinative. After the fall, taught Augustine, *non posse non peccare:* we cannot *not* sin. It is a self-hating view that is unusual among cultures; it "does not appear to be a general preoccupation of humanity", observes Sahlins dryly (1996: 396). While others trace their origins to gods, Western culture is unique in tracing its beginnings to ruthless savagery (Sahlins 1976b: 100). The conviction rests, Sahlins notes, on the idea of a God who resides outside nature and who created the world, not out of divinity, or even out of matter, but *ex nihilo*, out of nothing (Sahlins 1996: 396).

While Sahlins emphasizes Augustine's roots in Genesis, it must be said also that Augustine, to arrive at his assertion of universal depravity, had to read the story of the fall through the lens of Plato. The image in the *Phaedrus* of instinctive appetite as an unruly horse held in check by the charioteer of reason resided in the mental furniture of Neoplatonic culture, although Augustine, like other early Christians, exaggerated the distance between mind and body more than did other late-antique writers. The Greek dualism of mind and instinct, passing through Augustine, later the Reformers, and down to Hobbes, forms the bedrock of the modern notion that civilization can develop only when people rein in their natural desires and inclinations (see also Plumwood 1993: 43, 120–24).

Though pessimistic, to say the least, about human nature, Hobbes did see a natural check on all the violence. Because individuals are equal, and equally violent, they eventually arrive at an uneasy truce. Self-interest will balance out if everyone pursues it equally, though the better way remains the absolute power of a sovereign. The social contract thus consists of consenting to an absolute central authority to prevent the war for power and possessions waged by self-serving individuals.

Many of Hobbes's contemporaries were appalled by his dismal take on human nature, and not until after his death did Hobbes's story exert influence, preparing the ground for Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* a century later. Smith's positive valuing of self-interest as the engine of social harmony is a far turn from Hobbes's despairing view of warring individuals, yet common to both is the assumption that acquisitiveness and self-interest form the foundation of human nature. In Sahlins's words, "The Hobbesian vision of man in a natural state is the origin myth of Western capitalism" (Sahlins 1976b: 100). Hobbes's vision would also become the organizing centre of Darwin's theory of natural selection, which, as Sahlins observed, was present in almost all its parts in *Leviathan* (Sahlins 1976b: 101). And in our time the jaundiced eye of Hobbes is considered by many as so self-evident that those who depart from it are seen as unrealistic, and his pessimism about human nature is accepted as fact even by those who might be astonished to learn of its religious roots.[8]

By the time of Malthus, a hundred and fifty years after *Leviathan*, the industrial revolution was in full swing, and human misery resulting from the opened chasm between haves and have-nots had compounded accordingly. Though Malthus is usually read as the privileged economist patronizingly urging the poor to limit their fertility – and he

was this too – it is also said that he offered his theory of population growth because he wished to ameliorate the conditions of suffering for the lower classes. Whatever his motivations, Malthus put forward the theory that population increases geometrically while food supplies can increase only arithmetically. What therefore ensues is a "struggle for existence", a fight to the death over available resources. Hobbes's warring individuals seeking possessions and power became for Malthus tragic individuals struggling merely to survive. But fallen human sinfulness lay at the core also for the parson Malthus: sinful and sluggish humanity would not labour unless compelled to by a limited world. Food shortages were necessary to motivate people to work for a living (R. M. Young 1985: 73). The fault lay in nature itself, in these "deeper-seated causes of evil" found in "the laws of nature and the passions of mankind" (Malthus 1826: 3.2.3).

THE ANIMAL AND THE SOCIAL: DARWIN'S SYNTHESIS, DURKHEIM'S ANTITHESIS

Though they disagree on whether Malthus's concept of the "struggle for existence" matched Darwin's exactly, historians concur that when Darwin read Malthus the last piece of the evolutionary puzzle fell into place, namely, the *how*: evolution took place through natural selection defined as a struggle for existence (Bowler 1976; R. M. Young 1985: 80–88; Worster 1994: 149). By weeding out the less favourable variations and promoting the favourable ones, the environment could bring new species into being.[9]

And so the theory of competitive ruthlessness among humans passed into biology to help explain animal and plant life. Darwin accomplished a monumental task – reidentifying human beings with the rest of the natural world. But by locating his mechanism for evolution in the competitive individual, Darwin made Hobbes and Malthus come to seem natural as well.

After Darwin, the idea of the competitive, self-gratifying individual would pass back into social theory first as social Darwinism and then in a more generalized antithesis, articulated by Durkheim in the early twentieth century, between animal instincts and sociality. "The dualism of human nature", which Durkheim believed – wrongly – was universal, began for him not just in the separation of body and soul, but in the opposition between the two. "Our sensory appetites are necessarily egoistic", serving only the individual self, while the soul or mind serves more "impersonal" ends of disinterested morality (Durkheim [1914] 1973: 151). The personal and impersonal are inescapably opposed; "there is a true antagonism between them" (*ibid.*: 152). Every moral act (directed toward others) thus involves a sacrifice of personal, bodily satisfactions while every instinctive act to satisfy one's own physical needs must ignore a concern for others. "The result is that we are never completely in accord with ourselves for we cannot follow one of our two natures without causing the other to suffer" (*ibid.*: 153–4).

A starker opposition between self and others is impossible. Durkheim solved the problem in the way of Adam Smith, by redefining self-interested acts as moral ones (*ibid.*: 154). But his debt to Plato (and then Augustine and Augustine's early modern Protestant heirs) is clear: the conflict between individual and society rests on a dualism of body and mind, with the body coded as selfish and instinctive while only the mind or soul is able to connect, through reason, with the larger collective. Durkheim thus reified the chasm in

the Western imagination between individual and community: "society cannot be formed or maintained without our being required to make perpetual and costly sacrifices" (*ibid.*: 163). And he made it harder to consider, or even to see, the sociality of animals, for as (Cartesian) physical organisms only, they lack the capacity for mental reasoning that makes possible the collective.

This dualism of individual and community thus both rested on and recreated a theory of the natural world that identified animals with "brutishness", and especially with the brutishness peculiar to capitalism: that of individuals competing to survive – which itself rested on a theological assumption of fallen, self-serving human nature. In the Western story setting animal nature against social harmony, we project our economic practices onto animals and plants, and, "finding" there a fiercely competitive nature, we then reflexively apply it to ourselves – a self-reinforcing cycle of meaning that joins human and more-than-human worlds and appears to explain nearly every aspect of individual and social behaviour. In this hyperindividualistic tale, community is defined as unnatural, in the sense that it does not reside in the body or in the animal world but is made possible only through the (human) mind; community is an anthropocentric project achieved only by transcending and overcoming "animal" instincts. It then becomes the job of ethics, as Leopold understood it, to enforce "a limitation on freedom of action in the struggle for existence", and the purpose of society becomes curbing the individual (animal's) antisocial behaviour. The Western definition of the antisocial subject results in an oppressive definition of society. As Sahlins summarizes it: "The complement of the Western anthropology of self-regarding man has been an equally tenacious notion of society as discipline, culture as coercion. Where self-interest is the nature of the individual, power is the essence of the social" (Sahlins 1996: 404).

When individual and social are thus opposed, individualism can become an act of resistance against coercive social power. And when the individual–social opposition is mapped onto the natural world, individuals can resist coercive power only by exercising their "animal nature", which involves identifying with a romanticized notion of the isolated, need-gratifying animal. In the capitalist framework within which these oppositions took shape, consumers can thus come to symbolize resistance to group authority, acting to gratify their (instinctive animal) needs against the power of a disciplining society. Corporations, through advertising, can encourage such resistance (by promoting individual consumerism as a form of romanticized animal instinct) while masking their own disciplinary force as arbiters of mass culture and policers of the boundary between those who profit and those who do not. Exploitative economic behaviours, such as amassing resources on behalf of the few, can be defended as "only natural", and private enterprise can come to seem a refuge from centralized social or governmental power.[10]

By way of Hobbes, Malthus, Smith, Darwin and Durkheim, I now could see how the two events that coincided in my life long ago were connected. The baby fox had been euthanized as a result of environmental policy – influenced directly by Leopold and the Durkheimian separation between individual and ethical actions – that emphasized, in Darwinian fashion, the competition between animals over food and resources. But that very emphasis on competition rested on defining individual and community as irreconcilably opposed to one another, a notion that, as Malidoma and Sobonfu had alerted me, was culturally specific; it was thoroughly situated in the politics, theology, science and economics of European history.

CHALLENGING THE MODERN WESTERN STORY

In the remainder of this essay I highlight cultural stories that challenge – and therefore provide alternatives to – that of the modern West. Some stories belong to indigenous peoples inhabiting an animist worldview while others arise from native Western dissatisfaction, especially within the sciences, with the limitations imposed by the ruling story. All of these alternatives challenge the story at each of its interrelated key points: (a) its hyperindividualism, (b) its hyperseparation between animal and human, and (c) its emphasis on survival achieved primarily through competition.

Collaborative creation among the Cheyenne

Paula Gunn Allen contrasts the Cheyenne creation story and its collaborative Creator with the transcendent Creator of Genesis.[11] While the story she tells arises not from her own Laguna Pueblo tradition but rather from the Cheyenne, it underscores Sahlins's point that the Jewish and Christian idea of a creator residing outside of nature makes possible the Western cultural story, which ignores the creative roles of animals and plants as well as humans. Allen's account also induced a "disorienting dilemma" when I first encountered it, causing me to glimpse my society's origin story through the eyes of one whose culture arranges itself differently by placing humans, animals and gods in friendlier relation to one another.

Allen calls attention to the first chapter of Genesis, which depicts a Creator who accomplishes everything by himself – dividing light from darkness, separating dry land from water, and creating plants and animals. He "makes everything and tells everything how it may and may not function" (P. G. Allen 1992: 57). Genesis 2, although a separate myth, continues the theme of a stand-alone Creator who places the man and woman in a perfect garden paradise where all their needs are taken care of and where, in a state of dependence, they need not cultivate their own creativity. Then the Creator forbids them to eat of one tree, leaving them an impossible choice: will they develop their intelligence or be loyal to the Creator? When they pursue their own curiosity and decision-making power, they are punished with exile from the landscape of home and from relationship with their source.

Contrast this Creator with that of the Cheyenne, who, Allen says, is "somewhat wiser" (*ibid.*: 58). Instead of trying to fashion the whole creation by himself, Maheo the All-Spirit enlists help. He first creates four things: water, light, sky-air and water people. Then Loon makes a request: "When we are tired of swimming and tired of flying, we should like a dry solid place where we could walk and rest. Give us a place to build our nests, please, Maheo." The Creator acquiesces, but with this caveat: "By myself, I have made four things ... Now I must have help if I am to create more, for my Power will only let me make four things by myself" (Marriott & Rachlin 1972: 39, quoted in P. G. Allen 1992: 57).

Unlike the God of Genesis, this Creator has restricted powers, which gives him a "sense of proportion and respect for the powers of the creatures" (P. G. Allen 1992: 57). Instead of laying down limits for them, as one might for children, he cooperates with them as equals. Together, Maheo and the water people build dry land, as Loon had requested, and together they create the human man and woman.

A collaborative creation story like this one, says Allen, leads to a worldview in which all creatures are seen as co-responsible beings, and humans must cooperate with other

earth beings in the ongoing work of creation. The human "assumes a place in creation that is dynamic, creative, and responsive" (*ibid.*: 56–7) and interacts with the animals, insects and plants of the more-than-human world, who are regarded as possessing equal, and perhaps greater, powers.

The Cheyenne story, although having unique Plains elements, emphasizes the theme of collaboration among various creatures found in the creation stories of many American Indian nations (Weaver 2006: 84).[12] Its theme of partnership and its placing animals in the forefront of the cosmological creative activity contrast sharply with the isolation and competition that characterize the state of nature in the Western story. Community precedes individual in such an account, with the community of beings helping to create their own habitat as well as their younger members, the human beings.

Sharing breath with kin: the Rarámuri

The Rarámuri of the Mexican Sierra Madre, according to anthropologist and Rarámuri native Enrique Salmón, practise conservation activities that result from their experience of kinship with other beings who share the same home. Central to their worldview is the concept of *iwí*, the binding or creative force of the universe. Like the English words *spirit* and *inspire*, *iwí* joins the notions of breath, soul, life and creativity, with the related word *iwígara*, "the total connectedness and integration of all life in the Sierra Madre", signifying that all share the same breath (Salmón 2000: 1328). Thus all beings of the natural world are kin – not, Salmón emphasizes, in a merely metaphorical way but in reality. For the Rarámuri, "the natural world, therefore, is not one of wonder but of familiarity" (*ibid.*: 1329). The family extends to some plants and animals, such as bears, coyotes, morning glory, datura and maize, who are humans in a different form. "A certain attachment results from knowing that some of your relatives are the life-forms that share your place with you" (*ibid.*).

A world where all are kin demands that humans nurture their relatives, which can mean tending and harvesting plants in ways that maintain and increase their growth. When gathering wild edibles, the Rarámuri harvest "where the *iwí* is strong", which Salmón notes tends to be places where in Western terms the plants are abundant rather than scarce. They dig onions or gather pine needles for basket weaving in ways that ensure that the source is enriched rather than depleted. Because humans are on an equal standing with other creatures in the natural world, human activities of growing and consuming food are beneficial to the environment as long as they are carried out in accord with conservation principles. The Rarámuri practices of sustainable farming stem from the "realization that the Sierra Madre is a place of nurturing, full of relatives with whom all breath is shared" (*ibid.*: 1330).

Andean community: the *ayllu*

The themes of kinship and nurturing are found also among Andean peoples of Bolivia, Peru and Ecuador and are outlined by Grimaldo Rengifo Vásquez, anthropologist and Peruvian village native. Andean life centres on the *ayllu*, the community of relatives living together in one area. The concept of *ayllu* illustrates the intimacy assumed between humans, nature beings and spirits who inhabit a given landscape and emphasizes that

conversation is needed to keep relationships – and therefore the earth – functioning smoothly.

The *ayllu* comprises the community of humans (*runas*, Quechua), the communities of deities (*huacas*), and the animals and plants of the natural world (*sallqa*). With Andean societies placing a high value on harmonious relationships, the *ayllu* strives to make decisions together in an "atmosphere of profound equivalency" among all its human and other-than-human members (Rengifo Vásquez 1998: 89). No members of the community possess greater authority than others. Relationships follow lines of kinship, so that the potatoes grown in the field are the daughters and spring water carried to the fields might be a son-in-law (*ibid.*: 91).

Relationships within the *ayllu* are reciprocal, with nurturance the medium of exchange flowing back and forth among all the kin. People might say, "Just as we nurture the alpacas, they nurture us" or "as we nurture potatoes, they nurture us" (*ibid.*: 109). Relating well with others involves giving affection as well as receiving it, and a high value is placed both on "the pleasure of giving" and on allowing oneself to be loved (*ibid.*: 107). Nurturance flowing among all is the life-giving force that regenerates Pachamama, the living earth, who is the mother of all, the source of nurturance (*ibid.*: 109). When there is sweetness among the members of the *ayllu*, the earth is healthy and life can successfully regenerate. When disharmony or deception prevails, Pachamama is injured and crops are more likely to be harmed by pests or hail.

Through ritual, conversations take place between the people and the forest, between the deities and humans, between the deities and nature. If obstacles or disharmony disrupt relationships, conversations are held among the affected parties, and each type of community – deity, human and nature – is invited to speak. Deities and nature beings might speak through divination rituals while the individual human beings speak their hearts fully. When relationships are reconciled, life can flow freely again (*ibid.*: 109–17; Jimenez Sardon 1998). Conversation – listening to the speaking of others – is the basis of reciprocity, with humans listening closely for the signs given by, for instance, clouds or llamas in order to fulfil the mutual needs and obligations for nurturing within the community. "Conversation is thus an attitude, a mode of being in unison with life, a knowing how to listen and knowing how to say things at the appropriate moment" (Rengifo Vásquez 1998: 107).

The *ayllu* does not have fixed boundaries; rather, the definition of *ayllu* changes according to context: it might be one's family (in the context of the village) or one's district (while travelling in a city) (*ibid.*: 93). An *ayllu* might extend to other-than-local territories, with families holding fields and sending nurturing activities to other locations. Thus the *ayllu* is a "family without fixed borders" that stretches between human, natural and deity worlds as well as among disparate territories.

Andean people are bringing to both national and international arenas the idea that Pachamama, a person with a proper name, has inalienable rights. In 2008 Ecuador wrote into the national constitution the rights of Pachamama, including the rights to exist and regenerate and, in cases of degradation, be restored. Bolivia took similar action in 2011. In 2010 the Universal Declaration of the Rights of Mother Earth was drafted at the World People's Conference on Climate Change in Cochabamba, Bolivia, and presented for consideration at subsequent United Nations Framework Conventions on Climate Change.[13] The declaration recognizes the rights of the earth and all earth's inhabitants to clean air and water and freedom from toxic contamination, rooted in a regard for Mother Earth

as a living being, "a unique, indivisible, self-regulating community of interrelated beings that sustains, contains and reproduces all beings". Not surprisingly, the focus on a living earth results in opposition from the Andean framers of the declaration to capitalist and market-based solutions to climate change because such tactics proceed from the assumption that the earth is made up of resources to be exploited or traded, when the earth must be seen, rather, as "the source of life, nourishment and learning" (World People's Conference on Climate Change 2011).[14]

LEARNING FROM THE STORIES OF OTHERS

The three cosmologies briefly highlighted here all express a relational epistemology, where life takes place through communication among knowing subjects. They underscore the theory advanced by scholars of new animism that animist cultures are less concerned with Tylor's dualism between matter and spirit and more concerned with relationship – promoting harmony among all beings of earth, some of whom may belong to the material world, others of whom may not (Hallowell 1960; Viveiros de Castro 1998a; Bird-David 1999; G. Harvey 2006a,b). Animist emphases on the close relationships between humans and other beings, such as through kinship structures or through experiencing plants or animals as other-bodied humans, challenge the hyperseparation in the Western story between humans and nature. Among these three peoples, rationality and ethics are never regarded as uniquely human properties. Community is part and parcel of the earth itself, rooted in relationships among all beings living in a place. The emphasis in the Cheyenne story on creation as a collaborative circle among closely related beings challenges the hyperindividualism of the Western story and its emphasis on survival as the product of competition. The emphasis on kinship in the Rarámuri and Andean stories blurs the Western boundaries between human and animal as well as between individual and community. In none of the stories are individual and community seen as antagonists; rather, circles of support sustain each individual being and each community. Individuals, conceptualized as individuals-in-community, exchange nourishment and sustenance with others, whether human, animal, plant, or deity. In each of these stories, community precedes individuals, constructing individuals through processes conceptualized as support and nurturance rather than discipline.[15]

How can inhabitants of a capitalist, individualist society learn from indigenous animist cosmological stories? At the most obvious level, the stories of others can be used reflexively to plant a seed of doubt in the inevitability of one's own cultural story. The cosmologies of animist peoples, especially when considered in light of thriving animist cultures, can introduce the possibility of ecological and social alternatives to a neoliberal order. A "disorienting dilemma" may ensue, which can lead to new syntheses and perhaps even a seeking out of animist models for guidance on how to live more harmoniously with one another and the natural world.

One such use of an indigenous cosmology is being developed by economist Ronald Trosper, who suggests that the indigenous cultures of northwest North America were more ecologically sustainable than modern Western cultures because the potlatch system required chiefs to redistribute their surplus income among one another and their respective houses. Such a system, if applied in the modern world, would involve economic

entities such as corporations within an ecosystem sharing their surplus income, or profits, with one another rather than assuming that profit is to accrue privately to a few. Trosper develops such a model for implementing the potlatch system in the corporate world, a model that, like the potlatch system, joins the interests of individuals and communities and would incentivize cooperative behaviours within a given ecosystem (Trosper 1998).[16]

Another line of enquiry might pursue the notion of rights arising from the Andean *ayllu* and how this notion differs from neoliberal ideas of rights rooted in the social contract theory. When individual and community are not regarded as antagonists, how do conceptualizations of rights change accordingly? What misunderstandings are likely to develop in cross-cultural political dialogues as language of rights based in a communitarian concept enters the neoliberal global arena with its assumption of rights based in isolated and competitive individuals?

A methodological question inevitably arises: can animist values, based as they are in local ontologies and small-scale, face-to-face societies, be applied outside those contexts? Or does a relational ontology require a strictly local focus? The answer to both questions is *yes*: a relational ontology emphatically requires a local focus, to preserve the face-to-face care and nurturance shared with others (human and more-than-human) in the local geography. And yet this need not prevent animist ontologies from participating in global systems of communication or exchange. Indigenous animist concepts and values, rooted in a particular place, may inspire commitments to local communities elsewhere, and they may also, as in the case of Trosper, serve as models for shifting modern economic arrangements and practices toward greater ecological sustainability. Ecuador and Bolivia, with their nationwide policies on the rights of nature, might become examples of implementing a relational ontology at the national level, and the Andean concept of the community as a "family without fixed borders" might provide a model for imagining post-capitalist global interactions as based on interacting spheres of empowered local communities rather than on the movements of global capital.

The emphasis on local communities found within indigenous animist accounts can also mitigate against the power of centralized authority, which tends to accompany a cosmology in which humans and all of nature are seen as flawed and fallen. It should not be forgotten that Augustine formulated his doctrine of original sin shortly after Christianity became the religion of the empire, for the Pelagian view – that humans are able on their own to make better moral choices – would have rendered the Church irrelevant. A universally sinful humanity needed the Church to be the conduit of grace, and declaring Pelagius a heretic was one of the earliest decisions enacted by a newly imperial Christianity. A thousand years later Hobbes, with his doctrine of the absolute sovereign, restated the need for centralized authority that arises when human beings are defined as unable on their own to create a good society. An emphasis on the local community refocuses political attention on the well-being of local individuals, whether trees, humans, rivers, or mountains, and emphasizes also the power of local communities to nurture their own members.

A CHANGING WESTERN TALE: RECOGNIZING CONTEXT AND COOPERATION

Indigenous animist peoples are not the only ones challenging the Western cosmology; alternative stories are arising also from Western sources, especially the sciences. I

mention a few examples here to show that dissatisfactions can arise internally and also to lessen the impression of monolithic power that inevitably results when the Western story is condensed into a single whole and contrasted, as a whole, with the stories of others.

The twentieth-century advances in physics, especially quantum mechanics, have been integrated quickly into technological developments but have yet to be absorbed at the level of meaning. If Newtonian physics provided the foundation for modern thought, especially neoclassical economics, then it follows that the quantum-mechanic revolution will result in dramatically modified worldviews (Mirowski 1989). Physicist Karen Barad is one of the few to spell out implications of quantum theory for both the natural and social worlds. She builds from the theories of Niels Bohr to propose an ontology in which matter "intra-acts", or mutually creates, which approaches a panpsychist cosmology and parallels animist cosmologies in which reality is an ever-shifting process carried out by mutually creating subjects (Barad 2003, 2007; Stuckey 2010).

The story of animals as competitive, need-gratifying mechanisms is also being challenged by animal scientists whose observations reveal a different story. The work of Jane Goodall is paramount here, as is that of primatologist Frans de Waal, who criticizes the "Calvinist sociobiology" underlying evolutionary theory (de Waal 1996).[17] Ethologist Marc Bekoff and his colleagues have documented rules of fair play among wolves, which erodes the idea that community and ethics are singularly human constructions (Bekoff & Pierce 2009).

In the field of genetics, the ideology of competition as the basis for both evolutionary development and developmental biology is challenged by Ken Weiss and Anne Buchanan, who show that cooperation – between proteins, between cells, between DNA molecules and proteins – inheres in the most basic processes of gene expression (Weiss & Buchanan 2009). The wall that has been assumed between genes and environment is breaking down as researchers discover the influence of social-symbolic and environmental contexts in shaping gene expression (Jablonka & Lamb 2005).

Some challenges to the modern Western natural-social story arise from encounters with Buddhism. A Buddhist ontology with its dissolving of subject and object has encouraged some neuroscientists to offer conceptualizations of the mind that emphasize intersubjectivity, where the mind becomes, not the epiphenomenon of inert biological processes, but "the activity of an essentially *situated* brain: a brain at home in its proper bodily, cultural and environmental niche" (Clark 1998). The dialogues between Buddhists and neuroscientists that have inspired such rethinking might serve as a model for dialogues between animist ontologies and a Western cosmology.[18]

CONCLUSION: TOWARD A SUSTAINABLE STORY

In the dialectical relationship between culture and its origin story, people produce a story of themselves and the world, which then produces the culture – Geertz's "model of" and "model for" society (Geertz 1973: 93–4). We have looked at the Western origin story of isolated, self-serving individuals set in opposition to group discipline and how this story is mapped onto the natural world, with self-gratifying behaviour coded as "animal" while ethics and morality occupy the "social" pole. Threaded through Augustine, Hobbes, Malthus, Smith, Darwin and Durkheim, this story weaves together natural and social

sciences with economic behaviour to fashion what has appeared to be a nearly airtight story of human and environmental behaviour.

But if we are our stories, as Thomas King asserted, then the brokenness of our present world reveals a profound brokenness in the story we have been telling ourselves. The story we tell has ontological implications, and I want to risk an ontological claim: that the story of ourselves told by the modern industrial West, which is also a story about the rest of nature, is profoundly at odds with reality. In setting up fallen individuals in opposition to an order-preserving society, and in mapping that view of ourselves onto the natural world and depriving the more-than-human world of subjectivity, awareness and cooperative concern, we have made a centuries-long ontological mistake. We have not seen ourselves clearly, which means we have not seen giraffes or huckleberries clearly either. And, lacking accurate pictures of ourselves and bears and finches, rivers, scorpions, junipers, rocks and bacteria, we have pursued actions that deplete and destroy rather than sustain. Given the severity of our present ecological crisis, an ecocide that is in fact a suicide, an unraveling of the centuries-long Western story may be needed before a new fabric can be woven, a new story of our own nature told, one that is closer in alignment with reality, which is to say, nature itself.

Many indigenous cultures – perhaps most, if Sahlins is right that the West is unique in beginning its story in individual savagery – are sustained by stories that join individual and community into a whole that neither erases the individual nor sets individual well-being in tension with that of the community. If the animist cultural stories touched on here provide models of stories and cultures that are sustainable over time, they indicate that revisions to the Western story will need to centre on similarly joining interests of individual and community into a more harmonious whole. The animist cultures we touched on here accomplish this through (a) recognizing subjectivity in and kinship with the more-than-human world and (b) promoting practices of affection and nurturing as the medium of reciprocity that promotes social (and by definition ecological) stability. It is interesting that current scientific challenges to the Western story also promote models of interrelationship, co-creation and intersubjectivity. Many fruitful lines of inquiry might be pursued in comparing indigenous animisms with new developments in Western scientific stories.

But when it comes to practices of affection, Western cultures have much to learn. What will it take to reconceive the community – from organizations to governments – as nurturing rather than disciplinary bodies? As bodies that exist to promote the well-being of individual members through exchanging the coin of affection? It will require, at the start, redefining individuals as something other than self-serving (sinful) organisms, for the fallen humanity of Hobbes's vision was the prerequisite for his solution of centralized authority. Such a radical reconceiving of individual and group would have equally radical repercussions in economics, education, government and gender roles, and it is safe to say that the world could not look as it does now.[19]

And for such changes, we can fervently hope. We can also work to promote transformation toward a social order in which the flourishing of individuals in local communities stands at the centre of our perception and actions – which is to say, a post-capitalist era in which the interests of the few are no longer conceptualized as opposed to the interests of the many. Those who wish to move Western society toward greater sustainability, and a more sustainable story, can begin by practising acts of radical kindness. From an

animist perspective, any behaviour that treats an other as a speaking subject rather than a manipulable object, whether in an office or a forest, enacts a more-than-mechanistic story. Any behaviour that begins from the premise of cooperation rather than competition, whether of individuals or ecosystems, challenges the inevitability of the capitalist story. Any governing body that conceives of its purpose as nurturing its members more than managing them helps to erode the long-standing enmity between individual and community. And any act that assumes a continuity of interests between the self and others will have ecological benefits, for the community that enfolds each individual includes rocks and rain, humans and micro-organisms, and, contrary to what Western culture has been telling itself for four hundred or more years, we are all in this together. May we, before it is too late, listen to the speaking community, both human and more-than-human, and learn to tell a story that supports the flourishing of the world.

NOTES

1. "Modern Western culture" refers both to a worldview arising in northwest Europe during the seventeenth through twentieth centuries, a worldview dependent on body–spirit, human–nature, and subject–object dualisms, as well as the discourses and practices of industrialized countries, especially in the West and North, derived from that history (see also Plumwood 1993, 2002).
2. Though I was groping my way toward an analysis similar to that of Marshall Sahlins, discovering two of his essays greatly clarified my thinking, and I am deeply indebted to his work (Sahlins 1976b; 1996). Van Reybrouk (2001) thinks Sahlins confuses similarity between ideas with historical continuity between those ideas and believes Sahlins is arguing for a single underlying structure of ideas. But this is only one way of explaining recurring themes. An animist might talk instead about the long lives of stories.
3. I am grateful to Jeanine Canty for drawing my attention to the work of Mezirow.
4. I prefer to speak of "stories" about nature rather than "metaphors" or "root metaphors" (Pepper 1942; Bird-David 1990; Bowers 2001) to preserve an animistic awareness of the persons and subject–subject relationships present in all metaphors (see also Stuckey 2010). For example, the Nayaka of South India hold what Bird-David discusses as a root metaphor: "forest is as parent" (Bird-David 1990). But this phrase is already a story filled with active characters – forests and parents. Language of metaphor also tends to reduce a statement about "what reality is" to a materialist "what reality is like". To the Nayaka, the forest *is* a parent, not merely *like* one, and the label of metaphor bends the animistic Nayaka worldview to fit a mechanistic Western ontology.
5. My Mennonite forebears carried out a communal discipline that focused on personal morality and examination of congregants by elders; in practice, it closely resembled the type of discipline instituted by Calvin as outlined by Gorski (2003: 20–21). Mennonites, Amish, and their Anabaptist forerunners originated, of course, in Dutch and Swiss territories.
6. In his 1999 account Callicott backed away from tracing Hobbesian influence and instead credited Hume and Adam Smith, drawing a too-sharp distinction between Hume and Smith, on the one hand, and Hobbes, on the other, since Hume and Smith were working within social-contract assumptions about human nature that had been laid down by Hobbes. Worster traces the Hobbesian influence on Darwin through the geologist Charles Lyell's emphasis on the struggle for existence (1994: 143–4).
7. Though Thornton argues that he was a bit closer to Lutheranism than Calvinism (H. Thornton 2005).
8. The *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy* praises Hobbes as "an acute and wise commentator of political affairs" and admires him "for his hard-headedness about the realities of human conduct" (G. Williams 2005). During the administration of George W. Bush, Vice President Dick Cheney said that Hobbes was his favourite political philosopher (Horton 2009).
9. Young details, from Darwin's letters, how Darwin regarded natural and artificial selection analogically: what the human researcher did in the laboratory was what nature accomplished through Malthusian struggle (R. M. Young 1985: 79–88). The teleological argument (that mind or purpose

resides in nature itself) thus lurks behind the idea of natural selection, and Darwin himself was aware of it. To a reader who reported that he could not consider Darwin's mechanisms without the thought occurring "that they were the effect and the expression of mind", Darwin replied, "Well, that often comes over me with overwhelming force; but at other times ... it seems to go away" (*ibid.*: 112).

10. Foucault hovers just out of sight behind this discussion of power; Sahlins finds Hobbes in Foucault's assertion of an endless war of each against all and his belief in a divided self (Sahlins 1996: 407).
11. Allen was of Laguna, Sioux, Scottish and Lebanese ancestry although she identified as a Laguna woman (P. G. Allen 1992: ix).
12. Examples are found among Indians originating in the southeast, such as Muscogee Creeks (Fixico 2003: chapter 1); the northeast, such as Iroquois (Mann 2000, 1–12); other Plains groups such as Sioux (Erdoes & Ortiz 1984: 15–19); Pueblo people of the southwest, such as Hopi (Weaver 2006: 86); and people of the Northwest Coast such as Nuu-chah-nulth (formerly Nootka) (Atleo 2005: viii–ix).
13. The declaration has been part of the draft language of various international climate change conference documents, for instance, COP 16 in Cancún, Mexico, in 2010, where it was struck from the document before the start of the conference.
14. Catherine Roach suggests that the use of Mother Nature imagery in patriarchal Western culture tends to reify divisions between human and nature and to reinforce the role of women as nurturers (Roach 2003). A critical question is: does Mother Nature imagery function similarly in an animist culture where nurturance is defined as the work of both women and men?
15. Social discipline also takes place, but it is placed within the frame of nurturing and affection and practised through hearing each individual voice fully (Jimenez Sardon 1998).
16. I am grateful to Jared Aldern for alerting me to Trosper's work.
17. In a Calvinist sociobiology, scientists assume "selfish genes" and animal "greediness" while altruism and cooperation get disdained as sentimental or naïve. De Waal tells of primatologist Barbara Smuts, who dared to frame baboon activities in terms of "friendship" and received a cool and sceptical response: "Can animals really have friends? was the question of colleagues who without blinking accepted that animals have rivals" (de Waal 1996: 19).
18. These dialogues are initiated by the Mind and Life Institute: www.mindandlife.org/. Thanks to Sandy Hockenbury for reminding me of their work.
19. Regarding gender roles: nurturance in modern Western societies continues to be considered more women's work than men's, and the corporate world continues to pursue policies unfriendly to the nurturing of individuals and families. Making nurturance the business of the public world rather than primarily of women and families would overturn a system of gender-coded opposition between family and work.

IV

Dwelling with(out) things

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INTRODUCTION

Previous sections have approached one major aspect of animism's contribution or challenge to the dichotomy "nature–culture". They have illustrated various ways in which other-than-human species (especially animals) can be understood to be cultural or to live culturally. Having revisited the term "totemism" as a subspecies of animism in which different species cooperate in local, mutually beneficial clans, the chapters in Part IV are concerned with versions of what can be called "fetishism". They debate the animation, agency or relational liveliness of things, especially "made things".

Considering what it might mean to "be alive to a world without objects" Tim Ingold advances his always provocative thinking about the nature of the world. He builds on his definition of animism as "a way not of thinking *about* the world but of being alive *to* it, characterised by a heightened sensitivity and responsiveness, in perception and action, to an environment that is in perpetual flux, never the same from one moment to the next" (Ingold 2006: 10). This being so, Ingold seeks to overthrow the dominant "hylomorphic" model of the relation of matter (*hyle*) and form (*morphe*) in which matter is deemed inert until formed into something cultural and, therefore, alive and meaningful. His objection to the objectification of things is an excellent place to rethink human–thing relations.

This is followed by the late Tord Olsson's reflexive, engaged and engaging ethnographic narrative about ritual perception and practice among the Bambara in Mali. The Bambara identify their (traditional) religion as "fetishism", using either the French *fétichisme* or the Bambara *tontigiya*. The latter term can be translated as "ownership of a leather bag [which contains one or more object-persons]". Olsson tells us not only how these objects look, and how they are made, but also how they are made present – and how humans are made present to them – in both elaborate occasional rituals and in more everyday ones.

Fetishism is not the sole property of indigenous "others". Indeed, the word has played a vital role in Marxist and other analyses and critiques of labour, production and capital. For this reason, and because dialogues between putatively discrete phenomena may enlighten us about both, Alf Hornborg's chapter concerns "Animism, fetishism, and the cultural foundations of capitalism". Rather than focusing, as others have, on "personal phenomenologies of aesthetic or sensuous experience", Hornborg advances his "general critique of global capitalist relations" (initiated in Hornborg 2001b). Intriguingly but perhaps not surprisingly, Hornborg too finds in the discourse and practice of capitalism a denial of and willed dissociation from relationship with others. Even exploitative relationships are hidden from view so that fetishistic business practices can continue to animate modernity.

Amy Whitehead's consideration of devotion to two statues – that of the Virgin of Alcala de los Gazules in Spain and that of the Glastonbury Goddess in England – also finds that there are forms of fetishism in modernist Europe. Here, however, it is in the context of two different religious complexes. When devotees offer gifts to and anticipate the receipt of gifts from powerful, venerable beings in statue form, they do not step outside of contemporary modernity but they resonate with Latour's much-quoted claim that "we have never been modern" (1993). That is, while living modern lives, affected by many of the classic signs of the project of modernity, we (statue devotees and other denizens of the

contemporary world) have not been entirely disenchanted, alienated, individualized or bureaucratized.

Part IV proposes a "new fetishism" as another subspecies of the "new" relational or personalist animism. It is not the phenomenon that is "new" so much as the analytical clarity about what people do in the company of things.

17

Being alive to a world without objects

Tim Ingold

PROSPECT

In his notebooks the painter Paul Klee repeatedly insisted, and demonstrated by example, that the processes of genesis and growth that give rise to forms in the world we inhabit are more important than the forms themselves. "Form is the end, death", he wrote. "Form-giving is movement, action. Form-giving is life" (Klee 1973: 269). This, in turn, lay at the heart of his celebrated "Creative Credo" of 1920: "Art does not reproduce the visible but makes visible" (Klee 1961: 76). It does not, in other words, seek to replicate finished forms that are already settled, whether as images in the mind or as objects in the world. It seeks, rather, to join with those very forces that bring form into being. Thus the line grows from a point that has been set in motion, as the plant grows from its seed. Taking their cue from Klee, philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari argue that the essential relation, in a world of life, is not between matter and form, or between substance and appearance, but between *materials* and *forces* (Deleuze & Guattari 2004: 377). It is about the way in which materials of all sorts, with various and variable properties, and enlivened by the forces of the cosmos, mix and meld with one another in the generation of things. And what they seek to overcome in their rhetoric is the lingering influence of a way of thinking about things, and about how they are made and used, that has been around in the Western world for the past two millennia and more. It goes back to Aristotle.

To create any thing, Aristotle reasoned, you have to bring together form (*morphe*) and matter (*hyle*). In the subsequent history of Western thought, this hylomorphic model of creation became ever more deeply embedded. But it also became increasingly unbalanced. Form came to be seen as imposed, by an agent with a particular end or goal in mind, while matter – thus rendered passive and inert – was that which was imposed upon. The critical argument I wish to develop is that contemporary discussions in fields ranging from anthropology and archaeology to art history and material culture studies continue to reproduce the underlying assumptions of the hylomorphic model even as they seek

to restore the balance between its terms. My ultimate aim, however, is to overthrow the model itself, and to replace it with an ontology that assigns primacy to processes of formation as against their final products, and to flows and transformations of materials as against states of matter. This is the ontology of animism. Widely misunderstood as a system of belief that attributes life and even spirit to objects that are ostensibly inert, animism is – I argue to the contrary – a way not of thinking *about* the world but of being alive *to* it, characterized by a heightened sensitivity and responsiveness, in perception and action, to an environment that is in perpetual flux, never the same from one moment to the next (Ingold 2006: 10). In such an environment there are no objects to be animated. There are only things.

My argument has five components. I begin by establishing the distinction, upon which all else rests, between things and objects. I go on to explain what I mean by life, as the generative capacity of that encompassing field of relations within which forms arise and are held in place. I shall show that the current emphasis, in much of the literature, on material agency is a consequence of the reduction of things to objects and of their consequent "falling out" from the processes of life. Indeed, the more theorists have to say about agency, the less they seem to have to say about life; I would like to put this emphasis in reverse. In the third part of my argument, then, I will claim that a focus on life processes requires us to attend not to materiality as such but to the fluxes and flows of materials. We are obliged, as Deleuze and Guattari say, to follow these flows, tracing the paths of form-generation, wherever they may lead. Fourth, I shall determine the specific sense in which movement along these paths is creative: this is to read creativity "forwards", as an improvisatory joining in with formative processes, rather than "backwards", as an abduction from a finished object to an intention in the mind of an agent. Finally, I shall demonstrate that the pathways or trajectories along which improvisatory practice unfolds are not connections, nor do they describe relations *between* one entity and another. They are rather lines *along* which things continually come into being. Thus when I speak of the entanglement of things I mean this literally and precisely: not a network of connections but a meshwork of interwoven lines of growth and movement.

OBJECTS AND THINGS

Sitting alone in my study as I write, it may seem obvious that I am surrounded by objects of all sorts, from the chair and desk that support my body and my work, to the pad on which I write, the pen in my hand and the spectacles balanced on my nose. Imagine for a moment that every object in the room were magically to vanish, to leave only the bare floor, walls and ceiling. Short of standing or pacing the floorboards, I could do nothing. A room devoid of objects, we might reasonably conclude, is virtually uninhabitable. In order to make it ready for any activity, it has to be furnished. As the psychologist James Gibson argued, introducing his ecological approach to visual perception, the furnishings of a room comprise the *affordances* that enable residents to conduct their routine activities there: the chair affords sitting, the pen writing, the spectacles seeing, and so on. Rather more controversially, however, Gibson extended his reasoning from the interior space of the room to the environment in general. He asks us to imagine an *open environment*, "a layout consisting of the surface of the earth alone" (J. J. Gibson 1979: 33). In the limiting case – that

is, in the absence of any objects whatsoever – such an environment would be realized as a perfectly level plain, with the cloudless sky above and the solid earth beneath, stretching in all directions to the great circle of the horizon. What a desolate place that would be! Like the floorboards of the room, the surface of the earth affords only standing and walking. That we can do anything else besides depends on the fact that the open environment, like the interior room, is ordinarily cluttered with objects. "The *furniture* of the earth," writes Gibson, "like the furnishings of a room, is what makes it livable" (*ibid.*: 78).

Let us now leave the seclusion of the study and take a walk outside, in the open air. Our path takes us through a woodland thicket. Surrounded on all sides by trunks and branches, the environment certainly seems cluttered. But is it cluttered with *objects*? Suppose that we focus our attention on a particular tree. There it is, rooted in the earth, trunk rising up, branches splayed out, swaying in the wind, with or without buds or leaves, depending on the season. Is the tree, then, an object? If so, how should we define it? What is tree and what not-tree? Where does the tree end and the rest of the world begin? These questions are not easily answered – not as easily, at least, as they apparently are for the items of furniture in my study. Is the bark, for example, part of the tree? If I break off a piece in my hand and observe it closely, I will doubtless find that it is inhabited by a great many tiny creatures that have burrowed beneath it and made their homes there. Are they part of the tree? And what of the algae that grow on the outer surfaces of the trunk or the lichens that hang from the branches? Moreover, if we have decided that bark-boring insects belong as much to the tree as does the bark itself, then there seems no particular reason to exclude its other inhabitants, including the bird that builds its nest there or the squirrel for whom it offers a labyrinth of ladders and springboards. Considering, too, that the character of this particular tree lies just as much in the way it responds to the currents of wind, in the swaying of its branches and the rustling of its leaves, we might wonder whether the tree can be anything other than a tree-in-the-air. Is the wind, then, not as intrinsic to the tree as its wood?

These reflections lead me to conclude that the tree is not an object at all, but a *thing*. "An object", writes the philosopher of design Vilém Flusser (1999: 58), "is what gets in the way, a problem thrown in your path like a projectile" (from Latin *obiectum*, Greek *problema*). Standing before us as a *fait accompli*, it blocks our passage. To continue, we have either to find a way around it, to remove it, or to achieve a breakthrough. The thing, by contrast, draws us in, along the very paths of its formation. It is, if you will, a "going on" – or better, a place where several goings on become entwined. As the philosopher Martin Heidegger put it, albeit rather enigmatically, the thing presents itself "in its thinging from out of the worlding world" (Heidegger 1971: 181). It is a particular gathering or interweaving of the threads of life. The example that Heidegger used to illustrate his argument was a simple jug. The jug's thinginess, he argued, lies neither in its physical substance nor in its formal appearance but in its capacity to gather, to hold and to give forth (*ibid.*: 166–74). There is of course a precedent for this view of the thing as a gathering in the ancient meaning of the word as a place where people would gather to resolve their affairs. As the historical geographer Kenneth Olwig (2008) observes, in a brilliant account of the political geography of early medieval Jutland, the thing-place gathers the lives of people who dwell in the land, holds their collective memories and gives forth in the rulings and resolutions of unwritten law. Jutland is dotted with such places. To attend a thing, then, is not to be locked out but to be invited into the gathering.

If we think of every participant as following a particular way of life, threading a line through the world, then perhaps we could define the thing, as I have suggested elsewhere, as a "*parliament of lines*" (Ingold 2007a: 5). Thus conceived, the thing has the character not of an externally bounded entity, set over and against the observer, but of a knot whose constituent life-lines, far from being contained within it, continually trail beyond, only to mingle with other lines in other knots. Or in a word, things *leak*, forever discharging through the surfaces that form temporarily around them. I shall return to this point in connection with the importance, which I discuss later, of following flows of materials. For now, let me continue with our walk outside.

We have observed the tree; what else might catch our attention? I stub my foot on a stone lying on the path. Surely, you will say, the stone is an object. Yet it is so only if we artificially excise it from the processes of erosion and deposition that brought it there and lent it the size and shape that it presently has. A rolling stone, the proverb says, gathers no moss, yet in the very process of gathering moss, the stone that is wedged in place becomes a thing, while on the other hand the stone that rolls – like a pebble washed by a running river – becomes a thing in its very rolling. Just as the tree, responding in its movements to the currents of wind, is a tree-in-the-air, so the stone, rolling in the river current, is a stone-in-the-water. Suppose then that we cast our eyes upwards. It is a fine day, but there are a few clouds. Are clouds objects? Rather oddly, Gibson thinks they are: they seem to him to hang in the sky, while other entities like trees and stones lie on the earth. Thus the entire environment, in Gibson's words, "consists of the earth and the sky with objects on the earth and in the sky" (J. J. Gibson 1979: 66). In a painting dating from 1939, entitled *Poison*, René Magritte cleverly parodied this view of the furnished sky by depicting the cloud as a flying object floating in through the open door of an otherwise empty room. Of course the cloud is not *really* an object but a vaporous tumescence that swells as it is carried along in currents of air. To observe the clouds, I would say, is not to perceive objects in the sky but to catch a glimpse of the sky-in-formation, of its *clouding* (Ingold 2007c: S28). Once again, clouds are not objects but things.

What goes for such things as trees, stones and clouds, which may have grown or formed with little or no human intervention, also applies to more ostensibly artificial structures. Consider a building: not the fixed and final structure of the architect's design but the *actual* building, resting on its foundations in the earth, buffeted by the elements, and susceptible to the visitations of birds, rodents and fungi. The distinguished Portuguese architect Alvaro Siza has admitted that he has never been able to build a *real* house, by which he means "a complicated machine in which every day something breaks down" (Siza 1997: 47). The real house is never finished. Rather, it calls for unremitting effort to shore it up in the face of the comings and goings of its human and non-human inhabitants, not to mention the weather! Rainwater drips through the roof where the wind has blown off a tile, feeding a fungal growth that threatens to decompose the timbers, the gutters are full of rotten leaves, and if that were not enough, moans Siza, "legions of ants invade the thresholds of doors, there are always the dead bodies of birds and mice and cats". Indeed, not unlike the tree, the real house is a gathering of lives, and to inhabit it is to join in the gathering, or in Heidegger's terms, to participate with the thing in its thinging. Our most fundamental architectural experiences, as Juhani Pallasmaa explains, are verbal rather than nominal in form. They consist not of encounters with objects – the façade, door-frame, window and fireplace – but of acts of approaching and entering, looking in

or out, and soaking up the warmth of the hearth (Pallasmaa 1996: 45). As inhabitants, we experience the house not as an object but as a thing.

LIFE AND AGENCY

What have we learned from throwing open the windows of the study, leaving the house and taking a walk outside? Have we encountered an environment that is as cluttered with objects as is my study with furniture, books and utensils? Far from it. Indeed, there seem to be no objects at all. To be sure, there are swellings, growths, outcrops, filaments, ruptures and cavities, but not objects. Though a world full of objects might be *occupied*, the occupant is one for whom the contents of the world appear already locked in their final forms, closed in upon themselves. It is as though they had turned their backs on him or her. To *inhabit* the world, by contrast, is to join in the processes of formation. And the world that thus opens up to inhabitants is fundamentally an *environment without objects* or, in short, an EWO. Describing the tree, the stone, the cloud and the building, I have sought to give an account of life in the EWO. In so doing, I seem to have reached a conclusion diametrically opposed to Gibson's. Recall that for Gibson, an environment devoid of objects could be nothing but a featureless and perfectly level plain. Only when objects are added, whether laid out on the ground or hung up in the sky, does an environment – in his terms – become liveable. My argument, to the contrary, is that such a furnished environment, though it may be occupied, *cannot* be inhabited. How, then, does my approach differ from Gibson's? The answer lies in our respective understandings of the significance of surfaces.

It is by their outward surfaces, according to Gibson, that objects are revealed to perception. Every surface, as he explains, is an interface between the more or less solid *substance* of an object and the volatile *medium* that surrounds it. If the substance is dissolved or evaporates into the medium, then the surface disappears, and with it the object it once enveloped (J. J. Gibson 1979: 16, 106). Thus the very objectness of any entity lies in the separation and immiscibility of substance and medium. Remove every object, however, and a surface still remains – for Gibson the most fundamental surface of all – namely the *ground*, marking the interface between the substance of the earth below and the gaseous medium of the sky above. Has the earth, then, turned its back on the sky? If it had, then as Gibson correctly surmised, no life would be possible. The open environment could not be inhabited.

My argument, to the contrary, is that the world of the open *can* be inhabited precisely because, wherever life is going on, the interfacial separation of earth and sky gives way to mutual permeability and binding. In the EWO, earth and sky, far from being confined to their respective domains by the hard surface of the ground, continually infiltrate one another. Thus the ground is not, in truth, a coherent surface at all but a zone in which the air and moisture of the sky combine with substances whose source lies in the earth in the ongoing constitution and dissolution of living things. Of a seed that has fallen to the ground, Paul Klee writes that "the relation to earth and atmosphere begets the capacity to grow ... The seed strikes root, initially the line is directed earthwards, though not to dwell there, only to draw energy thence for reaching up into the air" (Klee 1973: 29). In growth, the point becomes a line, but the line, far from being mounted upon the

pre-prepared surface of the ground, contributes to its ever-evolving weave. The growing plant is neither *on* the earth nor *in* the sky, but is simultaneously both earthly and celestial. And it is so, as Klee pointed out, precisely because the commingling of sky and earth is itself a condition for life and growth. It is because the plant is *of* (and not *on*) the earth that it is also *of* the sky. There could be no life, in short, in a world where earth and sky do not mix and mingle.

For an impression of what it means to inhabit an earth-sky world we can return to Heidegger. In an admittedly florid passage, he describes the earth as "the serving bearer, blossoming and fruiting, spreading out in rock and water, rising up into plant and animal". And of the sky, he writes that it "is the vaulting path of the sun, the course of the changing moon, the wandering glitter of the stars, the year's seasons and their changes, the light and dusk of the day, the gloom and glow of the night, the clemency and inclemency of the weather, the drifting clouds and blue depth of the ether". Moreover one cannot speak of the earth without already thinking of the sky, and vice versa. Each partakes of the essence of the other (Heidegger 1971: 149). How different this is from Gibson's account of earth and sky as mutually exclusive domains, rigidly held apart at the ground surface, and populated with their respective objects: "mountains and clouds, fires and sunsets, pebbles and stars" (J. J. Gibson 1979: 66)! In place of Gibson's nouns denoting items of furniture, Heidegger's description is replete with verbs of growth and motion. In the earth's "rising up", as Heidegger puts it, in that irrepressible discharge of substance through the porous surfaces of emergent forms, we find the essence of life. Things are alive, as I have noted already, because they *leak*. Life in the EWO will not be contained, but inheres in the very circulations of materials that continually give rise to the forms of things even as they portend their dissolution.

It is through their immersion in these circulations, then, that things are brought to life. You can demonstrate this by means of a simple experiment, which I have carried out with my students at the University of Aberdeen. Using a square of paper, matchstick bamboo, ribbon, tape, glue and twine, it is easy to make a kite. We did this indoors, working on tables. It seemed, to all intents and purposes, that we were assembling an object. But when we carried our creations to a field outside, everything changed. They suddenly leaped into action, twirling, spinning, nose-diving and – just occasionally – flying. So what had happened? Had some animating force magically jumped into the kites, causing them to act most often in ways we did not intend? Of course not. It was rather that the kites themselves were now immersed in the currents of the wind. The kite that had lain lifeless on the table indoors had become a kite-in-the-air. It was no longer an object, if indeed it ever was, but a thing. As the thing exists in its thinging, so the kite-in-the-air exists in its flying. Or to put it another way, at the moment it was taken out of doors, the kite ceased to figure in our perception as an object that can be set in motion, and became instead a movement that resolves itself into the form of a thing. One could say the same, indeed, of a bird-in-the-air, or of the fish-in-the-water. The bird *is* its flying; the fish its swimming. The bird can fly thanks to the currents and vortices that it sets up in the air, and the fish can swim at speed because of eddies set up through the swishing of its tail and fins. Cut out from these currents, they would be *dead*.

This is the point at which we can tackle – and, I hope, bury once and for all – the so-called "problem of agency" (Gell 1998: 16). Much has been written on the relations between people and objects, guided by the thought that the difference between them

is far from absolute. If persons can act on objects in their vicinity, so, it is argued, can objects "act back", causing them to do or allowing them to achieve what they otherwise could not (see, for example, Tilley 2004; Gosden 2005; Knappett 2005; Latour 2005; D. Miller 2005; Henare *et al.* 2007; Malafouris & Knappett 2008). Yet in the very first theoretical move that sets things aside in order to focus on their "objectness", they are cut off from the life-support system comprised by the flux of materials. We saw this with the kite. To think of the kite as an object is to omit the wind – to forget that it is, in the first place, a kite-in-the-air. And so it seems that the kite's flying is the result of an interaction between a person (the flyer) and an object (the kite), which can only be explained by imagining that the kite is endowed with an internal animating principle, an agency, that sets it in motion, most often contrary to the will of the flyer.

More generally, I suggest that the problem of agency is born of the attempt to re-animate a world of things already deadened or rendered inert by arresting the flows of substance that bring them to life. In the EWO, things move and grow because they are alive, not because they have agency. And they are alive precisely because they have not been reduced to the status of objects. The idea that objects have agency is at best a figure of speech, forced on us (Anglophones at least) by the structure of a language that requires every verb of action to have a nominal subject. At worst it has led great minds to make fools of themselves in a way that we would be ill-advised to emulate. In effect, to render the life of things as the agency of objects is to effect a double reduction, of things to objects and of life to agency. And the source of this reductive logic lies, I believe, is none other than the hylomorphic model.

MATERIALS AND MATERIALITY

When analysts speak of the "material world", or more abstractly, of "materiality", what do they mean (Ingold 2007b)? What sense does it make to invoke the materiality of stones, trees, clouds, buildings or even kites? Put the question to students of material culture, and you are likely to get contradictory answers. Thus a stone, according to Christopher Tilley, can be regarded in its "brute materiality", simply as a formless lump of matter. Yet we need a concept of materiality, he thinks, in order to understand how particular pieces of stone are given form and meaning within specific social and historical contexts (Tilley 2007: 17). Likewise, archaeologist Joshua Pollard explains that "by materiality I mean how the material character of the world is comprehended, appropriated and involved in human projects" (Pollard 2004: 48). We can recognize in both pronouncements the two sides of the hylomorphic model: on the one side, brute materiality or the world's "material character"; on the other, the form-bestowing agency of human beings. In the concept of materiality the division between matter and form is reproduced rather than challenged. Indeed, the very concept of material culture is a contemporary expression of the matter-form of hylomorphism. When Tilley writes of "brute materiality", or archaeologist Bjørnar Olsen (2003: 88) of "the hard physicality of the world", it is as if the world had ceased its worlding, and had crystallized out as a solid and homogeneous precipitate, awaiting its differentiation through the superimposition of cultural form. In such a stable and stabilized world, nothing flows. There can be no wind or weather, no rain to moisten the land or rivers running through it, no "rising

up" of the earth into plant or animal, indeed no life at all. There could be no things, only objects.

In their attempts to rebalance the hylomorphic model, theorists have insisted that the material world is not *passively* subservient to human designs. Yet having arrested the flow of materials they can only comprehend activity, on the side of the material world, by attributing agency to objects. Pollard, however, sounds a note of dissent. Concluding an important article on "the art of decay and the transformation of substance", he points out that material things, like people, are *processes*, and that their real agency lies precisely in the fact that "they cannot always be captured and contained" (Pollard 2004: 60). As we have found, it is in the opposite of capture and containment, namely discharge and leakage, that we discover the life of things. Bearing this in mind, we can return to Deleuze and Guattari, who insist that whenever we encounter matter, "it is matter in movement, in flux, in variation". And the consequence, they go on to assert, is that "this matter-flow can only be *followed*" (Deleuze & Guattari 2004: 451). What Deleuze and Guattari here call a "matter-flow", I would call a *material*. Accordingly, I recast the assertion as a simple rule of thumb: to *follow the materials*. The EWO, I contend, is not a material world but a world of materials, of matter in flux. To follow these materials is to enter into a world that is, so to speak, perpetually on the boil. Indeed, rather than comparing it to a giant museum or department store, in which objects are arrayed according to their attributes or provenance, it might be more helpful to imagine the world as a huge kitchen, well stocked with ingredients of all sorts.

In the kitchen, stuff is mixed together in various combinations, generating new materials in the process which will in turn become mixed with other ingredients in an endless process of transformation. To cook, containers have to be opened, and their contents poured out. We have to take the lids off things. Faced with the anarchic proclivities of his or her materials, the cook has indeed to struggle to retain some semblance of control over what is going on. Perhaps an even closer parallel might be drawn with the laboratory of the alchemist. The world according to alchemy, as art historian James Elkins explains, was not one of matter that might be described according to the principles of science, in terms of its atomic or molecular composition, but one of *substances* which were known by what they look and feel like, and by following what happens to them as they are mixed together, heated or cooled. Oils, for example, were not hydrocarbons but what might rise to the surface of a cauldron of stewed plants, or collect at the bottom of a pit of rotten flesh. Alchemy, writes Elkins, "is the old science of struggling with materials, and not quite understanding what is happening" (Elkins 2000: 19, 23). His point is that this, too, is what painters have always done, in their everyday work in the studio. Their knowledge was also one of substances, and these were often little different from those of the alchemical laboratory. Painter's size, for example, was made from horses' hooves, stags' antlers and rabbit-skin, and paint has been mixed with beeswax, the milk of figs, and the resins of exotic plants. Pigments were obtained from a bizarre miscellany of ingredients, such as the small reddish insects that were boiled and dried in the sun to produce the deep red pigment known as carmine, or the vinegar and horse manure that was mixed with lead in clay pots to produce the best white paint.

As practitioners in the EWO, the cook, the alchemist and the painter are in the business not so much of imposing form on matter as of bringing together diverse materials and combining or redirecting their flow in the anticipation of what might emerge. The same

could also be said of the potter, as archaeologist Benjamin Alberti suggests in a fine study of ceramics from Northwest Argentina dating from the first millennium CE. It would be a mistake, Alberti argues, to assume that the pot is a fixed and stable object, bearing the imprint of cultural form upon the "obdurate" matter of the physical world (Alberti 2007: 211). On the contrary, evidence suggests that pots were treated like bodies, and with the same concern: namely, to compensate for chronic instability, to shore up vessels for life against the ever-present susceptibility to leakage and discharge that threatens their dissolution or metamorphosis. Far from what the modernist rhetoric of embodiment often implies (Sheets-Johnstone 1998: 358–61), the body is not a sink, a locus of sedimentation, or a vessel into which activity is instilled; it is rather a hive of activity in itself, a writhing mass of movements, fluxes and energic potentials. So too are pots. As parts of the fabric of the EWO, pots are no more stable than bodies, but are constituted and held in place within flows of materials. Left to themselves, however, materials can run amok. Pots are smashed; bodies disintegrate. It takes effort and vigilance to keep things intact, whether they be pots or people.

Modern society, of course, is averse to such chaos. Yet however much it has tried, through feats of engineering, to construct a material world that matches its expectations – that is, a world of discrete, well-ordered objects – its aspirations are thwarted by life's refusal to be contained. We might think that objects have outer surfaces, but wherever there are surfaces life depends on the continual exchange of materials across them. If, by "surfacing" the earth or incarcerating bodies, we block that exchange, then nothing can live. In practice, however, such blockages can never be more than partial and provisional. The hard surfacing of the earth, for example, is perhaps the most salient characteristic of what we conventionally call the "built environment". On a paved road or concrete foundation, nothing can grow, unless provisioned from remote sources. Yet even the most resistant of materials cannot forever withstand the effects of erosion and wear and tear. Thus the paved surface – attacked by roots from below and by the action of wind, rain and frost from above – eventually cracks and crumbles, and allows plants to grow through so as to mingle and bind once again with the light, air and moisture of the atmosphere. Wherever we choose to look, the active materials of life are winning out over the dead hand of materiality that would snuff it out.

IMPROVISATION AND ABDUCTION

By restoring things to life I have wanted to celebrate the creativity of what Klee called "form-giving". It is important, however, to be precise about what I mean by creativity. Specifically, I am concerned to reverse a tendency, evident in much of the literature on art and material culture, to read creativity "backwards", starting from an outcome in the form of a novel object and tracing it, through a sequence of antecedent conditions, to an unprecedented idea in the mind of an agent. This backwards reading is equivalent to what anthropologist Alfred Gell has called the *abduction of agency*. Every work of art, for Gell, is an "object" that can be "related to a social agent in a distinctive, 'art-like' way" (Gell 1998: 13). By "art-like", Gell means a situation in which it is possible to trace a chain of causal connections running from the object to the agent, whereby the former may be said to index the latter. To trace these connections is to perform the cognitive operation

of abduction. From my earlier critique of the double reduction of things to objects, and of life to agency, it should be clear why I believe this view to be fundamentally mistaken. A work of art, I insist, is not an object but a thing, and as Klee argued, the role of the artist is not to reproduce a preconceived idea, novel or not, but to join with and follow the forces and flows of material that bring the form of the work into being. "Following", as Deleuze and Guattari point out, "is not at all the same thing as reproducing": whereas reproducing involves a procedure of *iteration*, following involves *itineration* (Deleuze & Guattari 2004: 410). The artist – as also the artisan – is an itinerant, whose work is consubstantial with the trajectory of his or her own life. Moreover, the creativity of the work lies in the forward movement that gives rise to things. To read things "forwards" entails a focus not on abduction but on improvisation (Ingold & Hallam 2007: 3).

To improvise is to follow the ways of the world, as they unfold, rather than to connect up, in reverse, a series of points already traversed. It is, as Deleuze and Guattari write, "to join with the World, or to meld with it. One ventures from home on the thread of a tune" (2004: 344). Life, for Deleuze and Guattari, issues along such thread-lines. They call them "lines of flight", or sometimes "lines of becoming". Critically, however, these lines *do not connect*. "A line of becoming", they write, "is not defined by the points it connects, or by the points that compose it; on the contrary, it passes between points, it comes up through the middle ... A becoming is neither one nor two, nor the relation of the two; it is the in-between, the ... line of flight ... running perpendicular to both" (*ibid.*: 323). Thus in life, as in music or painting, the movement of becoming – the growth of the plant from its seed, the issuing of the melody from the meeting of violin and bow, the motion of the brush and its trace – points are not joined so much as swept aside and rendered indiscernible by the current as it sweeps through. Life is open-ended: its impulse is not to reach a terminus but to keep on going. The plant, the musician or the painter, in keeping going, "hazards an improvisation" (*ibid.*: 343).

The thing, however, is not just one thread but a certain *gathering together* of the threads of life. Deleuze and Guattari call it a *haecceity* (*ibid.*: 290). But if every thing is such a bundle of lines, what becomes of our original concept of "environment"? What is the meaning of environment in the EWO? Literally, an environment is what *surrounds* a thing, yet you cannot surround anything without wrapping it up, converting the very threads along which life is lived into boundaries within which it is contained. Instead let us imagine ourselves, as did Charles Darwin in *The Origin of Species*, standing before "the plants and bushes clothing an entangled bank" (Darwin [1859] 1950: 64). Observe how the fibrous bundles comprising every plant and bush are entwined with one another so as to form a dense matt of vegetation. What we have been used to calling "the environment" reappears on the bank as an immense tangle of lines. Precisely such a view was advanced by the Swedish geographer Torsten Hägerstrand, who imagined every constituent of the environment – humans, animals, plants, stones, buildings – as having a continuous trajectory of becoming. As they move through time and encounter one another, the trajectories of diverse constituents are bundled together in diverse combinations. "Seen from within," wrote Hägerstrand, "one could think of the tips of trajectories as sometimes being pushed forward by forces behind and sometimes having eyes looking around and arms reaching out, at every moment asking 'what shall I do next?'" The entwining of these ever-extending trajectories, in Hägerstrand's terms, comprises the texture of the world – the "big tapestry of Nature which history is weaving" (Hägerstrand 1976: 332). Like Darwin's

entangled bank, Hägerstrand's tapestry is a field not of interconnected points but of interwoven lines, not a network but what I shall call a *meshwork*.

NETWORK AND MESHWORK

I have borrowed the term "meshwork" from the philosophy of Henri Lefebvre. There is something in common, Lefebvre observes, between the way in which words are inscribed on a page of writing, and the way in which the movements and rhythms of human and non-human activity are registered in lived space, but only if we think of writing not as a verbal composition but as a tissue of lines – not as *text* but as *texture*. "Practical activity writes on nature", he remarks, "in a scrawling hand" (Lefebvre 1991: 117). Think of the reticular trails left by people and animals as they go about their business around the house, village and town. Caught in these multiple entanglements, every monument or building is more "archi-textural" than architectural. It too, despite its apparent permanence and solidity, is a haecceity, experienced processionally in the vistas, occlusions and transitions that unfold along the myriad pathways inhabitants take, from room to room and in and out of doors, as they go about their daily tasks. This goes back to Pallasmaa's observation that our architectural experience is primarily verbal rather than nominal. As the life of inhabitants overflows into gardens and streets, fields and forests, so the world pours into the building, giving rise to characteristic echoes of reverberation and patterns of light and shade. It is in these flows and counter-flows, winding through or amidst without beginning or end, and not as connected entities bounded either from within or without, that things are instantiated in the world of the EWO.

The distinction between the lines of flow of the meshwork and the lines of connection of the network is critical. Yet it has been persistently obscured, above all in the recent elaboration of what has come to be known, rather unfortunately, as "actor-network theory". The theory has its roots not in thinking about the environment but in the sociological study of science and technology. In this latter field, much of its appeal comes from its promise to describe interactions among people (such as scientists and engineers) and the objects with which they deal (such as in the laboratory) in a way that does not concentrate agency in human hands, but rather takes it to be distributed around all the elements that are connected or mutually implicated in a field of action. The term "actor-network", however, first entered the Anglophone literature as a translation from the French *acteur réseau*. And as one of its leading proponents, Bruno Latour, has observed in hindsight, the translation gave it a significance that was never intended. In vernacular usage, inflected by innovations in information and communications technology, the defining attribute of the network is connectivity (Latour 1999: 15). But *réseau* can refer as well to netting as to network – to woven fabric, the tracery of lace, the plexus of the nervous system or the web of the spider.

The lines of the spider's web, for example, unlike those of the communications network, do not connect points or join things up. They are, rather, spun from materials exuded from the spider's body and are laid down as it moves about. In that sense they are extensions of the spider's very being as it trails into the environment (Ingold 2008: 210–11). They are the lines along which it lives, and conduct its perception and action in the world. Now the *acteur réseau* was intended by its originators (if not by those who have been

misled by its translation as "network") to be comprised of just such lines of becoming. Their inspiration came, in large measure, from the philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari. And these authors are quite explicit that although the value of the web for the spider is that it catches flies, the line of the web does not *link* the spider to the fly, nor does the fly's "line of flight" link it to the spider. These two lines rather unfold in counterpoint: to the one, the other serves as a refrain. Ensconced at the centre of its web, the spider registers that a fly has landed somewhere on the outer margins, as it sends vibrations down the threads that are picked up by the spider's super-sensitive, spindly legs. And it can then run along the lines of the web to retrieve its prey. Thus the thread-lines of the web lay down the *conditions of possibility* for the spider to interact with the fly. But they are not themselves lines of interaction. If these lines are relations, then they are relations not *between* but *along*.

Of course, as with the spider, the lives of things generally extend along not one but multiple lines, knotted together at the centre but trailing innumerable "loose ends" at the periphery. Thus each should be pictured, as Latour has latterly suggested, in the shape of a star "with a center surrounded by many radiating lines, with all sorts of tiny conduits leading to and fro" (Latour 2005: 177). No longer a self-contained object, the thing now appears as an ever-ramifying web of lines of growth. This is the *haecceity* of Deleuze and Guattari, famously likened by them to a rhizome (Deleuze & Guattari 2004: 290). Personally, I prefer the image of the fungal mycelium (Rayner 1997). Whichever image we prefer, what is crucial is that we start from the fluid character of the life process, wherein boundaries are sustained only thanks to the flow of materials across them. In the science of mind, the absoluteness of the boundary between body and environment has not gone unquestioned. Over fifty years ago, the pioneer of psychological anthropology, A. Irving Hallowell, argued that "any inner-outer dichotomy, with the human skin as boundary, is psychologically irrelevant" (1955: 88), a view echoed by the anthropologist Gregory Bateson in a lecture delivered in 1970, in which he declared that "the mental world – the mind – the world of information processing – is not limited by the skin" (Bateson 1972: 429). Much more recently, philosopher Andy Clark has made the same point. The mind, Clark tells us, is a "leaky organ" that will not be confined within the skull but mingles with the body and the world in the conduct of its operations (Clark 1997: 53). More strictly, he should have said that the skull is leaky, whereas the mind is what leaks! Be that as it may, what I have tried to do here is to return to Bateson's declaration and take it one step further. I want to suggest that it is not just the mind that leaks, but things in general. And they do so along the paths we follow as we trace the flows of materials in the EWO.

RETROSPECT

Philosophers have ruminated at length on the condition of being *in* the world. Animism, however, is about what it means to be alive *to* it. To be alive to the world is, in a word, to be *sentient*. It is not possible, however, to be sentient in an insentient world (Ingold 2010: 247). In such a world, light, sound and feeling could figure as nothing more than vectors in the conversion of objects into images. Forever shut out from this world of which it seeks knowledge, the mind could grasp its contents only by way of internal representations, constructed – as the logic of hylomorphism requires – through a unification of the "raw

material" of sensory experience with the ideational forms of cultural signification. In a sentient world, by contrast, things open up to the perceiver even as perceivers open up to them, becoming mutually entangled in that skein of affect which the philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1968: 138–9) famously called "the flesh", but which I have described here, more accurately I think, as the meshwork. Thanks to this entanglement, my seeing things is the way things see through me, my hearing them is the way they hear through me, my feeling them is the way they feel through me. By way of perception, the world "coils over" (*ibid.*: 140) upon itself: the sensible becomes sentient, and vice versa. Thanks to this coiling, light, sound and feeling – far from serving merely as vectors of projection – come to comprise the experiential ground of being alive, and as such, underwrite our very capacities to see, to hear and to touch.

"If the eye were not sun-like," wrote the poet Goethe, "it could not see the sun" (Luke 1964: 282). The likeness that Goethe evokes here is not figurative but resonant. The eye that sees the sun is one of a seer whose consciousness is already saturated by the luminosity of sunlight. Thus when I see, the sun sees, since this celestial body – experienced as its light – has already invaded my visual awareness (Merleau-Ponty 1962: 317). Like lines in counterpoint, the eye and the sun – or more generally, the sentient and the sensible – *co-respond*. In this chapter, I have argued that life in the EWO is immanent in the correspondent, contrapuntal flows of materials and sensory awareness. By the same token that the argument is *against* hylomorphism it is also *for* animism. Instead of viewing animism through hylomorphic spectacles, as a cognitive system or worldview which ascribes agency to objects, I propose animism as a radical alternative to hylomorphism, one that allows us to cast aside both the constricting finalities of form and the dead weight of matter, and to welcome in their place the generativity of material flows and the creativity of an improvisatory practice that is ever responsive to what is going on. Animism is not about restoring agency to objects; it is about bringing things back to life. It gives us room to breathe.

18

Animate objects: ritual perception and practice among the Bambara in Mali

Tord Olsson

A bleak day of March in Gwanyebugu, the Bambara village that is my residence in Mali. Harmattan, the dusty wind from the desert, is haunting us in the whitening light. I lean my back towards the mud wall of my house, as I sit on the ground. The wind has effaced the laterite paths leading to the village, the paths winding between the mighty Baobab trees, each one of them with its aged biography. The ill-mannered wind tears the thatched roofs of the granaries, dashes between the ochreous houses, tormenting men and animals. I wrap my Tuareg turban closer around my nose and mouth. The movement is noticed by my hostess Ɲakɔrɔ Soko: "The white wind is hitting us", she says.

The big he-goat, who is the residence of the jinn, the genius of the village, stands still near the huge Kapok tree, with his head against the wind. Bambara villages that are not Islamized usually house such a he-goat. Ɲakɔrɔ follows the direction of my gaze:

"There is the jinn", she states laconically. Nothing particular about it.

"Yes, there he is", I answer. The people in the village do not know the proper name of this jinn. But many know that he is male, that his feet are atrophied, and for this reason has to transport himself with the he-goat as his riding animal. *A ka so don*, "It is his horse", some villagers say.

This is about the same as Abdullah, as my host Sungo Traore, Ɲakɔrɔ's son, once explained to me, referring to a Fulani man who often comes to visit us. The man is club-footed on both his legs, and he transports himself, eats and sleeps on his little donkey, as if he is firmly rooted to the animal.

People take care of the he-goat. When he dies, he has to be replaced at once by another he-goat, otherwise the jinn will take his seat in the body of a new-born child. All this is commonplace for Sungo and his mother. As for me, I lose myself in epistemological meditations. Like many others, Ɲakɔrɔ, in her statement, does not make any distinction between the he-goat and the jinn himself, between the visible and the invisible. The inner life under the rough surface, she says nothing of that, but Sungo does in his explanation. Both of them use metonymy in their language, but in different ways; Sungo and others

also use similes. Their parlance is figurative, but not entirely figurative. It also indicates understandings of the actual state of things in their life world; and these conditions are not only turned out in language, but also take shape in the relation of human beings to objects and agents in ritual situations.

The everyday talk about the he-goat, who *is* the jinn, and at the same time the jinn's riding animal, can not be dismissed merely as a diffuse imagery. Rather, it is a way of giving utterance to the experience of the ambiguous quality of things and agents that finds its most evident expression on the scenes of ritual. Ritual agents and ritual objects are ambivalent, and as such are regarded with a double gaze. Human beings as well as things can in ritual situations appear both as autonomously acting persons and as instruments for other agents, such as ancestors or other-than-human persons. Those men and women who are advanced on the trail of wisdom, who have refined their mind and have a clear vision regarding these matters, are called *ɲɛ-fila-tigi-w*, "the masters of the double gaze".

Some of my days in Mali seem uneventful, waiting in the desert wind, other days in the petrifying silence of the afternoon heat. The hunters Sory, Gwandin and Ɲɔkuru have come and sit down beside me. No conversation occurs, their faces retire into themselves. I watch them for a moment from my European century, but subside into their silence. Suddenly the wind becomes brick-red like a hunter's garment, by the laterite sand. Sory breaks the silence in a sudden burst of talk, puts his hand on my arm: "Ah, the great hunter is there in the red wind, he who was a victim of the accident forty days ago. Look, he is dead, but alive, and he lets us know his presence", he mumbles behind his turban.

In the pale yellow and red light of the wind, it occurs to me for a moment how the perceptible reality is suffused with doubt.

The life world of the Bambara is populated by a number of persons and, in fact, things (*fɛnw*) which are perceived as persons, and only some of the multiplicity of persons are the human beings who are physically alive at the present time. Some of the other persons are the dead who are not physically, but in another form of life, present persons; some of them are the ancestors, others are the immortalized heroes of semi-divine origins in a shadowy past. The jinn are regarded as a race apart. Indeed, there are a great number of beings that constitute circles of persons who are not humans. However, not only those beings, but also particular objects and artefacts (*fɛnw*) gain the character of persons, and are treated as persons, particularly in ritual situations, but also otherwise. One can say that these different kinds of persons, who are not physically living humans, belong to specific *circles of persons*, and that they, as agents in ritual situations, take action in different *fields of ritual* in which particular conditions prevail: the ancestors who are connected to specific sacrificial sites in the village and promote the year's crop; the jinn, who are shape-shifters and during nocturnal séances take possession of the bodies of men and women; the semi-divine heroes of the past whose presence is conjured up at the hunters' ceremonies in the bush, and the many other-than-human persons, who are linked with the fetishes that the hunters hold in veneration; the masks and other-than-human persons of the secret societies, emerging in nights of ritual revelling; and God, called Ngala or Ala, who sojourns in the remote distance, but also resides in the human heart. My dialogue partners among the Bambara are all more or less informed about these notions and practices, although individual positions vary, of course.

Many of my instructors also assert that they not only suppose or believe in these matters; they take for granted that these other-than-human persons exist, and say they

experience their presence and live their life together with them. For that reason they put confidence in them, respect them, and even fear these beings and things. This attitude not only characterizes people's way of being, their world of imagination, their faculty of forming ideas, and how they convey thoughts and feelings in words or by gestures and conduct, in everyday life. There are also decided ways to meet with persons who are other than now living humans, and there are well-defined ritualized contexts and times for such meetings. As in normal social intercourse, the situations in which one relates with persons who are other than now physically living humans demand a special form of discourse and etiquette. Right decorum must be observed. Rituals furnish arrangements where humans and persons who are other than now living humans meet. There, the parties announce their presence, and the relation between them is regulated.

Now, for the sake of clarity, it should be mentioned that my term "person" is an analytical term when I use it about other-than-human beings and things in the Bambara life world, which are not physically living humans at the present time. In the Bambara language, however, the word "person" (*mɔgɔ*, pl. *mɔgɔw*) in everyday speech is used exclusively about human beings. On the other hand, in particular situations people *act* and *behave* towards certain other beings and things as to persons, in about the same way as one relates to people. They are spoken to; one communicates with them, even physically, in a similar way. And those other beings and objects themselves communicate with people by means of speech, or by other means. I call those beings and objects persons, since they are sentient. They have the ability of perception, thinking and knowledge; they have the powers of volition, communication and agency. This is most evident in ritual situations.

Moreover, when ritual participants reflect on the course of action in a ritual and upon the nature of the other-than-human agents of a ritual event, then one can speak about these agents as *mɔgɔw*, in the sense of "persons". The use of language in such a meta-ritual discourse is thus different from everyday language. For instance, in such a discourse, an object such as a fetish or a ritual mask can be characterized as a person. Bambara themselves then use the word *mɔgɔ*, person, as an analytical term.

In the anthropology of religion the term "animism" is again the subject of a stimulating theoretical discussion that associates a new use of the term with understandings of personhood and environment. The premises today are other than in the classical discussion of animism that was launched by Edward Burnett Tylor in his book *Primitive Culture* (1871), where he presented his "minimum definition" of religion as "the belief in Spiritual Beings". In an article with the programmatic title "'Animism' Revisited: Personhood, Environment, and Relational Epistemology", Nurit Bird-David (1999) subjects some old and new theories to criticism (Tylor, Durkheim, Lévi-Strauss, Guthrie). With the aid of her ethnography from Nayaka, a South Indian hunter-gatherer society, she then demonstrates how animist ideas, in the sense of a "relational epistemology", operate in the social life of the Nayaka, and how these ideas are related to understandings of personhood and environment. Like many other anthropologists in the recent discussion on animism, which speaks to reflections on personhood, to the relations between humans and other species, and to conceptualizations of objects and of environment, Bird-David sets out from Irving A. Hallowell's epoch-making article "Ojibwa Ontology, Behavior, and World View" (1960). On the whole, the main sources of inspiration in the discussion today, besides Hallowell's article, are studies in language and worldview among circumpolar peoples and American Indians, and the ethnography of other peoples who are hunters and

gatherers (Bird-David 1999; Ingold 2000: 40–131; K. M. Morrison 2000; G. Harvey 2005a: 17–20, 33–49, 99–114).

In the Algonquian languages such as Ojibwe and Cree, *animacy* is an important grammatical and semantic category of nouns based on whether or not the referent of a noun in the given taxonomic scheme is sentient or alive (Valentine 2001: 114). The Athabaskan languages, such as Apache and Navajo, even show various levels of animacy in their grammatical and semantic hierarchy of nouns, from the most animate, referring to humans, followed by referents to animals, plants, natural forces, concrete objects and abstractions, generally in that order, though the sequence may vary between languages (Young & Morgan 1987: 65–6). From grammatical categories alone we cannot, of course, arrive directly at conclusions about worldview and understanding of life, it is true, but substantive ethnographic evidence shows that categories of language reach deeply into various cultural spheres, including figures of thought and views of life, conceptions of wisdom, involvement with environment and understandings of the relations between humans and other beings and things, and find expression through the agencies of everyday experience as well as ways of social interaction in everyday life and ritual practice (Hallowell 1960: 24–43; Gill 1981; Basso 1996; G. Harvey 2005a: 42–5).

The new use of the word animism refers – often in phenomenological terms – to an integrative understanding of life, telling us that we share this world with a multiplicity of persons, of whom only some are humans. For example, other persons may be ancestors, spirits and divinities, which the theoreticians of classical animism already maintained. But the new theoretical use of the term animism takes as its starting point that those other persons are not all characterized by any human form. This animism thus far does not project anthropomorphous attributes onto phenomena in the human environment. As a consequence of this, even some animals, plants, certain objects and artefacts, and natural phenomena, can be understood as persons. The pivotal circumstance is that the concept of person is the superior category. To be human is only one way of being a person. At the same time this means that humans can relate, not only to ancestors and divinities, but also to certain animals, plants, objects and artefacts, as to persons. According to this ontology humans and the other categories are subordinated categories of persons. This ontology is associated with a relational epistemology, so that the connection between humans and the world around them to a great extent takes the form of personal relations (Olsson 2006a).

As I said, the new discourse on animism and on conceptualizations of person and object are inspired by Hallowell's and others' studies of language and view of life among hunters and gatherers, circumpolar peoples and Native Americans. However, very little ethnography from Africa is brought forward in the discussion, and, astonishingly enough, fetishism has not been a salient feature of the debate (see, however, Hornborg 1999b: S81), although it is a striking example of how objects are conceptualized as persons, and met with accordingly. Thus, among the Bambara, artefacts like fetishes and certain masks are regarded as persons (and some masks are also treated as fetishes). This is especially the case in ritual situations.

A disquieting and theoretically intractable problem is how the person feature of objects like fetishes and masks is brought into presence in such situations, and how persons who are not physically living humans are conjured up ritually. As Edward D. Schieffelin remarks, anthropologists have always found just the creation of presence in rituals and other performances difficult to deal with theoretically:

> Performance is also concerned with something that anthropologists have always found hard to characterize theoretically: the creation of presence. Performances, whether ritual or dramatic, create and make present realities vivid enough to beguile, amuse or terrify. And through presences, they alter moods, social relations, bodily dispositions and states of mind. (1998: 194)

"We are not Muslims, we are fetishists", said my host Sungo Traoré, with emphasis and pride, when I arrived at Gwanyebugu twelve years ago. As is well known, the theories of fetishism (Surgy 1987; Ellen 1988) among anthropologists, and maybe also among Marxists and psychoanalysts, have long since fallen into disrepute, and with the theories also further research into the varieties of the phenomenon as such. However, in Gwanyebugu one is not acquainted with those theories, and the villagers continue to sacrifice to their fetishes as if nothing had happened. But it is not only in this odd corner half a day by car away from electricity and mobile phones that people are fetishists. My friend Sumankuru Kanté in the capital Bamako drives his BMW dressed in his hunter garment covered with amulets, and among them hangs his mobile phone. On his ID card I read "profession: *féticheur*".

My role as anthropologist has changed profoundly since I arrived at Gwanyebugu in 1999. After a long meeting in the house of the aldermen, they dictated their terms: I was welcome to stay in the village as long as I wanted, provided that I respected the fetishes and the manners and customs of the village. They had unpleasant experiences of a Christian missionary who had burnt their fetishes. "That was in 1987, but the irreverent man soon was good enough to leave our village", Sungo smiled ironically. When the purpose of my presence – to study the Bambara language, the customs and religious life of the village – had received credibility, my research project was ratified ritually in the presence of the whole village at my next visit. I photographed the event and recorded it. Thus I have a Bambara version of my research project as it was then defined. According to that, I was, freely translated to the common oxymoron term, a participant observer, one who was there to observe and to a certain degree participate in the life and religion of the Bambara. The method and subject of my research was thus vaguely and inclusively defined. Two terms were used to represent the central subject of my research, that is, the muddy field called "religion" in European languages. One of the terms is *bamanan-ya*, meaning Bambara-hood, the quality or condition of being Bambara, the Bambara way of life; *bamanan* is the name of the ethnic group; the suffix *-ya* marks an abstract noun. We would intuitively regard the term *bamananya* as too inclusive as a designation of religion, but since I have rituals in view, that is, forms of action, I would emphasize that the term is turned towards cultural practice, and ritual acting in particular, rather than towards a way of believing and thinking.

It should also be noted that in everyday speech in Mali, the word *bamanan* is not only used as a designation of the ethnic group, but also to mean "animist" or "fetishist". Persons, both Bambara and others, who have just been speaking Bambara, using the word *bamananya*, and then shift to French, would spontaneously choose the words "*animisme*" or "*fétichisme*" to describe Bambara religion, particularly when contrasting it to Islam. Since the word *bamananya* in such discourses refers to a type of religion, the term can also be used about "traditional religion" among other ethnic groups than the Bambara, especially as a contrast to Islam and Christianity. The word *bamananya* thus refers to a

cultural and religious pattern of life among the Bambara as well as among other ethnic groups. At the same time the word intimates another term that indicates the religion of the Bambara.

This term is *tontigiya*, which is also an abstract noun, but a compound based on metonymic associations. The first element *ton* refers concretely to the leather bag that its owner, *tigi*, carries on his travels. Everybody knows that this bag contains one or more fetishes (*boli*, pl. *boliw*). A *tontigi* is thus a person who has fetishes in his bag, a fetishist, and the compound *tontigiya* is a generic term for the most typical of Bambara religion. The word is thus used as a prototype. We might have the intuition that the term refers to a too narrow concept of religion, but my impression is that when the word is used as a synonym for *bamananya*, the latter term is specified so that associations go in the direction that *tontigiya* signals, meaning that fetishism is the most typical of Bambara religion. When, at my arrival in Gwanyebugu, Sungo told me that the people there were fetishists he was thinking along these lines, he maintained later. This I should respect and observe. According to my understanding the terms are used in religious discourses, both in an inclusive and in a prototypical sense to refer to a lifestyle, a way of being, referring to knowing and know-how, rather than to abstract knowledge, and especially to the proficiency and practice that has to do with fetishes – and not primarily to ways of thinking and configurations of beliefs.

There are other terms for religion in the Bambara language, but they are loanwords from Arabic: *diinɛ* (Ar. *dīn*, religion), and *sira* (Ar. *ṣirāṭ*, way), and the compounds *ala-sira* (Ar. *allāh*, God, and *sira*), and *diinɛ-sira*. The latter compound is sometimes used in the generic sense to denote religious practice, or form of religion. During my discussions with Bambara persons about Islam and Christianity, inviting comparison with Bambara religion, they focused on the cross of Christianity and the Kaba of the Muslims, which were explicitly compared with their own fetishes. Fetishism is the natural frame of reference when they regard the other: "The cross and the Kaba are their fetishes (*boliw*)", my Bambara friends stated. From their vantage point it is not doctrinal matters they have in view, but what they see as the prototypical artefacts of the other religions.

As elsewhere, the backbone of religion among the Bambara is thus not in the first place beliefs and truth claims, or notions of unsettled realities expressed in a more or less figurative use of language and imagery, but rather a kind of knowing or proficiency, a subject to practise and master, particularly in the form of more or less ritualized actions. As I mentioned, the life world of the Bambara is populated, not only by living people, but also by persons who are other than the now living humans. Proficiency in ritual is the ability to bring out and conjure up the presence of these other beings in close proximity to people, as well as within humans and artefacts, on the ritual scene of action. On the ritual stage the parties meet, reveal their identity to each other, and the relation between them is regularized.

A methodological note. My role as participant observer soon changed. My host Sungo Traoré, the only person in the village who speaks French, had already noted the difference. In his teacher training he had learnt that a scholar is an observer *à l'œil froid*, "with a cold eye", he said. But soon I came to participate entirely in the religious life, and even contribute a little to it. One may say that from being a participant observer I became an observant participant, and gave more attention to my role as apprentice as a part of the method in my ethnographic fieldwork. In any case, I have tried to gain insight into the

religion by participating as much as possible in conversations and rituals. My masters noted the change of my position: "*I sen donna*, your foot has entered", they said. However, nobody has ever asked me if I "believe" in the power of the fetishes and ancestors, or in the existence of the other-than-human persons. It seems irrelevant and, anyway, a private concern, and is not considered an appropriate matter to speak about, especially in ritual situations. On the other hand, it is taken for granted that I *approve* of the rituals. This acceptance is important (cf. Rappaport 1999: 119–23), and is warranted by my doing, by the fact that I participate in the ritual practice. In contrast to what I believe, my participation in the rituals can be witnessed by the other participants.

The other participants entertain no suspicions about the fact that I am a university professor (*sanfɛkalansobakaramɔgɔ*) doing research among in the Bambara, rather it gives confidence in my undertaking and increases the value of my presence. They feel entrusted, they state, with the responsible task of instructing me properly. The ritual masters say they regard me as their apprentice (*kalanden*), especially since I am otherwise a teacher (*karamɔgɔ*). My teachers say that apprenticeship as my method of fieldwork is a good thing. *I bɛ bonya da an kan*, you show honour to us, they tell me, by that attitude. That's about what they say.

THE FETISH FACULTY IN GWANYEBOUGU

The type of artefact the Bambara themselves call "*fétiche*" when they speak French is in the Bambara language called *boli*, in the plural *boliw*. This is the most common term, but also *basi* (pl. *basiw*) is used. To give a simplistic picture we might say that a certain *boli*-object is the body of a particular *boli*-person, or a portable altar that represents a particular other-than-human person (Cissé 1994: 89 calls such a person "*un esprit divinisé*"). Certain fetishes, however, are so big and heavy that they are as good as stationary. In the Bambara language the word *boli* is used as a generic term that refers both to this type of object and to the type of other-than-human person associated with such an object. Each such object has a proper name that is also the name of the other-than-human person that the object represents. A particular *boli*-object thus represents one other-than-human person only, rather than many. On the other hand, each *boli*-person is represented by a number of *boli*-objects, which have about the same shape (similar external form and contain similar things) and are owned by different people.

If a person owns a number of fetishes, some of them with a similar shape may represent the same other-than-human person, while the other fetish-objects represent other non-human persons. For instance, ten fetishes have been ritually transferred to me, and two of them represent the same other-than-human person, who is called Kungo Dono, "The Bush Rooster", which at the same time is the name of the two objects. A great hunter (*donsoba*) often has dozens or more of fetishes at his disposal. They help him to find the game, and also protect him, since in his lethal task he is exposed to *ɲama*, the revenging power issuing from the body of the animals he kills. When he sojourns at night in the bush he is also subjected to the machinations of evil jinn and other dangerous beings. For instance, a fetish like Dibi, "Obscurity", is able to make him invisible in the eyes of the jinn and wild animals. For such reasons, the *boliw* and the art of managing them are connected with hunters in particular. Since hunting is exclusively a male business – as

far as I know there is only one female hunter in Mali – the management of *boliw* is normatively regarded as a male concern, and women must keep away from the *boli* rituals of the men. On the other hand, women have their own fetishes – for instance Ɲakonin, "Little Benefit" – though men usually tend to overshadow this fact.

The ritual life of the Bambara is to a great extent determined by gender marks: five of the six ritual initiation societies are only for men, but the masters and most of the mediums of possession rituals are women. As a matter of fact, gender categories are the basis of a cosmology that is shared by many peoples in the Sahelian West Africa. The parameters of this cosmology have the result that the great ceremonies of religious life in practice take place on a number of *ritual fields* that seem mutually incompatible, but are associated with each other nonetheless. One and the same male individual can move between the different ritual domains (Olsson 2000: 43). What counts is his ritual commitment within the field he attends, and that he accepts the ritual actions in the domain where he presently is. His approval might not be based on conviction, and might be wanting in sincerity, but such things are inconvenient to articulate during the ritual. Such matters belong to the private sphere, and not to the official character of the ritual procedure (Humphrey & Laidlaw 1994: chapter 4; Rappaport 1999: 119–23).

The great ceremonies of religious life take place at special occasions during the year, but the *boli* rituals are a daily event. The relation between the *boliw* and their owners is very intimate. The objects are treated with care and respect. The owner offers them water in the morning, and after a sacrifice of an animal he smears the blood of the victim on them with tender motions by his hand. The transfer of a fetish to another person is a pronounced act of friendship that creates a bond between giver and receiver. The act of transference to the new owner must be established in a rite of passage, which is basically an initiation ritual for the fetish, and cements the new relation and forgives the giver. This is confirmed by sacrifices of roosters, chickens and, preferably, a he-goat to the fetish. During the ritual act the giver addresses the fetish with a lengthy speech in which the new owner, by name and reputation, is introduced to the fetish in order to convince him to work for his new master from now on. The ritual is closed by instructions to the new owner, concerning the needs of the fetish and the way of dealing with him.

I made a distinction above between the *boli* as an object or artefact, and the *boli* as a personal being. In the discussions my Bambara friends and I have had, they themselves sometimes do the same, and not only when I have tended to elicit a discussion in that direction. However, at the sacrificial ritual itself, and also when people otherwise explain what is happening then, I think that I recognize a double course of events: the dormant fetish is activated by the vital principle or life power of the sacrificed animal, its *ni*, which is transferred with the sacrificial blood to the *boli*-object, and as a result it stands out as animated, powerful and alive. During the ritual event the fetish-object itself is in fact perceived to be a person. The object is addressed and treated as a person, and this person is himself a ritual agent who communicates with the human agents. At the same time one can say that the *boli*-person becomes present inside or in close proximity to his fetish-object during the ritual. In meta-ritual discourses one sometimes says that the fetish-person arrives at his object, at other times one says that the fetish-person issues from his object. However, as a rule one is not liable to make any clear distinction between *boli*-object and *boli*-person. Possibly because of the pronounced focus on ritual one is not prone to reason in terms that keep the ritual practice and the belief in autonomous

fetish-persons separate. Yet, as I myself sometimes do, they occasionally distinguish between the artefact and the other-than-human person represented by it.

As we shall see, most of the prayers at the sacrifice to the fetishes are for protection, and expressed in rather general terms, but even when requesting the fetish for a concrete matter during the sacrifice it might be the autonomous person of the fetish who carries the request into effect, provided he is in the right mood. Sungo gave an example: when he sees that I have not had any wine for a long time, he says he can request the *boli* for that. *O tuma boli bɛ bɔ sitanɛ dɔ kan*, he says, "the *boli* [person] then goes away to visit one of the *sitanɛ* spirits" (the word is from Arabic *shaiṭān*, Satan), who are a collective of spirits who are not individually named, and who always move in the atmosphere around us. The *boli* orders the spirit to head for a certain person and influence his emotions in the appropriate way. The *sitanɛ* spirit penetrates into the heart of that person who starts to think about me: "Olsson has not had any wine for a long time, I have to give him that", and the man arrives to me with a bottle. The impression formed from this account is that the fetishes, in their capacity as autonomous other-than-human persons, each one of them with name and identity, are able to move in space and by that fulfil the wishes of their owner; in this example by approaching a *sitanɛ* spirit and by his dictatorial power over it executing his owner's commission. The reasoning seems to project on the relation between Sungo, the fetish, the spirit and a second human person, a kind of authority that is exercised in social life, in the form of orders given by respected or older persons to the younger. This authority over subordinate persons is ritualized in the relation between master and apprentice in the ritual societies. At the same time Sungo's reasoning is based on elements in the Bambara life world: the human body, like certain objects, is an instable psycho-physical organism that is permeable, so that external substances and beings can enter it and its own psycho-physical components can leave it. Such a process is vividly performed at the possession rituals (*jinɛdɔn*) when a jinn penetrates into the human body and its inner component constituting the personality (*ja*) of the individual leaves the body (Olsson 2000: 47–54; 2010: 140–48).

In a similar manner Sungo sometimes talks about the fetishes in a way that suggests the idea of local individual other-than-human persons who move about in the village, especially at night. He is then using the word *boli* throughout, and without any qualification. When I tell my dreams and nightmares to Sungo, he says they are induced by the *boliw* who come to my house and visit me, "just as you pay a visit to the village chief when you return here", he adds. The *boliw* make their presence known through my dreams. They are curious about me, and they sometimes try to tease me by giving me nightmares, Sungo said. In this connection he also stated that the fetish-persons (*boliw*) are able to shift shape and reveal themselves, or make their presence known, in different ways. In these respects they resemble the jinn, he said. But unlike the jinn, they have their dwelling place in the fetish-objects (*boliw*), in which they, as it were, rest or sleep during the day. If they are not roused from their slumber they remain inert. To become activated they need water, cola nuts, which have a bracing effect, alcoholic beverages and particularly blood, "in the same way as people are livened up by beer", says Sungo. In his explanation he is using the same word *boli* throughout, but he makes a difference in the connotations of the word: it means either fetish-object or fetish-person, in my wording, but from his way of using the term *boli* in such conversation it is fairly clear what the word means in either context.

He thus describes the fetish-persons as beings that behave in a similar way as humans and also as the jinn. My instructors maintain, however, that human beings (*mɔgɔw*), the jinn (*jinɛw*) and the fetishes (*boliw*) are three different categories of sentient beings and things. Each of the categories consists of beings or things that are persons in their particular manner. In my wording, they belong to different circles of persons. *Boliw* and *jinɛw* are agents on different ritual fields where they meet *mɔgɔw*, human beings (Olsson 2000, 2007).

THE BUSH ROOSTER: A RITUAL INITIATION OF A FETISH

We withdraw to the antechamber of Sungo's and Sira's house, where wind and light are warded off. I used to stay there the in early years of my fieldwork. It is time for *boli sɔn*, to sacrifice to the fetishes. Sungo has a good hand with them. He has learnt from his father, who was a master of the art. We are going to negotiate with the fetishes about our present life and our near future.

Sira Jara is the first of Sungo's three wives, but now she must keep away. Normatively, women are not allowed to see the fetish-objects, and they are not supposed by men to know anything about fetishes or to share men's knowledge that fetishes are persons as well as the abodes of persons. But of course the women are aware of much of that. I myself used to keep some of my fetishes on the top of the wall in Sira's antechamber, out of reach of the dogs. So if she were interested she could look at them. But the men do not expect she would, and when a woman is approaching the men hide the fetishes from her. The fetishes of the hunters, especially, should not be exposed to the gaze of women. This circumstance is connected with the gender-based parameters in a cosmology that the Bambara share with other ethnic groups in Sahelian West Africa. In this cosmology women are classified as belonging to the village and the hunters to the bush.

We prepare the sacrifice. Sungo will be the officiant, *bolisɔnna*; he fetches a red rooster and two red cola nuts. A bottle of wine is obtained. I take the calabash shell with the fetishes from the top of the wall and put it on the earth floor, and put my knife beside it. One of the fetishes, by the name of Kungo Dono, Bush Rooster, has recently been fabricated by Sungo and me; the others are black with clotted blood from our earlier sacrifices. I prepare the minidisc recorder; this additional technology is taken to enhance the dignity of the event. We are four men: Ɲɔkuru, Sungo, his elder brother Gwandin and me. We are all hunters. The fetishes foster the hunt, but they have also a wider field of action.

This is one of some hundred sacrifices to the fetishes I have participated in. The ritual process at these sacrifices always follows an established order. In this respect the fetish ritual is liturgy-oriented; the course of action is dominated by an orderly set of ritual procedures that are the same on different occasions (Atkinson 1989: 14–15; Olsson 2000: 55). The oral part of the ritual consists of invocations and prayers to the fetishes. These texts are characterized by their form, style and their general subject matter as well as the manner of performing them, and fit into a particular orature genre, which is called *sɔnkan*, sacrificial speech or prayer. Also, the texts are embedded in a recurrent rhetorical type of situation (Bitzer 1968: 3; C. R. Miller 1984: 151, 156), which is defined and named as *boli sɔn*, fetish sacrifice – in our case defined by four hunters, including one anthropologist. If the officiant forgets something, makes a slip of the tongue, hesitates or stumbles over

the words, the other participants prompt him. Like many others, Sungo maintains that "a similar thing is done", *bəɲəgənko bɛ kɛ*, and that one says the same (*kelen*) or similar (*ɲəgən*) words, and in a same manner at different ritual events. *Fəcəgə ye kelen ye*, "the manner of speech is the same", he says. On the whole, in our meta-ritual discourse, my Bambara friends and I share a common view on ritual procedures, genre, rhetorical type of situation, and manner of performance of the fetish sacrifice. My experience and my recordings, however, tell me that the actual wording in the invocations and prayers varies to some extent according to the situation. This depends of course on exigency, and the persons and the fetishes present: *boli kelen kelen n'a sənkan don*, "to each fetish its own sacrificial prayer", it is said. This is also an adage with the wider sense to meet every person as he is.

Sungo drinks a sip of the wine, then fills a mouthful and spurts it out over the fetish-objects. Then a divination with the cola nuts begins. He splits each of them in two parts and throws them on the floor beneath the fetishes. The verdict is positive; the fetishes are well inclined. He places the cola nut halves on the fetishes. Later during the sacrifice he bites the colas to bits, fills his mouth with wine and spits the mixture over the fetishes. The rooster with bound legs and the knife lie beneath them. He grabs the rooster, unties its laces and holds it in his left hand just over the fetishes, and the knife in his right hand. He recites at a fast and rhythmic pace:

Kuuku, kuuku, kuuku	Kuuku, kuuku, kuuku
Kungo Dono ye baala galo	Kungo Dono, you who have never been seen
Təri ka fari e ka fari	Təri is powerful, you are powerful
Kəmə ka fari e ka fari	Kəmə is powerful, you are powerful
Yakuni ka fari e ka fari	Yakuni is powerful, you are powerful
Dənəma ka fari e ka fari	Dənəma is powerful, you are powerful
Cɛkərəninku[n] ka fari e ka fari	Cɛkərəninkun is powerful, you are powerful
Dəjara ka fari e ka fari	Dəjara is powerful, you are powerful
i ka tasumatugu n ka ya[a]la	you may cause fire, but let me walk (unharmed)
i ka jiribaw bin	you may cause tall trees to fall
n ka yəsəkana	but leave me safe and sound
Ne Sungə ani Təɾd ƟlsƏn	I Sungo and Tord Olsson
an taara dən kalan Kəmə-ko la	we went to learn the wisdom of the Kəmə
cɛw dimina un [*an*] *kərə*	men have been backbiting us
musow dimina un [*an*] *kərə*	women have been backbiting us
i ka məə cɛw kəfɛ	rank us above the men
i ka bila cɛw ye	set us before the men
i ka bə musow kəfɛ	let us emerge before the women
i ka bila musow ye	set us before the women
Kungo Dono i ka cɛ fari	Kungo Dono, you are a powerful man
mi[n] kəri filɛ	do you want to drink, here you have
i ka mi[n] k'i fa[*n*] *jugu cɛw nəfɛ*	that you'll be on our side against the men of evil
jugu musow nəfɛ	against the women of evil
Kungo Dono ye baala galo	Kungo Dono, you who have never been seen
ni e sən a' o mə	and received your sacrifice, that gift of yours
woro bile filɛ o sigi a' ko kan	here is a red cola nut, its position is on your thing
y'o ye dono bile filɛ o joli mina	here is a red rooster, receive its blood

i ka ne Sungɔ	allow my, Sungo's,
ni Tɔrd Ɔlsɔn joli bila	and Tord Olsson's blood (progeny) to remain
i ka kisi ka tankan [*tanga*]	save us and protect us
ka gɛrɛjigɛ [*garijɛgɛ*] *la bila*	grant us good luck (progeny)
sun [su] ani tile	night and day
mɔgɔ si kana se anw na	watch over all people, come to us
Kungo Dono ye baala galo	Kungo Dono, you who have never been seen
Tɔri ka fari e ka fari	Tɔri is powerful, you are powerful
Kɔmɔ ka fari e ka fari	Kɔmɔ is powerful, you are powerful
Yakuni ka fari e ka fari	Yakuni is powerful, you are powerful
Wulutigɛ Muru ka fari e ka fari	Wulutigɛ Muru is powerful, you are powerful
Biɛkisitigɛ Muru ka fari e ka fari	Biɛkisitigɛ Muru is powerful, you are powerful
i ka anw sɔ[n] kosɛbɛ	let our sacrifice be successful

(Minidisc recording 5 March 2005)

Then the rooster is slaughtered with a quick incision at its throat and the blood is shed on the fetishes. The victim is thrown out through the doorway and we observe the movements of the dead body, and its final position when the movements have subsided. The divination tells us that the sacrifice has been accepted by the fetish.

The oral text has not been easy to put down into writing and translate. Certain phrases are compressed and elliptic constructions, typical of ritual speech, and differ from normal speech syntax. Also, as a result of the rhythmic recitation and its accelerated tempo, certain final nasal vowels /un, in, ɔn/ become oral /u, i, ɔ/. This is the case with the repeated word for "powerful", here pronounced as /fari/, and /sɔ/ in the last phrase, thus with final oral vowel instead of the nasal in *farin* and *sɔn*, which in the standard orthography represent the pronunciation in everyday speech. The final vowel is likewise oral /u/ in Cɛkɔrɔninkun, "The Little Old Man's Head", which is a celebrated mask (*kun*, head, mask) in the rituals of certain secret societies. In order to give an impression of the elliptic and formulaic locution dependent on the fast and rhythmic pulse of the recitation, I have not altogether standardized the text according to the phonetics and syntax of everyday speech.

Already the phonetic and syntactic shifts mark that the text is not everyday language, but a special kind of performance that attracts attention. The rapid, rhythmic and monotonous chanting, the parallelisms and the repetitive style interplay with the content of the text and draw attention to it. The vocal pitch and diction of the reciter also shows that he is using a register that stands out from everyday speech, which every attendant would recognize, probably even without any knowledge of the Bambara language. All these features together with the accompanying sacrificial acts and divinations thus mark that the text is not everyday language but a ritual speech act. The reason why I put down the Bambara text in writing in this way and dwell upon the trifles here is that it may reveal something about the attitude of the officiant and the other participants before the fetishes and about what is going on in the ritual. Like many other ritual texts, this one, in the last but one stanza, explicitly refers to the ritual acts that occur during the incantation.

Let us consider more closely the content of the text and its context. The invocation opens with the ideophone that imitates the crowing of a rooster, and functions as a

verbal icon representing the fetish-object or fetish-person immediately mentioned in the incipit: Kungo Dono, Bush Rooster, who is the focus of the ritual. More exactly, the iconic sign here represents an index of a rooster – if we apply the terms of Charles Sanders Peirce, as they have been used in ritual analysis by Roy Rappaport (1999: 58–68). Anyhow, the sound attracts the attention of the fetish-object or fetish-person as well as the other agents of the ritual. Because of their expressive and dramaturgic function such signs play a significant role in fetish rituals and in the rituals of the secret societies of the Bambara.

The form and content of the text and the manner of performing it are very similar to other incantations to fetishes, and the text is embedded in an orderly set of ritual acts that corresponds to numerous other sacrifices to fetishes I have participated in. However, the ritual event when this text was chanted is at the same time different from what is usual, since Sungo and I shortly before had fabricated a new specimen of the Kungo Dono. This one is the focus of the ritual. The object is small, six centimetres long, and consists outwardly of a horn of a he-goat, which is filled with various substances: powdered charcoal from medical plants, a little silver, and on Sungo's request I supply two things: some gold leaf bought in an artist shop in Sweden (European gold is considered more powerful than that from Mali) and hairs from a lion's mane (from a headdress of a Maasai warrior in Kenya, who once gave it to me). As I, and in his way also Sungo, understand it, all these ingredients are metonymically or synecdochically connected with powerful phenomena (or are their indexes). At the making of the fetish, Sungo whispered formulae (*kilisiw*) over one black, one white and one red thread of cotton, twined them together and spat gently on them before putting them inside the horn, so that the power of the words should be transferred through his breath and saliva to the threads and the fetish. We sealed the horn with beeswax and pressed down a cowry shell upon it. The shell serves as decoration, but it also bears the memory of its former use as money in Africa. These things and their synergism compose the potentially powerful nucleus of the fetish, which is activated (*a ka kisɛ*) when the wine and the blood of the sacrificial victim are poured upon the fetish. At that moment the fetish-object becomes an active person. The substance of the elements in the fetish-object is activated and the object is regarded as a personal being (or converted into one) at the consecration with wine and blood; only the outward appearance of the fetish-object still remains. In other words, it is a transubstantiation of an object into a person. The process is similar to the transubstantiation of the Eucharistic elements of bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ at the consecration at Roman Catholic Mass, with only the appearance of bread and wine still remaining.

At the same time, another way the participants regard the situation is that the substances empowered by the consecration of the *boli*-object attract an other-than-human person, Kungo Dono, who makes his presence perceived in the object ("your thing" in the text) and in its proximity, among us who perform the ritual. However, these different perspectives are not articulated in speech during the ritual event; only in meta-ritual discourse are they discussed, and are then said to have no direct bearing on the manner of performing the ritual.

The name Kungo Dono, Bush Rooster, shows that the *boli* belongs to the bush (*kungo*) and hence to the domain of the hunters. He is encouraged by the phrase "you are a powerful man", and with the repeating of the illocution "*you* are powerful". The repetitive use of the emphatic pronoun *e*, "you" (beside the unstressed *i*), lends weight to the words

that this particular fetish is most powerful and the principal character at the centre of the ritual stage. The names of various other fetishes are also invoked, among them Tɔri, Kɔmɔ and Cɛkɔrɔninkun, the awe-inspiring fetishes and masks of the secret Kɔmɔ society. Fetishes share with people the character of being jealous of each other if neglected, and for this reason they are apostrophized. But they can also be summoned to concert their actions – common among people as well, they say – which gives cause for invoking more than Kungo Dono. The speech act is marked by its illocutionary force and seems to inspire a perlocutionary effect; to convince the listeners, by way of persuasion, that the fetishes mentioned are all truly potent.

There exist many other similar fetish-objects which are called Kungo Dono and represent an other-than-human person with the same name, and they have received sacrifices before, but this particular object has just been fabricated. The object is a novice in the circle of fetishes. In the text this is announced by the repeated phrase "Kungo Dono, you who have never been seen", once with the addition that the fetish has not before "received your sacrifice, that gift of yours", and for the fetish's guidance this is specified as the red cola nut and the blood of the red rooster. This would hardly concern some different other-than-human person Kungo Dono, but rather refers to the new fetish-object itself, addressed as a person. Furthermore, the new fetish needs to be informed of recent circumstances, such as Sungo's and my participation in the Kɔmɔ rituals, that we have been backbitten, and other things that the informative statements in the text refer to. In fact, an essential part of the ritual, including the recitation of the text, is an initiation of a fetish into the circle of older and knowledgeable fetishes. At the same time this ritual event actualizes the problem of the enigmatic identity between object and person of fetishes that is so difficult to capture. Sungo not only turns to a number of fetish-persons, but also to a recently fabricated fetish-object that now assumes the character of being a person; a person who needs information, and to whom Sungo relates as to a person.

In Bambara folklore there are many narratives about fetishes. Some stories I have heard are based on the notion that fetish-objects are persons who are able to act in a very concrete way. One common type of narrative tells that someone has maltreated, neglected, or tried to sell his fetish, whereupon it seizes the owner and paralyses him. In these stories it is the fetish-objects themselves that act abruptly and forcibly in their capacity as persons. They are more than inanimate objects representing some other-than-human person.

When entering a room or a secluded place used for *boli* rituals one takes off one's sandals as a sign of respect. Nevertheless, I find that the fetish-objects, when not used, are treated almost like ordinary things. One sits close to them and chats without showing much obvious piety; I can photograph them and examine them, some of them also on the inside, and their owners willingly explain when I ask for details.

The hunters and fetish masters Sungo and Gwandin Traoré, Sory Keita, Pierre Jara and Yoro Sidibé have been instructing me at their shrines; they have taught me the names of their fetishes, their individual characters and fields of action, how to invoke them and treat them with their proper sacrifice, and how to interpret their will. The fetishes all promote the work of the hunter and protect him, but also other people. During my month-long participation at the respective shrines of Sory and Pierre, people attended all day long to seek the protection and support of the fetishes.

THE RITUALS OF THE SECRET KƆMƆ SOCIETY

As I mentioned parenthetically above, some masks of the secret societies are at the same time fetishes. Such masks receive blood sacrifices in the same way as other fetishes. Also, when they are used in ritual dances, the essential perception, as expressed by participants, is not that a human person hides behind or inside the mask, although this is of course a known but overshadowed fact. Rather it is the mask itself that is perceived as a person.

The ceremonies of the secret Kɔmɔ society essentially consist of mask dances and sacrificial rituals. However, writing about them involves a documentary and moral dilemma. Certain details and names of persons and places have to be left out. For all that, certain information about the Kɔmɔ has been reported by early anthropologists and some members of the society (Olsson 2006b: 271–2, with reference to Dieterlin & Cissé 1972; Kanté & Erny 1993: 228–49). Although I am an initiated member (*kɔmɔna*) of this society I have not been allowed to take notes, photograph or tape-record anything during our ritual sessions. One sticks strictly to keeping the secrets (*gundow*) of the society from non-initiates. When the Kɔmɔ ceremonies are performed, the paths to the ritual ground are guarded by watchmen, who prevent unqualified persons to be admitted, especially women, children and members of the griot caste, *jɛliw* (i.e. bards). These categories of people are not allowed to witness the séances of the society, since they are considered unable to keep secrets. I was once myself reprimanded after mentioning in passing that I had attended a Kɔmɔ ceremony. Concerning the interdiction on women there is a gender-based etiological myth that embodies a justification for an ancient overturning of an older archaic order, according to which the women were the original owners of the Kɔmɔ fetishes. But it happened that their fetishes were dropped into a deep well so that the women were unable to reach them. The men, however, tied their waistbelts together (women do not wear belts), and used them to descend into the well and succeeded in fetching the fetishes. Since then they belong to the men alone, and women are not allowed to see them, nor are they allowed to hear this story. When the initiates speak about Kɔmɔ among themselves, it is in a hushed, low whisper inaudible to an outsider. Many who have witnessed the rituals are appalled by the violent sacrifices of dogs in large amount, and the ritual consumption of their meat. The day before the nocturnal séances the young men to be initiated have to bring animals for sacrifice, mainly big dogs that have run wild. Once I counted some forty dogs. Many people say they shudder from awe or horror when they think of the frenzied dances and the awesome parades at the evening séances of the society, the sound of the bull-roarer in the darkness, the howls of the participants, and the imposing masks walking in procession in the obscure light of flickering fires during the nocturnal rituals. It is said by the members themselves that the knowledge of the existential themes of birth and death, expressed in the Kɔmɔ rituals, brings suffering to the seeker of wisdom, since the search for it is endless. In the metaphorical parlance used in the Kɔmɔ society, wisdom and knowledge are sometimes – as in European language imagery – said to be a "well" (*kɔlɔn*), while the wooden poles around the mouth of the well that keep sand from sliding down it are compared to sages, the guardians of traditions, and the sprouts, blossoms and the fruits (*denw*) of the trees are compared to the apprentices and followers (*kɔmɔ denw*) who transfer the traditions of the society. A Kɔmɔ song runs as follows:

Kɔlɔn kana jiriw ye	Look at the wooden poles protecting the well
Jiriw dugudɛgɛ	The trees plume themselves
Jiri den caman	The fruits of the trees are many
Jiri dɔ bɛ nugu	One tree sprouts
Dɔ bɛ fyere	Another blossoms

(Olsson 2006b: 271, my translation)[1]

On the eve of Kɔmɔ rituals in villages where I am not known, the masters enquire of my friends about my morals, and then I receive my basic instructions. Those who are recently initiated must exhibit a peremptory decorum: Restrain your speech! Do not touch anybody! Do not shake hands with the person you greet, no physical contact! And then the exhortation to observe the peculiar sign in greeting the Kɔmɔ masters and the masks of the ritual: to reach out the forefinger and little finger of your left hand, with middle finger and ring finger bent onto the palm and with the thumb over them. This forms an iconic sign of an animal head, the outstretched fingers its ears. The animal intended is the hyena, *suruku*, which symbolizes the wisdom that is in custody of the society. The most important fetish and dance mask of the society represents a hyena, whose strong jaws can crack the hardest bones, in a figurative sense the hardest problems. For that reason the animal is an emblem of knowledge and spiritual understanding, which are the goal the society strives for. The mask is called Kɔmɔ-suruku, The Kɔmɔ Hyena. In addition to the jaws it is equipped with horns, which is a device of attack, and again a metaphor for tackling problems (see my photo in Olsson 2010: 139 of a sacrifice to the mask, though not at a secret ritual). In this double manner the mask is an icon for the seeking of knowledge. The desirable knowledge is itself called *kɔmɔ*, and this knowledge or wisdom is considered to exist on its own in the form of a substance (*fɛn*) outside (*kɛnɛma*) or above (*sanfɛ*) common human bodies and minds, but it may enter the body at the secret rituals. The *karamɔgɔw*, the masters of the society, carry this substance in great measure in their bodies. If it spreads out of control it may be dangerous, hence the caution against physical touch. Knowledge is represented as an immense and heavy reality, harsh, ardent and demanding, an insatiable desire. The acquisition of this knowledge is shown as descending from above (*sanfɛ*), down to the initiated. For this reason the Kɔmɔ-suruku mask is worn on the head, as a head-crest, and not as a mask covering the face (Olsson 2006b: 272).

After the opening meeting with the masters we enter the ritual ground; it is as usual on the margin of the village. We exchange cordial greetings, but the "handshake" is with air between hands. "This is *Kɔmɔ-ko*, Kɔmɔ's sake!" The place is sparsely illuminated by the flickering fires, and around them old men sit and talk. We are shown to a seat on a cowhide. The young initiands sit by themselves, on another cowhide. A delegation enters from the fields behind us, announcing the arrival of Kɔmɔ with loud cries. The imposing mask glides in: it is four metres high. I cannot see it properly, but I realize (and was later told) that it is made of a cylindrical wooden frame covered with cloth and feathers. On the top of it there is the Kɔmɔ hyena fetish. The man inside the mask is entirely hidden. He speaks in a half singing register through a *gele*, an iron mirliton (a tube containing a membrane which vibrates when sung through). At the evening rituals before the nocturnal sessions the mirliton is a main instrument of the Kɔmɔ, and a mark (index) of the society. I have seen the same instrument inside Dibi, "Obscurity", one of Sory's many fetishes (such transfer of symbols is rather common in Bambara religion). The voice from inside

the mask, thus strongly distorted, the dancing shadows and the light from the fires that now and then blaze up, illuminating the imposing mask, create in all a *Verfremdungseffekt* (distancing effect). The scene is strengthened by a priest who continuously circles around the mask, engaged in a dialogue with it, and the estrangement effect is reinforced by him addressing the audience directly. Their enunciations are short, and break in on each other, almost intertwine. The priest paraphrases and interprets in a loud voice, to the participants of the ritual, what the mask says in its half singing manner. Sometimes it is the mask that again, in its distorted metallic voice, paraphrases in its rhythmic manner what the priest has just said. We all know the priest and his voice well, but now he too speaks in an enforced and rhythmic way, but in a different register to that of the mask. The auditory and visual elements impart a sensation of contrasts as they are perceived, rather than known. The participants tell me they are under the impression that the mask itself, with it metallic and vibrating voice, is another sort of person than the priest and us. The mask seems to be perceived as an other-than-human ritual agent. When it approaches us we make the Kɔmɔ sign.

The creation of the presence of other-than-human persons is an important aspect of all the rituals among the Bambara. In the fetish rituals this presence is created in a double way: in the first place by means of the ritual acts, including the speech acts, which are focused on the fetish-object, whose dignity is enhanced by that and who is perceived as a person; at the same time this presence is supported by the notion that an existing fetish-person, who either lies dormant in the fetish-object or is movable in space, is stimulated by the ritual acts and becomes present in and around its material object as one of the ritual agents. When in our meta-ritual discourse I say I can discern the difference between the two aspects, Sungo, Sory and others say they can too, but they add that in practice this distinction is irrelevant. Also, in meta-ritual discourse with elders of the Kɔmɔ, we discuss the details of the Kɔmɔ-mask, but during the ritual it is not mentioned that a man hides inside the mask. The novices too would know that, but their perception of the mask is not the same as this knowledge. The mask itself is perceived as the ritual agent. What I discern, in more analytical terms, is a ritual fusion. Even in our meta-ritual discourses this fusion sometimes shows itself, not as an analytical inability to identify the distinctive agents and paraphernalia of the ritual, but rather as a tendency to disguise their different identities. Sometimes I sensed a certain disinclination to discuss the matter in such terms, and a desire to overshadow the distinction between an other-than-human person as agent and his material representation in an object perceived as a person and ritual agent, or the unwillingness to acknowledge a human person as an agent inside the ritual mask. This fusion – which was already intimated by the perception of the dead hunter's presence in the laterite-coloured wind, and the presence of the jinn in the he-goat, or their identity – thus recurs in rituals that are more magnificent and ceremonial than the daily fetish sacrifices. But the tendency is the same in the different ritual fields: in the daily fetish sacrifices, and in the rituals of the secret societies, but also in other ritual fields which I have not dealt with here, such as in the ceremonies of the hunters, and in the women's possession rituals – the disinclination to discern between a ritual object as person and an other-than-human agent present in or near the object; or a human agent behind the mask and the mask itself perceived as a person and ritual agent. By this fusion ritual presence is created. As in art, the purpose of ritual is to impart the sensation of things as they are perceived and not as they are known (Shklovsky 1965: 12, 18).

NOTE

1. Cf. the text in Zahan (1960: 227), which I have adjusted to the orthography of standard Bambara.

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Submitting to objects: animism, fetishism, and the cultural foundations of capitalism

Alf Hornborg

This chapter discusses how the specific way in which "post-Enlightenment" humans tend to relate to material objects is a fundamental aspect of modern capitalism.[1] The aim is to reconnect the discourse on "fetishism", the main thrust of which has become largely restricted to exploring personal phenomenologies of aesthetic or sensuous experience (cf. Apter & Pietz 1993; Spyer 1998; Mitchell 2005; Latour 2010),[2] to a general critique of global capitalist relations. The ambition here is not to attempt to review the voluminous discourses on fetishism, animism, epistemology, magic, materiality, technology, or consumption, but to bring together insights from these various topics to suggest new ways of illuminating some cultural dimensions of modernity and capitalism. More specifically, the goal is to combine some relevant aspects of culture theory with perspectives from political economy, world-system analysis and ecological economics in order to "defamiliarize" (Marcus & Fischer 1986) our everyday understanding of technology. Empirically, the discussion ranges from early British textile factories and the Luddite movement to indigenous Amazonian animism and ancient Andean ritual.

EXPANDING THE MARXIAN CONCEPT OF FETISHISM

Karl Marx ([1867] 1990) famously observed that relations between people in capitalist society assume the form of relations between things. The fetishism of money and commodities thus obscures the social foundation of these objects, as a result of the alienating split between people and the products of their labour. It simultaneously animates such things, by attributing to them autonomous value, productivity, or growth. To deconstruct fetishized human–object relations such as these, in order to reveal underlying social asymmetries, can be a powerfully subversive analytical strategy. It helps us to understand phenomena as diverse as the pervasive desire for consumption goods and the violence of physical sabotage. Ultimately, it provides a radically alternative perspective

on the economic, political and environmental inequalities of global society. In order to seriously challenge those inequalities, we would have to open our eyes to the social relations underlying modern technology. Modern technological objects (here referred to as "machines"[3]) are basically also inanimate things attributed with autonomous productivity or even agency, obscuring their own foundation in asymmetric global relations of exchange (Hornborg 1992, 2001a,b, 2009).

The Marxian concept of fetishism can thus be extended from our understanding of money and commodities to explain how we tend to be deluded by modern technology. All three categories of objects (money, commodities and machines) are fetishes in the sense that they mystify unequal relations of exchange by being attributed autonomous agency or productivity. The mainstream interpretation of modern technology, however, is that it is an index of human progress over time, even as a gift to humanity from the wealthier nations of the world. This view of technology qualifies as a "world view" in Kearney's (1984) sense. As it is fundamental even to a Marxian perspective, it poses a peculiar contradiction to social science, drawing on Marx's analysis of capital: how can capital, once it assumes the form of technology, become exempt from political critique?

An alternative and more critical interpretation is that modern technology is largely an index of accumulation, rather than ingenuity in itself, and that its capacity to locally save time and space occurs at the expense of (human) time and (natural) space lost elsewhere in the world. This can be illustrated by calculations showing that the Industrial Revolution in England was founded on "time-space appropriation", a concept which combines the Marxist focus on the unequal exchange of embodied labour with more recent, ecological concerns with the unequal exchange of embodied land (Hornborg 2006b). In selling £1000 worth of cotton textiles on the world market in 1850, a British factory owner was able to exchange the product of a smaller number of hours of British labour for that of a larger number of hours of (mostly slave) labour in overseas cotton plantations. In terms of space, the same market transaction implied the appropriation of the annual yield of almost sixty hectares of agricultural land overseas in exchange for the space occupied by a British textile factory. This was the global context of the steam engine, and the economic rationale underlying the shift to fossil fuels.[4] It locally saved time and space, but at the expense of human time and natural space elsewhere in the world system.

These perspectives should change our ways of writing history, particularly environmental and economic history, but ultimately also the history of technology. Not only must Europe and the "West" be dethroned as intrinsically generative of economic growth, modern technology and civilization, but these phenomena must in themselves be recognized as contingent on specific global constellations of asymmetric resource flows and power relations. In other words, not only was the "rise of the West" a geographical coincidence of world history – the location of Europe as middleman between the Old and New Worlds (cf. Blaut 1993, 2000; Frank 1998; Pomeranz 2000) – but its economic, technological and military *means* of expansion, generally viewed as European "inventions" and as contributions to the rest of humanity, were products of global conjunctures and processes of accumulation that coalesced after the articulation of the Old and New Worlds. The very existence of industrial technology has thus from the very start been a global phenomenon, which has intertwined political, socio-economic and environmental histories in complex and inequitable ways. Technological rationality is never disconnected from issues of global resource distribution. If historical hindsight helps to clarify this generally

neglected fact, the next challenge must be to spell out its ramifications for our perceptions of economic growth and technological progress today. We need to understand that technology is not simply a relation between humans and their natural environment, but more fundamentally a way of organizing global human society.

In order to understand fetishism as a simultaneously cultural and political phenomenon ultimately implicating macro-scale power structures at the global level, we need to consider a spectrum of ways in which humans can relate to other beings and other things in their surroundings. Let us begin by discussing the contrast between animism and objectivism.

ANIMISM VERSUS OBJECTIVISM: MODERNITY AS DISSOCIATION

The topic of animism continues to intrigue modern people. What, then, do we mean by "modern"? As a number of social theorists have suggested, the social condition and technological accomplishments of European modernity have been founded on a categorical distinction between Nature and Society. It is by drawing a boundary between the world of objects and the world of meanings that the modern project has emerged. By, as it were, distilling Nature into its material properties alone, uncontaminated by symbolic meanings or social relations, modernists have been freed to manipulate it in ways unthinkable in pre-modern contexts. Objectivism thus suggests a kind of moral or emotional dissociation from that part of reality classified as object.

Animism suggests the very antithesis of this objectifying modern stance. Yet it is not a phenomenon that can be relegated to a previous period in human history. As Descola (1996b), Bird-David (1999), Ingold (2000) and other anthropologists have shown, many contemporary people who are intimately engaged in gaining their subsistence from local ecosystems continue to approach their non-human environments through what is now being called a "relational" stance. Entities such as plants or even rocks may be approached as communicative subjects rather than the inert objects perceived by modernists.

We can approach the notion of animism from the perspective of what Latour (1993) has called a "symmetric anthropology": an anthropology that does not merely represent an urban, modern perspective on the pre-moderns in the margins, but that is equally capable of subjecting modern life itself to cultural analysis. Latour argues that we have, in fact, never been modern. The notion that the world of objects and the world of subjects are separable, in any other than an analytical sense, has been an illusion from the start. Not only do human beings everywhere impute personhood and agency to entities which according to official modernist doctrine ought to be classified as objects (think of our favourite trees, houses, cars, or teddy bears), but Latour makes the important point that modernity itself, through the new socio-technical networks unleashed by its dualist epistemology, continually generates ever more obvious examples of hybrids or "quasi-objects" that contain both subjective and objective aspects, and that span the divide between Culture and Nature. In other words, the official Cartesian ideology of subject–object dualism is not only contradicted in our everyday lives; when applied in social and technological practice, it inexorably produces increasingly conspicuous evidence of its own invalidity. From the ozone hole to genetically modified organisms, the real world afflicted by modernity has shown itself to be not only permeable to, but imbued with,

politics, meanings and human intentions. The new technologies and networks prove to be not objects but what Latour calls quasi-objects: part Nature, part Society, and apparently brimming with agency.[5]

It is important to add that our training in the skills of modernist detachment and objectification is contextual, as illustrated by the professional logger who privately cares for his garden, or the industrial butcher who privately cares for his dog. The efficacy of modernity in unleashing wholesale transformations in human–environmental relations lies in the creation of a spectrum of highly specialized occupations, each emphasizing its own specific application of objectification and detachment, so that the total impact of modern society is unrestricted by moral concerns, while each individual is able to maintain, by and large, a moral identity. In other words, it may not so much be an incapacity to relate as such that distinguishes us from the animists, as the incapacity to exercise such relatedness within the discursive and technical constraints of the professional subcultures that organize the most significant share of our social agency. Science and technology do not so much make us into robots, as make specific parts of our behaviour robot-like.

Or does the difference indeed go deeper than this? Do modern people have a generalized tendency to perceive their environments as collections of objects? A compelling observation in this direction is Viveiros de Castro's (1999b) intriguing suggestion that Europeans and Amerindians have diametrically opposite images of how humans and animals are constituted. Whereas Europeans tend to conceive of human beings as biological organisms masquerading in a cultural costume, Viveiros de Castro observes that Amazonian Indians view animals as fundamentally persons concealed under their animal surface. For Europeans, then – or at least for European biologists – living things are fundamentally objects, while for Amazonian Indians they are fundamentally subjects. The latter, of course, is an unusually concise statement of animism. But then, the Cartesian view of non-human animals seems counterintuitive, even to the most ingrained modernist. A telling illustration of this is the classical example of the early European vivisectionists, who felt compelled to sever the vocal cords of the dogs whose living anatomy they explored (cf. Evernden 1985: 16–17). In effect, they could only perform their modernist task after having shut off the communicative link – the relation – between dog and human. This is a very tangible illustration of how objectification can be seen as a strategy of dissociation.

MODERN STRUGGLES FOR RELATEDNESS: THE SEMIOTICS OF KNOWING

Would modernity be impossible in a world where living things are consistently recognized as subjects? Latour's answer seems to be yes. It is only by severing or submerging our capacity for relatedness that we are set free to impose our modernist designs on the world. Significantly, to make this point, Latour refers to Descola's (1996b) suggestion that traditional societies of Amazonia retain their relative inertia – compared to Europe – precisely because their conception of the non-human environment remains embedded in their moral conception of society (Latour 1993: 42). Animism, to Descola, is the projection of social metaphors onto relations with the non-human world. In not separating Nature and Society, Amazonian Indians like the Achuar automatically embed their ecological practice in a compelling moral system. For centuries, mainstream European society has refused to

be thus constrained, and this liberation of capitalist modernity has been founded on the incommensurable distinction between Nature and Culture. Against this background, it seems ironic that calls are now being made for an "environmental ethics". The very idea indeed poses a conundrum for Cartesian objectivism. How shall we be able to reintroduce morality into our dealings with our non-human environment, now that we have invested centuries of training and discourse into convincing ourselves that Nature lies beyond the reach of moral concerns?[6]

If the systematic modern denial of relatedness is somehow at the root of ecological crisis, as many environmentalists believe, what are our prospects for resurrecting it? It is difficult to imagine that modern society as an act of instrumental reason should begin inculcating in its citizens the long-term ecological validity of pre-modern metaphors of what Bird-David (1993) calls "subject-subject relatedness". However much we admire the eco-cosmologies of the Nayaka, the Achuar, or the Cree, we should not expect to encounter them anywhere but in the anthropology departments, and definitely not in mainstream textbooks on ecology or sustainability.

Nor can we put much hope in what has become known as New Age spirituality. The movement as such is highly relevant from the point of view of this discussion, but it is a flimsy platform on which to build a future: a post-modern symptom of epistemological collapse rather than an advance on modernity. When neo-Pagans and other New Age enthusiasts proclaim that this or that sacred site possesses such strong "energy", it seems as if they are indeed struggling for relatedness – for a restoration of meaning beyond the existential wasteland of modernity (cf. Heelas 2008) – but remain confined to the modernist (and, in fact, scientistic) vocabulary through which objective properties are attributed to distinct, external things (cf. Hanegraaff 1998; Hammer 2000). New Age spirituality thus reproduces the inclination of mainstream science to turn subjects into objects, only now the objectified subject(ivity) is one's own.

Surrounded by philosophers and sociologists of science announcing the end of Cartesian objectivism and acknowledging the extent to which human meanings infuse the material world, anthropologists discussing animistic understandings of nature will now be excused for taking them more seriously than a generation ago. But rather than going native, or adopting some version of New Age spirituality, it is incumbent on us to analytically sort out what epistemological options there are, and to ask why pre-modern, modern and post-modern people will tend to deal with subject–object relations in such different ways.

The object – in the sense of a material, intrinsically meaningless, but essentially knowable reality – appears to be a thoroughly modern invention. Whichever interpretative schemes conventionally adhered to in pre-modern societies, they enjoyed a kind of authority that modern knowledge rarely achieves. It is the predicament of modern people to remain chronically uncertain about the validity of their own representations. This modern condition of reflexive uncertainty can either be harnessed in the production of new but provisional certainties (as in science) or assume the form of solipsism, disengagement and indifference. The latter alternative is what we have come to know as the post-modern. It is a condition where the exhausting attitude of chronic scepticism tends to give way to a kind of resigned gullibility. All hope of certainty has vanished, but precisely because no pretence to power or truth can be admitted, any pretence is as good as any other (e.g. the claims of the neo-Pagans). As in the pre-modern condition, a sign

is again naïvely perceived as an index of identity – rather than an arbitrary symbolic convention demanding to be challenged – but now simply by virtue of positing itself as such, rather than because of an assumed correspondence with some underlying essence (Hornborg 1999a). This post-modern abandonment of essence is what Baudrillard (1975) has aptly called the "autonomization of the signifier".

The problem with objectivism – as unimaginable for the pre-moderns as it is unacceptable for the post-moderns – is the notion of a kind of knowledge that is not situated as part of a relation. By posing as disinterested representation, decontextualized from any political aspirations, modernist knowledge production suggests a relinquishment of responsibility, but in fact serves – through technology – to set the instrumental rationality of the powerful free to go about its business in the world. But the post-modern mirror image of objectivism – that is, relativism – certainly fares no better in terms of responsibility. Both these epistemologies have been spawned by the same, modern subject–object dichotomy. The division into natural versus human sciences, pitting realism against constructivism in Western knowledge production, remains a projection of this fundamentally existential, dualist scheme. The former takes the represented object as its point of departure, the latter the constructing subject, but neither acknowledges their recursivity, that is, their relation. One reason why animism continues to intrigue us may be that this is precisely what animism does. Rather than viewing knowledge as either representation or construction, animism suggests the intermediate view that knowledge is a relation that shapes both the knower and the known. An animistic or relational ontology is a mode of knowing that is not only constitutive of both the knower and the known – as is all knowledge, according to the cognitive scientists (cf. Maturana & Varela 1992) – but that crucially also acknowledges this fundamental condition, and thus also the responsibilities that must always adhere to the very act of knowing. Beyond objectivism and relativism, there can only be relationism. Perhaps because purely instrumental knowledge and rational risk assessment can rarely be as powerful incentives for human action as moral imperatives, we may need new metaphors capable of sustainably relating us to the rest of the biosphere (Hornborg 1996).

Animism raises our curiosity as the hesitant acknowledgement of suppressed childhood experiences, the assertion of which would challenge the entire modern project. Relatedness is a condition that most of us continue to be capable of achieving in particular, experiential contexts of some minimal duration. Our modernity – our inclination toward abstraction, detachment and objectification – is the product of our disembedding biographies (Hornborg 1999b). It is in being involuntarily deprived of relatedness that we become Cartesianists. The powerful historical trajectory of objectivism relies on a peculiar recursivity between social disembeddedness, Cartesian epistemology and technology – ultimately, that is, between individual existence and socio-technical power structures. The epistemological predicament articulated by Descartes was not so much an innovative, cognitive shift from animism to objectivism, as the emergence – or unprecedented generalization – of a social condition of alienation. Through processes of increasing commodification and alienation – and more recently through the proliferation of new technological hybrids in Latour's sense – the social condition of modernity has accentuated our anxieties about where or how to draw boundaries between persons and things (cf. Kopytoff 1986), amplifying a pervasive (Cartesian) dissociation of self from non-self that, as we have seen, is at the root of both solipsism and objectivism. To the extent that we

do continue to animate our favourite trees, houses, cars, or teddy bears, it is because we continue to need concrete reference points onto which to anchor our selves (cf. Shweder & Bourne 1984; Hornborg 2001a: 206–8). It is the long immersion in the concrete and experiential specifics of place that yields conditions conducive to relatedness – *vis-à-vis* irreplaceable persons, localities and things. This, if anything, should provide us with clues about the prospects for resurrecting relational ontologies.

FETISHISM AND THE CULTURAL ANALYSIS OF CAPITALISM

Let us now turn to a second and complementary aspect of our argument, with the aim of bringing both parts together toward the end. There is another and thoroughly modernist way in which things can be animated, which has to do not with experiential resonance but with ideology and political economy. Animation is in fact fundamental to fetishism, and fetishism to Karl Marx was central to modern capitalism (cf. Friedman 1974; Taussig 1980; Pietz 1985, 1987, 1988, 1993, 1998; D. Miller 1987, 2005; Ellen 1988; Hornborg 1992, 2001b). It is indeed important to ask how animism relates to fetishism. There is a crucial difference between representing relations between people as if they were relations between things (Marxian fetishism), and experiencing relations to things as if they were relations to people (animism and pre-modern fetishism[7]). The former is an ideological illusion underpinning capitalist political economy, the latter a condition of phenomenological resonance. We should probably further distinguish between the animation of living things such as trees (animism, more narrowly defined) and that of non-living things such as stones or machines (that is, fetishism). Cartesian objectivism and fetishism here emerge as structural inversions of one another: the former denies agency and subjectivity even in living beings, whereas the latter attributes such qualities to inert objects. In this framework, a more strictly defined category of animism would be reserved for the intermediate and quite reasonable assumption that all living things are subjects, that is, equipped with a certain capacity for perception, communication and agency. Animism, fetishism and objectivism can thus be understood as alternative responses to universal human problems of drawing boundaries between persons and things.

Perhaps some of these problems can be alleviated by recognizing the difference between drawing boundaries in an analytical and an ontological sense, respectively. We can probably all agree with Latour that Nature is continually being intertwined with Culture or Society in our landscapes, our bodies, and our new hybrid technologies that obviously invalidate ontological versions of the Cartesian dichotomy. But does this mean that the categories of Nature and Culture, or Nature and Society, are obsolete and should be discarded (cf. Ingold 2000)? On the contrary, never has it been more imperative to maintain an *analytical* distinction between the symbolic and the pre-symbolic, while acknowledging their complex interfusion in the real world. Only by keeping Society and Nature analytically apart can we hope to progress in the demystification of that hybrid web in which we are all suspended, and which more than anything else obstructs our pursuit of relatedness: the realm of animated objects that we call *technology*. We more than ever need to retain our capacity to distinguish between those aspects of technology that derive from Nature and those aspects that derive from Society. The laws of thermodynamics and the political economy of oil prices require completely different analytical tools.

What is sometimes referred to as the "anthropology of technology" comprises some interesting attempts to explore the interface of culture and materiality, but the field tends to be conspicuously detached from considerations of global political economy (cf. Latour 1996; Ingold 2000; Ihde & Selinger 2003).[8] For instance, both Ingold and Latour are preoccupied with the dubious modern distinction between persons and objects and between Culture and Nature, both recognize that this distinction is paradoxically itself cultural (cf. Latour 1993: 99; Ingold 2000: 42), and both keep returning to the phenomenon of modern technology as an arena where the distinction becomes blurred or at least problematic, but neither of them is concerned with how this very arena is itself a manifestation of global rates of exchange.

There is something about the general concept of "technology" that seems to escape us, both as social scientists and as citizens. On one hand, modern technology seems quite obviously to be a strategy for capacitating an affluent minority of the world's population through an asymmetrical exchange – an expanding net appropriation – of resources from the rest of the world (Hornborg 1992, 2001a, 2006b, 2009). On the other hand, technology tends to be represented as a politically innocent and intrinsically productive union of human inventiveness and the pure material essence of Nature – indeed as a gift of the wealthier, developed nations to the rest of humanity (Adas 1989, 2006; Marsden & Smith 2005; Friedel 2007; Headrick 2010). How are these two contradictory images of technology able to coexist, without the former contaminating the latter? The answer, Latour would probably say, lies in that rigid categorical distinction between Nature and Society, between the world of pure objects and the world of human relations. Once classified as object, technology is automatically immune to political critique. For how could pure objects be conceived as sources of malign agency? If the behaviour of the early nineteenth-century Luddites today strikes us as odd, it is because they were not yet quite modern. Today we supposedly know better than to direct our political frustrations at machines. The efficacy of technology, we hold, comes from "objective properties intrinsic to the nature of things" (Latour 1993: 51). Like economic rationality and scientific truth, says Latour, technological efficiency "forever escapes the tyranny of social interest" (*ibid.*: 131).

But if these modernist convictions were indeed to collapse, and we were to realize the extent to which our technologies are in fact politically constituted, our machines would cease to be pure objects and conceivably be accredited with a malicious agency far surpassing that of any pre-modern fetishes.[9] Such a transformation would hinge on the nature of the agency attributed to technological objects: from having been fetishized into politically neutral, autonomous agents, they would emerge as social manipulations. To expose the agency of these cornucopian "productive forces" as a transmutation and deflection of the agency of other humans would be to render morally suspect that which modernity had couched in the deceptive neutrality of the merely technical. And in seeing, for the first time, the machines as they really are – as machinations – perhaps the animist within us would stir again, and we would ask ourselves: what manner of creatures *are* these things, part mineral, part mind, that serve the few to enslave the many, while fouling the land, the water and the air?

Such a scenario serves to remind us that animism and relatedness bring possibilities not only of harmony and community, but also of horror and rage. It might help us understand how the Cartesian suppression of relatedness has served a fundamental

ideological purpose in the emergence and expansion of industrial capitalism. Against this background, nothing would appear to be more revolutionary than to rekindle some of our pre-modern attitudes as we confront the demons of our own making.

FIGHTING AGAINST MACHINES

History tells us, however, that revolutionary rage is rarely enough. Machines were objects of political violence two hundred years ago, in early industrial England, through the activities of the so-called Luddite movement (Sale 1995; Fox 2002; Binfield 2004; S. E. Jones 2006). This short-lived movement created considerable turbulence in the heartland of early British industrialization (the counties of Yorkshire, Lancashire, Cheshire, Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire) from late 1811 to early 1813. Thousands of local, proto-industrial textile workers who had seen their livelihoods eclipsed by the large-scale machinery of factories perceived these new buildings and their technologies as immoral contraptions violating traditional principles of justice and fairness. The factory system was explicitly likened to "colonial slavery" (Sale 1995: 23), and the embittered workers who suffered dwindling incomes and unemployment responded with revolutionary fury. Their response, which may then have appeared somewhat less futile than it does today, was to attack and destroy the machines themselves. In slightly over a year, damages to technological infrastructure exceeded £100,000, and many factory owners were attacked and injured. As Charlotte Brontë later wrote, it is not difficult to understand why "these sufferers hated the machines which they believed took their bread from them; they hated the buildings which contained those machines; they hated the manufacturers who owned those buildings", yet "it would not do to stop the progress of invention" (quoted in Sale 1995: 15–16). The British authorities swiftly crushed the Luddite movement and executed its leaders. Sale concludes that

> the architects and beneficiaries of the new industrialism knew that it was imperative to subdue that challenge, to try to deny and expunge its premises of ancient rights and traditional mores, if the labor force were to be made sufficiently malleable, and the new terms of employment sufficiently fixed, to allow what we now call the Industrial Revolution to triumph unimpeded. (*Ibid.*: 5)

Did the Luddites in 1811 really perceive sabotage of machinery as a possible way of intervening in the logic of capitalism? Or were they driven by the same kind of rage that has repeatedly prompted embittered people to destroy the fetishized monuments and images (the ritual "technologies") of pre-modern elites such as those of ancient Rome, the tenth-century Maya or Easter Island?[10] Are the two incentives in fact inseparable? Whatever the case, historical hindsight suggests that theirs was simply not a feasible strategy. Sale (1995) aptly titled his book *Rebels Against the Future: The Luddites and their War on the Industrial Revolution*. The social project of physically destroying machines, however, deserves reflection. In directing their anger at these mechanical objects, the Luddites can be said to have engaged in a form of fetishism, if we define fetishism as the attribution of animacy and agency to non-living things. On the other hand, their actions can be said to have been intuitively justified, if we concede that the machines were indeed

objectified social relations. In fact, to ontologically divorce the machines from social relations of exchange, as has become the predominant outlook in modern industrial society, suggests a more subtle and mystifying form of fetishism (Hornborg 2001a). If the (unevenly distributed) accumulation of technological infrastructure is viewed simply as what Brontë called "the progress of invention", that is, as an inevitable accretion of ever greater technological capacity, irrespective of a population's position in a global system of resource flows, we may be mistaking a privileged position in global social space for an advanced stage in historical time (cf. Fabian 1983; Hornborg 2009). Nevertheless, the persuasiveness of machine fetishism has proven highly durable for two hundred years. As dramatically illustrated by the 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center in New York, physical sabotage against modern infrastructure has not been a viable strategy for subverting modern power.

The concept of fetishism as used by Karl Marx helps us to see how human relations to objects are ultimately about their relations to other humans. From this point of departure, David Graeber (2001, 2007) has used ethnographic material from comparative anthropology to challenge mainstream modern conceptions of economy and power. In pursuing such a strategy, he is following in the footsteps of Marx himself, who turned the notion of fetishism back on Europeans attributing it to exotic Others. It seems that relations of social power are more or less universally mediated by fetishized objects (cf. Friedman 1974; Taussig 1980; Godelier 1986; Bloch 1989). The human exchange and appropriation of things has always been about the production of persons, but, as Graeber reminds us, commodity fetishism encourages us to imagine otherwise. For instance, although the idea of private property is a thoroughly social relation, that is, a person's right to exclude others from access to a thing, it presents itself to us as a relation between that person and that thing. Nor do we generally see that the commodity is an embodiment of other people's labour and landscapes. If the consumer's sovereignty over his or her commoditized objects is modelled on the monarch's sovereignty over his or her subjects, as Graeber (2007: 73) suggests, the affinity between the two relations thus boils down to a transformation of social power.

Viewed in this light, it is revealing to see how closely related capitalism is to slavery (Graeber 2007: 85–112). Not only was wage labour generally abhorred by free men in precapitalist societies, the underlying principles of capitalism and slavery are disturbingly similar: both systems involve exchanging abstract human labour power for money; both involve rationalized industrial organization of production; both rely on a spatial separation of the reproduction of labour and its realization in production; and both (in principle) deny any relevance of a worker's social identity outside the workplace. (Yet, Graeber notes, capitalism presents itself to us as freedom, *viz.* the freedom of every individual to *sell* his or her freedom.)

What do all these features shared by capitalism and slavery have in common? The commoditization of abstract human labour power achieved something prototypically modern by dissociating (Karl Polanyi or Anthony Giddens would have said "disembedding") productive activity from all other aspects of human life. In thus systematically alienating human beings from the products of their labour, these systems make it possible for the extracted agency or life force (Graeber calls it "creative action") of human workers to be appropriated by others in the form of objects representing congealed abstract labour. This is the foundation of Marx's concept of commodity fetishism and in

itself a powerful step toward a cultural deconstruction of the naturalness of capitalism. The abstraction of labour power is a means of transforming human energy into profits, or capital.

But the analysis can be pushed even further, for, paradoxically, Marx was not a Luddite.[11] The very tangible, material operation of what we think of as modern technology is, no less than commodities, an embodiment of the deflected agency or life force of human workers. Every "technological" solution is thus ultimately a social relation in the sense that it will have implications for the societal distribution of the burden of problem-solving. The car or computer that may save its owner time represents losses of time for the myriad workers (such as in mines or oil fields) whose congealed labour it represents. Moreover, to the extent that modern technologies make possible a more efficient use of urban or agricultural space, for those segments of global society who can afford it, it is important to consider that they may represent losses of natural space (such as for strip mines or oil fields) elsewhere on the planet.

It is not a coincidence that David Harvey (1996) and Graeber (2001) have both been intrigued by Munn's (1986) study of how the exchange of pre-modern money objects in Melanesia generates specific kinds of "spacetime" in the sense of particular relations of claims and reciprocities that variously extend the social reach of individual persons. The transition to general-purpose money, which now dominates our lives, has entailed a generalization of exchange in time and space. Money can thus be seen as an institution for delaying and extending the universal, gravitational pull of reciprocity. It is the transformations of this pull that make possible increasingly asymmetric exchanges between distant populations and ecosystems. And it is these increasingly asymmetric exchanges that make possible our technology. Time-space compression relies on time-space appropriation (Hornborg 2006b).

MACHINES, MAGIC AND POWER

In struggling to grasp and communicate the magnitude of our misunderstanding of the phenomenon of technology, I have found no better framework than the Marxian concept of fetishism (Hornborg 1992, 2001b). As Graeber (2001: 239–46) has also recognized, this concept immediately prompts us to consider the issue of magic.[12] Magic and power share a similarly hybrid position between scam and efficacy. There is an important sense in which the seemingly inexorable, material logic of the capitalist world order ultimately rests on the beliefs and conceptions of its participants. If restricted to the psychology of financial collapse, this is quite obviously true. But I would seriously argue that even technological efficacy is cognate to magic. I have repeatedly found that the quickest way to communicate what I mean by the concept of machine fetishism is to compare modern technology with the magical "soup stone" of European folklore:

A hungry tramp is reluctantly admitted into a rural kitchen, but the housewife has no intention of serving him any food. He pulls a stone out of his pocket, asking merely for a pot of water to boil some soup on it. The housewife is too intrigued to deny his request. After a while, stirring and carefully tasting the water, the tramp observes that the soup might be improved with some flour, as if this was the only missing ingredient. The housewife, still baffled, consents to offer him some. Then, one by one, he similarly

manages to lure her to add the various other ingredients, until finally she is amazed to find a delicious soup *made from a stone*.

In transferring attention from the wider context to its imaginary centre, the stone in the soup is the prototypical fetish. Fetishized objects are in an important sense constitutive – not just misrepresentations – of accumulation and power. They are visualized as intrinsically generative or productive, and they are indeed responsible for processes of accumulation, but only by orchestrating them, whereas this orchestration itself hinges precisely on obscuring their social basis in unequal exchange. No more than the stone contributed to the soup is a fetishized sacred king like the Inca emperor the source of his people's affluence (Godelier 1986; Hornborg 2000). Similarly, the industrial machine (i.e. the technological object) is but a fetishized node in a global system of resource flows. If those flows were to cease, the machine would grind to a halt.

Now that I have said that modern technology works like magic, I suppose it is incumbent on me to clarify the difference between them. What is the difference between the efficacy of magic and the efficacy of the machine? This question is simultaneously the question of how pre-modern sacred and ritual power could be transformed into modern economic and technological power. Graeber (2001) shows that the former never operates only by power of suggestion, or, conversely, by power intrinsic to the people who have it, but through the social relation by means of which these people are able to convince others that they do have it. Power is thus cognate to magic because both rest on the premise that stage illusions work and must thus on some level be true. The import of fetishes such as *Spondylus* shells to ancient Cuzco helped the Inca court to convince the emperor's ten million subjects that his ritual communication with his father *Inti* (the Sun) was the prerequisite of agricultural productivity, and that it was entirely appropriate for them to reciprocate by spending significant amounts of their time working his fields and building his terraces (Murra 1962, 1975; Paulsen 1974, 1977; Marcos 1977/1978; Morris 1978; Godelier 1986). The illusion no doubt *worked* in the sense that the metabolism of the Inca empire hinged on the flow of red oyster shells from Ecuador to Cuzco. It was ultimately dependent on the trade of pre-modern prestige goods along the west coast of South America, through which merchants were able to acquire *Spondylus* in exchange for other objects coveted in Ecuador, such as packs of axe-shaped pieces of copper (Shimada 1985, 1987). This trade, of course, hinged on the cultural evaluations which determined the rates at which copper could be exchanged for *Spondylus* (Rostworowski 1977; Salomon 1986; Hornborg 2000).

Industrial technology, no less than theocratic ritual, is dependent on such pivotal exchange rates (e.g. oil prices). The difference is that, in industrialism, the transformation of imports into work has been locally objectified (into technology) so as to seem entirely material and non-social. But what has actually happened is that the pivotal evaluative moment has been shifted from the local to the global level. Locally, it has been delegated to the non-negotiable, kinematic logic of machines, but these are in themselves manifestations of global exchange rates. In ancient Peru, what were imported over longer distances were primarily symbols, which were ritually convertible into work in the form of manual labour. The productive potential on which the system was based was still local labour, and the rate at which prestige goods were converted into work was to some extent negotiable. But in modern industrial centres, it is increasingly the productive potential itself that is imported, which means that the imports are *physically* convertible into work,

and that it is the global rather than the local conversion rates that ultimately determine the feasibility of accumulation. No less than ritual, machines mystify us by pretending to be productive independently of exchange rates. In modern capitalism, however, the mystified exchanges have become even more opaque, and the magic agency of fetishized objects has become compelling in completely new ways.

Modern power relations based on economic and technological accumulation are thus, like pre-modern power, dependent on the ability of social elites to extract obedience and labour energy from the myriad human beings who provide them with the means of asserting these demands, and for this reason remain dependent on monopolies on legitimate coercion. They continue to operate only as long as the people they control can be persuaded, by magic and/or coercion, to subscribe to the claims to power offered by the elite. At this moment in history, these claims hinge, for instance, on the promises of continued economic and technological growth, and of global sustainable development. Perhaps most centrally, they hinge on the promises of technology. History tells us that, in the long run, coercion alone will never suffice to maintain a power structure, rendering magic superfluous. The technological infrastructure accumulated in certain areas of the world unevenly illuminates nightly satellite images. For the operation of the current global order to continue, it is no doubt essential that the billions of people whose daily labour maintains the asymmetric flows of energy and matter to these areas do not recognize, in the objects composing that infrastructure, the products of their own life force.

CONCLUSION: CONSUMPTION AS A TRANSFORMATION OF CANNIBALISM

Let us conclude by pursuing some additional implications of this cultural analysis of capitalism. Graeber (2007: 57–84) asks why our concept of "consumption" builds on the metaphor of eating. He provides several persuasive historical hypotheses for why this metaphor is now applied to whatever people do when they are not working, including the urge to destroy things in order to gain recognition of one's sovereignty over them. Eating is indeed the perfect idiom for destroying something while literally incorporating it. But Graeber argues that many activities conventionally classified as consumption, such as watching television, do not involve goods that are destroyed by use. Nor, for the same reason, does he think that a teenage band practising in a garage should be thought of as engaged in consumption. Yet, even these activities must submit to the joint constraints of capitalism and the entropy law (Georgescu-Roegen 1971) that correctly identify consumption as destruction: any activity that, for want of other resources, must involve manufactured goods – or even using electricity – implies destroying purchased physical resources in the process of creating meaning. The concept of consumption thus deserves to be retained, for its critical potential: because it highlights how that which capitalism would have us maximize is ultimately destroying the planet. While there is no exemption from entropy – whatever the mode of production – the specificity of capitalism lies in its relentless pursuit of ever higher rates of resource destruction.

Graeber (2007) criticizes the concept of consumption from two opposite angles, *viz*. for being perceived respectively as creativity and destruction. As much as I share his scepticism regarding the ideological uses of the former perception, I am unable to abandon the latter (even when applied to TV programming). In fact, it is only by acknowledging the

material, biophysical dimension of the global economy that we can resist the seductive neoliberal glorification of consumption as the right to creative self-expression.

Marshall Sahlins's (1976a) useful elaboration of Baudrillard (1972) taught anthropologists to view commodities as elements of semiotic systems that shoppers sought to incorporate into their selves, as the consummation of culturally constituted desires. Graeber (2007: 57–84) traces the historical recognition that such consumer desires are potentially infinite and quite possible to manipulate. Clearly, it is this latter dilemma that raises the most incisive doubts about capitalism, rather than the extent of resource destruction itself. For if profits are proportional to our creative destruction of resources, it means that marketing will be geared to fabricating increasingly arbitrary incentives for us to maximize such destruction. To continue to expose this fundamental logic seems a more trenchant criticism of neoliberalism than to debate whether this or that activity is really destructive of resources.

Moreover, if the commodities we consume (i.e. metaphorically eat) are really em*bodi*ments of other people's life energy, not only is capitalism a transformation of slavery, as Graeber has argued, but of cannibalism.[13] The defining feature of capitalism is its specific social and cultural organization of the appropriation of geographically remote labour and land. Modern forms of market exchange, technology and consumption represent net transfers of embodied (human) time and (natural) space extracted from some social groups for the disposal of others. Rather than directly controlling the labour of other human bodies in the vicinity, as in slavery, this is achieved by controlling the products of labour. Rather than shipping commodified labour (in chains) across the oceans, modern ocean-liners thus ship the commodified embodiments of labour. Ever since the first textile factories emerged in early industrial Britain, machines have assumed an illusory dissociation from the social relations of exchange through which their raw materials are extracted, appropriated, transformed and redistributed. As I have argued in this chapter, this illusion rests on the cultural assumption that material objects are politically innocent and immune to moral critique. The same, ultimately Cartesian, illusion liberates consumers to continue devouring distantly derived objects without any significant moral qualms about the social or ecological implications of consumption. As the use of general-purpose money and objectified market exchange were understood as immediate reciprocation and the severance of further social relations between market actors, the spirit of the gift was increasingly overshadowed by commodity fetishism. This cultural framework became solidly entrenched in the currently hegemonic economic discourse that was devised by (and for) successful stockbrokers such as David Ricardo (cf. Gudeman 1986), situated in the hub of a global empire.

A central paradox of this framework is that its point of departure appears to be a generalized power over objects, as exemplified by both consumption and by the fundamental severance of moral relations to an objectified environment (discussed above), while it simultaneously implies an unprecedented submission to objects, as exposed in Marxian analyses of fetishism. Although a prerequisite for modernity appears to have been an abandonment of animism, this very objectification of Nature may have paved the way for increasingly opaque varieties of fetishism. Paradoxically, to expose the political constitution of the machine would be tantamount to perceiving it as a malicious agent, and perhaps to risk revitalizing the Luddite urge to subject it to physical sabotage.

I have tried to show that the concept of fetishism continues to be useful, not only within fields concerned with theology or the phenomenologies of aesthetic experience,

but also for extending a general Marxian understanding of political economy. In particular, it can help us solve a neglected but puzzling conundrum of social science, *viz.* how access to technological objects (i.e. "development") can simultaneously be conceived as a result of exploitative accumulation and as the politically benevolent emancipation of all humankind. The answer, in this analysis, is that the fetishism of technology represents a specific mode of mystifying unequal exchange.

To conclude, we can ask ourselves what is the common denominator of the ideological pillars of modern power, which maintain the illusion of a morally neutral economy and technology, mystifying the affinities between capitalism and slavery, technology and magic, and consumption and cannibalism. I think the key is the phenomenon of *denial*. Johannes Fabian (1983) observed that the whole idea of development is founded on the denial of coevalness. The implicit assumption is that the people who don't own machines somehow inhabit an earlier period of time than those who do. In a similar manner, I suggest, the idea of the world market rests on a denial of appropriation. The concept of unequal exchange simply does not exist in the vocabulary of mainstream economics. Finally, our image of technology – much like commodity fetishism – is based on the denial of embodiment. In our Cartesian worldview, objects are automatically exempt from moral critique. And the denial of our coexistence with, exploitation, and consumption of other people is, like the Cartesian matrix as a whole, ultimately a dissociation from the reality of the Other.

NOTES

1. This chapter overlaps with my online article "Technology as Fetish: Marx, Latour, and the Cultural Foundations of Capital" (Hornborg 2013).
2. For a more systematic discussion of the various uses of the concept of fetishism, see Hornborg (2001b).
3. I use the word "machines" to refer to technological objects the existence and operation of which is ultimately dependent on access to inanimate energy sources such as fossil fuels and electricity.
4. The long-term implications of the global energy shifts we shall be witnessing over the next few decades may very well lead to the conclusion that much of what we have come to know as modern or industrial technology is feasible only when it requires less local land area than the same work conducted by humans and draught animals (cf. Hornborg 2011). This has indeed been the case through two centuries of fossil fuel energy, but at the moment we have no reason to believe that this specific kind of rationality will extend beyond the fossil fuel era.
5. The invalidity of the Cartesian dichotomy challenged by "actor-network theory" (ANT), by imputing agency to material objects, has been recognized as applying generally to human interaction with the remainder of the biosphere (Latour 2004; Bennett 2010). There is definitely a sense in which material objects of various kinds – even landscapes – can be agents, prompting or constraining human action. However, agency does not necessarily mean subjectivity or intentionality, while the agency of technological artefacts that we here refer to as "machines" (see note 2) generally deserves to be scrutinized in terms of the embodiment or delegation of political intentions.
6. Probably because animism would imply such moral constraints, the few Western scientists who have seriously championed an animistic worldview (e.g. Bateson 1972; Uexküll [1940] 1982) have inexorably been relegated to the margins. This is not because their arguments about the semiotic and communicative dimension of ecosystems have been shown to be invalid, but because they have been found irrelevant to the modern project. The primary interest of Western science is not to get to know living organisms as subjects, but as objects.
7. It is advisable to distinguish between pre-modern and modern (Marxian) versions of fetishism, where the former consists in attributing full personhood (cf. Santos-Granero 2009), the latter only agency, to non-living things.

8. This disjunction of technology and economy is equally characteristic of mainstream studies in the philosophy of technology (for an overview, see Ihde 1993).
9. Cf. Pietz's (1988:114) remark that colonial European writers frequently observed that pre-modern Africans were inclined to perceive technological objects as magical beings.
10. Compare Latour's (2010) discussion of iconoclasm.
11. In fact, it is not unusual to regard Marx as, in some respects, a victim of the technological ideology of nineteenth-century industrialism (e.g. Benton 1989: 76).
12. The etymology of the word "fetish" can be traced through a Portuguese word for magic and sorcery (*feitico*) to a Latin word for manufacture (*facticius*; Pietz 1987).
13. For the biologically inclined, I might suggest that modern technology and consumption represent a form of parasitism between members of the same species. A similar argument has in fact been suggested by Ruyle (1973), but we should recall that cannibalism here serves as a metaphor rather than a literal understanding of consumption. Ruyle does not distinguish between the consumption of food and the consumption of other "material use-values", only the former of which is actually consumed in the sense of being incorporated into the physical body of the consumer, but only the latter of which are produced in the sense of incorporating energy expended by the producer.

20

The new fetishism: Western statue devotion and a matter of power

Amy Whitehead

This discussion of the power of matter begins with a brief description of animism. Animism is dependent on three things: relationships, performances and the moment. It is a practice, a co-inspired form of active, mutual relating that emerges from the unique, personal, even intimate relationships that take place between persons (human and other-than-human) rather than a religious label, an ethic, or a worldview. According to Graham Harvey, animism is a relational activity that is discerned through treatment, behaviour, time and space, and relationships with "the living world" (2005a). Unlike Tylorian animism (Tylor 1871), it is not restricted to the theoretical confines of spirit and matter, subjects and objects, or other commonly accepted dualistic constructs. However, in its potential theoretical flexibility, it is capable of including these distinctions and more.

For several years I have been conducting qualitative research in two European statue-centred religious communities, namely those devoted to a Catholic statue of the Virgin of Alcala de los Gazules, Spain, and Pagan statues of the Glastonbury Goddess, England. In both of these contexts, devotees regularly commit to relational encounters with so-called "artefacts". Yet with time it became clear that these "artefacts" are not treated as artefacts at all: they are relational participants in ceremony, rites and venerative performances. The Virgin and the Goddess are addressed, petitioned, touched, negotiated with, and given gifts (coded as offerings). They are treated with such respect that they are housed, assigned guardians, protected, ritually bathed, dressed and offered food, gold and other valuable objects. An expansion of Hallowell's interpretation of the "personhood" found in Ojibwe culture (1960) aids in describing the animistic status of the Virgin of Alcala and the Glastonbury Goddess. These effigies are persons because accounts and observations found that they are related to as such – not strictly in a biological sense, but similar to the treatment of what Gell calls "an honoured guest" (1998: 128). However, religious statues are persons with a difference: they not only have direct access to the divine and/or to the mystery that is spiritually or magically other, but they are also capable of

being power and other. If petitioned correctly or given the right gift, they can make good things happen – but only if they so desire.

As indicated by the title of this chapter, these ideas point towards another theoretical angle from which to more specifically consider these matters. Anyone who has delved inside the material dimension of religion might have observed that when one begins examining the roles of matter as powerful, the concept of the fetish is not often too far behind. With its intrigue and otherworldly charm, the fetish continues to haunt debates about the roles of religious and other materiality in our Western cultural discourses because *its* matter can act of its own accord. For this reason Pels's distinction between what he refers to as animism's "'spirit in', as opposed to fetishism's 'spirit of' matter" (Pels 1998: 91) is significant to this chapter, fetishism being the former – "of matter". The fetish can reward, punish, or stand witness to its creators, and it unnerves. Its undiminished presence in academic and popular cultural discourses reminds us that we have, in fact, as Latour asserts, "never been modern" (1993), at least in the ways that broadly inherited understandings of the project of modernity would have us believe. It is not, however, the intention of this chapter to engage with an ongoing polemic about modernity. Latour (*ibid.*) and others have successfully unmasked it and decided that it is lacking as a culturally descriptive tool capable of accounting for that which takes place between here and there, subject and object, or mind and matter. What this chapter contributes to the modernity debate is the suggestion that we expand on ideas about modernity so that they might include more relational possibilities. This means that the features of modernity that we are so familiar with do not need to be negated, but rather they must be enlarged to include that which takes place between and beyond dualistic constructs.

One must naturally err on the side of caution when surveying the roles of matter in Western religious discourses. Not only statue devotion but religious materiality generally remains at the heart of religious polemics. This is due to the fact that religious studies and related disciplines have largely and theoretically relegated materiality to being representational instead of sensual, embodied or tangible. In contrast to the lived realities of religion where devotees have actual relationships with statues, a defining aspect of statue devotion in European Christianities specifically is that statues are often interpreted, at least doctrinally, as representations of some otherworldly counterpart. Yet (as discussed in more detail in A. R. Whitehead 2013) relational discourses such as animism aid in understanding statues as they are (at least from the perspectives of devotees), that is, as persons capable of participating in, perpetuating and maintaining relationships. As this chapter will demonstrate, both animism and the fetish help in developing broader understandings that human persons exist in a world filled with human and other-than-human persons (G. Harvey 2005a). In England and Spain, along with other cultures in the West, those other persons can be statues.

If animism accounts for the relational side of encounters with statue-persons, that is, animism indicates action (religious and non-religious) and active relating with others whose personhood emerges according to who or what is in the neighbourhood (with a nod to Gell 1998), then the fetish goes that step further. Redressed and refined, its relational diversity complements animist discourses through addressing the possibility that statues can have power independent of human agency. The fetish, according to Pels, "is animism with a vengeance. Its matter strikes back" (1998: 91). If approached as a subspecies of animism, a new kind of fetishism emerges that can push animist relationality to

its limits: statues of the Virgin and the Goddess are so relational that they can be inherently/independently powerful, representational, or both simultaneously. This assertion depends not only on the fact that statues are persons during moments of active relating, but on *the manner in which* they are related to.

This chapter is thus a theoretical experiment. It proposes that (a) statue devotion is a form of Western animism that is best described through use of a new kind of theoretical fetish, and (b) gift giving to statues is Western animism/fetishism in action because it exemplifies not only the relational status of statue-persons, but also their roles as powerful members of contemporary Western religious communities.

THE VIRGIN OF ALCALA AND THE GLASTONBURY GODDESS

The Virgin of Alcala de los Gazules and the Goddess of Glastonbury exist within two distinct religions and cultures. The Glastonbury Goddess originates from a new religious Pagan movement specific to Glastonbury, England and the Virgin of Alcala is a vernacular Catholic Mary found in the La Sierra of Andalusia, Spain. After time spent with informants of both case studies participating and observing in various rites, rituals and ceremonies, as well as observing everyday devotions and performances, I found that the treatment, veneration, display and relationships had with the statues are significant indications that the roles of matter go far beyond the limits of "subject" and "object". Statues of the Virgin and the Goddess can take on their own animated qualities, not only through the expectations that devotees bring to them, but through historical contexts, their display, the offerings that are visible supporting testimonials to their power, and their presences within their shrine and temple settings. Both the Virgin and the Goddess are dressed, sung to, given gifts and petitioned for various reasons. Their status depends on their ability to traverse boundaries and even worlds in order to fulfil promises and sustain relationships with devotees, thus maintaining their positions as powerful deities.

The Virgin of Alcala

Housed in a hilltop shrine, the Virgin of Alcala is the Catholic patron of the village of Alcala, one of Andalusia's "white villages", which has roughly 5,600 inhabitants. Like other villages in the province of Andalusia, Alcala has its own shrine and Marian statue, and the Virgin of Alcala is unique to her vernacular locale. From an outsider's perspective it could appear that the Virgin of Alcala is one of many statues of the Virgin in Spain. Yet to her devotees, she is *unico*, unique, and this is reflected in the love, adoration and personal relationships that the people of Alcala and beyond have with her.

The Virgin and her shrine have occupied the outerlying territories on the outskirts of Alcala for over five hundred years, and the statue is thought to be even older. The shrine is Baroque in style and full of a vast array of colourful devotionals and offerings, much of which are handcrafted or of a personal nature. Housed in a *templete* (mini temple within the shrine) of silver, the statue herself is made from cedar and stands roughly three feet in stature. Her features are as follows: she has large, dark, penetrating eyes, a small delicate mouth and pale painted skin. A multitude of complex and personalized statue-centred performances take place in relation to this statue-person, which are best described as acts

resulting from a combination of official doctrine and popular piety. She is ritually bathed and dressed by an elite group of women within the cult of the Virgin called the *camaristas* (literally, chamber maids) and in accordance with celebrations and the liturgical year. Her mantles are made from the finest materials, including gold threads, and her mantle covers all of her body apart from her face and hands so that her modesty is protected. Her chamber can be visited so that her devotees can touch her mantle, leave prayer requests in notes beneath her feet, or place their head under the back of her mantle and ask for a miracle. This is the custom of the shrine and it is one that is well known and used often.

The Virgin plays central roles in the community of Alcala. An example of this is found in a conversation I had with the parish priest. He said, "The locals badger me to death when the statue has to go away to be restored. They keep asking when she will be back." Perhaps this is due in part to the fact that the Virgin offers protection both to the village and to her devotees. For example, she is processed around the village in times of drought, and she is thought by many to keep the village and her devotees safe in times of crisis.

More than being a Catholic devotional, that is, an image that serves as a mediating tool that stands between the transcendent divine and the tangible world, this Virgin is not only referred to by devotees *as if* she were alive, but she is treated as such. She is treated as a participating subject in devotional ceremonies instead of an inanimate object. Further indicative of her personhood is the fact that her shrine, sanctuary and surrounding territories are literally in her name – "The Virgin of Alcala de los Gazules" is what one will find on the deeds to the terrains surrounding the shrine. There are many other ways in which the Virgin of Alcala is subjectified.

According to the steward of the shrine (called the *Santero*, one who protects, maintains and deals with the saints on a daily basis), this statue of the Virgin is particularly powerful in that she is famous for performing miracles such as restoring fertility to couples, saving lives when illness and accidents strike, or, as mentioned previously, providing rainfall. In support of his claim, there are thousands of *ex votos* lining the walls of the shrine which testify to her miraculous deeds. The Virgin's power and continuing prayer requests are also indicated by the many offerings left in her shrine. Sometimes offerings serve as the basis of contracts ("If you do this for me, then I will give you a lock of my hair"), and sometimes offerings are made in moments of devotional praise and celebration. Whatever the performance or the reason why the performance takes place a type of gift economy is set in motion when devotees make offerings to statues. Kay Turner refers to "the economy of the altar" as the "model of the exchange critical to the productivity of any relationship, human or divine" (1999: 107). At the altar, personal problems are laid bare, and promises, sacrifices, pledges and deals are made in ways that reflect the personal relationships experienced between devotee and divine. In some of my visits to the shrine of the Virgin I have seen offerings such as framed locks of hair, photos of loved ones, and jewellery such as bracelets, rings, brooches and necklaces made from gold, silver and precious stones. I have also seen an abundance of seasonal flowers, plants and money. The rings offered to the Virgin are placed on her fingers and changed weekly so that every piece has some time on her hands. The *Santero* said that there is a "backlog" of jewellery that must be placed on the "body" of the Virgin – on her fingers, around her neck, on her wrists – and not enough time. Offerings also include rosary beads, candles, cloth cut from the clothes of loved ones, and written petitions placed under the feet of the statue. I have also seen baby dummies, baby jewellery and baby shoes left in the shrine as offerings given for

prayers answered with regards to fertility. Military medals and *ex votos* are also common shrine inhabitants. In terms of negotiations, the *Santero* said that if a devotee goes to the Virgin for help with some issue or problem and the Virgin does not want to remedy the situation in the way that the devotee asks (if at all) then she will not do it.

A particularly helpful informant, on several shrine visits the *Santero* openly discussed his personal relationship with the Virgin. Compared with other Virgin statue-persons which are present in the province of Cadiz, the *Santero* says that with her fine and delicate features, "his Virgin" is the most beautiful. On two different occasions he took me into her chamber and, touching her mantle, showed me how her face changes: she can look either serious or happy. He said, "My wife thinks I'm crazy, but she gets angry and punishes me if I do something as silly as kill a mosquito, and I know because her face changes and she looks angry." The *Santero* also indicated, while pointing at the statue, that the Virgin is the only being who truly cares for woes and trials of humanity.

The Glastonbury Goddess

Before the statues of the Goddess are discussed, a brief description of Glastonbury's unique locale along with the origins of this relatively new religious movement are required. Nestled in the rolling green hills of Somerset in the southwest of England, Glastonbury is a small market town with a population of around 8,600 inhabitants. Having lived in Glastonbury for two years, I have encountered its many names: the "Isle of Apples", the "Isle of Glass", the "Isle of the Dead" and "Avalon" (Glastonbury's mystical and otherworldly counterpart). Contemporarily, many claim that Glastonbury has both strong Pagan and Christian lineages and many claim it was home to ancient mystery schools, the resting place of King Arthur and his Lady Guinevere, the burial place of the Holy Grail, and home to the ancient and contemporary Goddess of Glastonbury (Bowman 2005: 165).

It is, however, the Goddess's contemporary origins that we are concerned with here. Kathy Jones (author, writer and resident of Glastonbury) and other founders of the movement adopted the idea of a surviving "cult" dedicated to the feminine divine as the foundation upon which the contemporary Goddess movement in Glastonbury was created. Bowman says: "In the late nineteenth century John Arthur Goodchild claimed that there had been in Glastonbury the survival of an ancient Irish cult venerating the female aspect of the deity which became attached to the figure of St Bride" (Bowman 2007: 25).

According to Bowman, Kathy Jones claims that "Where we find St Bridget we know that the goddess Bridie was once honoured" (Bowman 2005: 160). This forms a kind of mission statement for the Glastonbury Goddess religion which points toward the reclamation, restoration and transformation of Glastonbury's history, legends and mythologies. This restoration of the Goddess to Glastonbury by Jones and others has its "official" roots, according to Bowman, in the first Goddess conference held in 1996, and especially with the Goddess procession that took place during that first meeting. The first conference and statue procession, set around Lammas (1 August), created a tradition that continues annually today. Hence, the ideas of both restoration and reclamation of the Goddess from an imposed Christianity forms major parts of this religiosity.

A source of continual change, renovation, innovation and devotion, whereby countless forms of volatile, votive expression can be found, the Glastonbury Goddess Temple is said by devotees to be the first "indigenous temple" to be dedicated to the Goddess of

that land in over 1,500 years. The Temple houses the willow wickerwork Goddess statues that reside there. Created from locally sourced willow, these statues are tall, lean and willowy (reflecting their wooden source) with faces of alabaster plastercast that show fine, delicate, feminine features. The figures are dressed with flowing, colourful materials in accordance with the Goddess who is being worshipped on the Goddess Wheel of the Year (based on the Wiccan Wheel of the Year), also known as the Medicine Wheel, or the sacred Wheel of Britannia, or Ana. These "points" are the eight compass directions and are associated with the seasons of the calendar year. There are also nine wicker figures in the Goddess Temple called the Morgens, who play important roles to Goddess devotees. The Nine Morgens can be best described as healing goddesses who are connected to different parts of the natural landscape around the town such as springs, mounds and groves. These goddesses are said to have been women who once lived around Glastonbury and the Isle of Avalon. Kathy Jones says that the Nine Morgens are a ninefold sisterhood who "rule over the Isle of Avalon surrounded by the Lake of Mysts" (2001: 213).

After conducting several informal interviews with different informants, research has found that how the Goddess is perceived in terms of whether or not the Goddess statues represent or "embody" the Goddess differ greatly. That many devotees understand the Goddess statues as representational points toward the fact that this particular form of Goddess devotion exists in a predominantly Protestant country where culturally rooted biases continue to reflect the wider effects of modernity along with those of the Protestant Reformation. Compared with the Virgin of Alcala, who is doctrinally meant to represent the universal Mary but who is engaged as a person, this Goddess religiosity has no doctrinal limitations on how to understand her roles. Hence, it is best to understand the Goddess through the relationships that both groups and individuals have with her. Those devotees who regularly spend time in the temple, such as the temple caretakers, have intimate relationships with the statues. According to one informant, the statues sometimes move. Their facial expressions change. They can look "pissy" or "happy". Other informants have reported that they have experienced "strange occurrences" in the presence of the statues.

As with the Virgin, offerings and negotiations take place at the altar of the Goddess. Objects of natural materials are generally offered at the temple such as wood, bone, minerals, stones, feathers, acorns, hazelnuts, shells, plants and flowers. These natural objects are often, but not limited to being, indigenous to the Somerset levels. Ribbons, clouts, candles, hand-made ornaments and/or jewellery (earrings or necklaces) are sometimes tied to or hung on the wicker Goddesses on display at that time. Offerings also consist of items such as money, paintings, goddess figurines, jewellery of sentimental or other value, or photographs of loved ones who are either ill or passed away. Offerings are important to my argument because they express the relationships, hopes and expectations shared between both devotees and deities, yet indicative of the power of the Goddess, I was told that under no uncertain terms should the Goddess be negotiated with, suggesting that the power of the Goddess is to be feared. The informant said that this is "risky business". Yet there is no lack of offerings to be found at the altar of the Goddess, a fact which indicates that the Goddess statues are open for business and that devotees use them thus. Both their favour and their power are sought daily which tells us that these statues are powerful beings, whether or not they are understood to represent or embody the Goddess.

THE FETISH

Having created a context for considering the fetish within animism while being fully aware of problems that accompany the term, I will demonstrate that the fetish is theoretically applicable to Western statue devotion for three reasons. First, the word "fetish" is Western: it is Portuguese in origin and a product of colonial and trade encounter. Paul Johnson writes, "The fetish is unusual among such terms in that it does not derive from any indigenous term – nowhere is there a fetish as such – but rather from the colonialist 'encounter' between cultures, from the attempt to locate and describe the Other" (2000: 246–7).

In other words, the fetish is a European invention. It is culturally *ours*. For that reason it is being held theoretically accountable for how Western European devotees of statues *do* their religions, particularly those within the case studies discussed further on. Both Catholicism and Paganism are often considered *other* within the biases found in England's Protestant cultural discourses, and Paganism is *other* within Spain's Catholic discourses. The fetish's European roots practically generate its usefulness in terms of helping to understand the roles and working of matter within Western animism. Specifically, it helps when examining relationships with human-made artefacts.

Second, although the word "fetish" might conjure up images of cowry shells, bits of wood, bone, stone, beads, feathers, crudely carved images, hair and/or other forms of materiality (which would be accurate if one were to consider the fact that a fetish can be anything present in the moment of its own creation), etymologically it means little more than "that which is made" (P. C. Johnson 2000: 229). Here we find that the root of the word lies in creation and creativity, the ability to make and undo worlds accordingly. A fetish is something that is continually invented, destroyed and reinvented with each relational encounter. The Glastonbury Goddess statues and the statue of the Virgin of Alcala are/were made, in theory, as copies of envisaged otherworldly prototypes, yet they are treated physically as divine royalty. The creation of statues is, as Graeber might say, "pure social creativity" (2005: 411). Statues are created and used in ways that might be responsible for the consequent formation of social relations among human persons, but they are things that become significant to their communities through their making and position, and through the relational, repetitive actions that people conduct towards them thereafter. If we once again trust the etymology of the fetish, that is, "that which is made", and look at how statues are fetishized then a helpful pattern emerges. Graeber writes, "We create things, and then, because we don't understand how we did it, we end up treating our own creations as if they had power over us. We fall down and worship that which we ourselves have made" (*ibid.*).

This can be seen in the phenomenon of how objects (offerings) are given to other objects (statues). How is it that human-made "things", or artefacts, created from wood become sacred focuses of adoration? What are the "steps to sacrality" that raw materials must undergo? How is the wood chosen? How do carved and woven forms achieve statuses that make them worthy of either embodying or representing the divine (or both), or even having their own power?

Third, the fact that the fetish preceded animism among academic theories helps in better understanding how materiality works as a part of a new and broadening animist discourse. Johnson writes, "De Brosses's and Comte's 'fetichisme' was replaced by 'animism' under the Tylorian evolutionist paradigm and then by Marett's 'pre-animism'

before being dealt a final death blow, at least in its denotation of a particular religious mode, by Durkheim and Mauss" (P. C. Johnson 2000: 254).

Simply put, instead of only dealing with relationality or the classic understanding of Tylor's (1871) animism where spirits take up residence in things of nature, the fetish deals in the power inherent in objects, or objects *as* power. It nods toward those artefacts that have the power to dominate and have power over others, such as statues of the Virgin and the Goddess. It addresses their direct abilities, not those of their doctrinal or representational prototypes. In both its conceptual and material diversity the fetish is understood as many things. Its roles vary from a collaborative project to a contract that serves to seal agreements (the consequences of which are punishment by the fetish if agreements are broken). A fetish might serve its creator in a similar way to how the Christian Bible serves its adherents for the swearing of oaths in a court of law. Like amulets found in popular Catholicism, the fetish can have talismanic qualities. It can offer protection. Further, the fetish is an extension of the fetishist. Like statues the fetish can be dressed, fed, or housed. The fetish exists under negotiated terms. Its status is always in a state of flux and its identity is never fixed. As with statues, subjects and objects cohere with the fetish. It is the beginning and end of devotion and it has the power to traverse worlds and boundaries, to heal, to make magic, to punish and to bind agreements. It is the offspring of creativity and labour and it exists in migratory, non-dualistic spaces.

The fetish works in animist discourses because it signifies pure relationality. Graeber writes:

> They were ultimately collections of bits of rare wood, beads and silver ornaments, kept hidden under cloth or in boxes, usually with little houses of their own; sometimes they spoke through their keepers; they had names and stories, wills and desires, they received homage, gave blessings, imposed taboos. They were, in other words, very much like gods. (2005: 427)

As described in the ethnographic accounts, statues of the Virgin and the Goddess are treated in similar ways to how Graeber describes treatment of the fetish. We cannot, however, rely solely on treatment to help us understand how the fetish as a subspecies of animism can be applied to Western forms of statue devotion. Epistemology and modernity, the distinctions between subject and object and spirit and matter all play significant roles in understanding the relational roles of the Virgin and the Goddess. Although different from "classic" Victorian, anthropological animist theories, Western animism is so relational that sometimes Tylor's (1871) animism might be more appropriate than the new version of animism to account for the power of matter. As previously acknowledged, Catholic doctrine interprets religious materiality in terms of tools of devotion and representation. In theory, this would make the universal Mary more significant than her referent. However, vernacular Catholicism (or *lived* Catholicism) is, as Primiano suggests about vernacular religion generally (1995: 42), private and personal. Demonstrated in the ethnographic account is the fact that the Virgin of Alcala is addressed, treated and petitioned as a living, breathing, powerful being who has influence within the realm of the supernatural. This treatment is "unofficial". To attribute power (or personhood) to a statue is, officially, idolatry. Yet in the lived reality of religious practice, the status of the Virgin of Alcala is relational, making her changeable with each personal, devotional

encounter within her overriding roles as universal divine mother and intercessor. As Holbraad says about the powder of Cuban diviners *being* power (2007: 201), in this case the statue *is* power, even if she is only power when she is being petitioned and/or given gifts. The role of matter in this case can be considered fetishistic, although Catholic devotees of the Virgin of Alcala do not self-identify as fetishists. Further, although these distinctions can be made between her vernacular role and her theological one, as is also the case of the Goddess, popular piety and doctrinal protocol are on a continuum (i.e. they are separate but complementary, interwoven and mutually informative). This means that devotional relationships with the Virgin of Alcala also form part of a relational continuum, rendering devotional practices particular to specific encounters between devotees and statues.

The *thealogy* (or feminist theology) surrounding Goddess worship is sometimes more flexible than Catholic theology in terms of belief because thealogy has no doctrine. For example, Glastonbury Goddess Pagans discuss their statues both in terms of the Goddess being present in the statues and of the Goddess being represented by the statues. Certainly, in moments of active relating, the case of the Glastonbury Goddess is one of Pels's animistic "spirit in matter" (1998: 91), that is, the spirit or deity is in the land but also hovering above it, ritually brought in to inhabit the temple and the statues, and is said to take up residence in the physical forms of the statues, then let go in the evening. This flexibility of spirit/the divine taking up residence in matter is one of *thea*logical freedom where monotheism and polytheism are interchangeable. In any case it is through her statues that the Goddess is addressed in her Temple and it is here that she is honoured, dressed, given gifts and negotiated with. The theoretical fetish is part and parcel of statue devotion not only because it points toward the respect and honour given statues (as indicated through their treatment), but because it sometimes indicates *subordination*. This requires a consideration of power.

POWER RELATIONS AND THE POWER OF MATTER

Surveying the power of matter through the relationships that devotees have with statues (and vice versa) leads this experiment to further explorations into the power relations that take place between the two. Let us begin this final section by asserting that the theoretical fetish can be applied to statues of the Virgin of Alcala and the Glastonbury Goddess because their matter has power, whether or not these statue-persons are interacted with as representational, inherently powerful, or both. Here, persons are made, indeed they are brought into being, through the act of giving gifts. This assertion, however, considers that there are many ways of being persons and that some are more potentially powerful than others. The difficulty encountered here is that the statue-persons and human-persons have different "perspectives", as Viveiros de Castro (2004) might indicate. When one considers the biographical differences between statue-persons and human-persons, it becomes clear that these two ways of being persons differ greatly. There is, in fact, an imbalance of power.

It seems perfectly acceptable to consider the fact that offerings are given to statues. It is a culturally understood mode of being religious in many parts of the world. The townships of Alcala and Glastonbury are no exception. These statues/deities can be negotiated with to make these things happen. Statues are said to listen, empathize, and they can, depending on the encounter, play either intercessory roles to greater supernatural powers, be

inherently powerful, or both. There is a type of gift giving and reciprocity that takes place at the altars of the Goddess and the Virgin that creates long-lasting relations with the divine. Yet in the exchanges that take place at the altars of the Virgin and the Goddess, from a modern, even phenomenological perspective, objects are being given to objects. This issue both engages and challenges Mauss's ([1923] 2006) ideas of gift exchange and reciprocity that understands gifts as social representatives being given and received by two human-person participants who share a set of socially agreed norms. How, then, are gifts received? Are they accepted at all? Can statue-persons and human-persons share gift-giving etiquette, especially when the Glastonbury Goddess and the Virgin of Alcala supposedly have or have access to "supernatural" powers? Mauss might have argued that the giving of gifts pivots on factors of human exchange where objects can be temporarily enchanted by the giver with poison, magic, good or bad will. How can we know with what intentions statues keep up their end of negotiations? Human-persons do not usually have supernatural powers, but religious statues do (or are sometimes believed to do so by devotees). This does not denote equality. Like the fetish, the powers of the Goddess and the Virgin are thought to be able to punish, to destroy enemies, and protect devotees and entire parishes from disaster. Statues are said to have more power than devotees.

Gift giving to statues also contains the possibility of maintaining the peace with statues whose power can be so unpredictable and unruly that offerings must be made to satisfy that whose power is, in actuality, other and therefore unknowable and potentially dangerous. Devotees can, however, have power over statues. For example, should the statues stop fulfilling their roles and duties, those who maintain their positions (through maintenance, belief and devotional gift giving) could potentially rebel. Guardians and care takers could simply let the statues fall into ruin in terms of restorative processes, or in the case of the Goddess, they could be left to decompose instead of being ceremonially burned in an honourable way. So when Graeber (2005: 411) writes of social creativity in terms of statues that we create and then fall down and worship, perhaps this is better understood as a kind of *creative tension* between persons who are not and cannot be social in the same way, but who are mutually dependent upon one another and share religious culture.

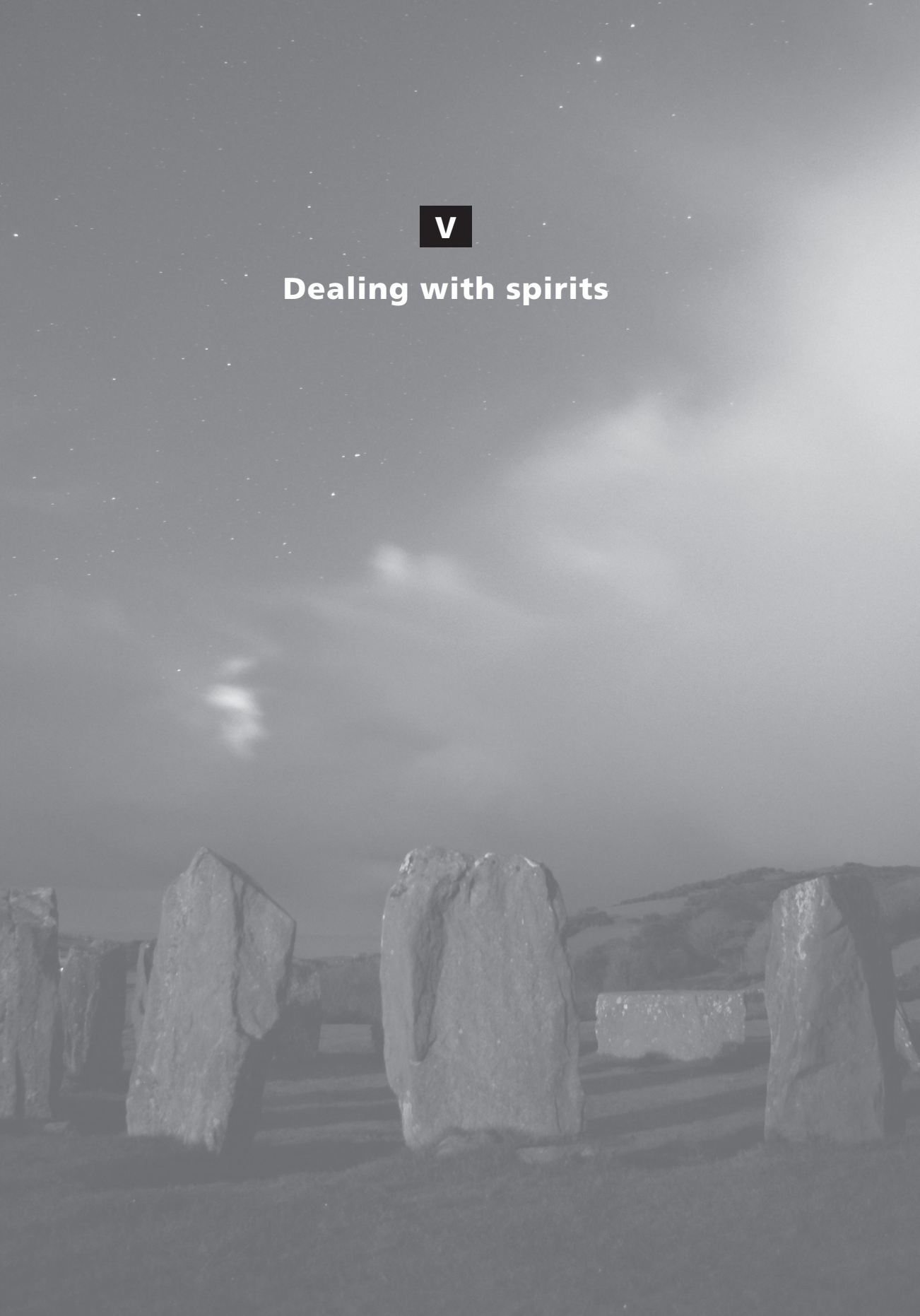
With these questions in mind, how might the dynamics that take place when statues of the Goddess and Virgin are approached for healing work? The *Santero* says, "If she [the Virgin] does not want it [a healing] to happen, it will not happen." Yet in terms of reciprocity and exchange, statues must give something back. In the case studies discussed here, my informants say that they do. They must do this if they are to maintain their perspectives of power, that is, their divine, royal status and ties with the community. The Goddess and the Virgin are said to grant wishes, protect, and cure illnesses and infertility, and testimony to this can be seen in how *ex votos* line the walls of the shrine of the Virgin and how the Goddess remains in receipt of veneration. Like the closing of an open-ended circuit, paintings are commissioned for promises that have been fulfilled and donations continue to roll in.

CONCLUSION

Research has found that resisting the fetish is futile. Expanding on current animist discourses I have proposed that a new kind of fetishism, a subsection to the new animism, be

used to help examine the roles that religious statues play, here specifically in contemporary Catholic and Pagan discourses, and with potential application across a wide spectrum of different forms of statue devotion. Once divorced from the "problem of the fetish", the "problem of materiality" and the commonly accepted dualities discussed throughout this chapter, the fetish, in its flexibility, addresses questions of time, space, location, power inherent, and power represented in and by matter. The new fetishism is an accurate theoretical tool that addresses the power relations that take place between artefacts and devotees. It is a further consequence of relational encounters in that it assists in going beyond the boundaries of representation. This assertion is best illustrated when working from the previously mentioned etymology of the word, "that which is made" (P. C. Johnson 2000: 229), which places the fetish on a continuum, that is, as a "thing" of continuing, creative relational engagement. The fetish does, after all, account for those unpredictable, negotiated territories that exist between subject and object, the sacred and the profane, or spirit and matter, where personal, often sentimental, relationships take place. Further, gift giving to statues is phenomenological and offers ways in which altar reciprocity can be re-examined. The power relations discussed here facilitate a departure from the altar reciprocity discussed by K. Turner (1999), although here, too, reciprocity depends on relationships. They also create steps that move beyond Mauss's "gift" (2006) and other social anthropological theories where the agents of gift exchange operate within a shared set of cultural norms where power is presumably equal.

The Virgin and the Goddess exemplify matter at the height of relational, representational and/or inherent power. Like many forms of religious materiality, statues are *exaggerations* of the roles that matter can play in wider cultural contexts. Statues of the Virgin and the Goddess are more than representations, and venerations are more than symbolic gestures. They stand on the borders between this world and the next, offering insight into the lives of devotees, and signalling the impossible. Statues are powerful persons. Thus active relating with statues can be taken not only as evidence of personhood, but personhood with an edge. This understanding assists in defining religion as an ontologically fluid, not "fixed", relational phenomena. Renewing relational discourses such as the fetish – with its contestable past and promising future – can help to dissolve the boundaries that exist between materiality and belief. The materiality of the fetish is real, and powerful, and like statues, its perseverance in academic discourses is a visible testimony to its vitality.



V

Dealing with spirits

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INTRODUCTION

Edward Tylor's monumental work (1871) established a definitive connection between animism and "spirits". In Part V that postulation is debated, elucidated or contested. As in previous parts, contributors bring varied disciplinary perspectives to bear on distinct data sets. In addressing putative "spirits" they engage with a rich field of possibilities.

Rane Willerslev wants us to think (again) about indigenous theories about reality. He offers a rethinking of positions he previously presented (e.g. 2007) or agreed with (i.e. those of some colleagues) because he now thinks that we must go beyond a focus on the "practicalities of indigenous living" or "empirical experience" to attend to what may be called, with Gilles Deleuze (1988), the "virtual" fabric of the social world's "actual" or "empirical" manifestations. He seeks to persuade us of the necessity of defining animism as a metaphysics.

Roberte Hamayon writes briefly about the use of "shaman" in a globalized and individualized context, and about the imaginative creation of "shamanism". However, her chief interest arises from the association between shamanic acts and the Siberian Tungus verb *sama* which has something to do with the gestures of animals or people impersonating animals. Such actions provide a way into considering the shared and different possession of "souls" and other similarities and differences between species (humans included). Thus, Hamayon too draws attention to the importance of "soul", "life force" and "spirit" within animism.

This is followed by Isabella Lepri's examination of the Amazonian Ese Ejja's ideas about bodies, souls and powerful beings. Lepri makes it clear that the Ese Ejja do not represent some pristine indigenous culture uninfluenced by outsiders, unaware of alternative perspectives on the world, or fixed within some timeless "tradition". What they and the subjects of other chapters say, even about important matters such as relationships with powerful beings or the nature of souls, is rarely systematized or static. Even fearsome cannibal beings may be treated, under certain circumstances, as quite ordinary consumers of fish. In addition to contributing to the understanding of shamans and their activities, Lepri includes art by Ese Ejja children that shows how powerful beings look and what they can be expected to do within this elaboration of Amazonian animist multinatural perspectivism.

More artwork is in view in Robert Wallis's examination of prehistoric rock art (paintings and engravings). He argues that these require an understanding of animism that resists their interiorization or psychologization (e.g. as "hallucinations" of "spirits") – which are commonplace in previous uses of "shamanism" or "trance" in explaining rock art. Wallis reflects on animic ontologies, relationships between human and other-than-human persons (including rocks), and the sensual immersion of humans in a world that is not well approached by separating "spirits" (or culture) from "things" (or nature).

Paul Johnson seeks to do for the term "spirit possession" what others have done for the terms totemism, fetishism and shamanism. That is, he traces the genealogy and resonances of the term in the philosophical texts, especially as they contemplate and promote European and colonial authority and legitimacy in the world. The production of modernity required the primitivization of (imagined) others. Johnson does not deny that people might claim to be possessed, or to have seen others possessed. Rather, as Johnson has previously (2002) considered the transformation of Brazilian Candomblé, here he initiates

a revisitation of "spirit possession" that is fully cognisant of the entanglement of colonial economic and philosophical constructions of the world.

Andy Letcher's chapter opens another possible line of research. He reflects here on his ongoing "internal dialogue" (though this also involves fellow scholarly-and-practitioner collaborators) to understand knowledges and experiences gained in both mushroom-inspired "trips" and in more ordinary (to scholars) research locations, such as Oxford University's Bodleian library. Letcher's engagement with one wing of contemporary alternative spirituality, a psychedelically informed eco-activist Paganism, generates both ethnographic data and philosophical musing about the possibilities of accessing "immediate experience". As with other contributors, Letcher presents his chapter as a step in an ongoing debate which links data about what others do with reflection on what scholars and other interested people might do.

Stewart Guthrie's chapter about "spiritual beings" provides an important cognitive account, informed by Darwinian evolutionary theory, of the origins and nature of animism in the "need to discover any agents in an uncertain environment". Animism, says Guthrie, is "basic to religion, if not sufficient for it". It means both "belief in spirit beings" and "giving life to the lifeless" – also known as anthropomorphism among humans, but paralleled among animals. Guthrie demonstrates the implications of such evolved responses to the world as that of Charles Darwin's dog to a parasol blown by the wind.

As in other parts of the book, a range of possible approaches to and interpretations of phenomena are presented here. They circulate around terms like "spirit" in order to pay appropriate attention to cognitive and religious processes and activities.

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"The One-All": the animist high god

Rane Willerslev

Central to the approaches to what is often called the "new animism" is a rejection of previous scholarly attempts to identify it as either metaphoric, a projection of human society onto nature as in the tradition of Emile Durkheim ([1912] 1976), or as some sort of imaginary delusion, exposing primitive man's inability to distinguish dreams from reality as in the tradition of E. B. Tylor (1871).[1] Instead, the scholars concerned – including Philippe Descola (1986), Eduardo Viveiros de Castro (1998a), Tim Ingold (2000: 111–31; 2006), Morten Pedersen (2001), Graham Harvey (2005a), Aparedica Vilaça (2005) and Carlos Fausto (2007) – each in their way seek to take animism seriously by reversing the primacy of Western metaphysics over indigenous understandings and follow the lead of the animists themselves in what they are saying about spirits, souls and the like.

In my own book *Soul Hunters* (2007), I pushed in the same direction, arguing along phenomenological lines that animist cosmology is essentially practical, intimately bound up with indigenous peoples' ongoing engagement with the world. Accordingly, animism is nothing like a formally abstracted philosophy about the workings of the world or a symbolic representation of human society. Instead, it is mostly pragmatic and down to earth, restricted to particular relational contexts of involved activity, such as the mimetic encounter between hunter and prey.

This take on animism certainly has its advantages. First, it reverses the ontological priorities of anthropological analysis by holding that everyday practical life is the crucial foundation upon which so-called "higher" activities of thinking or cosmological abstraction are firmly premised. In addition, it allows us to analyse animist beliefs in a way that is compatible with the indigenous peoples' own accounts, which tend to be based on hands-on experiences with animals and things rather than on abstract theoretical contemplation.

Now, while this scholarly determination of turning the studies of animism away from high-level abstractions and back to the concrete and solid ground of practical and perceptual engagement with the world provides a persuasive analytical framework, I have

started to feel that it may in fact lead us away from a more fundamental understanding of what animism is really about. The argument advanced here is, therefore, in many ways the reverse of what I previously suggested about the nature of animism. Instead of searching for its nature in the practicalities of indigenous living, we need to go beyond empirical experience to what may be called the "virtual" fabric of the social world's "actual" or "empirical" manifestations (Deleuze 1988).

THE ANIMIST HIGH GOD

My uneasiness with the present-day theories on animism developed as I started reading two classical scholars, who are now largely lost to historical view. One is Andrew Lang (1898), a folklorist and writer, who stressed that a theistic concept of a "High God" is evident among the most primitive of peoples. Even among the Australian Aborigines who Sir James Frazer had deemed the "rudest savages" with no religion, only magic, a "high god" – the so-called "All Father" – had been detected (Howitt 1884). Lang thus concluded that "certain low savages are as monotheistic as some Christians" and that "supreme gods [were] not necessarily developed out of 'spirits'" (quoted in Stocking 1995: 174). The other scholar who provoked me to think differently about animism is Robert R. Marett. Rather than arguing for the existence of aboriginal beliefs in "high gods", Marett (1909) suggested that "primitive" religion was at once a wider and a vaguer phenomenon than Tylor's beliefs in spiritual beings – what he termed "animatism". Marett found evidence for his "pre-animist" theory in the fact that among many "primitive" peoples a conception of an impersonal sacred power was evident: *orenda* among the Iroquois and *mana* among the Maori.

In northeastern Siberia, where I have done much of my research, similar beliefs in a supreme being were being reported around the same time that Lang and Marett proposed their theories. Thus, the two legendary ethnographers Waldemar Jochelson and Waldemar Bogoras argued for its existence among Siberia's supposedly most archaic peoples, the Chukchi and the Yukaghir. The Yukaghir named it *Pon* (Jochelson 1926: 140, 235), meaning "something", whereas the Chukchi (Bogoras 1904–9: 314) called it *Va'irgin*, which means "Something Existing".

Now, this claim of the existence of a god-like creature or an abstract spiritual force among the world's most "savage" people caused the old evolutionary establishment much theoretical discomfort. Tylor (1871) had already proposed that the origin of religion developed out of simple thoughts about the existence of souls, which then at a much later stage of culture turned into a belief in God. Frazer (1890) proposed a similar developmental scheme, arranging magic, religion and science in an evolutionary linear sequence. It comes as no surprise, therefore, that Tylor (1892) fiercely rejected the theory of Lang, arguing that the "high gods" were not archaic pre-contact deities, but the result of direct or indirect influence from missionary activities – a view which has recently been revitalized by Jonathan Z. Smith (1982).

However, I believe that the rejected ideas about impersonal Supreme Beings among animist indigenous peoples are in need of renewed attention, since they, if they turn out to have some reality, may overthrow not only the old evolutionary take on animism, but may also challenge many of the so-called "new animist" presumptions.

I will begin my analysis by returning to Siberian ethnography, which I know the best. It is noticeable that indigenous Siberian ideas about a Supreme Being are not restricted to the Yukaghir and the Chukchi, but are in fact shared among all of the so-called Paleo-Siberians: the Koryak, the Itelmen and the Aleut (Jochelson 1926). In addition, we may certainly say that Yukaghirs do not regard *Pon* as equivalent to the Christian God – as implied in Tylor's reply to Lang. This is clearly shown in their distinction between *Pon* and *Qoil*. The latter used to be the name of the dead clan shaman's skull – the most sacred of the ancient Yukaghir idols (Jochelson 1926: 65) – but is now the name of the Christian God. Finally, while it can be said that Christianity has had an impact on virtually all the indigenous peoples of Siberia, Bogoras (1904–9: 729–30) is right in arguing that the Chukchi are an exception. During the eighteenth century, when the Russian Orthodox Mission was most active, the Chukchi were at constant war with Russia – a war which they in fact won, with the result that their lands where fully annexed by the Russian empire only after the 1917 Revolution, when all missionary activity had been banned. Many Chukchi, therefore, have been totally out of the reach of Christian missionaries and are not even formally baptized (Willerslev 2009: 694).

This, however, is not to say that I fully accept Lang's theory of archaic "high gods" as parallel to the Christian God. From the information at my disposal, it is quite clear that both *Pon* and *Va'irgin* do not count as "gods", but are rather like the "Creative Spirit" of the Nuer, whom Evans-Prichard (1956: 4–7) described as beyond contact and comprehension, yet the giver and sustainer of all life. Thus, Jochelson writes about *Pon* that "he is of a most vague and infinite character" (1926: 140). "The Yukaghir do not address him with prayers and do not present offerings to him ... [and their] mythology contains no reference ... to the Pon" (*ibid.*: 235). As regards the Chukchi conceptions of *Va'irgin*, Bogoras (1904–9: 314) is even more indefinite. He is unclear if the name refers to an individual deity or is rather an appellative term for the entire class of spirits. However, *Va'irgin* "does not belong to those sacrificed to" (*ibid.*) and "plays no active part in mythology" (Jochelson 1908: 26).

This notion of the Supreme Beings as elusive and indefinable, having no personal or concrete features or any cult attached to them, was fully confirmed during my own spells of fieldwork. In fact both *Pon* and *Va'irgin* are almost completely unknown to the majority of present-day Yukaghir and Chukchi. Whenever asked, they would shrug their shoulders in dismissal and say "who knows?" or "never heard of it". Only one Chukchi elder and a type of shaman came up with a somewhat more elaborate answer:

> *Va'irgin* exceeds our ability to comprehend and although we have given him a name, he eludes our naming with his many faces. You look around and everything you see, the reindeer, the snow, the sky and the sun are all *Va'irgin*. His eyes rest on everything and he sees through everything that exists. This is why we simply call him *Va'irgin* [meaning "Something Existing"].

What all of this implies, then, is that ethnographically speaking, *Pon* and *Va'irgin* hardly exist: there are no sacrifices or prayers directed towards them, and no myths explaining their whereabouts and deeds; the people themselves hardly know of them. In fact, they exist outside just about the entire ethnographic domain of empirical "fact". And yet I suspect them to be of paramount importance to the issue that interests us here, namely the fundamental nature of animism.

To show this, however, I need to return to the classical problem of "soul", which Tylor pointed out sits at the heart of animism (Stringer 1999: 552). How are we to understand the animist concept of soul and how does it, if at all, relate to indigenous ideas about the existence of a Supreme Being?

THE SOUL

In the Americas, many indigenous peoples of both the Northern Boreal forest (Hallowell 1960; Tanner 1979: 136; Burnham 1992; Brightman 1993) and the Amazon (Descola 1986; Viveiros de Castro 1992; Vilaça 2005) give emphasis to the theme of animals and spirits seeing themselves as humans see themselves. The same ideas are found among indigenous groups of Southeast Asia (Howell 1989; Valeri 2000: 305), Mongolia (Pedersen *et al.* 2007: 144) and northern Siberia (Jochelson 1926; Willerslev 2004, 2007: 86–110). To quote briefly Bogoras with regard to the much-feared evil spirits of the Chukchi, the *ke'let* (sing. *ke'lE*):

> [They] go hunting and fishing, and the old men sit at home and try to read the future by the aid of divining-stones. The object of their hunts is exclusively man, whom they usually call "a little seal". Their divining-stone is a human skull, while men often use for this purpose the skull of some animal ... After catching a soul, they chop it into pieces, cook it in a kettle, and feed their children with it ... [However] the ke'let are not exempt from the attacks of shamans, who can deal with them in the same way as they deal with men. The ke'let, on their part, call shamans ke'let. (Bogoras 1904–9: 294–5)

The far- and wide-spread phenomenon that we are dealing with here is what Viveiros de Castro has denoted "perspectivism". It is an ontology "according to which the world is inhabited by different sorts of subjects or persons, human or non-human, which apprehend reality from distinct points of view" (Viveiros de Castro 1998a: 469). Yet these are not alternative points of view of the same world, but rather result from a carrying-over of the same point of view into alternative realities. Accordingly, the *ke'let* see the world in similar or identical ways to human beings and behave just like them from their own subjective perspective. This, according to Viveiros de Castro, is because both humans and non-humans possess the same kind of intentional substance or "soul", and, as he writes, "the ability to adopt a point of view is undoubtedly a power of the soul ... [and] since the soul is formally identical in all species, it can only see the same things everywhere" (*ibid.*: 478).

The difference between viewpoints lies, therefore, not in the soul but in the specificities of *bodies*, with their distinctive dispositions for action and perception. Accordingly, while the *ke'let* go hunting for prey in the same way as the Chukchi go hunting for prey, *what* each class of beings sees as prey differs and depends on their distinctive kinds of bodies. Likewise, from the viewpoint of Chukchi, the *ke'let* have monstrous and terrifying features (Bogoras 1904–9: 294; [1910] 2007: 15; Dolitsky 1997: 28), yet, according to the *ke'let* themselves, they are the ones who are humans: that is, people pursuing a full social life and endowed with a human appearance.

My point in all of this is to show that animism and perspectivism are quite likely very closely connected phenomena (Viveiros de Castro 1998a: 472–4), or, as Morten Pedersen

(2001: 421) states, perspectivism is the strongest form of the general animist belief in human–non-human sociality. Its elementary premise appears to rest on a pertinent division between an "inner spiritual soul", concealed beneath an "outward material appearance". Whereas the former is anthropomorphic and independent of its variable outward form, the latter is likened to somatic "clothing", which may be exchanged so that one takes up the viewpoint of another being (Viveiros de Castro 1998a: 471). Indeed, when reading through the various ethnographic studies listed above, we find numerous examples of shamans, hunters and warriors covering themselves in outfits resembling an animal's or ancestor's outward form so as to take on their corporeal powers and perspectives (see e.g. Chaussonnet 1988; Hamayon 1990; C. Humphrey 1996; Willerslev 2004; Vitebsky 2005; Pedersen 2007).

Hence, at first view, Viveiros de Castro's (2001: 33) assumption that the animist concept of soul is a "given" dimension of the body, in the sense that it is identical for all beings and not the product of transformation (or at least not in the way the body is), appears to be supported by much ethnographic evidence. Yet, when confronting ethnographic details of the body–soul interface among various indigenous groups, ambiguities crop up, which obscure or at least complicate the logical consistency of Viveiros de Castro's theory.

Above all, one cannot fail to take notice of the widespread tendency to conceive the soul as something quasi-physical, rather than spiritual. Indeed, when taking a hasty glance through the enormous ethnographic literature on soul conceptions among indigenous groups, it is hard to find any examples whatsoever of an altogether immaterial soul. A similar observation is made by Åke Hultkrantz (1953: 391) in his massive compendium of North American soul conceptions: "The soul is ... vested with a not inconsiderable measure of coarse materiality, which has sometimes surprised European investigators."

The Chukchi are a case in point. Their term *uvi'rit*, which is usually translated as "soul" in Russian anthropology (Gorbacheva 1985: 12–17), belongs to the linguistic root *uvi'k*, meaning literally "body" (Bogoras 1904–9: 332). In fact, there is an important sense in which Chukchi souls are a form of body. This is best illustrated by describing the workings of a small wooden amulet in the shape of a human figure that is regularly "fed" with tallow or bone marrow. The amulet is called *ka'mak-lu'u*, meaning "wooden face", and is fastened in the armpit of a person's outer clothing or to his belt (Willerslev 2009: 697). It is said to provide its owner with the body of a *ke'lE*, whereby his own body becomes protected against predation from these "cannibal" spirits, who will see him as a fellow human being as opposed to animal prey and leave him alone. The principal idea is that the person attaching the amulet to his body turns himself "inside out", so to speak, in that his own body becomes the soul of the *ka'mak-lu'u*. Hence, what compromises the "inner" soul and the "outer" body is a matter of perspective: from the viewpoint of the *ka'mak-lu'u*, the person's body is the soul, whereas, from the human viewpoint, the *ka'mak-lu'u* is the soul (*ibid.*). Body and soul are, so to speak, "reversibles" (Corsín Jiménez & Willerslev 2007: 538).

This leaves us with the problem of accounting for the coexistence of two seemingly contradictory sets of animist beliefs about the nature of the soul. On the one hand, the soul is seen as a common spiritual essence distinct from the body, which is conceived of as a form of "clothing" and through which alterity is apprehended as such. On the other hand, no clear division exists between body and soul, appearance and essence, or outer and inner, and each pair can be mutually reversed. Can these two apparently opposed conceptions of the soul be integrated in a logically coherent way?

Aparedica Vilaça's study of how the soul is connected to the body among the Wari' of lowland Amazonia constitutes an apt entry point in this attempt. Among the Wari', she writes, the reality of soul "lies in the eyes of others" (2005: 449), which is therefore not a subjective experience but "constituted within relations" (*ibid.*: 456). A given person's soul, human or non-human, is visible to other persons, but in the form of a body. However, if those others perceiving the soul belong to another kind of people, such as animals or spirits, they will see it as radically different from the way in which the human subject sees his or her own body (*ibid.*: 455). Thus, the soul represents the capacity of the person to adopt a multiplicity of bodily forms as seen from the external perspective of others. However, Vilaça is at some pains to point out that in Amazonian perspectivism, the different perspectives never add up to a whole; thus "any totalization of the body is impossible" (*ibid.*: 458).

I will return to this latter point. For now I will point out that it follows quite logically from Vilaça's account that "duplicity is the law of every being and every event" (Lima 1999: 121). A Chukchi person's soul will display one reality for his fellow human beings and another reality for the *ke'let*. To humans, his soul is in fact identical with his human body, or rather it *is* his body, whereas it is the body of a "reindeer" or a "seal" in the eyes of a *ke'lE*. The soul becomes in this way the person's "double body".

May we then conclude with Vilaça (2005: 455) that the animist soul is in fact the body, whose actualization as a specific kind of body depends on the eyes of the person, who is looking?

I believe we still face a problem, which begins with the acute question of "translation between cultures". So far, I have uncritically followed Tylor among many other anthropologists, and used the English word "soul" to represent indigenous concepts. However, this word is quite clearly misleading. The soul in our Judaeo-Christian discourse is part and parcel of an ontological opposition of "spirit" and "matter", which implies that the soul is immaterial. However, according to animist perspectival thinking, as we have just seen, the soul is nothing of the sort. Quite the contrary, in fact: it is a body! Even beings that are said to hunt for "souls", such as the *ke'let* among the Chukchi (Bogoras 1904–9: 294–5), the *bas* among the Chewong (Howell 1989: 104) and the *abasylar* among the Yukaghirs (Willerslev 2007: 82), never actually see souls. They see "meat", "reindeer", "seal" and "elk" – so, what they see is as a matter of ethnographic fact bodies.

Does this then mean that the soul as something essentially invisible, ethereal and ghostlike does not exist in animist perspectival thinking? I venture to suggest that it does. In fact, I will set out to show that among various indigenous societies we find ideas about a soul, which operates on a purely spiritual plane, thus escaping the embodied infra-human perspective of any actual being. Indeed, it is from this articulated extension of perspectivism that I believe that we may finally comprehend the animist concept of a Supreme Being.

THE TOTALITY OF VISION

This, however, will require a slight detour away from ethnography and into the philosophy of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, whose theory of perception proposes a radical break with our intuitive, common-sense understanding of vision as located where our eyes are:

> When I look at the lamp on my table, I attribute to it not only the qualities visible from where I am, but also those which the chimney, the walls, the table can "see"; but back [*sic*] of my lamp is nothing but the face which it "shows" to the chimney. I can therefore see an object in so far as objects form a system or a world, and in so far as each one treats the others round it as spectators of its hidden aspects and as guarantee of the permanence of those aspects. (Merleau-Ponty [1962] 2002: 59)

Let me explain this somewhat cryptic passage, which pushes vision into the animist realm where every object grows eyes and stares back. Given that our perception of an object always takes place from one perspectival point of view or another, we can never see the object in its totality but only partly. There will always be a "hidden side", which remains absent from our direct view. Nevertheless, we immediately presume that there is more to the object than what is exhibited to our "naked eye". If this were not so, we would experience the object as a two-dimensional façade and not as a fully fledged three-dimensional reality. So there is a sense in which we see the object as having sides that are hidden from view. Merleau-Ponty explains this by arguing that it is because our own perspective is entangled in a vast sprawling web of viewpoints, which surrounds the focal thing and provides the supporting context for that side of the object which is in view at any one time, that we experience it to be deep or solid rather than just flat. Without this matrix of other viewpoints, weaving the object through to its core, the directly given aspect of the thing would simply lose its sense of depth and volume – that is, it would lose its three-dimensionality. It is, so to speak, "because vision is 'everywhere' that we as perspectival beings are able to see things from 'somewhere' – that is, from one particular viewpoint or another" (Willerslev & Ulturgasheva 2007: 92). In other words, we do not simply see by our own power or force, but are dependent on an anonymous or general vision, which is already in place, waiting to assign us a place within it.

Merleau-Ponty calls this primordial anonymous totality of vision the "view from everywhere". This does not imply a leap into an otherworldly "beyond". Not at all: the "view from everywhere" is embedded in matter – in things, objects and bodies – and, as such, it does not exist in some higher plane. While we can understand it imaginatively, we can never actually see things in their totality, simply because seeing in its nature is embodied and therefore perspectival. Even so, "the view from everywhere" is a viewpoint that we cannot do without. It underlies every perspective as the invisible background that allows things to stand out in their visibility. As Merleau-Ponty ([1964] 2000: 187) expresses it: "the proper essence of the visible is to have a lining of invisibility ... which it makes present by a certain absence". In other words, while the "view from everywhere" implies the world seen in totally clear and unambiguous visibility – that is, the world as laid bare in absolute transparency – it is a view that must "hide itself" in order for the visible world to appear before our eyes. As such, the "view from everywhere" is a view that cannot be an object of our own perspectival seeing except "negatively", that is, by its *absence* (Holbraad & Willerslev 2007: 334).

Now, this anonymous primordial totality of vision, which is situated here, there and everywhere all at once, is more or less analogous to what Gilles Deleuze (1988: 111) calls the "virtual", understood as the primordial visual force that exists beyond the organic limitations of actual seeing beings and which is most adequately expressed in pure thought. However, I also venture to suggest that it finds its creative equivalent in the

Yukaghir and Chukchi notions of *Pon* and *Va'irgin* and in the so-called Supreme Beings of other animist societies. These essentially elusive and impalpable creative forces represent a *pre*-perspectival vision marked, as it were, by an anonymous or general seeing, which underlies any bodily perspective as its vital or animating principle (Willerslev 2006: 34). Indeed, this explains why *Pon* and *Va'irgin* go under such unidentified names as "Something" and "Something Existing", because they are nothing but the unlimited "One-All" (Deleuze & Guattari 1994: 35, 38): the virtual primordial totality that sees without limits and distances in a single movement of spirit. Likewise, it comes as no surprise that no myth refers to them and no offerings or prayers are made in their honour, because this would entail reducing them to some kind of corporeal creature with specific and therefore limited visual capacities.

But if *Pon* and *Va'irgin* are the pure viewpoint that intuits the whole of reality, then what do they in fact see? In the terminology of perspectival theory, they can only be seeing the full spiritualization or dematerialization of life, which is the *soul* of things. As the anonymous and unlimited expanse of vision, the Supreme Being thus defines or makes visible the soul, which is the body seen in its totality or absolute visibility, leaving nothing hidden – that is, the body seen from *all* sides, in *all* relationships *all* at once (Holbraad & Willerslev 2007: 335). The soul, in other words, is nothing but the body grasped in a single totalizing view. Vilaça (2005: 458), therefore, is quite right ethnographically when she holds that within a perspectival cosmology "any totalization of the body is impossible". However, anthropologically she is not right *enough*: it is the anonymous primordial totality of vision, ascribed to Supreme Beings like *Pon* and *Va'irgin*, which allows for a perspectival concept of soul to arise in the first place. The real "starting point" or origin of the animist soul is, therefore, the virtual primordial totality of vision, which is in fact a "phantom ideal" (Derrida 1995: 244) and not an actual thing to be seen – the reason why no creature within the perspectival cosmologies ever sees souls.

VIRTUAL ANIMISM

With these observations in mind let us turn to the key question that interests us here, namely the nature of animism and how we are going to study it. It should be clear from what I have been arguing that the route toward taking animism seriously does not lie in the old animist thesis of Tylor, which proposes that indigenous ideas about the soul belong to a different stage than ideas about a Supreme Being. Quite the opposite is in fact true. Without the awareness of some kind of an "all seeing" being, even if only vaguely recognized, there could be no concept of soul *as such*. This is the germ of truth in Lang's (1898) and Marett's (1909) rejected doctrines of "high gods" and "animatism" in "primitive" societies.

In addition, it seems equally clear that it would be a mistake to take our interest in animism in the direction of further empirical investigation into what indigenous people say about spirits, souls and animal persons or how they engage with them in everyday practical life. As already shown, the animist awareness of a Supreme Being exists outside just about the entire ethnographic domain of empirical "fact". Thus, we find no sacrifices or prayers directed towards it, and no myths explaining its whereabouts and deeds. As such, the animist Supreme Being does not belong to the world of the actual or empirical,

but is a purely contemplative abstraction. Still, its presence is highly *real* in that it sustains any of the divergent forms of actual perspectival bodies, without which they could not be actualized as particular kinds of persons: human and non-human, prey and predators alike. A good deal of contemporary anthropology's misinterpretations of animism, I venture to suggest, derive from the fact that it has focused almost exclusively on its actual ethnographic manifestations in hunting, shamanism and warfare, thus leaving the anthropologist blind to the importance of its virtual condition. This condition, I have shown, is the existence of a primordial and self-determining force, at the very limits of human comprehension. We might cautiously follow Lang and think of it as a god, so long as we remember that this God is thinkable precisely only as unthinkable and that it is not itself presentable and is nowhere to be found, making itself present only through absence. In any case, its reality exposes the shocking truth that the animism problem is essentially a metaphysical issue, not an empirical one.

NOTE

1. This chapter is based on an argument developed in my "Frazer Strikes Back From the Armchair: A New Search for the Animist Soul" (2011a).

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Shamanism and the hunters of the Siberian forest: soul, life force, spirit

Roberte Hamayon

Shamanism is often seen as the paragon of animism. Shamanism has been the object of approaches so diverse (and is itself so multiform) that a short recap is essential before coming to the exemplary case of the hunting peoples of the Siberian forest in the pre-Soviet period. They are exemplary, first, because it is from the language of the Tungus people that the term "shaman" comes. But they are exemplary especially because shamanism occupies a central position in their societies: it governs hunting according to animist conceptions which legitimate it and make it possible; it manages the ensuing relations – both with the natural environment and within society. And this conception adapts to other contexts, as I will show through an outline of the concept of spirit in contemporary Siberia.

A WESTERN CONCEPT

The concept of shamanism is a Western construction, which developed in several stages. The first observers (at the end of the seventeenth century) were Russian Orthodox clergy for whom the shaman was a religious character and a dangerous rival suspected of being in the service of the devil because of his extravagant cries and gesticulations, in contrast to the restrained contemplation of the Christian (van Gennep 1903; Pascal 1938; Delaby 1976; Hamayon 2003; Stépanoff 2005). This perception anchored the idea that in shamanism there is a link between the state of the soul and bodily expression.

One century later, under the influence of the Enlightenment, observers presented the shaman as a charlatan who exploited popular credulity. Both were culpable: the exploiter, but also the people, credulous and ignorant. In reaction, a Romantic current later took the shaman for a noble magician in touch with nature, though this bookish creation had scarcely any impact. In the middle of the nineteenth century – the great epoch of colonial expansion – the image of the shaman changed (Flaherty 1992). In Siberia, doctors

and administrators saw in shamanic behaviour a sign of mental or nervous pathology (Ohlmarks 1939). Indeed, to defend themselves in the face of colonial pressure, indigenous peoples buttressed their rituals by claiming for them therapeutic value so that they could be tolerated by the authorities. Shamans and patients were henceforth encompassed within a psychopathological lexicon and accounts were peppered with the terms "cure" and "recovery" (Olivier de Sardan 1994). The idea that "shamanizing" was good for the health became widespread. This was the moment when the West discovered psychoanalysis, whose influence marked the apprehension of shamanism until after the Second World War. The Californian counter-culture of the 1960s reversed these values, idealizing shamanism as a universal spiritual quest based in real embodied experience (Atkinson 1992; Kehoe 1996, 2000; Hamayon 2004; Francfort *et al.* 2001). In fact, the role played by the body in the shamanism of Siberian hunters before the Soviet era was quite different. The view of the shamanism of Siberian hunters presented below sums up the results of a previous study based on the abundant documentation available, especially in Russian and Buriat, and on personal fieldwork (Hamayon 1990), and reinterprets them in the light of subsequent research and recent debates in anthropology.

SHAMANISM AND HUNTING AS A WAY OF LIFE IN THE FOREST AND THE SPIRITS AS PARTNERS

The Tungus verb *sama* means "to shake the lower parts of the body" when one speaks about wild animals, and "to act in a shamanic manner" in a ritual context. The other Siberian languages also qualify shamanic ritual conduct in terms of similar animal gestures. This terminology contributes to give a concrete idea of the worldview that these rituals stage.

For these peoples, the taïga (forest) is "rich" with game and is the key to their survival: they feel at home in this vast, flat, nourishing universe. Humans are just one species among others (see Hamayon 2010). Since animal species eat one another, this makes humans part of the food chain that ensures the viability of forest life. Shamanism is in the first instance a symbolic procedure aimed at securing the best possible benefits from this connection with the environment. It consists in establishing and managing "relations" with animal species.

Conceived on the model of relations between humans, these relations rest on the idea that the body of the animal is "animated", just like the human body, by a spiritual component or soul, which is endowed with intentionality. The soul is supposed to reside in the bones and to be nourished by the "life force" located in the meat (or flesh) just as the body is nourished by the meat. Our expressions "soulful" and "soulless" help us to understand this concept of the life force. Life force is a substance that may vary in quantity and quality during life time and *circulates* between species to keep them living and animated as will be explained below. By contrast, the soul is an individual entity held to survive after death and then be reborn for a new life strictly *within* the same human line or animal species. Thus, both soul and life force are indispensable to the body for it to be living and animated, although in different manners.

However, the distinction between "soul" and "life force" is eclipsed by the terminology of animism, which resonates both with *animus* and *anima*, and merges these two different

concepts whose implications diverge. Likewise, both are encompassed in the notion of "interiority" as put forward by Descola and defined in opposition to physicality, a notion that encompasses the body and all physiological processes (Descola 2005: 168–9). Our analysis of Siberian data shows that such merging of the notion of soul (an individual entity) and life force (a substance) would make it impossible to understand the process of exchange between the human community and the wild animal species, as we are going to see: souls are reused within human lines or animal species from one to the other generation, while life force circulates between them.

To enter into a relationship with a species it is necessary to address its "spirit", a kind of generic soul not linked to any particular animal and therefore not concerned by the cycle of life and death.[1] Thus, the spirit of a given edible species is held to control its living members (as a stag, not as a herder), and hence to be able to give the hunters access to their bodies without interference of their individual souls.[2] Therefore the hunting community proceeds to engage in interactions with the spirits of edible species and treat them as partners in a socially correct manner. This partnership requires human compensation as the price for the animal spirits' gift of game.

THE EXCHANGE OF FLESH AND LIFE FORCE BETWEEN HUMAN AND WILD SPECIES: *MORS TUA*, *VITA MEA*

The exchange relation is conceived as follows: just as humans are nourished by feeding on game, so the spirits of wild species consume the life force of humans. It is the order of things that humans lose their vitality with the passing of years and die. There is no shamanic "cure" for this. If a person is lost in the forest or drowns in a river, then the hunters think that the spirits will have been reimbursed for game or fish taken (Gracheva 1976: 58; Homich 1976: 21). To fall prey to the animal spirits is the prize for having been fed during one's life and the guarantee of future food for descendants. More precisely, humans are supposed to fall prey to the spirits of meat-eating animals on behalf of the main spirit in the forest (see note 1). The ideal death is one which awaits the hunter when, having become a grandfather, he leaves for the forest "to return" to the animal spirits (Zelenin 1936; Lot-Falck 1953). The prospect of human death justifies that of game. Each in turn is devourer and devoured. Mutual consumption defines life and death to all who live in the forest.

With reference to death, animal bones, like those of humans, are deposited in high places, in trees or on platforms called "aerial tombs". The soul lodged in the bones of an individual is supposed to be recycled and then return "to animate" a new individual of the same human line or the same animal species.[3] It never transfers to another species; therefore there can be no transformation of animal into human or vice versa in the logic that underlies ritual practices (even though this can happen in narratives). Its reuse through generations ensures the integral reproduction of human lines and animal species. Only the meat or flesh and the life force it bears circulate between humans and animals, nourishing their bodies and souls. The hunter never says that he "kills" an animal (he "obtains it" or the animal "gives itself to him"); he takes only its meat and the life force it carries, and treats the bones so that it can be reborn.

THE SHAMANIC FUNCTION: PLAYING LOVE TO BENEFIT FROM THE EXCHANGE

The shamanic function is not restricted to establishing this exchange. It aims to create an advantage for humans. Born from an ideology of symmetrical reciprocity, it consists in making it possible, in practice, to bypass or deviate from it in order to obtain more "luck" in hunting. The catching of "luck" by the shaman is supposed to determine and foreshadow the catching of game, and this initiates a deliberate optimism on their part.

Such is the objective of the large, periodic and collective rituals which are the framework *par excellence* for the exercise of this function. These rituals bring into play all the aspects of this exchange, in particular the institutional framework through which it unfolds: that of matrimonial alliance. The shaman is the one charged by the community to represent the human partner in this alliance. During the ritual, he "marries" a female spirit of a game species. Thanks to his "spouse" it is as a *husband* and not as an abductor that he will be able to hunt in the realm of wild spirits for promises of game, that is, for a certain amount of luck, to redistribute among the hunters. Where fishing is important, his marrying a "spouse" in the aquatic world will give him access to the resources of this world.

The spiritual "spouse" of the shaman is imagined in the form of a female reindeer or elk, the best game in the taïga. She must remain an animal to be useful to her husband: she is socialized, but not humanized. She is a kind of generic wife and is never given a personal name: each shaman has one, supposedly "madly in love" with him. She is conceived as a permanent representative of her species who cannot be affected by the deaths of its individual members, who give themselves to the hunters "out of love" for them. She is supposed to command animals of carnivorous species which are regarded as the "brothers-in-law" of the shaman and who must cooperate with him in hunting. To unite with her, the shaman "animalizes" his own appearance during the ritual, but he remains human, because he acts in the name of his group; the animal appearance he adopts is superimposed on his human identity. He is dressed in the skin of a large deer and capped with a crown adorned with antlers, but these are made out of iron (Beffa & Delaby 1999). He imitates the deer's call, but also speaks and sings. He leaps, stamps, twists, butts with his head, or throws it back, but he never goes on all fours. The verbs used to describe these gestures constitute the vocabulary of the shaman's ritual behaviour. Beyond the ritual context, this vocabulary applies to the gestures of animal species in the mating season. The reigning intention is always for ritual behaviour to imitate that of dominant males whose chief role and activity is to perpetuate the species: repelling his rivals and mating with his female. The beat of the drum – which is struck with an upward stroke on the outer membrane – concretely evokes the sexual act. The fighting preliminary to the union is likewise affirmed in both gestures and words. In addition to the Tungus verb *sama*, let us cite the Yakut *oyuu* "to leap", the Buriat verbs *mürgehe* "to head butt (with respect to horned ruminants)", *hatarha* "to trot (of reindeers)", *naadaha* "to couple (of birds and fish)". In Mongolian, the costume is a "cuirass" *huyag*, and in Buriat, "armour" *zebseg*, and the iron crown bears a deadly dagger in the middle of the front.

The "marriage" of the shaman is also evoked by a number of elements which, in the ritual, refer to alliance. The reference is sometimes very explicit: among the Chors, a small group of Turkish-speaking Altaï, the drum represents the "wife" of the shaman. It

is wrapped in a headscarf like the head of a Russian female peasant. It is placed within the yurt like a fiancée, and is abducted by the shaman as the bride is by her husband on their wedding day.

More fundamentally, the "marriage" of the shaman is evoked by the mime of a symbolic hunt which comprises most of a ten-day ritual. Indeed, hunting and alliance appear to be metaphors of one another, and the shamanic ritual stages this metaphor. Metaphor is to be understood here as defined by Lakoff and Johnson. For these authors, "the essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another" (1980: 5). The utilization of the terms of marriage for understanding and experiencing the hunt is the choice of the Siberian hunters which they express in a concrete and very realistic way. Thus, the metaphorical structuring of ritual action makes it possible to legitimate the act of predation by presenting it in terms of taking a wife (i.e. from a male's point of view of marriage: behaving as the "owner" of a wife, appropriating a wife) and the consumption of game in terms of the sexual act. This metaphorizing process, which entails words, gestures and objects as well, aims to mask the killing in the guise of a love relationship. In other words, claiming to relate to wild animals as to relatives belongs to the register of representations. This is an opportunity to show that rituals, myths, everyday practices, current speech and empirical observations are data with different statuses and therefore cannot be used in the same way and put on the same level in interpretations.

The whole of these rituals – and often even their names – are placed under the sign brought by the concept of "play". To play derives its sense fluently from verbs of shamanic action. The atmosphere is one of optimism and joy. A multitude of games brings the participants together, wrestling (in a sportive sense) body against body, dancing in the image of animals (especially grouse and other birds) at the mating season. Like the gestures of the shaman, the fight and the dance are of animal inspiration. The conduct of defence and perpetuation which they evoke are fundamental obligations which impose on everyone at all times. It is significant that it is games of this type which, nowadays in post-Soviet Siberia, constitute the main elements of the national or ethnic festivals, which themselves are called "games".

Whereas the shaman has to behave "as if" he were an animal to interact with animal spirits, the participants play among themselves, like animals, but in codified forms. To play in these ritual games is an obligation for everyone, and the shaman has to make this obligation respected: to make the participants play, such is his task during these rituals, which are sources of social cohesion and sources of communal identity. For young people, to play is, in the first place, through these games of sparring and sporting, to train and to prepare themselves for their adult roles of defence and reproduction. For the shaman's part, it is at the same time "to make present" the animal spirits and to interact with them. Let us note that this mimetic mode or, rather, dramatization which personalizes and gives dynamism to ritual action is held to have an effect on the spirits. The shaman's task usually also involves divination in order to influence the by definition random outcome of the ritual.

The shaman's interaction with the spirits also has a playful aspect. He should get the better of them, while respecting the loyalty due to them as representatives of the animal partner in the exchange. Such loyalty is indispensable to guarantee the perpetuation of the exchange. Its aim is to obtain more, and more quickly, (some) promises of game (by being as tempting as possible), while promising to return (some – as little as possible

and as late as possible) human life force (by being as crafty as possible). That is, both the promises extracted and those given are likely to remain relatively imprecise.

This is why the conduct of the shaman is always peculiar (or at least is perceived as such) during the ritual. Let us reconsider his imitation of a large deer. We saw him imitating an elk in all its virility during the major portion of the ritual; we see him doing it, at the end of the ritual, in its destiny as prey. He stretches out on a small carpet representing the forest, on his back, motionless, as if he were offering part of his life force to the hungry animal spirits. This virtual gift of himself is at the same time a promise to return to the spirits compensation for game taken and also an attempt to both reduce the numbers of those within the community who will die until the next ritual and postpone the moment of their death. But it may well be necessary for some to die to cement the exchange. Emotion is strong, the stakes are high. The participants are said to fear that the shaman may be devoured for good, even if he "pays" enough to save them temporarily from having to die. They fear especially his last act of divination which will define their longevity, since the point of impact, near or far, of each miniature arrow the shaman fires through the smoke-hole in the centre of the hut will be interpreted as fixing a person's life expectancy. Never among these hunting people does anyone forget that he will have "to return" one day for the game taken.

This entails a passing remark on the problems Siberian materials would pose for generalizing the perspectivist model that Eduardo Viveiros de Castro (1998a) and others have elaborated on the base of South-Amerindian references. The Siberian form of shamanism implies that humans and spirit animals are similar (but not identical) in essence and equal in status, but excludes their being symmetrical to the extent that their perceptions could be reversible. The hypothesis of their being symmetrical would merely preclude the ritual action from operating: strict reciprocity would exclude the very possibility for the shaman to get the better of the spirits in the exchange process. The shaman's marriage only socializes his animal-spirit wife without making her into a human being or a person, which would render the established alliance relation useless. Moreover, the male of the marriage alliance relation is always the human partner of the exchange and the female, the animal one; this is not reversible. Finally, the spirits who release game animals are those of edible species, whereas those who suck human life force, that is, who ensure the reciprocity of the exchange, are those of meat-eating species.

The shaman should get the better of the spirits because "luck", like game, is a kind of thing that is unpredictable and can only be available in limited supply as is any type of good which humans cannot cause to happen. "Luck" must thus be obtained in a symbolic way, which implies selection and personalization of those who have to perform the task. Any man can be a shaman, every young boy trains himself to imitate animal gestures and voice, but it is also necessary to know how to "seduce" and to "trick". So the community puts pressure on adolescents whom it considers most sturdy and skilful so that they engage with this function. Women can also be shamans, because they belong to the human community which lives by the hunt, but they are restricted to minor and private forms of ritual, and they never "marry" a male animal spirit.

This conception, which leads groups to rivalry through their shamans' endeavours to get more "luck", explains why shamanism cannot be used as an ideological support for a centralized authority, and why it is marginalized as soon as a society becomes hierarchized and centralized; a shaman can become neither pope nor king. However, this

conception survives the disappearance of the hunt, which explains the persistence of shamanic forms in other modes of life. The concept of "luck" applies then to other kinds of goods similarly perceived as impossible to produce: rain, health, fortune, happiness, and all forms of success (including, nowadays, success in commerce or on the stock exchange). The concept of luck always implies, as a corollary, being selected by the spirits and having the duty to reciprocate. And the spirits' choice is always interpreted in terms of love. The principle of ambivalence and of taking turns which accompanies this conception explains the difficulties encountered by Orthodox missionaries to anchor among these people the idea of absolute Good and Evil, or that of salvation. Conversely, it also explains the affinities of shamanism with certain contemporary currents of ecological philosophy and the spiritual quest for happiness in the here and now.

THE SHAMANIC TASK OF MANAGING THE SPIRITS IDENTIFIED AS THE SOULS OF THE DEAD

Charged with managing the exchange relation with wild animal species, the shaman must remedy that which is likely to block the perpetuation of both partners, the animal species and the human group. Taking care of humans is the shaman's principal task when society moves to cattle-rearing. Since cattle-rearing is a productive activity, the relationship of society with the world is modified as is its internal organization.

Subsistence is consequently regarded as depending on the ancestors from whom pastures and herds are inherited. One asks them to protect and to defend the pastures and the herd against robbers or wolves. The lineage chiefs direct the big, calendrical collective rituals marked by the presence of prayer and sacrifice. Prayer, because the human language of veneration and supplication is understood by the ancestors, and consequently words take precedence over gesture in ritual. Sacrifice, because domestic animals can be offered to them in return for benefits received. The tone is one of lament and coercion: one does not "play" with the ancestors, one complains to them, one begs them, one covers them with offerings. Within this collective framework controlled by the lineage chiefs, the role of the shaman is reduced.

On the other hand, the activity of the shaman increases in the private field, in relation to those spirits born from the souls of the unhappy dead – from those who died too early, or in a tragic way, and especially those without descendants through which to be reborn.[4] These souls are imagined as frustrated, greedy for revenge, bringing trouble to the living. As a result, some (living) people suffer from depression, anorexia (the dead soul having stolen that of the living), or, conversely, mania (the dead soul having installed itself in the body of the living). The shaman offers to these souls consolation and compensation so that they leave the living to live in tranquillity. Invited to make a ritual, he indicates by divination the dead person responsible, invokes it, and sings the ups and downs of its life. Then he intersperses his song with phrases said in the name of the dead, to express its misfortunes and thus to settle its account with the living. He lends it his voice and his body. He asks questions and gives answers in a dialogue of negotiation which leads to the neutralization of the dead soul's thirst for revenge and to the curing of the living patient it disturbs (this is the principle of the "cure"). He may even organize a venerative tradition to transform the dead into a guardian. This is what the Buriats call "making good

the bad dead" (Batorov & Horoshih 1926: 56). A shaman may also, for example in Korea or in Taiwan, ritually "marry" the soul of an unmarried dead young man and that of an unmarried dead young woman.

The practice of caring for the unhappy dead crossed into the veneration of the saints brought by the Russian peasants who came to Siberia. The category of the unhappy dead who have been made into venerated guardians accommodates not only some Christian saints, but also the souls of "communards" shot at the conclusion of the Paris Commune in 1871; they are supposed to have found refuge in Lake Baikal, and, from there, to give fish to the fishermen as a sign of gratitude for having been accommodated there (Mihailov 1965: 100–101). The development of this practice renders shamanic activity more subversive with regard to the traditional order of the society, just as it is a factor of transformation.

CONCLUSION

The forms of shamanism presented above appear closely dependent on particular ways of life. What of Siberia today, after seventy years of communism and almost twenty years of openness to the world of the market?

When the Siberian people, with the fall of the Soviet regime, were free to reconnect with their old and long-forbidden practices, they wanted to redefine their identity, and only shamanism offered them an authentic indigenous support. But which shamanism, and to do what? To obtain the "luck of the hunt" has value today only for those groups which still live by hunting in the forest, but their shamans have disappeared and the great rituals with them. The hunters themselves, in private, perform only elementary and rudimentary rites, being faithful to the principle of exchange with the realm of the game-giving forest, which they now call "nature". If the principle of exchange remains, the idea of "marriage" which implies the collective organization of ritual, has gone. In town, there are displays in museums or stage actors who provide a chance to see the shamans of the past, in costume and equipped with all their accessories: but they have become stilted symbols of a bygone culture.

Nevertheless, all these peoples claim shamanism as an emblematic identity. The local elites wanted to recreate the collective rituals and to endow shamanism, by reinventing it, with all that is necessary to create a religion. For all their efforts, only two seem to have succeeded. One is the introduction of a current of thought defining shamanism as a philosophy of "harmony with nature", aptly suited to support local environmental claims and to engage with global ecology. The other is the performance of "games" in which animals are imitated, also expressing harmony with nature; these are games, dances and songs that are taught in schools, but they suggest nothing shamanic at the ritual level, and in particular nothing spiritual; they are appreciated as reviving the players' life force, also understood as vitality.

If the hesitant attempts to establish shamanic spirits on a par with divinities failed, practices implying shamanic spirits were maintained, albeit transformed. They were adapted not only in relation to the current location in town, but also with attention to Westerners coming for "mystical tourism" (Merli 2010). The present-day spirits are reinterpretations of the two types of spirits that mattered in former times: on the one

hand generic spirits representing the world of living wild animals; on the other hand the souls of dead humans who having really lived are now endowed with a posthumous "life".

We may consider that the vague idea of wild "nature" associated with vitality that is developing today in urban context is a reinterpretation of the world of living animal spirits. Quite recently the idea of energy emerged, involving the appearance of all kinds of made up words using "bio-" as a prefix. But both nature and energy, as abstract concepts, differ from spirits of animal species associated with the forest, with which hunting obliged people to weave social bonds.

As for the souls of deceased humans, they are still divided into two categories. The ancestors are solicited collectively to restore social links and to reaffirm the right of their descendants to exploit their land. The souls of the unhappy dead demanding attention are mainly the souls of those shamans who fell victim to Stalin's purges. To deal with them means in a way to rehabilitate them, while mourning that tragic past. Both ancestors and wandering souls can be called upon collectively in general terms. But they are specifically and individually summoned up if direct and personal relations with the concerned dead are established. Only in this case can we say that singing invocations implies an expectation of efficacy, hence an attitude of belief in their existence and in the possibility to interact with them.

The examined data encourages a rather restrictive conception of animism in Siberian societies. An object is said to be "animated" if it is regarded as the abode of a spirit; it is not by itself a spirit for all that. Thus, still today, some artefacts made of various materials, natural or not, can be said to be "animated". The spirits which they house are either animal or human and must be "nourished" to maintain their "life force". These two types of spirit refer to two categories of "animated" beings: animals and humans. They represent two types of "other" for living humans. For this reason, I consider inappropriate and irrelevant the current classification of animated beings as "humans" and "non-humans". This opposition amounts to classifying all types of spirits as non-humans: it does not take into account that one category of spirits comes from *human dead* souls, neither does it take into account that the spirits of animal species are associated with *living animals*. Thus, it amounts to overlooking two other oppositions (between living and dead, and between empirical and non-empirical), which are at least as meaningful.

Plants may also be considered to be living, hence to also be animated and, in some Siberian societies, to have a soul and, therefore, intentionality. They are usually constant or provisional supports of spirits and sometimes merge with the spirits they harbour or accommodate in common speech. However, in the actual place of my research, no plant is by itself spirit. The reason for this is that plants lack the capacity of autonomous movement which is another attribute required for spirits in the logic of Siberian peoples' conceptual systems, and which specifically characterizes only humans and animals.

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NOTES

1. Thus, the Buriat characterize *Bayan Hangai* – "rich forest" – as a generic spirit imagined in the form of an elk that represents all the members of the deer family that are hunted for their meat.
2. Classifying animals and spirits in a unified category of "non-humans" makes analysis uneasy.
3. In spite of their having a soul endowed with intentionality as the humans, for the hunters of the Siberian forest the wild animals are not for all that "persons" as proposed by Tim Ingold (2000), Descola (2005) and others concerning other parts of the world. In particular, they are not called by personal names. Moreover in my research on Siberian conceptions of animals, I have never encountered the idea that "animals see themselves as humans" which is integral to the perspectivist argument.
4. The ancestors, spirits born from the souls of the dead of a kinship group, are treated collectively whereas the souls of the unhappy dead are treated as individuals and called by personal names.

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Bodies, souls and powerful beings: animism as socio-cosmological principle in an Amazonian society

Isabella Lepri

In my past work I have explored the construction of identity in relation to others in a Bolivian Amazonian society, through the ambivalent attitudes the Ese Ejja display towards non-indigenous and mestizo Bolivians. I argued that the Ese Ejja's ambivalence reflects their notion of identity as mutable, contextual and relational. The relationship described was characterized by self-debasement on the part of the Ese Ejja, who appeared to be saying, in contrast with an attitude often encountered in Amazonia and elsewhere, that they were not "proper" people. This I partly attributed to historical, economic and political factors, but I also showed it to be consistent with the indigenous strategy of avoiding direct confrontation with dangerous entities, as can be observed in their constant negotiations with powerful beings. In this chapter I wish to give an account of these powerful beings exploring the notion of *eshahua*, a principle of volition and agency shared by such beings and the Ese Ejja, often referred to in Spanish as "*anima*" (soul).[1]

The Ese Ejja can be described as "animist" in the sense that they endow some animals and plants with *eshahua*, although this idea needs qualification, as the translation as *anima* conceals a profound conceptual difference between the Ese Ejja and the Spanish term, namely that *eshahua* is substantial and tangible. It goes without saying, but I will say it anyway, that when I speak of Ese Ejja "animism" I do not mean it as a concept to be evaluated but as a phenomenon for us to understand. In other words I am not interested in whether they are right or wrong in talking about the *eshahua* of animals or plants, but what it means to them. Years ago, when I was a student I respectfully questioned Eduardo Viveiros de Castro's sincerity, suggesting to him that he either believed that white-lipped peccaries were humans or he was just patronizing the Arawete when talking about perspectivism, which really he thought, not unlike Tylor about animism, was a failed epistemology. Now, thinking about Ese Ejja ideas about *eshahua*, I concur with him that we are not in the business of either making judgements on others' epistemologies nor of finding new things to believe in. The Ese Ejja are also perspectivists (see Viveiros de Castro 1998a) and *eshahua* is the seat of

the point of view, which makes each being see itself as human and different beings as either predators or prey.

Before I turn to my ethnography, one word of caution is in order. For a long time I have been reluctant to discuss Ese Ejja cosmological ideas because I found that what my informants talked about was too "inconsistent". They talked about what "the ancient people said", referring mainly to mythical narratives and shamanic knowledge, but also quoted from the Bible and reported on what they had been taught in school. For reasons of convenience and focus, in what follows I concentrate on "the ancient people's talk", but I am well aware that this is an arbitrary distinction and that what people now describe as "ancient people's talk" is undoubtedly overlaid with meaning derived from missionaries and the state school. Moreover, people are full of doubts about some of these ideas which they voice frequently, depending on whom they are talking to. They will say to their children: "Don't go to the forest alone or *edosiquiana* will kill you", but to the missionaries they say: "It is just ancient peoples' talk". First, I am going to set the scene and briefly outline the basic principles of Ese Ejja cosmology, then I will turn to the powerful beings who inhabit the different regions of this cosmos, and finally I will discuss Ese Ejja "animism" or the meaning of *eshahua*. I am aware that what follows may appear as a somewhat lengthy catalogue but I firmly believe that when writing about Amazonian societies, especially little-known ones, it is very valuable to have detailed descriptions of local ideas, which contribute to the ongoing work of piecing together the enormous jigsaw puzzle of transformations of indigenous stories told across the continent.

ESE EJJA COSMOLOGY

The Ese Ejja, also known as Chama in Bolivia and Huarayos in Peru, are an indigenous Amazonian group of the Tacana linguistic family.[2] They live along the banks of the Beni River, in the northernmost regions of Bolivia, in the Departments of Pando and La Paz, and in the Madre de Dios province of southeastern Peru. Nineteenth-century sources describe them as nomadic (Armentia 1976) but, over the course of the twentieth century, they have progressively adopted a semi-sedentary lifestyle. Nonetheless, small groups frequently travel over long distances, and seasonal as well as permanent migrations are common. The centre of Ese Ejja existence is the river and the world of the living ends "where the river ends".[3] They insist that they have always lived by the edges of rivers and contrast this lifestyle with that of the "wild Indians" that lived in the forest, "like animals", or even like powerful beings. According to the historical record, riverine life would have characterized their history at least since the nineteenth century (*ibid.*) and today, the Ese Ejja live in established communities, in isolated households or in seasonal beach camps, but never in the forest.

A LAYERED COSMOS: FOREST, RIVER, SKY, UNDERWORLD

The forest is the domain of *edosiquiana*, the masters of game, and must be approached with great care. People should not enter it alone and should not live there permanently. The forest is the place of dangerous and often fatal encounters with the masters of game.

The river is one of the Ese Ejja's main sources of animal protein but the quest for food alone does not justify this residence choice. The Ese Ejja are good hunters and while they are also skilled fishermen, they consider forest meat by far preferable to fish.

The importance of the river resides in its role as a link connecting all the places the Ese Ejja visit, namely, the towns of Riberalta, in the Department of Beni, and Rurrenabaque (La Paz) and the Peruvian Ese Ejja communities near Puerto Maldonado in the Madre de Dios region. People undertake long and arduous journeys of several hundred kilometres to go and visit kin. These are the extreme limits of their direct geographical knowledge.[4] Importantly, under the water there is said to be a world inhabited by powerful beings called *ena*(water)-*edosiquiana*, who are the masters of fish, of which more below.

The sky is said to be divided into three layers: the first layer, where the clouds and the stars are, is called *eya tahua tahua*, the blue/green sky. Above the clouds, there is a river teeming with fish, and Ese Ejja are said to live along its banks since the mythical split of sky and earth. Moreover, Christian converts and non-Christians agree that above these layers there are *calles de oro*, streets of gold, where [the Christian] God lives, a description which echoes the golden city of Revelation (21.18).

People seldom talk of what is underground, but on more than one occasion I was told of someone being grabbed from below when they were digging in the sand for turtle eggs, and that a shaman had to intervene to free the victim. Maria Chavarría Mendoza dedicates a whole chapter to the "World under the ground" described by her informants as inhabited by very small relatives, *paisanos*, who are the original inhabitants, but also of other people who went there at different times and for different reasons (1996). "It is conceived as a closed space that can be entered through a hole. They say that following the hole one can go around the world and reach another dimension of reality that is Kueihana" (*ibid.*: 155). My informants said Cueijana was the land of the dead, which is where the river ends.

POWERFUL BEINGS

Powerful beings are identified with certain animals and plants and yet have the ability to engage with the Ese Ejja, to speak to them, feed them, influence them, harm them and also kill them. They are the ultimate "other" and proper sociality with them is impossible. Intercourse with them in most cases – with the exception of shamans – is fatal.

Edosiquiana

The suffix -*quiana* characterizes collective nouns, as in *eshoiquiana*, children, and *etiiquiana*, old/ancient people; therefore *edosiquiana* (*edosi* people or the *edosi* lot) is a category of beings rather than a specific one, but as Chavarría Mendoza points out, "the plural form has been lexicalized and, in Spanish, the Ese Ejja accept to say "*el edosikiana*" [singular]" (1987: 263).[5]

Edosiquiana own forest animals and breed them in corrals, like cattle, and they kill people who venture in the forest alone by shooting them with invisible arrows, which make them ill and eventually kill them. Sometimes they are said to cook people in large pots and eat them, thereby transforming them into animals. One day, I was on my way to visit a young man who had suffered from some kind of fit, when a woman stopped me

and warned me not to go and see him, that he would eat me. Later on, his father told me how a devil had entered his head. Another time, my old friend Peno said: "If you meet *edosiquiana* on your path you become ill and you die. He goes round with his pot. He cooks you and eats you and transforms you into an animal. Once you get home, you die, because he has cooked you and eaten you." Another man told me how his brother-in-law's father was killed by *edosiquiana*: "He was working in his garden alone, when *edosiquiana* attacked him. He came home looking fine but he told what had happened and after two days he died. *Edosiquiana* had taken his *yami*, his flesh/body, and left him his *eshahua*." According to Dejja Ai, *eshahua* is like another body, like another flesh that you can touch. Basi, Dejja's wife, told me *edosiquiana* cuts his victims open and takes their insides, then sews them back. He cuts the insides in small pieces and cooks them in his large pot.

It would seem that, between people and *edosiquiana*, normal sociality is impossible, however, *edosiquiana* also make shamans, teaching exceptional victims how to cure. When a man or a woman has been attacked, he or she suffers excruciating pains, but if they can endure them they go back to the forest to meet *edosiquiana* who disclose to them the secrets of shamanry and turn them into shamans called *eyamiquecua*.[6] (*E*)*yami* means body or flesh but also meat and the flesh of fruit and *-quecua* is a verb that conveys the action of piercing, with an arrow, but also of making a hole in the ground to plant, and of sexual intercourse. The body of the future shaman is pierced by *edosiquiana*'s arrow, and he or she learns to see and to extract the arrows that cause illness in others. Shamans are the only people who can be *edosiquianaja epeejji*, friends of *edosiquiana*, whom they can call upon to discover the causes of sickness or the origin of sorcery. I was told how "*edosiquiana* can tell you who the sorcerers are" and how they summon the dead, *emanocuana*, for this purpose.

In everyday talk, the curing powers of *edosiquiana* are overshadowed by their propensity for cannibalistic attacks on the Ese Ejja. Yet, in spite of the "diabolisation" (Meyer 1999) of powerful beings on the part of the missionaries, *edosiquiana* remain morally ambiguous characters. In myth, Deer – who is an *edosiquiana* – appears as a righteous man, who condemns lazy men who let their children go hungry, and he plants a garden, initiating agriculture; however he is also a cannibal: he eats the vulture grandmother, who in turn had intended to eat him. Deer is killed and left to rot by the vultures, who eat him, but he comes back to life, transforms them into carrion birds and takes Condor's daughters as wives, turning enemies into affines.

Enaedosiquiana

As I mentioned above, *enaedosiquiana* are powerful beings who inhabit the world under the rivers. They are said to be "like Ese Ejja", living in houses similar to the ones Ese Ejja live in, breeding pigs and cultivating plants. From the point of view of *enaedosiquiana* caymans are pigs and fish are maize, manioc and pumpkin: when the Ese Ejja fish, they are taking from *enaedosiquiana*'s gardens. Like the *edosiquiana*, *enaedosiquiana* provide the Ese Ejja with an essential part of their diet by growing fish crops, but if the Ese Ejja fish too much they become angry because they are stealing from their gardens. This is one of the reasons why they may kill them, by capsizing their canoes and drowning them. Occasionally, they emerge from under the river, luring people into their world to make them their spouses and never allowing them to return to the dry land. Children who swim in the river are often warned to beware of *enaedosiquiana* attacks. Many people, especially

young adults, associate *enaedosiquiana* with mermaids, *sirenas*, described as *gringas*, foreign white women, with long blonde hair and blue eyes, with large breasts and painted lips. They are half *gringa* and, from the waist down, half fish. Some say *sirenas* live in "Brazil", a foreign place downriver; others say they just live in villages under the water. Like other *enaedosiquiana*, *sirenas* prey on humans, enticing them to follow them into their world to marry them and never let them return. The figure of the mermaid is widespread in Bolivia and is found in the Andes as well as in the lowlands. Nathan Wachtel describes how the Urus call *serenos*

> beings of human appearance, small in size, which they describe as imps, naked, with long blue hair ... they live in rivers and water holes and they play either a silver flute or a drum that "shines like bronze". Their encounter is very dangerous, especially yielding to a kind of fascination, if one stares at them: then one is hit by a deadly disease, manifested in stomach and head aches and fits of madness.
> (1990: 203)

Wachtel's contribution is doubly enlightening because it reveals a continuity between the Andean and the Amazonian vision of the supernatural, in which foreign figures are incorporated, but he also reports on the existence of aquatic figures, half human and half fish, in the pre-Colombian pantheon, suggesting a superimposition of foreign and autochthonous beings (*ibid.*: 549). In the lowlands, this imagery is related to the *bufeo*, the river dolphin. Percy Fawcett mistakenly identified it with "a mammal of the manatee species, rather human in appearance, with prominent breasts. It follows boats and canoes as porpoises do ships at sea" (1953: 85). I have never seen or heard of a *bufeo* in the stretch of the Beni between Portachuelo and Riberalta, but there are reported to be many further downriver, below the waterfalls of Cachuela Esperanza towards Guayaramerin, where the Beni meets the Mamoré to form the Madeira River. Fawcett's report also suggests the presence of manatees, which fit the description given of *sirena*s. In the Ese Ejja representation of mermaids, there is also a strong sense of the danger and the attraction of the other. *Sirenas* are definitely not Ese Ejja. They come from the end of the river and, like other *edosiquiana*, they want to marry the Ese Ejja, and this union causes death.

Ecuiquia

Ecuiquia appears when a person dies and it is associated with the person's shadow. However, it is not ephemeral like a ghost; on the contrary it is said to be the body of the dead person, and to maintain the characteristics it had at the time of death. So, for example, when the body of a young Tacana man was recovered from the river, for weeks people said they saw him walking through the village at night, swollen and eaten by carnivore fish. *Ecuiquia* live in the forest, in trees, and wander at night, from dusk until dawn, looking for Ese Ejja to grab and eat. They are also said to spend time near water pools and eat raw fish-heads. One can tell they are present because they whistle.[7] *Ecuiquia* sometimes is called *cocoi*, a word used by the Spanish-speaking Bolivians to refer to the "bogey man". This is how I was first introduced to it by a group of young boys sitting and chatting at dusk by the football pitch. They told me there were many *cocoi*, male and female, and they lived in the forest. They were "like us", but completely black, even their

eyes, but on this point they could not agree: some said they were white. "They are all naked, they don't even wear pants. They are dead." They warned me to be careful in the dark and in the forest, because *cocoi* would eat me.

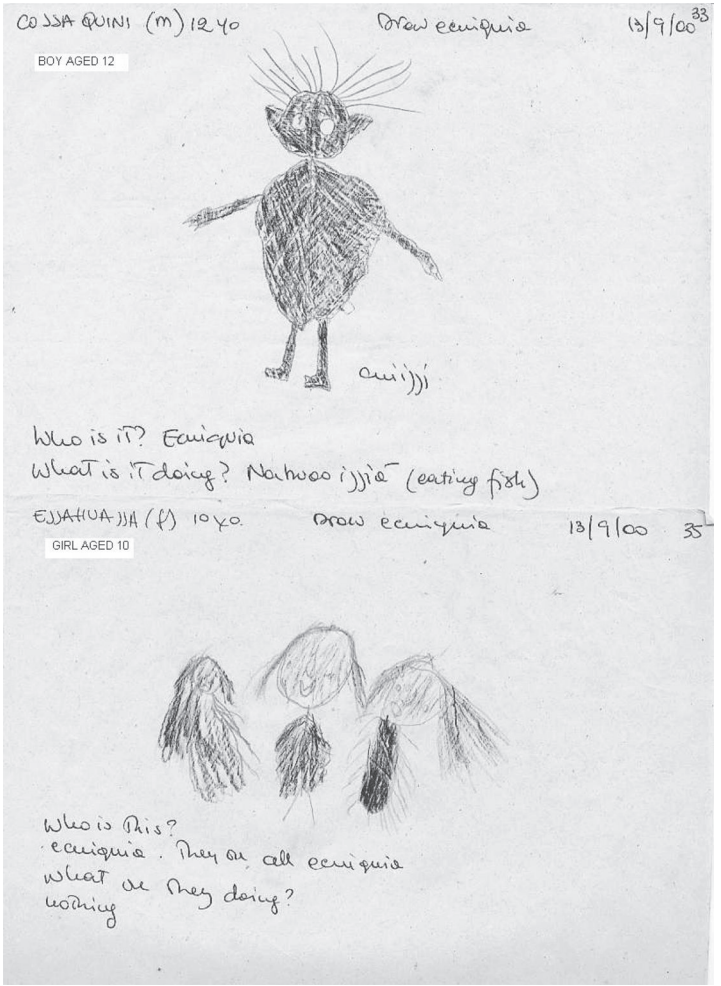
Ecuiquia are the opposite of people: they live in the forest, they go around naked, they eat raw food, they roam at night and sleep during the day. People have very strong ideas about their appearance, but while adults agree that they are tall and black, very hairy and with red eyes, large teeth and sharp nails, children give different descriptions. I asked eighteen children between the ages of six and thirteen to draw *ecuiquia*.[8] I was encouraged to ask about this after seeing girls aged six or seven, in the school, spontaneously drawing *ecuiquia* and *eshahua* on the blackboard. The drawings immediately show that *ecuiquia* look like human beings, except when they are very hairy, which is not always the case. They are not monsters; they do not look threatening and some even smile. Out of the thirty-five *ecuiquia* I collected, only two are described as cannibals ("they are going to eat people") – one of which is depicted as a jaguar, while the others are said to be doing nothing or to be going to eat fish by the lake.

In the drawings (see Fig. 23.1), there are families with female and male devils; there are children and cat and dog *ecuiquia*. Sometimes they are completely black and other times they are very colourful. This exercise revealed to me that children are very familiar with *ecuiquia*, although their attitudes towards them are ambiguous, as they do not seem to find them as horrifying as adults do. Sometimes they walk around at night laughing and saying *ecuiquia* do not exist, yet at other times they burst out crying if they are left to walk alone in the dark. Especially after a recent death, many people spotted *ecuiquia* wandering around the village at night, but they rarely admitted it to me; yet, occasionally, adults described how they became aware of *ecuiquia*'s presence. My "mother" Ino told me how, one night, as she washed the dishes, she had heard an *ecuiquia*, whistling in the trees and making a rasping sound. Immediately she had felt the hairs on the back of her neck stand up. In myth, *ecuiquia* always tries to eat his brother-in-law, by luring him into the forest. He wakes him at night and tells him to go fishing, and once at the lake, after poisoning fish, he tries to grab him. However, the man always unmasks him, because *ecuiquia*, who hides his face not to be recognized, gives away his nature by eating the fish raw. The man ends up scalding him with boiling water and chasing him off. In another narrative of this kind, *ecuiquia* follows a man who is hunting in the forest and steals all his game, then tries to capture him too. However, the hunter is cleverer and succeeds in neutralizing *ecuiquia* by impaling him with a spear. These stories cause merriment among the listeners, who laugh at the misfortunes of the clumsy creature. Interestingly, *ecuiquia* is an affine, "prototypical figure of alterity" (Viveiros de Castro 1998a), who tries to eat his brother-in-law; he is dangerous but he is not powerful, and ultimately, humans outwit him.

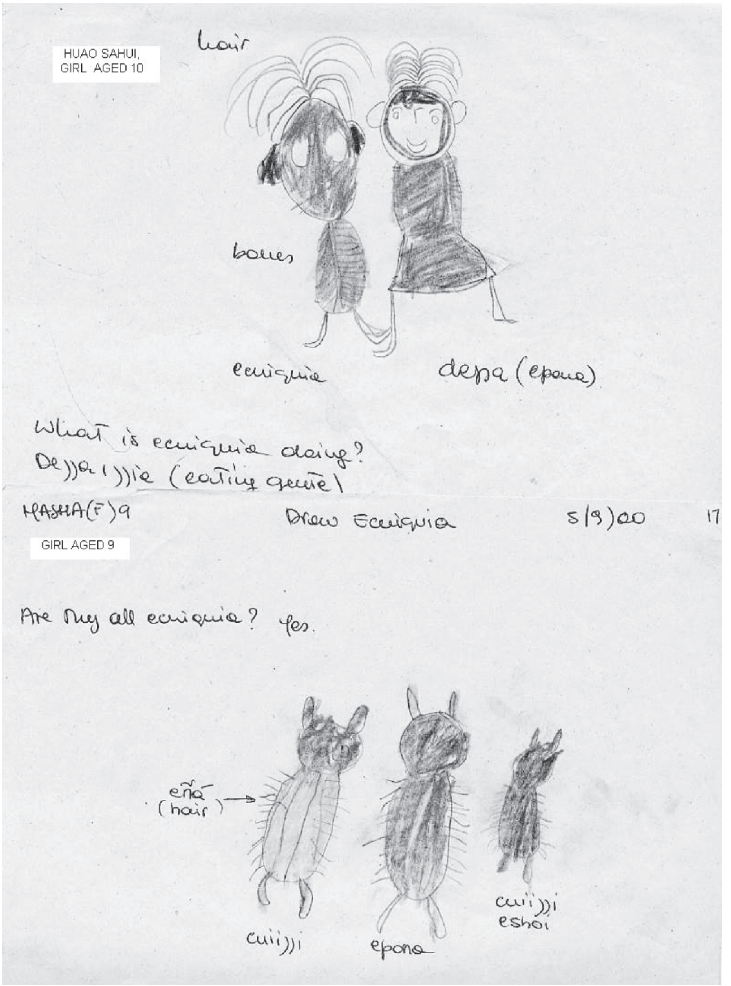
Duende

The Ese Ejja include in the number of powerful beings an imported demon called *duende* (widespread in Hispanic, Lusophone and Filipino cultures). When talking about it, they stress his attire, which is markedly foreign: he is fully clothed, with long trousers and boots, and he wears a large hat. But they also say "he" is small, "like a child", and has a long tail which he wraps around his victims. He comes out of a hole in the ground at night, during holidays, when it is raining slightly. He displays characteristics associated with

(a)


CO SSA QUINI (m) 12 yo
Draw ecniquia
13/9/00
33
BOY AGED 12
cuiijji
Who is it? Ecniquia
What is it doing? Nahuoo ijjiã (eating fish)
EJJAHUA JJA (f) 10 yo.
Draw ecniquia
13/9/00
35
GIRL AGED 10
Who is this?
ecniquia. They are all ecniquia
What are they doing?
nothing

(b)


HUAO SAHUI,
GIRL AGED 10
hair
bones
ecniquia
depa (epona)
What is ecniquia doing?
De jjo i jjie (eating quite)
MASHA (F) 9
Draw Ecniquia
5/9/00
17
GIRL AGED 9
Are they all ecniquia? yes.
eña (hair)
cuiijji
epona
cuiijji eshoi

(c)

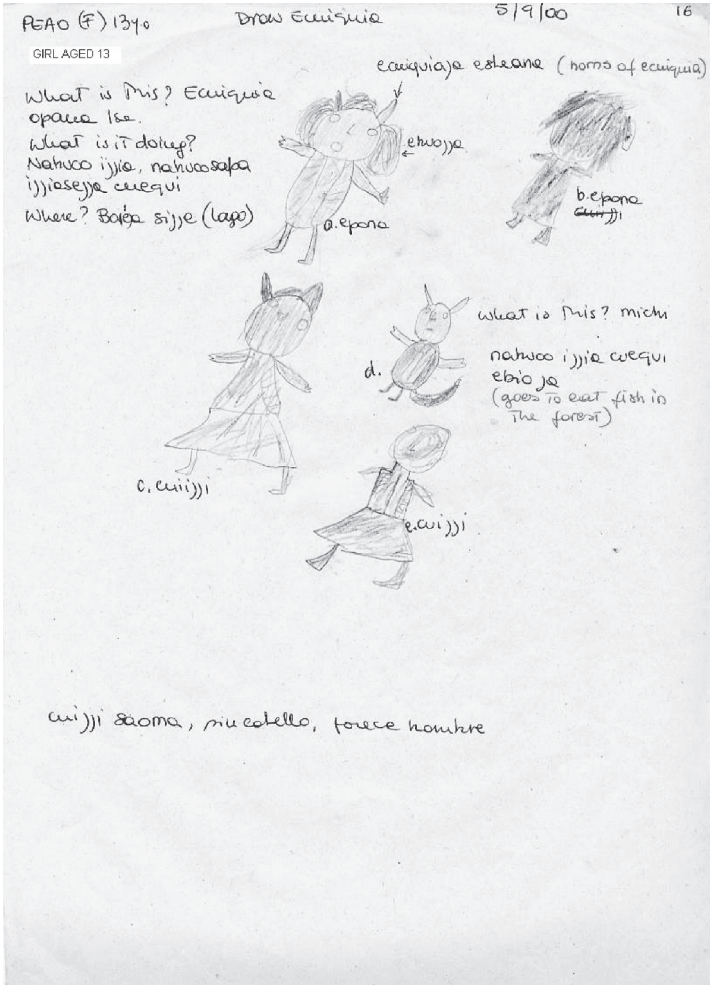


Figure 23.1 (a–c) Drawings of *ecuiquia* (copyright contributors).

non-Indians, such as the style of his clothes, and especially his boots and a hat, moreover his tail is like a whip. This suggests an association with *mestizos* and slave raiders, who otherwise make very rare if any appearances in Ese Ejja narratives. This may be another instance of the demonization of foreigners, as was described in the representation of mermaids as blue-eyed and blonde-haired *gringas*. But he also lives underground like *emanocuana*, the dead.

ATTITUDES TOWARDS POWERFUL BEINGS

When I asked about powerful beings at the beginning of my research, many people denied that they existed, even when it was obvious that they feared them profoundly. That was often the case with my "mother", Ino. One day, walking home from a visit to her sister-in-law in Alto, I asked her what *edosiquiana* was. Without hesitation, Ino declared that "he" lived in the forest and that when people walked in the forest alone, he grabbed them and ate them. She began to sound uneasy with my questioning, so I abandoned the subject until we were safely in the grounds of the school, then I asked again and at that point she told me that it was just a story of the ancient people and that she "did not think like that", meaning that she didn't believe in them. However, she never went to the forest on her own, and once we became closer, she started to tell me about *edosiquiana* and admitted that she never went out at night, not even to the latrine on her own because she was afraid of *ecuiquia*. The same attitude I found in her daughter Quisaa. Sometimes she told me she did not believe in *ecuiquia* or in *edosiquiana*, but then she gave me detailed descriptions of the habits and the dangers of these beings. She explained that people should never sleep on their own because if *edosiquiana* found some space in the bed, he would come in and attack them. She also told me how *edosiquiana* lived in the forest on the branches of the very tall *mapajo* tree (Ceiba pentandra, *Bombacaceae*), where he had his house, and there were roads and lorries running on them. He had shops and bars and lots of food. "At midday he opens his door and lets you in. He keeps you there for a week and then kills you. Sometimes he sends you home and when you get there you die." The presence of powerful beings affects people's behaviour in many ways: not only women and children refrain from venturing in the forest alone, but people take special precautions when they are particularly vulnerable, as in when they go to sleep. At night, my "parents" would always bolt the door, and eventually they admitted they did it to keep *ecuiquia* out. They also explained that there were two ways of resisting an *ecuiquia*: either by flashing a torch at it or by shooting it with a rifle. However, when, for a while, I was sleeping alone in the house next to theirs, Ino made sure I had a knife with me, suggesting that that too would have been useful to defend myself from possible attacks.

OF SOULS AND BODIES: ESE EJJA ANIMISM

For all their otherness, powerful beings have something in common with the Ese Ejja that other beings lack. My suggestion is that this is *eshahua* and this is what I want to turn to now. *Eshahua* is identified with the shadow projected by a body, and most often is referred to in Spanish as *espiritu*, spirit, *alma*, soul, or *sombra*, shadow. However, *eshahua*

has none of the ethereal characteristics associated with "spirit" and "soul" in Spanish and in English, because it too is considered to possess a solid, tangible body. *Eshahua* emanates from certain beings, but it does not coexist with them: it acts independently. In this sense, *Eshahua* is reminiscent of the *jam* of the Warí described by Aparecida Vilaça as someone's double: "Although it is related to the body, since it is from the body that it is constituted, the double is not simply a projection of it; it is mobile and has an existence somehow independent of the body" (1992: 55). The *eshahua* of humans is said to "come out" after death in triple form: as *ecuiquia*, who runs to the forest to lead a lonely restless life, haunting the path of the living; as *ecojjashahua*, literally the *eshahua* of the eyes or of the face, that goes to the sky;[9] and as *edojjoshahua*, that of the inside, which goes to *cueijana*, the city of the dead, where the river ends.[10] When *edojjoshahua* reaches *cueijana* it starts a new life as *emanocuana*, a dead person, which is very similar to the previous one. He or she finds a spouse, begets children and carries on his or her everyday activities such as fishing, hunting, making canoes and weaving mats. Moreover, he or she retains the memory of the living. He or she can be called upon by shamans at the request of living kin, enquiring after his or her health, and will go and talk, joke, eat and drink with them. *Eshahua* also manifest themselves in dreams: the Ese Ejja say that when a person dreams of a relative or a friend, it is because that relative was feeling nostalgia and their *eshahua* went to visit them.

Some animals and plants, namely jaguars, deer, vultures, anacondas, piranhas and red bananas, have *eshahua* which can cause illness and death in humans, when they fail to observe the appropriate behaviour in relation to food and sex. Such failure angers the master of the animal or the plant that was consumed and causes its *eshahua* to enter the body of the culpable person and eat him or her. Food taboos prescribe that, when any meat or fish are left over from one day to the next, the hunter must refrain from having sex until they have been eaten, or the food becomes *ebinatta*, causing anyone who eats it to become ill or die. Similarly, when a man or a woman collects certain fruits, they should be consumed before they have sexual intercourse, which is why young couples will often ask their children to cut down plants for them.

As I mentioned earlier, ideas and practices varied and younger people often declared that they ate, and fed their children, everything; that they had experimented and realized that there was no danger in plants and animals. Mi'Ai, who was a grandmother, said parents should avoid dangerous foods until their children reach their first year, but lamented that nowadays young people ate everything: "The ancient people taught us these things, but d*ejja* (*mestizos*) eat everything, and their children do not die." Cuaene, a woman in her late thirties, who has several children, said she ate everything because her parents were dead and there was no one around to tell her what she should and what she shouldn't eat. However, even the more sceptical admitted avoiding at least red bananas, considered the most dangerous of fruits.

A disease commonly associated with the *eshahua* of an animal is *tajja*, leishmaniasis. This is attributed to the piranha which enters and eats the body of a person who does not respect the rules of separation of food and sex. The only remedy for this disease is thought to be fish poison which can kill the *eshahua* of the attacking fish.

Finally, *eshahua* is also the active principle of sorcery. The most common form of sorcery is to put a red banana on the path of the victim to step on, so that sorcery enters the body through his or her feet. This kind of sorcery is called *ejiojji cuiajji*, which literally

means to pierce or to hit the feet: once the victim steps on the banana, he or she becomes ill and the only way of rescuing him or her is to cut the plant from which the banana came, to neutralize its *eshahua*. Interestingly, Andrew Gray (1996) reported how some of the most dangerous sorcerers in Arakmbut society come from other groups, such as the Matsigenka and Ese Ejja. According to the author, they perform *wa'i*, which means "footprint". "These sorcerers use footprints to work their magic with ayahuasca or some other form of incantation. However any part will do, such as nail paring, hair or bits of personal property" (Gray 1996: 164).

The cutting of the plant to avert sorcery is the same method used to neutralize the effects of the breach of food taboos. If a fruit has become dangerous because the person who picked it had sex before the fruit was eaten, the tree from which it came should be destroyed.

So what can we make of *eshahua*? It is an active principle; it has a body but it does not coexist with it; it can act independently; and yet the destruction of the body it emanates from invalidates the power of the action of *eshahua*. It is clearly not a "spirit" or a "ghost", as the idea of "anima" immediately suggests, although the old mind-spirit–body dualism is no longer a given in so-called Western epistemology, let alone in cross-cultural comparison. But, as I said, what is interesting to me is *eshahua* as a phenomenon, not as a concept. The way I understand it, *eshahua* is an active principle which makes interaction between certain beings possible: Ese Ejja, the dead, other people and powerful beings.

EATING THE SOUL

Killing by the powerful beings is always a form of voracious consumption as is also visible in the description of the *eshahua* of carnivore fish who eat at the body from inside and cause leishmaniasis. But what does this consumption mean for the Ese Ejja? Generally it is the mode of action of enemies, who try to eat you and take away your children as spouses. *Edosiquiana* kills and cooks his prey in a large pot, in which, some say, water boils without fire, and transforms them into animals. But this is not the celestial cannibalism of the Araweté (Viveiros de Castro 1992), where the souls of the dead are cooked in effervescent water – boiling without fire – in order to become gods and find celestial spouses. Nor is the effervescent water the medium of initiation as among the Warí (Vilaça 1992). *Edosiquiana*'s eating or being eaten is not constitutive of sociality, instead it is experienced as predation and a sign of the impossibility of proper sociality.

CONCLUSION: IRREDEEMABLE OTHERNESS AND COMMONALITY OF THE SOUL

In conclusion, I want to suggest that in this context, animism is a socio-cosmological principle. For the Ese Ejja, the other is everywhere outside the group of one's close kin and all others are potential enemies (see Lepri 2005); therefore, they are surrounded by enemies. The category of other includes affines who, in a social philosophy widely shared by Amerindian peoples, are considered a necessary evil: they are "dangerous but necessary" to "the perpetuation of the social group" (Overing 1986: 151). Ese Ejja who

speak a different dialect and live in a different place, referred to as "those who live/sleep somewhere else", stand at a further level of otherness. Further still are other indigenous people, non-indigenous people, Bolivians and gringos, as well as the dead and powerful beings.[11] But the otherness of the powerful beings is irredeemable and it cannot be turned into sociality. On the contrary, any contact with them, except for shamans, results in death.

Fear of the other is central to Ese Ejja life, where others are the beings that belong to the opposite Ese Ejja community, to the town, to the forest and to the underwater world. Portachuelo Alto and Bajo are full of reciprocal enemies, who gossip about one another, and are ready to send sorcery at the slightest offence, and the forest and the river are dangerous because they are inhabited by predatory creatures. But while distant Ese Ejja, dejja and even gringos can ultimately be domesticated, powerful beings cannot.

What is important about the powerful beings is not their moral status, but the effect they have on people: that they are dangerous, that they may make them ill and eat them, and measures must be taken to prevent them from doing so through shamanry, food prohibitions and counter-sorcery. However, sometimes measures are not sufficient, when somebody else's carelessness in separating food and sex, or somebody's desire to harm one through sorcery make the attacks from powerful beings inevitable. The possibility of death is constantly present in Ese Ejja everyday life, in the form of fatal diseases, especially for small children, of accidents on the river or during hunting expeditions, in the form of attacks from animals, such as jaguars and anacondas, and of sorcery attacks, which are all caused by the ill will of enemies. My suggestion is that these relations, social or antisocial that they might be, are possible because all these beings, including the Ese Ejja, share the possession of a point of view, that is, a soul.

NOTES

1. Linguistic note: at present there are two orthographies for the Ese Ejja language. The first is the one devised by the Summer Institute of Linguistics, adopted by the New Tribes Mission and employed in Bolivia. The second is the one in use in Peru, devised by the linguist Maria Chavarría Mendoza (1996). The first follows broadly the Spanish phonetic system, the second the international one. In this chapter I adopt the former, which is the one used by my informants. In quotations I have retained the spelling used by the authors.
2. Both names are considered derogatory by the people themselves.
3. This is where the mythic hero, Deer, escapes to, fleeing the fire of the envious people.
4. They are of course aware of the existence of other places, further away, such as the cities of Trinidad, Cochabamba and La Paz, but hardly anyone has visited them, and they are perceived as cold and dangerous. Finally, they are familiar with the names of places such as "the United States", because the missionaries travel there, and of "Italy", "Germany", "Holland" and "France", from the names of the World Cup football teams, but their notions of these places are extremely fuzzy. I was often asked whether Italy or the United States were in Bolivia and I realized that the notion of "Bolivia" itself was also rather different from the official one. The idea of the "state" (*el estado*) is informed by their notion of village and community and my friends always referred to Italy or England as my "*comunidad*".
5. The Ese Ejja agree that there are many *edosiquiana*, male and female, and that there are also children *edosiquiana*, but they do not have sex; instead children are conceived "with words", something unfortunately I never managed to get anyone to elaborate on.
6. People say that women cannot endure the pain as much as men, which is why shamans tend to be male.

7. This resonates with Gray's (1996: 180) description of the Arakmbut *toto*.
8. It was not a planned sample. Ese Ejja children are very independent and unruly. Not wanting to impose this activity as a task, I contented myself with those who were willing to come and draw for me.
9. On the fate of *ecojjashahua*, my informants were a lot less explicit, simply stating that it went to the sky. Some occasionally would say that it went to live with God.
10. According to some, the path to *cueijana* is the rainbow.
11. The Arakmbut associate *toto* (harmful spirits) with *Taka*: non-Arakmbut indigenous people considered "old enemies who used to attack the maloca in dawn raids to kill men and capture or steal women" (Gray 1996: 180).

24

Exorcizing "spirits": approaching "shamans" and rock art animically

Robert J. Wallis

The construct of "shamanism", hand-in-hand with "spirits", has been used in a very general sense to interpret a great variety of prehistoric visual culture, and rock art in particular. Engaging critically with this issue, I offer three examples of rock art, each of which is very different visually and in its cultural and geographic context, but all of which have been interpreted as "shamanic". First is the famous "shaft scene" from the Upper Palaeolithic cave of Lascaux in the Dordogne (c17,000–15,000 BCE; see Figure 24.1), which in a wide range of literature has been interpreted as an ithyphallic shaman juxtaposed with a bird-headed staff perhaps depicting a spirit-helper of some sort (e.g. Kirchner 1952; Lommel 1967; Davenport & Jochim 1988; Goodman 1990).

Figure 24.1 The Lascaux "shaft scene", Dordogne, France; Upper Palaeolithic, c17,000–15,000 BCE (copyright Claire Gaudion).

Figure 24.2 Engraved ostrich, Twyfelfontein, Namibia, c4000 BCE to 0 CE (copyright Robert J. Wallis).

Second is a rock engraving from Twyfelfontein in Namibia (c4000 BCE to 0 CE;[1] Figure 24.2), which is strikingly unusual in depicting something which is realistically impossible, a three/four-headed ostrich, but which when approached with the notion of shamanism, may be argued to represent a somatic hallucination wherein a shaman, in altered consciousness, has undergone an experience of transformation into an ostrich spirit-helper and in addition experienced polymelia, the hallucination of having many limbs (R. J. Wallis 1996a, 1999a; also see Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1989, 1993).

The final image is of the entrance stone to the Neolithic passage tomb of Newgrange in Ireland (c3000 BCE; Figure 24.3), highly decorated with spirals which may derive from the entoptic phenomena seen in shamans' hallucinations (see e.g. R. Bradley 1989; Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1993; Dronfield 1993, 1996a,b; R. J. Wallis 1996b, 2011).

These three examples of rock art imagery constitute the material "things" that I am concerned with in this chapter, while the "spirits" are the hallucinations apparently depicted in rock art and deemed central to shamans' altered consciousness experiences.[2] Addressing critically this shamanistic interpretation of rock art, I argue that by virtue

Figure 24.3 The highly decorated entrance to the Neolithic passage tomb of Newgrange (c3000 BCE), County Meath, Ireland (copyright Robert J. Wallis).

of a rational-materialist, mechanistic lens it tends to reduce shamans' experiences to neuropsychological hardwiring and propose that by instead thinking through rock art animically, we can exorcise "spirits" and relocate shamans within sophisticated ontologies and epistemologies.

"SHAMANISM"

The construct of "shamanism" and indeed the emphasis on shamans' engagements with "spirits" can be traced to the Renaissance and Enlightenment (see Flaherty 1992; Narby & Huxley 2001), when a distinctly modern notion of the shaman as an exotic noble savage, master of spirits and ecstatic visionary emerges. Crucially, while the origin of the term lies with Tungus speakers in Siberia including the Evenki, the discursive term "shamanism" is European in construction and applied etically; indeed shamanism becomes crystallized in the eighteenth century as universal and timeless, even held to mark the "origin" of religion. "Shamanism" at this time also becomes entangled with a comparable generic discourse on art and the artist, the idea of the artist as an outsider and genius whose visions-on-canvas are divinely inspired. Finds of cave art in the nineteenth century then lent empirical, chronological weight to the notion of ancient, universal origins for shamanism and art, reiterated their relationship as axiomatic and set the precedent for the shamanistic interpretation of art across cultures in the following century. As the three

images I opened this chapter with show, "shamanism" and "art" are often represented as apparently timeless, universal features of human experience, with an immutable relationship linking them, but these concepts and their interface are not fixed, unchanging and uncomplicated, but constructed, historically situated and contentious (R. J. Wallis in preparation b).[3]

In the twentieth century, interest in what shamans do became increasingly scientific, first psychologized as a form of mental illness in the work of Czaplicka (1914), Kroeber (1940) and Devereux (1956, 1961), among others, then rehabilitated by psychological anthropology as a form of psychotherapy (e.g. Grof 1975; Groesbeck 1989; Senn 1989; Krippner & Welch 1992). The inner workings of shamans' minds were of great interest, particularly what were classified as "altered states of consciousness" (ASCs), and there was a flurry of research on ASCs in the "psychedelic" 1960s (e.g. Prince 1967; Tart 1969). The experience of "ecstasy", moving outside oneself, or "journeying" to a "spirit world" in order to engage with "spirits", for Eliade (1964) and others, was viewed as the result of altered consciousness. Harner ([1980] 1990), most notably, popularized this idea, even going so far as to propose a distinct SSC, a "shamanic state of consciousness" (see also P. A. Wright 1989). As a result, while few scholars agree upon a discrete definition of shamanism, most do concur that shamans engage with a spirit world via altered consciousness, and these ASCs are often positioned, unproblematically, as definitive of their practices (for various community-oriented tasks including healing and the harnessing of weather and game animals). In rock art research, ASCs have been identified as benchmarks by, for example, Lewis-Williams (1998), Whitley (1992, 2000), Dowson (1999), Lymer (2002) and Loubser (2010), and I too have applied this shamanistic approach to rock art in Namibia (R. J. Wallis 1996a, 1999a), Ireland (R. J. Wallis 1996b) and Melanesia (R. J. Wallis 2002). But my thinking has changed. If with "shamanism" goes the "spirits" occasioned by "ASCs", then, problematically, "matter" must follow "spirit" in a Eurocentric dualism, and scientifically "spirits" must be hallucinations. Some scholars even go so far as to discuss communities with shamans as having shamanistic "worldviews" (e.g. Hardman 1995: xiii), with apparently "shamanistic" themes underlying their belief systems, typically based on a tripartite cosmology of upper, middle and lower worlds (e.g. Lewis-Williams & Pearce 2005). There is, then, a tendency to universalize shamanism based on the altering of consciousness, and so mark out shamanism as a coherent, enduring religion (oft cited as the "origin" of religion; e.g. Riches 1994; McClenon 1997), with shamans as arbiters of the production of a community-wide cosmology.

I, along with others, think this approach, focusing on the "altered states of consciousness" and inner visions (read brain-derived "hallucinations") of shamans, and situating shamans as the arbiters of ontology, limits our thinking on shamans and their communities (e.g. Hamayon 1993, 1998; Kehoe 2000; G. Harvey 2005a), and the production and consumption of rock art (e.g. Dowson 2007a). One problem is that shamans themselves do not talk about "spirits" in the sense that we mean "spirits" (that is, "hallucinations" not "real things"), nor do they draw the sort of hard distinction between spirit and matter which Western thinking tends to hold to. Darhad shamans in Mongolia, for example, use *ongon* – conventionally translated as "spirit vessels" (see e.g. Pedersen 2007: 150) – but while *ongon* are "ritual objects" of sorts they are simultaneously subjective, something like "spirits", *and* they are much more than this, resisting simple Western categorization. *Ongon* then, as "things", are not objective or subjective, are not "objects" or "spirits" in the Western

sense, because they stand outside our spirit/matter dichotomy. In more terse terms (as such because our language is challenged to accommodate this complex contradiction) an *ongon* "is an inherently polymorphous and labile entity, for it is irreducible to any singular form, and is always moving along the inchoate path defined by its propensity to transmute from one form to another" (*ibid.*: 156). So shamans have their own terms, situated within their own ontologies and epistemologies, which do not stand up to scrutiny as "spirits". Rather than imposing Western rational materialism which suggests that while shamans' experiences are valuable in social reproduction they are hallucinations nonetheless, or just plain wrong, I think we need to exorcize "spirits" and our determination of these as incorrect, to develop more sensitive approaches to shamans' experiences on (as far as possible) their own terms. I do not think I am stating the obvious here, certainly not in the case of rock art research, and next examine this problematic dualism in the scholarship in more detail.

SHAMANISM AND ROCK ART

The shamanistic interpretation of rock art has been a controversial part of archaeological discourse for at least twenty-five years. The proposal that certain cave art imagery may be derived from shamans' visions has been around since the early twentieth century, but the idea was reinvigorated in the late 1980s with two papers (Davenport & Jochim 1988; Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1988), the former rather less famous, now, than the latter. Davenport and Jochim's suggestion (following others, e.g. Kirchner 1952; Lommel 1967) that the "wounded man" in the Lascaux shaft scene might be an Upper Palaeolithic shaman had no great or long-lasting impression on rock art research, despite its innovative approach to apparent avian characteristics shared by both the human figure and the bird-topped "staff". In notable contrast, Lewis-Williams and Dowson's proposal of a "neuropsychological model" and its application to cave art imagery of the European Upper Palaeolithic had a significant and important, albeit contentious, impact.

Lewis-Williams and Dowson's (1988) neuropsychological model proposes three, loosely defined stages of trance: stage one, perception of *entoptics* (geometric "hallucinations" produced within the eyeball); stage two, construal of *entoptics*; and stage three, perception of *entoptics* and iconics. In all stages, imagery may be subject to seven principles of visual transformation: replication, fragmentation, integration, superpositioning, juxtapositioning, reduplication and rotation. In more detail: in the first stage, subjects spontaneously perceive *entoptics*, classified into six principal types: grids, lines, dots, zigzags, catenary curves and filigrees. In the second, "construal", stage, subjects attempt to make sense of these geometric shapes and construe them into culturally recognizable forms: a Western subject might perceive an entoptic grid and might construe it into the string-grid of a tennis racket, while a San (Bushman) shaman might construe an entoptic grid into the shape of the honeycomb associated with powerful bee helpers. In the third, "*entoptics* and iconics", stage, subjects may perceive both entoptic and culturally derived iconic imagery. In this latter stage also, when the trance is at its most intense, subjects may feel they are a part of their imagery: in one neuropsychological experiment, a subject thought of a fox and instantly became a fox; the *therianthropes* (composite human-animal images) in San rock art and European Paleolithic cave art may be associated with such experiences.

This neuropsychological model has since been applied to a vast corpus of imagery as diverse as Californian rock art (C. Patterson 1998), Australian rock art (Sales 1992), northwest European passage tomb art (e.g. Dronfield 1996a) and even Iron Age coinage in Britain (Creighton 2000). Certainly, in far too many instances the model has been applied uncritically in a search for "*entoptics*" (as set out by Dowson 1999; see also R. J. Wallis 2002), the geometric visual phenomena endogenous to trance and characteristic of stage one in Lewis-Williams and Dowson's model. The mistaken equation was *entoptics*=shamanism. Yet some of these authors ignored trance stages two and three, and the principles of transformation steering the perception of imagery (Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1993) in Lewis-Williams and Dowson's model, as well as the heterogeneity of rock art and shamanisms, in what has aptly been termed "a steamroller approach" (Garlake 1995). Without rehearsing the critically engaged discussion set out in detail elsewhere (e.g. Dowson 1999; Kehoe 2000; Francfort & Hamayon 2001; R. J. Wallis 2002, Helvenston & Bahn 2002; McCall 2007), my specific interest here is in the notion, constituted in the neuropsychological model and elsewhere in the study of shamanism, that altered states of consciousness are axiomatic to shamanism and that these altered states occasion shamans' engagements with what we term "spirits", or more accurately, "hallucinations".

The idea that the impulse behind shamanism and other religions originates in brain chemistry, "neurotheology", has had a major impact on thinking on shamans.[4] Having demonstrated that there are consistencies in shamanism and other healing practices across cultures (*Shamans, Priests and Witches*; 1991), Winkelman explained (in *Shamanism: The Neural Ecology of Consciousness and Healing*; 2000) such similarities in terms of a biological imperative: since all humans are capable of altering consciousness and such altered states are derived from the human central nervous system, so shamanism specifically is "the original neurotheology" (Winkelman 2004), and as such, marks the origin of religion. The more recent work of David Lewis-Williams, including *The Mind in the Cave: Consciousness and the Origins of Art* (2002) and *Inside the Neolithic Mind* (with Pearce, 2005), similarly proposes a neurotheology: shamans' experiences are straightforwardly identified as "a set of mental states created by the functioning of the human brain" (Lewis-Williams & Pearce 2005: 26). Shamans are held to engage with "spirits" or "spirit-helpers", which are interpreted as internal phenomena, so that the interpretative focus is on "the shaman", the shaman's trance vision and the "spirits" of the vision, all of which is explained away as derived from neuropsychological hardwiring. This reduces shamans' experiences, in essentialist terms, to brain events undergone by an individual in altered states of consciousness. It also universalizes shamanism, overlooks the diversity of rock art traditions and neglects the wider ontological and epistemological positioning of shamans and their art. For Lewis-Williams and Pearce, for instance, "Neolithic people did not – could not – challenge the [shamanistic] tiered nature of their universe: it was wired into their brains" (*ibid.*: 85). The danger with a neurotheological approach is of biological reductionism and the reifying of metanarrative (e.g. shamanism as the origin of religion). The closing thoughts of *Inside the Neolithic Mind* are particularly solipsistic, seeing all religion, not only shamanism, as a doomed if quaint elaboration: "Once the trend to recognition of the supernatural as a product of the human brain is firmly established, there is probably no way to turn back" (*ibid.*: 290). From this perspective, shamans live in a materially constructed world and their "spirits" may serve useful functions in social reproduction but they are hallucinations nonetheless; there is no room for other, equally viable ways of knowing, outside

of a rational-materialist standpoint, and it is assumed that the only way to empirically examine shamans' experiences is through neuropsychological analysis, albeit informed where possible by ethnographic records.

The issue lies, I think, not with the relevance of a shamanistic approach to rock art (summarized in R. J. Wallis 2002; see also R. J. Wallis 2003, 2004), but the methodology of neurotheologists, and their focus on "the altered state of consciousness" (ASC). Beguiling in its apparently scientific credentials and familiarity in popular currency, "ASC" arguably obscures shamans' own understandings of their experiences and the ontologies within which they are embedded. The issue of "control" over these states (see e.g. Harner [1980] 1990) or command of "spirits" (see e.g. Jakobsen 1999), contrasted with possession, much-debated in the literature on shamans (e.g. Lewis 1971; Bourguignon 1976; Reinhard 1976; Heusch 1982; Hamayon 1993, 1998), similarly might also tell us more about our own pre-occupations than the experiences of indigenous (and possibly prehistoric) shamans. In short, rational-materialist readings of shamans' neuropsychology now problematically characterize the shamanistic interpretation of rock art, drawing an axiomatic distinction between subjects and objects, humans and non-humans, and overemphasizing the role of altered states of consciousness, to the point that shamans' experiences, while they may facilitate social reproduction, are merely brain events. This mechanistic lens has more in common with enlightenment thinking than the ontologies of indigenous and prehistoric communities, and tells us as much about ourselves as modern/late-modern scholars as it does about prehistoric/indigenous artists/shamans. While recognizing the benefits that studies on altered consciousness and the notion of spirits have brought to the study of shamanism, and some rock art traditions in particular, I propose a different line of approach: a more sensitive and holistic shamanistic interpretation should engage with and take seriously the wider indigenous ontologies and epistemologies within which shamans are situated.

ANIMISTS, ART AND AGENCY

My project is situated within the wider theorizing of visual and material culture studies, drawing specifically on current thinking on thing theory, materiality, animism and agency across the disciplines of archaeology, anthropology, art history and the study of religion. The turn to "thing theory", for instance, presents a challenge to modern dualistic viewpoints by critically rethinking the interface between subjects and objects, persons and things. Thing theory became crystallized at the turn of the millennium in the 2001 special issue of *Critical Inquiry* on "Things" (B. Brown 2001), along with Hoskins's *Biographical Objects* (1998) and Gosden and Marshall's special issue of *World Archaeology* on "The Cultural Biography of Objects" (1999), but had its origins at least a decade before in such work as Appadurai's *The Social Life of Things* (1988). These works reflect an increasing interdisciplinary interest in the interface between people and things, and in critically rethinking the interface between subjects and objects (see e.g. Olsen 2003; Course 2010). Important work over the last few years has extended this thesis, from Latour's (2005) actor-network theory which treats humans "like things", to Graham Harvey's *Animism* (2005a), Ingold's examinations of animism (e.g. 2006) and materiality (e.g. 2007b), and the edited volumes *Thinking Through Things* (Henare *et al.* 2007) and *The Occult Life of Things*

(Santos-Granero 2009) which address how indigenous communities deal with things. Animic ontologies (e.g. Stringer 1999), specifically, do without the Cartesian object/subject dialectic to instead consider a relational world which is filled with "persons", only some of whom are human, situating shamans and their human communities within a wider-than-human world (e.g. G. Harvey 2005a); what Viveiros de Castro (1998a) terms indigenous "perspectivism".

Drawing on this thinking, I conceive of certain traditions of prehistoric and indigenous "shamanism" and art "objects" (and other visual/material culture) – though, obviously, not all of this material – as situated within animic ontologies rather than as self-contained special categories in their own right. For animists, "humans" and "objects" are potentially equally "things" and "persons" – things-as-persons and persons-as-things – with diverse agentive qualities, situated within wider-than-human communities. Humans must engage with other-than-humans on a daily basis and endeavour to perform proper social comportment so as to maintain harmony between persons (and in some instances, the opposite effect; "magic" and "sorcery" are, after all, grey areas). I locate shamans as key mediators and negotiators between humans and other-than-humans, able to "see as others do" so as to repair imbalance, including in the production and consumption of material/visual culture – specifically in the case at issue, certain rock art imagery. In some instances, "artworks" perform as animate "persons" with their own social intentionality and agentive contribution to community life. Pedersen captures the importance of relationality and the permeability of boundaries between persons and things in shamanism, when considering the example of the Darhad shaman's costume, which,

> affords the shaman with a multiple, extra-human body, which, by inducing a momentary transformation of his or her corporeal gestalt, enables the shaman to attain otherwise unattainable points of view ... a highly potent "ontological tool" inasmuch as it is perceived to imbue shamans with the magical capacity to crosscut the boundaries between human and nonhuman beings. (Pedersen 2007: 142)

What makes a Darhad shaman genuine, he goes on to say, is the ability to "personify as many disparate relations as possible" (*ibid.*: 160), or put differently, shamans attempt access to various bodily perspectives and to articulate or externalize other persons' perspectives to others.

Crucially, a relational, animist approach to shamans and art challenges the idea that humans are the ultimate arbiters of agency, extends the notions of "society" and "community" beyond humans, and draws attention away from Western dualisms of spirit/matter, culture/nature, mind/body, to consider other forms of relating more attuned to indigenous life-ways. If shamans are understood as animists and mediators, then it is more relevant to speak of "animic ontologies" than it is of "shamanistic worldviews" or to focus on the interiority of shamans' "altered states of consciousness" and inner visions ("hallucinations"), which tell us more about Western terminology and how we have tried to work out what shamans mean to us than about shamans themselves, whose practices do not easily fit into our conceptual frameworks. Rather than their altered conscious experiences *producing* the "worldviews" of their communities, shamans, their experiences and their communities, human and other-than-human, are situated within wider animic ontologies. And rather than "spirits" being the notion with which we might understand shamans'

engagements with other-than-humans, it is with the more radical if cumbersome "other-than-human-persons" that an animist viewpoint can be more sensitively appreciated.

A key feature of the animic systems within which shamans and their communities (human- and other-than-human) are situated is communication and negotiation with other persons (fish-persons, tree-persons, rock-persons, story-persons, and so on). Not all human-persons have the skills required to engage in this communication, to "see as others do", but shamans profess these skills – they deploy ASCs in the form of "adjusted styles of communication" (G. Harvey 2005a); that is, I argue, adjusting themselves by various means to meet the communicative level of other-than-humans. This reframing of how shamans perform draws attention away from the vague and much-debated term "consciousness", altered states as axiomatic to shamanism, and the problem of "spirits" as conceived within a rational-materialist frame, all of which characterize the neurotheological approach to rock art. Attention is brought instead to the purpose of these ASCs in the first place – to communicate with other-than-human-persons and negotiate harmonious relations. Further, this animist ontological position is recognized as equally valid to a Western one, and one which despite being mediated by Western discourse (the English language for instance [Course 2010]) is perhaps more in tune with shamans' own understandings of their experiences.

This understanding can be framed usefully, I think, to use Viveiros de Castro's (1998a) terms, as a multinatural and unicultural ontology, not a multicultural and uninatural one – which I understand to mean that to recognize a world filled with diverse persons is to appreciate that all persons, as equals, know in the same way, or have a related "culture" (unicultural), but that our natures, our ways of seeing the world and one another in it, and being embodied are different (multinatural). There is, then, not one objective natural world "out there" (separate from humans) with culture imposed on top of it, but uniculture with a multinatured variety of ways of seeing (and relating with) one another. Put differently, "the world is divided into a multiplicity of ontologically discrete bodies (notably those of humans and game animals), which all share the same invisible intentionality, namely, the capacity to have a (body-specific) perspective. It follows that it requires another kind of body to perceive the world in another way" (Pedersen 2007: 157).

In terms of the relevance of art practice or visual/material things to this, Pedersen again offers the example of the Darhad shaman's costume which

> does not just provide the shaman with an additional – or, more precisely, a *perfected* – body ... it rather seems to engage the shaman within a whole series of non-human bodies ... By donning the costume, then, a Darhad shaman is transformed into the *ultimate multinatural entity*, as this hyper-surface is believed to transport the shaman to an immanent space of multiplicities (Deleuze and Guattari 1999), which, unlike the more "objectified" vessels, is isomorphic with the fluid ontology of the *ongod* themselves. It is precisely in this sense that the [*ongon* and costume] can be said to be constitutive of a Darhad sense of the self. (*Ibid.*: 158–9)

In contrast to the Western evolutionary model of humans as the ascendant species, for animist-shamans humans are not superior but simply different; all persons are of one culture, with their ways of seeing equal and as such multinatured. Shamans are skilled in adjusting themselves in their ASCs (to reiterate, "adjusted styles of communication",

not "altered states of consciousness") so as to attempt to meet the communicative level of other-than-humans, to "see as others do",[5] and so negotiate harmonious relations between persons. I next explore the value of this animic approach by revisiting the three examples of rock art with which I opened my discussion.

THE LASCAUX "SHAFT SCENE"

The Lascaux "shaft scene" has three striking features. First, the stylistic similarity of the human figure and bird-headed "thing" as simple "stick-figures", which distinguishes them from the more complex painted animals, a bison and a rhino (shown in Figure 24.1). Echoing this trend elsewhere in Europe's Upper Palaeolithic cave art, humans tend to be depicted very simply (see e.g. Lewis-Williams 1997), while animals are given much closer and sustained attention (see e.g. Bahn & Vertut 1997). Some scholars suggest the human figure in the shaft scene may be a shaman (e.g. Lommel 1967; Goodman 1990; Lewis-Williams 2002: 264–5) accompanied by a shamanic tool of some sort in the form of a bird-headed staff. Davenport and Jochim (1988) strengthen this loose ethnographic analogy by interpreting the staff as perhaps similar to the Darhad shaman's *ongon*. The second feature, also pointed out by Davenport and Jochim, is that the bird-headed thing and human figure are similar in that they share avian characteristics, however simply rendered, principally above the waist and particularly at the head. The third feature, specific to the human figure, is that it is ithyphallic.

These three elements can be interpreted in a number of ways and may have been intentionally polysemic. Most often (e.g. Gombrich 1950; Lommel 1967), modern interpreters read the "scene" as either a straightforward "hunting" or a "hunting magic" narrative. In the former case, a human hunter has struck a bison with a "spear", the death of the bison being reiterated by its evisceration; the hunter has, in turn, been mortally wounded by the angry bison, and his erect penis may indicate the automatic physical result of a severed backbone. It is problematic, of course, to impose narratives onto this imagery under the assumption that it can be read logically. In the case of hunting magic, the idea goes that aspirational hunters prodded the imagery with their spears to affect game via sympathetic magic, a persistent if unpersuasive idea (Bahn 1991) since the Upper Palaeolithic faunal remains from consumption tend towards reindeer (see e.g. Mellars 2004) rather than the large game animals depicted in the parietal art.

By contrast, Lewis-Williams argues that the shaft scene does not present "a real-life tragedy" (Lewis-Williams 2002: 265), but that the "death" of the human figure is rather a metaphoric representation of the shaman's trance experience, with the erect penis "common in altered states and in sleep" (*ibid.*). The bison, for its part, is a "spirit bison" with the painted image "fixing the *spirit* animal" onto the rock (*ibid.*). Following Davenport and Jochim (1988), Lewis-Williams (2002: 264–5) also argues that the two bird-headed figures are linked by a transformation, with the shaman shape-shifting into a bird. In summary, we have a hallucination reproduced in an artwork. This shamanistic interpretation is viable, informed by strong "relations of relevance" (Lewis-Williams 1991), yet I think overly focused on the individual shaman depicted and his altered state, without attention to the broader social and ontological frame within which the images were produced and consumed.

I agree that the two bird-headed figures suggest a transformation is taking place, but think the emphasis on change from human to animal can only be read from a Western point of view insensitively; that is, as fantastical, hallucinatory and incorrect. Thought through animically, by contrast, the transformative moment depicted visually in the painting is one of perspective, from the viewpoint of a human-person to that of an other-than-human-person and specifically, it seems, Davenport and Jochim's bird-person embodied by the "*ongon*". The *ongon* similarly enables Mongolian shamans to "attain otherwise unattainable points of view [and] crosscut the boundaries between human and nonhuman beings" (Pedersen 2007: 142). The Lascaux shaman has become, as Pedersen might put it, "isomorphic with the fluid ontology" of the *ongon*; or more simply rendered, the shaman is represented in an adjusted style of communication and so able to meet the communicative level of the bird-ally. With the assistance of the *ongon* the shaman is adjusted from, to use Viveiros de Castro's terms, a unicultural level (all persons are encultured) to engage with a range of multinatural other-than-human bodies (all persons are embodied differently). And in Pedersen's words, he is transported to "an immanent space of multiplicities" and so becomes what he calls the "*ultimate multinatural entity*" (*ibid.*: 158–9). As such, the shaman is better enabled to engage with other-than-human-persons; and the imagery indicates specifically the bison-person and rhino-person depicted.

Building on this animic interpretation, the "death" of the bison and human figure in the shaft scene need not be read as either real (in which case the paintings are reduced problematically to passive records of a hunting accident) or metaphorical (reducing the elements to "hallucinations" or evidence for sympathetic magic), but at a more nuanced level as "perfectly real"[6] for those that depicted them. The "scene" is not straightforwardly or only about "hunting", "hunting magic" and/or "shamanism", but can be situated in a broader ontological, animic, setting. Referring once again to the ithyphallic human figure, Lewis-Williams supports his shamanistic interpretation by pointing out that "sex is sometimes associated with shamanistic travel" (Lewis-Williams 2002: 265), but Dowson (2007a: 56) adds that equally "[m]any hunter-gatherer groups around the world see a parallel between hunting and sexual intercourse and marriage ... Both activities can be thought of as rites of regeneration", with consumption following killing and birth following intercourse. One task undertaken by shamans in adjusted style of communication is the negotiation of successful hunting expeditions and while in the case of Upper Palaeolithic parietal art these game animals are not depicted, those animals that are may have been regarded as important helpers in the problematic negotiation process. The elements of sex, death and certain actions shamans undertake can then be brought together usefully by an animic reading of the shaft scene.

While the neurotheological interpretation of cave art moves away from such tired metanarratives as "hunting magic" and "art for art's sake", it is too simplistic to limit the meaning to an all-encompassing "shamanism", focusing on "altered states" and the neurological hardwiring of shamans' experiences. Entangled within a wider animic ontology, the figurative elements in the Lascaux shaft scene are arguably fluid "things" or "persons", which disrupt such simple binary divisions as subject/object, human/animal and culture/nature. The stylistic equivalence of the shaman and *ongon*, in contrast to the other painted animals, accentuates their relationship and suggests that isomorphic with the *ongon*-like bird-headed staff the shaman is able to "see", via adjusted styles of communication, "as others do", and so meet the communicative level of a bison-person and

rhino-person. Adjusted in this way, the shaman is able to engage in certain community-sanctioned tasks. Since hunting is an activity that many hunter-gatherers associate with sexual intercourse, so the sexually charged imagery here may suggest that one such task was to negotiate the taking of life from certain game animals and so accomplish "violence with impunity" (G. Harvey 2005a: 55).

ROCK ENGRAVINGS AT TWYFELFONTEIN, NAMIBIA

No less controversial than the shamanistic interpretation of cave art is that of Southern African rock art, but here ethnographic evidence completes part of the picture because there is general agreement that records of the San/Bushmen in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries are analogous to the prehistoric hunter-gatherers of the region (e.g. Lewis-Williams 1998, 2001; Dowson 1992; Ouzman n.d.), even if there are disagreements over how these should be interpreted (e.g. Solomon 1997, 1998; Lewis-Williams 1998, 2001). With this in mind, I return to the rock engraving of an ostrich, and other art, at Twyfelfontein (see Viereck & Rudner 1957; Scherz 1975; Dowson 1992; R. J. Wallis 1996a, 1999a; Van Hoek 2002, n.d.; Ouzman n.d.), one of the largest rock engraving sites in Southern Africa (approved as the first UNESCO World Heritage Site in Namibia in 2007). Located in the Kunene region (formerly Damaraland) of central Namibia, Twyfelfontein borders the central Namib desert in a transitional zone between semi-desert, mopane shrubland and savannah. In addition to the prehistoric hunter-gatherer (ancestors of today's Bushmen[7]), Khoekhoen (herder), Damara (farmer) and European colonizer human-persons that have left their material remains, the diverse ecosystem can support a range of other-than-human-persons, including such large game animals as giraffe, lion, ostrich, elephant, gemsbok and others, all of whom are depicted in the rock art.

Consistent with rock art elsewhere in Southern Africa, these motifs seem to refer to the "shamanistic" experiences described in Bushman ethnography (e.g. Dowson 1992, 2007b). A number of authors (e.g. Lewis-Williams 1981; Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1989; Dowson 1992; Lewis-Williams & Pearce 2004) have noted that large game animals were viewed by Bushman shamans as sources of supernatural power, harnessed in order to effect certain socially sanctioned tasks (resonating with my interpretation of the Lascaux "shaft scene", above). Regional diversity is marked out at Twyfelfontein by the preponderance of engraved giraffes, indicating that they were seen as particularly significant in this regard. The manner in which certain animals are depicted lends further weight to a shamanistic interpretation. I have already noted how the three/four-headed ostrich may be argued to represent a somatic hallucination wherein a shaman, in altered consciousness, has undergone an experience of transformation into an ostrich spirit-helper and in addition experienced polymelia, the hallucination of having many limbs (R. J. Wallis 1996a, 1999a). In another instance, the famous "Lion Panel" (see Dowson 1992, Figures 76 and 164) shows a lion in profile with two spoor (footprints) with five toes where the front and hind feet should be, as well as an elongated tail with an abrupt angular kink in it, terminating in a third spoor with six toes. As the footprints of cats show only four toes, so the engraved spoor with five toes suggests a human hand as much as the paw of a lion, while the six-toed spoor engraved at the tip of the tail is again suggestive of polymelia.

At Twyfelfontein, water seems to be especially significant in relation to the art. Twyfelfontein translates from Afrikaans as "uncertain spring" but in Damara the area is known as /Ui-//Ais (also Ùri-/Aus), "jumping waterhole", and the spring has been a vital source of water for the variety of persons attracted to the valley, particularly because it flows even during droughts (Viereck & Rudner 1957). It is striking that among thousands of engravings, there is a significant concentration of these around the spring itself. This patterned association between rock engravings and water sources, particularly water holes, is shown elsewhere in the central Namib desert (Dowson 1998) and accentuating this, the body of engravings at Twyfelfontein is focused in the Huab Valley, a geomorphological feature fashioned by water, with a braided river system caused by flash flooding. According to the shamanistic interpretation of Bushman ethnography, shamans refer to experiences of entering holes in the ground including water holes, submergence in water and sensations of drowning, which can be read as metaphors for altered conscious experiences (see e.g. Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1989). Taking the importance of place (following Deacon 1988) and especially water, as my cue, in earlier work I proposed that the waterhole and braided river systems may have been used by shamans as the entrance to and channels for out-of-body travel (R. J. Wallis 1996a, 1999a).

Compelling as this shamanistic interpretation is, it overlooks the wider ontological setting of shamans and their experiences, and makes sense of these experiences in Western terms of fantastical hallucinations. Considering the relationship between rock art and water, Kinahan (1991, 1993) argues that large rock art sites in Namibia's Brandberg were locations of aggregation around water sources during the extreme stress of the dry season (see also Richter 2002: 533). With this seasonal availability of water, Twyfelfontein too must have attracted a variety of persons to the valley. The coming together of persons in what may have been very dense numbers for a short period marked a shift in the usual social relations (between all persons). In short, it is difficult to maintain proper social comportment when so many persons "rub shoulders". I suggest that the production of rock art by human-persons (most likely though not necessarily or solely shamans) evidences their attempts at the renegotiation of harmonious relations between persons, or at least between human-persons and the other-than-human-persons they came into such close contact with.

A striking feature of the rock art at Twyfelfontein is the great variety of the engravings and the intimate relationships shown between them in dense panels of juxtaposed, overlapping and blatantly fused images. This may evidence attempts to adjust the perspectives of human-persons to a wide variety of other-than-human-persons at a stressful time of a dense concentration of persons visiting the valley. At any rate, this idea seems to stand up better than the naïve interpretation of "hunting magic": the faunal remains of consumption at Twyfelfontein consist of small antelope, rock dassie and other small prey rather than the large game animals depicted. Animically, then, the hybrid synthesis of human and animal features in the "Lion Panel", for instance, may reference a transformation of perspective, away from the perspective of human persons, towards that of other-than-human-persons, specifically a lion-person.

Given the sheer number of engravings at Twyfelfontein, and the character of certain images, I suggest that the art was not produced solely by shamans. The intimate relationships shown between engravings in dense panels of fused imagery may mark attempts by non-shamans to also contribute to the renegotiation of harmonious relations between

persons at times of stress. And since animically all persons are understood as involved in this process of negotiation, so other-than-humans should not be ignored in the interpretation. Examining Southern African rock art elsewhere, Dowson considers other-than-human agents in the biography of the images, particularly "rocks that have been rubbed smooth by rhinoceroses". He argues that:

> the control of supernatural potency was not the exclusive preserve of shamans, but ... all human and non-human animals were involved in maintaining the continued circulation of these vital life forces through the various activities that constituted human and non-human beings' identities. The painting and engraving of these activities revealed a deeper understanding of the world to ensure its continued existence. (2007a: 49)

Dowson elaborates:

> The painted and engraved images we see on the rock surfaces of southern Africa, certainly those we can ascribe to hunter-gatherers, reveal a world in which both human and non-human beings actively engaged with one another, and the manifold attempts of these beings to ensure the circulation of supernatural forces that kept the animic system going. (*Ibid.*: 59)

I am wary of the terms "supernatural" and "non-human" here (as with "spirits" and "altered consciousness"): the former must inevitably reinforce a dichotomy of nature/supernature, hand-in-hand with matter/spirit which does not hold in indigenous communities; and I prefer the more nuanced "other-than-human" because "non-human" insists on a rigid distinction between humans and others. But I am excited by Dowson's attention to the agency of other-than-human-persons and his theorizing of the efforts of various persons to maintain social harmony. While Dowson takes a different animic approach from my own, then, I agree that shamans, non-shamans and other-than-human-persons are all actively engaged in the reproduction of harmonious relations, and think this may also be evidenced in the rock art at Twyfelfontein.

MEGALITHIC ART IN NORTHWEST EUROPE

The enigmatic megalithic art of northwest Europe, entirely non-representational in form, is perhaps the most problematic to interpret of those I have illustrated. This has led to a tendency to impose Western thinking onto the past; for instance, while attention to "landscape" has pushed interpretative analysis in much-needed new directions, "landscape" (as with "art" and other Western categories) is not an "unproblematic given" (Smith & Blundell 2004: 259; see also M. Johnson 2007). A persistent and problematic trend in approaches to rock art landscapes (e.g. Whitley *et al.* 2004; McCall 2007; but see Lahelma 2005), and in landscape archaeology writ large (Ashmore & Knapp 1999), is the interpretation of "landscape" as a "natural" *tabula rasa* which is passive and inert prior to human intervention. Landscape or "space" is held to become meaningful as active "place" only as a result of the inscription of human culture. I am interested instead in Taçon and

Ouzman's notion of the rock itself as not "a neutral support for imagery" but "an active, a living and sometimes a dangerous entity" (Taçon & Ouzman 2004: 39), with rock art not a two-dimensional object or representation but "a thing in itself" (*ibid.*: 51). For animists, landscape is not a passive, natural blank slate in waiting for active, enculturing rock art: "landscape" is conceived of as "living", filled with other-than-human-persons who are extant prior to human engagement and who dwell at "pre-given places" (Cruikshank 2005: 15). I next address these issues with regard to megalithic art in northwest Europe, arguing particularly that an animic approach can avoid being monolithic by considering the biography of the art: a variety of animisms, historically situated, over time.

The act of engraving megalithic art "in the landscape" and the engravings themselves, when thought through animically, might indicate respect for a place and index specific pre-given places (some of which are more "alive" than others). Megalithic art locales may be indicators of places where other-than-human presences dwell(ed), agencies perceived to be extant prior to human engagement – for animists, other-than-human-persons have their own communities, lives, stories, and contributions to the world, in spite of human presence. In addition to indexing pre-given places, the art may have been produced as a result of communication with/the negotiated assistance of other-than-human agents. At Kilmartin in Argyll, Scotland, the selective choice of naturally cracked rock surfaces – hardly the logical "canvas" – over available smooth surfaces (A. Jones 2007: 209–13) perhaps indicates the advice of other-than-human-persons that the obvious locations for image-making were inappropriate. The human producers and consumers of early Neolithic open-air rock art, I suggest, saw themselves as by no means the preeminent presence in a wider field of intentional agents.

Over time, rock art sites change. In Britain, panels in the landscape often cover a much larger surface than first appears, due to the incursion of lichen, moss, weeds, turf and detritus. An immediate response in a contemporary setting is to lift the turf so that the art can be viewed, but perhaps during the life history of these sites the slow covering of the art by turf and debris was not seen as a challenge to conservation, as much a part of the site's biography but as newly executed and clearly visible motifs. Perhaps whole panels of rock art were, at points in their biography, not meant to be viewed by humans but by other-than-human-persons living below the surface, viewing the imagery from "the other side". Weathering might have been viewed as an acceptance of the rock art, offered up to other-than-human-persons. Perhaps once used in the negotiation of human and other-than-human relations, mediated by specialists able to "see as others do", hidden art might no longer have been considered as part of the human realm but appropriated into the other-than-human world. The producers and consumers of early Neolithic open-air rock art were beginning to take up farming but for the most part subsisted as hunters and gatherers, their extensive mobility evidenced archaeologically by trade over long distances, the regional circulation of human remains and general lack of data on permanent agriculturally based settlements (see e.g. J. Thomas 1988, 1991, 2000). These animist communities seem to have paid significant respect to pre-given places and other-than-human-persons, as evidenced by their rock art.

In the later Neolithic, change is evidenced by the production of new styles of art and the incorporation of earlier rock art from landscape settings into bold new architectural features; in the Boyne Valley of Ireland, the "passage tombs". This may signal a lasting votive offering and moreover an active brokering of accomplished meaning (Blain &

Wallis 2006) between human and other-than-human intentional agents in the planning and construction of the tombs. Some of the earlier megalithic art positioned in the Boyne Valley passage tombs was intentionally hidden on the reverse of the stones out of the way of the human gaze. Previously interpreted as the recycling of earlier megaliths without concern for the placement of existing motifs (see Eogan 1998; Tilley 2008: 168), some hidden art arguably shows patterning and is therefore worthy of more serious attention (R. J. Wallis 2010; in preparation a). Thinking animically, this hidden art may have been produced for consumption by other-than-human-persons, and was only ever to be "seen" and actively engaged with by them. In this way, engagements between human-persons and "stone-persons" may be seen as two-way and relational rather than involving a one-way inscription of human meaning. For example, where megaliths with art were reused as orthostats at the passage tomb of Knowth, with the motifs positioned upside down in relation to their former context, so making them hidden, the stones and their art were carefully brought into contact with other agentive substances, including soil and the living things it produces. One community of persons was brought into dialogue with other persons, and although this was facilitated physically by humans, the dialogue effected in the case of hidden art was set apart from human conversation – in which case, the subject/object dichotomy and the notion that materiality is inert, that landscapes are blank canvases, that things are mute and only become activated and meaningful through human social practice, is disrupted.

For the human producers and consumers of Irish passage tomb art and architecture, the "ancestors" interred perhaps included not only human-persons, but also the animal-persons, stone-persons, pot-persons, flint-persons and other "things" that have been excavated. One key artefact at Knowth, the richly carved macehead, was perhaps more than "deposited" at the entrance to the right-hand chamber (of the eastern passage); as a notable other-than-human-person it may have been, like human-persons, "buried" in the tomb and "retired" from an earlier life, nonetheless presencing its prestige and authority to begin a new and privileged life with other "dead" things, human and other-than-human. This example, and the common intermixing of fragments of flint, pottery and other things with human remains (see e.g. Fowler 2002, 2004, 2010), suggests an expansion of the field of "the social" (also pointed to by, e.g., Pollard 2006) to encompass a full range of persons/things and their relations, as befitting animic ontologies elsewhere.

The builders of the passage tombs were clearly not approaching their world in the same way as those who produced the earlier open-air rock art, accessible to all and situated across the landscape. With an increasing emphasis on human ancestors in the later Neolithic, epitomized by the funerary monuments of the Boyne Valley, a different sort of animism from that in the earlier Neolithic may be cited. Perhaps here we are seeing a move towards what Pedersen (2001) identifies (in North Asia) as animist-totemist ontologies, concerned increasingly with vertical rather than horizontal social organization and distinctions between certain other-than-humans (specific totem animals) and the (human-descent) clans associated with them, and other other-than-human-persons (different totem animals) and the clans associated with them – involving a greater emphasis, though evidently not axiomatically, on human ancestors. In future work I intend to examine further these changing animisms in the Neolithic and at the Neolithic–Bronze Age transition. Such shifts in animic ontologies over time (see also Fuglestvedt 2010), I conclude, accent animisms as discursive, with historicity, and so resistive to metanarratives.

CONCLUSION

My aim has not been to propose definitive answers about how humans in these very different locations and prehistoric periods approached their world, but to offer an exploratory discussion of thinking through rock art things animically, in part to challenge Western prejudices, but also to re-enchant our perspectives on the past. Reflecting critically on how "persons" and "things" are constituted, animic ontologies present unsettling challenges to Western mindsets and some of our most deeply held values (the nature of "self" and discreteness of "mind", for instance). A relational approach rethinks "passive" rock art as potentially agentive and associated as much with other-than-human as human agency. Human engagements with other "persons", in the narratives I have set out, are arguably two-way or dialogic rather than one-way in an inscription of human meaning. This approach reconfigures what is "materiality" and considers landscapes as plausibly "alive" with diverse persons. Importantly, these "things" are not "spirits", which requires a spirit/matter dualism, but "persons" of various identities, situated within a world which is filled with other persons, only some of whom are human. For animists, agency is not restricted to humans and the agency of "objects" is not necessarily derived from human action; "objects" are often constituted as other-than-human-persons, ascribed with social status and treated as persons. "Objects" can act, not with the "free will" or "consciousness" which humanist liberalism associates with the nature of what it is to be an individual human being, but nonetheless aware of themselves as persons, as intentional agents. If this challenges our Western worldview, then it is up to us to adjust ourselves to understand these ontologies and epistemologies rather than impose our thinking on them. If mind/body, matter/spirit and other conventional dichotomies remove us from participatory engagement with our environment, then contemporary thinking on animism, as G. Harvey (2005a), Ingold (2006) and others have suggested, reminds us that we too are immersed in, not separate from, a sensual world.

NOTES

1. Rock art images, particularly engravings, are difficult to date directly and relative dating is unable to provide precision (see, for example, Bednarik n.d.). At Twyfelfontein, it has been proposed that most of the engravings and all the paintings were made by San hunter-gatherers of the Late Stone Age, from around 4000 BCE to 0 CE, and that around 500 BCE to 0 CE Khoekhoen herders made the distinctively different and entirely geometric engravings (Dowson 2007b). For further discussion on dating Southern African rock art, see Mazel and Watchman (2003); Mazel (2009a,b).
2. An earlier version of this chapter was presented at the conference *Things and Spirits: New Approaches to Materiality and Immateriality*, Institute of Social Sciences, University of Lisbon, 15–17 September 2010.
3. Shamanism and art can be viewed usefully as entangled and transformed in the manner of Deleuze and Guattari's ([1972] 1980) rhizomes, the creeping and ever-spreading roots of certain plants, iterated culturally as historically located paradigms, or perhaps more accurately they are mycelic, interweaving and undergoing historic change like the growth of fungi.
4. See, for example, the 2010 "Anthropologies of Consciousness", special issue of *Time and Mind: The Journal of Archaeology, Consciousness and Culture* edited by Winkelman.
5. An overly specular reading here should be avoided: in their ASCs, shamans are able to literally embody other perspectives.
6. In chapter 10 of *A Thousand Plateaus*, entitled "Memories of a Sorcerer", Deleuze and Guattari outline how "we sorcerers" engage with the sea of constant flow, flux, change and becoming by

"becoming-animal", a form of shape-shifting, transformation or therimorphism. Unusually for Western philosophy, shape-shifting in this instance should not be read as a metaphor, analogy or form of mimesis: for Deleuze and Guattari, becoming-animal is not imaginal or fantasy but "perfectly real" ([1972]1980: 238, also 273–4).

7. I use the term "Bushman" here without any pejorative intention; along with "San" (vagabond), the nomenclature is problematic.

25

Whence "spirit possession"?

Paul Christopher Johnson

Translations that file two compared entities under a third term are like commodities or exchange-value transactions. Here are several examples: "Pani" in Hindi and "water" in English are both local variations of H_20 (Chakrabarty 2000: 75); the Australian Aboriginal *churinga* and a Santería *toque* are *affirmations of community*; nineteenth-century slaves' work-slowdowns in Alabama and the contemporary manufacture of *paket-kongo* in Haitian Vodou can be compared as *subaltern resistance*; the fact that a Dinka boy in Africa "has a ghost in his body" (Lienhardt 1957: 58) and that a Thai villager afflicted by a *phii paub* cries out or laughs loudly and then hides her face (Tambiah 1970: 321) are two members of the class *spirit possession*. Such translations into artificially constructed third terms are like commodities that repossess the object of study with different properties than those with which they began. It is intriguing to think of theoretical key terms as carrying traces not only of the geographies of their original disembedding, but also of the economic regimes they replicate in the forms of exchange they facilitate, as "factors" (in the word's original sense of agents of exchange), or currencies. As we will see, this is especially apropos for the case of "possession", which quite directly links ideas about the body to ideas about property.

By contrast, translations that investigate compared phenomena through their direct contiguity and local terms in order to seek their shared properties in lived experience are akin to barter, or use-value transactions. They are to be preferred, argues Chakrabarty, in so far as they do not deform the objects of exchange, retaining some degree of ontological intertextuality.

This barter strategy worked beautifully for the study of the idea of the fetish (Pietz 1985, 1987, 1988; Masuzawa 2000; Graeber 2005; Murray 2007; Keane 2007). *Fetish* was, quite literally, a term of barter (initially among Portuguese and West Indian traders) long before it became a theoretical commodity. Such a genealogy did more than link present work to the past, pointing to the ideological positions that formed academic disciplines, and that may even now be smuggled in with its key terms, important as that is. It also

disclosed a new picture of a specific historical time and place, by foregrounding the terms of exchange with which its actors themselves negotiated their worlds. In the case of the *feitiço*, it provided suggestive leads on how "economic" and "religious" words, and worlds, were bundled together.

While this sort of work has been done for many tributaries of the idea of the primitive in the anthropology of religion – the fetish, the totem, the cannibal, shamanism – it has not been done for *possession*. One reason is the lack of any obvious point of origin compared to these other terms. Spirit possession's point of disembedding cannot be as easily located; it derived from a confusing mélange of ideas about persons, bodies, civil society, the primitive, and expanding webs of commercial exchange. This may be part of the reason that "spirit possession" remains in wide circulation, while the others breathe only with artificial life-support, or in a more or less forensic mode, through their autopsies. This is all the more reason the category of possession needs to be carefully thought through.

To do this will require stepping back from the massive "spirit possession" literature. Instead, I want to move the lens back to an earlier strategic point of entry, to spirit possession's place and time of departure as a comparative descriptor and generic thing. The investigation will be something of an experiment, what we might call an "ethnographic" foray into early modern philosophy. There are obvious risks to letting an ethnographer get lost in the tangled flora of Hobbes and Locke, but my hope is that this will be a productive sort of going astray, the kind that leads to surprising discoveries. The task will be to investigate "the thing", the stuff of ritual events grouped as spirit possession, in relation to the terms by which that thing was animated; and to ask what was conjured by this convention (Jameson 1981: 35, 38). To be clear, then, this chapter is not about the diverse phenomena and ritual events referred to by European observers as spirit possession. It is rather about the idea of the occupied body and spoken-through person, possession as an episteme (Boddy 1989: 407; F. M. Smith 2006: 3) that served as a key apparatus for theorizing a particular modern political project, and a purified model of religion that has exerted enormous power ever since.

Discourses and legal actions naming and constraining "spirit possession" over the past four centuries were a lever creating the dual notions of the rational individual agent – who possesses, rather than being possessed – and the civil subject of an emergent modern state. The silhouette of the propertied citizen and free individual took form between, on one hand, the spectre of the automaton or zombi, a machine-body without will, and, on the other hand, the threat of the primitive or animal, being ruled by passions (or the two merged, as in Descartes' "nature's automata", animals-as-machines [2003: 24, 29, 66]).[1] The balance between the lack of will and its unchecked excess, especially in relation to governance, has been thought through the prism of the dangers of spirits in relation to persons and objects at least from the mid-seventeenth century to the present. Often it has been thought in relation to African religions, where the prospect of body-as-machine and the dread of unrestrained religious frenzy were conjoined, with the latter justifying the former.

This is not to suggest that the term "possession" first or solely emerged out of colonial processes. Possession is a very old Latin term derived from the roots of *potus*, to be able, and *sedere*, to sit. Though it has long been applied to the image of spirits' occupations of bodies, what is important for my purposes is simply the observation that notions of

property preceded, and guided, notions of spirits' capacity to "sit" in flesh. I would like to consider how the terms of property, the place one can sit, were transferred to ideas about the human body, its ownership and its volition.[2] Via the labour of the negative, "spirit possession" defined the rational, autonomous, self-possessed individual imagined as the foundation of the modern state, in canonical texts from Hobbes, Locke, Charles de Brosses, Hume, Kant and many others, as those texts constructed the free individual and citizen against a backdrop of emerging colonial horizons. My programme is to try to recover themes that are so obvious as to be usually overlooked, and to trace some of the themes, encounters, places and times out of which "spirit possession" was forged, then detached and universalized, and then widely reapplied in histories, ethnographies, and eventually even the practice of Black Atlantic religions.

The outcome I envision is not that "spirit possession" will be retired. To the contrary: by showing how the category first emerged from overlapping domains of religion, expanding colonial economies, emerging ideas of national polity, and the making of the individual citizen, I hope to refit the old saw with new and sharper teeth.

CONVENTIONS

The conventional argument goes roughly like this: spirit possession as a conceptual apparatus of the West emerged out of the nomenclature of Christian demonology, beginning with the New Testament and peaking from the fifteenth to the first half of the seventeenth century (Caciola 2003; Sluhovsky 2007), with the famous mass possessions at Lourdes (1634), Louviers (1647) and elsewhere marking in one sense the apex and in another the exhaustion of the demonic paradigm's legitimacy.[3] The Catholic Church itself began to carefully discipline and police invocations of demons and their exorcism with the official Roman Rite of 1614 (Sluhovsky 2007: 63).[4] The Anglican Church officially dismissed possession altogether in 1604 (Canon 72), taking the position that the biblical age of miracles was past (K. Thomas 1971: 485). As it began to be rationalized and policed in the West, possession by spirits broke free from a religiously specific application beginning around the mid-seventeenth century, and was extended to perceived similar phenomena from far-reaching parts of the world as colonial reports filtered back to European metropoles. This eventually generated a freestanding, objective morphological class for the purposes of advancing comparisons of rituals and beliefs across groups. The comparisons fuelled anthropologies in which the nature of "human being" was first a question of static kinds along an escalating chain of being laid out geographically, and then a question of temporal order and progressive development. Spirit possession was one of the key markers of the primitive stage in the evolution of civilizations. By the nineteenth century, this process culminated in the category's reification as an utterly generic class of action, a founding term in the discipline of anthropology. E. B. Tylor's theory of animism was pivotal: "To the minds of the lower races it seems that all nature is possessed, pervaded, crowded, with spiritual beings" (1871: II, 271), a maxim applying as much to "an English ploughman and a negro of Central Africa" (*ibid.*: I, 7).

This is a plausible account, the broad outlines of which I do not dispute. In fact, the tracing of this story, which has not been adequately told, is part of what my present work in the broadest terms seeks to carry out. But I also want to muddle this version.

Derrida coined the phrase "spectral duplicity" to ask of what, or whom, "spirit" is itself possessed (Derrida 1989: 6; Heidegger 1962: 74, 92, 132). The corollary question is: of what is *possession* possessed? That is, if spirit possession is itself a *feitiço*, a made thing, it is also a *congeries* – even better, an entrepôt – where manifold ideas about personhood, will, action, things and power were deposited in haphazard and but nevertheless structured ways.

Another complication of the conventional argument is that it is not sufficient to suggest that spirit possession merely *derived* from (mis)translations of what missionaries and traders encountered, for those agents also created, or at least accelerated, what they "found" (Mayes 1995: 5). Spirit possession gained force and frequency in the African Americas under and after the regimes of slavery, even compared with Africa itself (Mattoso 1986: 127), so much so that African-born slaves in Brazil were surprised at the prominence and frequency of possession in creole practices they in other ways found similar to those of the homeland (Rodrigues [1896] 1935: 101; R. Harding 2000: 155). To take a contemporary example, "possession" befalls Haitian migrant children in the US, who would never be legitimate candidates for being possessed at home (K. Brown 1991: 253; Richman 2005). In this sense, Sartre's intervention in his preface to Fanon's *Wretched of the Earth* has it wrong: "In certain districts they make use of that last resort – possession by spirits. Formerly this was a religious experience in all its simplicity, a certain communion of the faithful with sacred things; now they make of it a weapon against humiliation and despair" (1963: 19). It is wrong because it was not just the *uses* of it, but the very "it" that was made and remade as social and economic relations changed in time and place. Without going so far as to reduce spirit possession to a ritual response to conditions of suffering – though that argument has been powerfully made, especially to assess the overwhelming frequency of women as its enactors (e.g. Obeyesekere 1984; Caciola 2003) – there seems to be something about "possession" as at once the filling of, but also the mediating and reinstituting of diasporic and other kinds of absence.[5]

A third complication from the conventional narrative derives from the fact that spirit possession's arc was not merely descriptive, or theoretical, but rather entailed dramatic practical effects on the ways formerly secret religions were made public (P. Johnson 2002). Its anthropological canonization was enormously influential on the study of Black Atlantic religions. The first ethnographic descriptions of Afro-Brazilian religions and Afro-Cuban religions, by Nina Rodrigues and Fernando Ortiz respectively, were direct applications of Tylor's ideas. But these studies in turn also had far-reaching legal consequences, which I address in brief below. Spirit possession was a gate-keeping mechanism for constructing the good society and proper civil comportment, and its long-standing association with religions of African origin posed high legal, political and social barriers to former slaves in the new republics of Brazil and Cuba.

Finally, there is a fourth complication to the conventional narrative, though I have space only to signal it here: as religious adepts themselves begin to adopt the moniker of "possession" as a first-order term in their own practices, this translated bodily phenomena previously described in manifold other ways into the terms of property and ownership, *potus sedere*. Learning to perform certain forms of ritual experience *as* "being possessed" transforms religious practice and experience itself.

TOPOGRAPHY OF THE POSSESSED: FROM THE INDIAN TO THE AFRICAN

As spirit possession emerged as a generic comparative class in the seventeenth century, it served simultaneously as a medicalization of demonology and an engendering of a novel hermeneutics of the self. Determining who, and what, possesses you required an articulated system of interior life (Foucault 1999). But as that interior life was shaped in Europe, possession was increasingly "found" abroad, and those two processes were related. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the possessed were primarily "Indians". Recall the long trajectory of the Brazilian Tupi in European thought – from Montaigne to Shakespeare to Rousseau.[6] All these citations hinged at their outset on the rival descriptions by the French Franciscan royal cosmographer, André Thevet ([1574] 1986), and the Huguenot, Jean de Léry ([1578] 1990). Cannibalism was the spectacular centre of both descriptions, but *possession* was a near second. Thevet reported that "more than 100 times" he seized the bodies of possessed Indians (using just that term) and, reciting the Gospel of St John and other texts, conquered every demon. These repeated possession events provided at once an alleged domain of religious intersubjectivity that linked the Frenchman to Tupi – since they used an overlapping repertory of ideas and acts to communicate a body occupied by spirits (de Léry, to wit, found in Indians' possessions a soapbox from which to fulminate against the "atheist dogs" of Europe) – and a graphic demonstration of religious hierarchy, Christians on top.

A century after Jean de Léry and André Thevet's reports, "possession" began to be viewed less as the problem of the savage and more and more as a dangerous propensity generic to all humanity. The spectacle of victory over the spirits would become less that of Christian over savage and, increasingly, one of the civil over the mob. Indigenous religions continued to play the foil, but the geography of the possessed Other gradually shifted from the Americas to Africa and the Caribbean. By the 1700s, the possessed place was Africa and the African Americas.[7]

What has not been noted is how, in most of these uses, possession (frenzy, madness, wild gesticulation) appears as fetishism's accomplice. In Hegel's *Philosophy of History*, to take just one instance, the two noted features of African magic are fetishism – objects indiscriminately endowed with independent agency – and "special ceremonies with all sorts of gesticulations, dances, uproar, and shouting" (1956: 94). The link between these was applied even to late-nineteenth-century descriptions of African-American Christianity, where "fetish dances" and "animal excitement" remained a tandem description (Chireau 2003: 125–6). The pioneering ethnographic books on Afro-Brazilian and Afro-Cuban religions yoked fetishism tightly to possession: Nina Rodrigues referred to "fetishist possession" ([1896] 1935: 109), and Fernando Ortiz ([1906] 1916: 84) suggested "idol possession" (posesión del ídolo) and "fetichismo con manifestaciones animistas". These new hybrids joined the primitives' faulty ontology of objects to a loss of personhood in uncontrolled states.[8] Yet this whole artifice, the link between ideas about the misperception of things (fetishism), a mental state of indeterminate agency (possession), and a social quality (the frenzy of the horde), was in certain ways an invention of Charles de Brosses in his 1760 *Du culte des dieux fétiches*. More specifically, it emerged from the gap between Willem Bosman's widely circulated and translated descriptions of the West African coast (1705) and de Brosses' later expansion of those descriptions into a second-order theory a half-century later.

To put this schematically, Bosman's descriptions located *fétiche* in relation to problems of contracts on the West African coast at the end of the seventeenth century, especially in relation to gold-dealing with Europeans; the Dahomean royal cult's "idolatry", on the other hand, calls up a "madness like that of the Bacchantes" (Bosman 1705: 372). On the one hand, negotiating *things* of unknown content; on the other, negotiating *persons* of unknown content. On one hand, the (mostly) economic problem of the fetish; on the other, the (mostly) anthropological problem of possession.

A half-century later, Charles de Brosses, relying on Bosman's text as his key source, pulled what had been distinct issues of property and ecstasy – or, gold contracts and serpent-cult madness, separated by some three hundred miles – into a single frame. The conflation set the groundwork for Africa to be viewed as the model anti-modern site of possession, a place where the inner content of objects and persons were misrecognized in similar ways, and where economic and religious spheres of action were incorrigibly confounded. If this reading is correct, de Brosses' meta-category, fetishism, was itself a hybrid of possessed persons and indiscriminately empowered things. It extended the problem of things to the problem of personhood and, even more, to the spectre of an undifferentiated society, a seething horde.[9]

But what *was* the proper view of things? What views of person and property was de Brosses engaging – even helping to construct, through the juxtaposition with the depiction of possessed things and persons – and why were Bosman's description and then de Brosses' theorization so resonant and compelling? Part of the answer lies in the fact that that African religions were interpolated into a nexus of ideas about property, contract, personhood and society in which spirit possession was *already* featured in debates about the civil order required to end the era of the wars of religion and to undergird an expanding colonial economy. I will briefly address each of these vectors – property, contract, person, society – in turn.

"POSSESSION" IN RELATION TO PROPERTY, CONTRACT, PERSON AND SOCIETY

Property

The prospect of "possession" by spirits, of being owned or occupied, was a metaphor lifted from descriptions of property and proprietorship and assigned as a general human propensity. Hobbes's "De Cive" (1642) and then *Leviathan* (1651) were, to my view, the key texts in which possession by spirits was first given this generic, proto-anthropological character. For example:

> And for that part of Religion, which consisteth in opinions concerning the nature of Powers Invisible, there is almost nothing that has a name, that has not been esteemed amongst the Gentiles, in one place or another, a God, or Divell; or by their Poets feigned to be inanimated, inhabited, or possessed by some Spirit or other. ([1651] 1985: 173)

For Hobbes, spirit possession posed a grave danger both individually and for the prospect of civil life under the sovereign. He described "spirits" as madness and lunacy; man is

in truth possessed by none but his own "Corporeall Spirit" (*ibid.*: 661), the spirit of him- or herself. Locke asserted something similar when he described man as "proprietor of his own person", the basic premise through which the foundations of property in general were laid ([1680] 2003: 119).[10] In this version of early modern political theory, persons were to be envisioned as "their own" property, owners of themselves. This was true only in ideal terms, of course, as Africa and the growing plantation system of the Americas provided the chiaroscuro backdrop for this portrait.

If questions about the place and actions of spirits were essential for defining the autonomous individual, that determination was in turn viewed as crucial for constructing a civil society, which depended on predictable and regulated rules of property ownership and exchange. Property was endowed by Hobbes with nothing less than the magic of social transformation: property is the only reason for entering, or becoming a society at all; it moves a person from abstract liberty to concrete political liberty; it saves humanity from the state of nature; it joins generation to generation, constructing temporal order; and it demarks slaves from non-slaves, and so builds a meaningful social order.[11] The emerging civil society would be a relation of free individuals, an exchange between free *possessors*, and that which they possess.[12] The semantics of possession were more than clever wordplay. Hobbes recognized and played on the dual meanings of possession – possession by spirits and material possessions – and the relations that linked them. Possession by the "wrong" spirits posed a risk to civil society because agency and will, expressed in acquisition, the freedom to *take possession*, were compromised (Hobbes [1651] 1985: 93, 236, 344, 366, 371).

These issues will warrant further explication, but here I propose the following as a basic observation: *spirit possession is a category that was predicated at its inception on the idea that persons are a kind of property, an economic resource.*

Contract

The problem of contract arises because the authenticity, identity and agreement as to mediating authority are all rendered opaque by spirits' occupation of bodies. Civil society depended on the recognized and legitimate transfer of rights to lands, goods or labour. Contracts, in turn, require at least these three virtues: authenticity, the assurance that contracts in fact express the actual wills of contracting partners; identity, the assurance that contracts made today will still abide in the future; and authority, an agreement as to the common power compelling and ensuring the contract's fulfilment. Possession by spirits throws all of these, and thus contract itself, into question.[13] Authenticity and identity are forfeit if a person is comprised of multiple, possibly conflicting agents. "Passions" pose a similar, if lesser, risk (*ibid.*: 196), since the contractor may or not "be himself" at the moment a covenant is made (cf. Hegel 1956: 23, 27; Léry [1578] 1990: 138; cf. Lambek 1993: 312).[14] In short, contracts can only be assumed between agents who agree on the nature, and limits, of their agency. That is why no contract can be assumed, wrote Hobbes, with beasts, on the one hand, and God, on the other ([1651] 1985: 197).[15]

The key is that with the expansion of paper money's circulation, its value depended on its future redeemability for precious metals. But the promise of the future hinged, in turn, on the putative integrity – present and future – of the *person* issuing the paper bill. Paper money was a question of trust in the person; of his probity, prudence and credit.

The spirit-infused were the antithesis of such contract-worthy trust: "But thus far we do not see that those who, in their own opinion, are extraordinarily favored (the chosen ones) surpass in the very least the naturally honest man, *who can be relied upon in social intercourse, in business, or in trouble*" (Kant [1791] 1960a: 189–90, emphasis added).

Moreover, this was all radically complicated when contracting business with partners of an entirely different, and unknown, religious formation. The idea of the fetish played across these domains, but so did possession; both undermined confidence by rendering transparency impossible. Here were encountered persons of unknown content trading metals of unknown mix, with the two problems of true interiority interlocked, as Braudel noted: "Countries producing gold and silver were almost always primitive, even savage places" (1992: 197). Contracts required the production of equivalence, not only in the sense of exchange-value between different currencies, but also an equivalence of "persons", agents (at the "Factory") and authorities.

At this juncture, I propose a second general proposition: *spirit possession, the ownership or occupation of the body by unseen agents, emerged out of an analogical relation with material possessions and lands; yet perceived possession by spirits also complicated the lawful exchange* of *possessions and lands.*

Person

John Locke, like Hobbes before him and Rousseau after him, relied on the terms and stories from the colonial world to construct his version of the rational person. In his fourth edition of the *Essays* (1700), for example, he added the tale of a possessed Brazilian parrot to his argument.[16] The Dutch colonial governor of Pernambuco (the primary seventeenth-century sugar producing region of Brazil), "Prince Maurice" (Johan Maurits van Nassau-Siegen), had heard about a famous talking parrot. Upon entering the chamber to be presented to the Governor, the parrot first observed, "What a company of white men are here!" "Who is this prince?", the parrot was asked about the Governor; "Some general or other", he replied. The parrot was then asked where he is from ("Marignan"), to whom he belongs ("a Portuguese") and what he does, "Je garde des poulles" (I take care of the chickens).

Locke quoted the story from William Temple, who had tendered the story as nothing but a curiosity, an "idle question" that "came in his head". Locke, in turn, also used the story for amusement, a good story and a digression from a "busy scene". But he also had a purpose: could a parrot be possessed of "personal identity"? In the next section Locke seems to say no, for personal identity hinges on reason and reflection, the ability to consider itself as the same thinking thing across different times and places – hence a "self" that may "be continued in the same or divers substances". Locke seems to decide that a parrot is but a mimic, able to parrot rationality but not generate it.[17]

Yet surely there is more to this "digression" than Locke is willing to concede. The backstory of the story hinges on the racial cue that initiates the parrot's speech, "What a company of white men are here!" The parrot is from Europe, Marignan, and while himself owned by a Portuguese, the supervisor of "the chickens". Africans? Moreover, Prince Maurits of Nassau not only ruled Pernambuco from 1637 to 1642, he led the mission to take control of Elmina Castle (São Jorge da Mina) on the Gold Coast of Africa (today's Ghana), the very site from which another Dutchman, Willem Bosman, composed his story

of gold- and slave-trading several decades later. Though Locke did not use the phrase, he seems to be writing about the prospect of fetish-persons; persons who give the appearance of being the "same man" or a genuinely rational parrot, but are in fact entities unknown, like fetish-gold that mimics the outer flash but is internally composed of copper and iron. Yet the parrot accuses the governor of being little more than a mime in his own right, playing an assigned role, "some General or other". In the exchange, Pernambuco, the Brazilian sugar colony, becomes the site of the comic interlude. The joke is the animal personating the human: a being who can only be spoken-through claiming to speak for itself, as author; or the slave "personating" a fully human being.

The *person* so carefully distilled by Locke through a series of possession thought experiments – the possessed parrot, or the body of a cobbler occupied by the soul of a prince – is measured against those lacking genuine internal credit. That is the man who is not self-possessed, who is a mere parody, or parrot. Religiously, he is one of "fetish-faith", as Kant put it ([1791] 1960a: 181), the enthusiast who "fanatically imagines that he feels special works of grace within himself", such that virtue comes to "arouse his loathing" (*ibid.*: 189). When the religious idiom of Command is overtaken by Possession – to take Hobbes's terms ([1651] 1985: 144) – civic virtue is dead.

Society and the spectre of the horde

Dangerous possession-practices could lead to civil disorder. "In a little time, the inspired person comes to regard himself as a distinguished favourite of the Divinity; and when this *frenzy* once takes place, which is the summit of enthusiasm, every whimsy is consecrated", wrote Hume (2006: 75, emphasis added). Or Spinoza, "The mob is terrifying, if unafraid" (1996: 144). The Prophets commended humility and repentance for the good of the "common advantage", argued Spinoza (*ibid.*), which would lead all toward the blessings of reason. Sociologically, Kant's writing on Swedenborg and elsewhere had conveyed a similar concern with class distinctions; illuminism is attached to the danger of the masses, the crowd seething under a spell ([1791] 1960a: 168). Here, sociology met geography, as the irrational possessed body shifted from the state of nature Hobbes had located in the Americas to representations of African religions. Hume and Kant both adopted some of de Brosses' description of not only individual irrationality but also of questionable social mores, where "every whimsy is consecrated". The frenzy of possession – the horde's swarming enthusiasm, *Schwärmerei* (Kant 1960b: 107, 123) – becomes the sociological outcome of fetish-faith in practice. One risk of enthusiast forms of religion is that of mistaking the Holy Spirit for other spirits. In Hobbes's terms, in place of this metaphysical cacophony, the very idea of the Leviathan, the Sovereign, the "mortall God" who is possessor of all his subjects, must be mirrored by a single divine God encompassing all rival spirits, that being Kant would later name the "First Possessor" (Kant [1791] 1960a: 74).[18]

In Hegel's writing that followed, the swarming horde is pictured above all in the African religion of fetishes, imagined to elevate random objects for veneration, misrecognized as containers of presence. This became standard. "The fetich doctor and fetich belief were a *vis a tergo* with the native horde" (Nassau 1904: 127), goes one of the most widely read missionary accounts at the turn of the last century. Fetish-faith overtly referred to empty ceremonialism, "clericalism", and attached the critique of African religion to the critique

of Catholic "popery". Yet reading carefully, Kant also used it to describe a lack of ability to distinguish between objects with agency and objects without, and simultaneously to a lack of attention to *social* distinctions (1960b: 110).

The confluence of possession by spirits with the dangerous force of the crowd reached its apex in Gustave Le Bon's 1896 *Psychologie des foules*. Le Bon's immensely popular tract on "the crowd" seems to have been influenced by Tocqueville, and it in turn drew responses from readers from Freud to Mussolini. What is striking in Le Bon's work is the drawing together of vivid portraits of modern massification and primitive culture. In this scenario, modern man under the force of the crowd again descends the evolutionary ladder to become a non-rational primitive, for which "Ethiopians" and "negroes" play the foil. The process by which this primitive "soul of the masses" becomes immanent in the individual is called *religion* (Book I, ch. IV). Socialism and traditional religion are but two versions of the same phenomenon for Le Bon. The man lost in the crowd, just like the primitive, is blindly obedient and incapable of exercising free will; he is, rather, possessed. This posed not just intellectual, but political risks: "In this way the religious spirit replaces at one stroke the slow hereditary accumulation necessary to form the soul of a nation" (1912: 194).

I suggest at this juncture a third intervention: *spirit possession indexed both the lack of a properly bounded self, and an inadequately defined society. Africa became the chronotope of the anti-citizen, the place and time (the past in the present; the primitive) of both frenzy – the irrational and uncontrolled – and of the horde – a socially undifferentiated mob.*

IN THE THEATRE OF POSSESSION

Let us try to bring this philosophical flight back down to earth. In the wake of slaves' emancipations in the Americas, African American religions were read in precisely the terms of this literature. Both Nina Rodrigues's ground-breaking work on Afro-Brazilian religions in the 1896 essays later published together as *O animismo fetichista dos negros bahaianos*, and Fernando Ortiz' inaugural study of Afro-Cuban religiosity, *Los negros brujos*, to take the two most obvious examples, were extended engagements with Tylor's animism. These two twin studies by criminologists, penned a decade apart (1896, 1906), were the gate of entry for the religious practices of former slaves into the civil religious union of the fledgling republics. This was a crucial moment, the rupture of hierarchic tranquility (Sodré 1988: 43) by a new social proximity, requiring a rethinking of the nation and its religious proxemics.[19]

For the early Ortiz, Cuba's turn-of-the-century "mala vida", the grey zone of prostitution, crime and vice, defined in opposition to the "vida honrada" and the "vida buena" (F. Ortiz [1906] 1916; [1906] 1973: 1), were direct consequences of lingering African spirits. Despite their being "every day more assimilable" (*ibid.* [1906] 1916: vii), the African remained "slave of his passions" (*ibid.*: 55), locked in his "atavismo moral" and "parasitismo social" (*ibid.*: 21), evidenced above all in rites of possession.

Nina Rodrigues, for his part, cited the whole lineage from Bosman to de Brosses to Tylor in grappling with Brazil's republican problem, and underscored multiple civil risks related to Afro-Brazilian Candomblé. First, the religion interrupts the regularity of work and justifies vagrancy (*vadiagem*) (Rodrigues [1896] 1935: 18).[20] Second, Yoruba religion

is religion copied from the form of civil government, where the king corresponds to the high god, mediating ranks of nobles correspond to the mediating deities called *orixás*, and so on. Therefore Africans, crioullos and mestiços who practise Yoruba religion in Brazil are all already living within a rival political system. Rodrigues declared that he had even heard of possession's power in motivating battle and sedition, thus (it was reported to him) the reason for prohibiting African immigration (*ibid.*: 112). Third, Afro-Brazilians are in a state of transition from fetishism to idolatry, and given their *hybrid* religion (*ibid.*: 15), as *mestiços do espirito* (*ibid.*: 28), not liable to conversion to a purified Catholicism. That is, based on religion, it is not clear that Afro-Brazilians would actually be assimilable, at least in the near term. Fourth, the religion involves possession – the loss of individual personality, memory and accountability (*ibid.*: 116–17) – but even worse, involves the faking of possession (*ibid.*: 101–3, 130; cf. F. Ortiz [1906] 1916: 84). Fifth, Candomblé has already taken possession of the country; it is embedded "*no ânimo publico*", in the public spirit, and risks further expansion via contagion, as his dramatic story of a possessed white girl conveys (*ibid.*: 123–6; cf. F. Ortiz [1906] 1916: 17).

These classifications allowed by "spirit possession" were not only an anthropological project, but also a legal project applied and enforced in the making of nations according to preferred religious profiles or "civil religious" instantiations. Rodrigues's terminology, ranging from "possession" to "*espirita sonâmbulo*", appears in police reports prosecuting cases of illegal religion ("charlatanism") at the close of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth century, as republican Brazil took shape. His studies, and their vocabulary, provided the grammar for legal control of religion during the first decades after Emancipation as slave religion was reformed as part and parcel of a civil religious project. It is in this light that we should read the new "public health" laws mobilized in 1890 Brazil, which declared it illegal to "captivate and subjugate the credulity of the public" (Article 157, in Maggie 1992), or the 1930s efforts by the state to subject spirit mediums to psychological screening and licensing procedures.

During the same period, spirit possession began to occupy a central place in narratives of late modernity from Marx to Benjamin. The rational individual was turned inside-out, exposed as possessed by the state, by social ideals, and by latent memories rising to incarnate form in moments of sudden arrest.[21] The social transformations of late modernity were routinely written of in the terms of spirit possession, as formulations by Marx, Morgan, Freud and Durkheim about modern life were informed by, and appealed to, ethnographic accounts of "primitive" religions arriving *en masse* from the colonial world, a process that had begun already with de Brosses' notation of fetishism as a way of thinking (*façon de penser* [[1760] 1970: 52]) that modern man never quite left behind. To name the savagery of late modernity itself, the founding figures of the social sciences drew on the language of spirit possession as a critique of the rational citizen and self-possessed individual; or conversely, its celebration.[22] Consider this passage from Morgan's *Ancient Society* (1907), where property is written of as an organic thing, a germ, which takes over the brain:

> The idea of property was slowly formed in the human mind, remaining nascent and feeble through immense periods of time. Springing into life in savagery, it required all the experience of this period and of the subsequent period of barbarism to develop the germ, and to prepare the human brain for the acceptance of

> its controlling influence. It not only led mankind to overcome the obstacles which delayed civilization, but to establish political society. (L. H. Morgan 1907: 6)

If in the earlier version spirit possession had served as a negative marker of free will, here it pointed to the inevitable vertigo experienced by the civilized but alienated new industrial man. We are all many, all possessed.

Spirit possession emerged stabilized as, as de Brosses had formulated fetishism, a phenomenon exemplified in Africa, but in another sense general to all humanity – as Locke had put it, it described man when "not himself" or "beside himself". One might say that it was redeemed from its marginalizing and locative power – that which is *over there* – through its becoming sedimented as a concept and circulated into wider use, and as it passed from chronotopic into utopic significations. This is why E. B. Tylor could begin *Primitive Culture* with a dismissal of notions of free will from Aristotle to Leibniz (1871: I, 2). The idea of free will is itself a kind of possession-state: "This view of an anomalous action of the will, which it need hardly be said is incompatible with scientific argument, subsists as an opinion patent or latent in men's minds, and strongly affecting theoretic views of history" (*ibid.*: 3). The new, new man was inhabited by regular laws, not misty, opaque freedom; the history of mankind is "part and parcel of the history of nature" (*ibid.*: 2). With this single move, Tylor inaugurates the social sciences in their modern incarnation.

Still, spirit possession infiltrated the twentieth-century anthropological production of "religion" and even religious practice itself, in paradoxical ways. First, ethnographers documenting spirit possession often use the phrase, and their engagement with the phenomena it describes, as a way of posing resistance, or at least alternatives to, the "possessive individualism" of the West (e.g. Sharp 1993; D. Miller 2001; Lambek 2003). Indeed, they themselves are often possessed, as at once a subversion of "objectivity", an expression of epistemic creativity, and a bid for *bona fide* ethnographic authenticity. The first published account of the scholar possessed that I know came from the hand of Zora Neale Hurston ([1935] 1990), but if the move was initiated by Hurston, it was most famously applied by Maya Deren's vivid description of the sensation of "white darkness", in *The Divine Horsemen* (1953). Since then, the trend of narrating the ethnographer-possessed has only expanded, and now it seems nearly a cliché in the anthropology of Black Atlantic religions. Though not all scholars of the Black Atlantic make this ethnographic and rhetorical move, nearly all must at least address it, respond to it, in some fashion *account* for it, even apologize for it, as they construct their authorial position in relation to possession (M. Keller 2002: 23). The intertextuality that since Hobbes's "De Cive" ([1642] 1991) has linked spirit possession to the diagnoses of society and the self has finally reached even the anthropologist, for long safely cordoned off.

The ways in which the category serves as an avenue of critique for this particular set of issues (what is an integrated individual, what is pathology, what is a bounded, rational self) – at least sufficiently so to be able to interpret other selves – reveals how "spirit possession" remains haunted by early modernity's rattling ghosts.[23] Today, ethnographers of Black Atlantic religions, and probably many others as well, must all locate ourselves in relation to possession: whether we are in it, near it, avoiding it, rejecting it, we must in any case keep on saying why. To ventriloquize Lévi-Strauss, himself possessed by Rousseau (criticizing philosophers who too easily distinguish "human" from "animal"), the phrase

says as much about those applying the category as about those indigenous practices it is supposed to describe.

THEORIES AND PRACTICES

Finally, what about the visitations of theories of property and ownership in possession practices themselves? Is it too far-fetched to claim that early modern philosophies of property and personhood inhabit not only the terminology, but even ritual enactments of so-called spirit possession? Do Hobbes and Locke somehow live in the gods (*orixás*) of Candomblé when those gods possess their devotees? I think so, at least in a certain sense, since those gods were recast in the New World in the context of plantation slavery. A new initiate of Candomblé whose head will be "ruled" by a West African god is "sold" at the end, in a mimesis of slave-auctions; she must "pay for the floor" she occupied during the ritual process, while she acquired a new "owner" of her head. The tropes of body-as-property, expressed in the absenting of will and the economic value of that evacuation, inflect the process throughout. To be possessed is in at least one sense to become a slave. In Vodou, to take another contemporary example, the image of the zombi is precisely a reprise of the slave, a body owned and occupied yet simultaneously empty and agent-less, movement minus will (McAlister 2002; Richman 2005). As an Umbanda priestess in Rio de Janeiro expressed it, "I don't have free choice, I don't have it. I don't have my own life: I am a slave" (Hayes 2011: 13).[24] If Afro-Brazilian religious practice presented in a certain sense, resistance to enslavement – at least by posing the oxymoron of the *slave at liberty* to engage in rituals that forged allegiances superceding that of slave to master (Reis 2011) – and in that sense a making of free bodies (R. Harding 2000: 158), this was a complex kind of regained autonomy. A Kantian autonomy, if you like: freedom as conformity to a rule; or humanization "by their very subordination" (Matory 2008: 367). As the historian João Reis put it, in initiation to Candomblé, "slaves had to learn to be slaves for a second time" (2011: 105). To say this is not to reduce the ritual practices called spirit possession as a kind of false consciousness or misrecognition. To the contrary, it is to say that the powers of possession, at least in the Afro-Atlantic context, are unleashed by working in and through the history of slavery, sometimes consciously, sometimes not, rather than via its elision or supercession.[25]

"In the beginning, all the world was America" (Locke, *Second Treatise* IV, §49). My argument is that swirling ideas about persons as property, and bodies without will, provided the matrix out of which "possession" in its multiple valences emerged, already entwined. Spirit possession was a hybrid by which Europe interpolated, and then was in turn infiltrated by, the many phantasmic Others it sought to transform into things. Spirit possession bridged notions of the person, religion and the good society: *la vida honrada*. It lasted for centuries, and expressed with increasing prominence the trajectory from Hobbes and Locke to de Brosses and Kant, from Hegel to Tylor and the founding of modern anthropology. The shadow of possession lengthened as the stakes of states increased, from brazilwood to sugar to coffee, and as lands without owner and bodies without will became more and more central to the economies of Europe. It should not surprise that the locus of the civil problem of spirit possession moved from the Americas to Africa and the places where enslaved Africans lived, to Brazil and the Caribbean.

Spirit possession describes the idea of being spoken through, but it has itself always been spoken through too, ventriloquizing a series of positions. I have tried to gloss some of them here, as a placeholder for the more detailed work that is to come, and also as an invitation to other scholars. The trick will be to also hear who and what is speaking sideways and in translation – through parrots, zombis, the spirits, from the belly (ventriloquism) and in the language of "being possessed" itself. But this can only start by figuring out the mediating terms – the *facteurs* (agents) in the factory – with which the category of spirit possession was made. Looking with this sort of double vision is the first step toward a re-animated programme of thinking through spirits.

NOTES

1. "But what do I see apart from hats and coats, under which it may be the case that there are automata hidden?" (Descartes 2003: 29). The metaphor of the automaton, a person "resembling machines, automatic", first appears around the same period, in 1607 (*Online Etymological Dictionary*, consulted 19 March 2009); the OED locates the earliest citation in 1625.
2. To wit, Jack Goody has documented that the terms of "property" were applied to slaves before they were applied to land in human history (in Palmié 1996).
3. Judaism's tradition is itself rich and varied, providing the vocabulary of *ru'ah*, wind, and a standard word for spirits; *maggid*, "a heavenly mentor granted to great kabbalists"; the *ibbur*, "a usually undetected additional righteous soul that came to help rectify one's sins"; *gilgul*, "a soul that moves from dead to live bodies"; and, more recently, *dybbuk*, a "malevolent spirit, generally that of a dead person, that adheres to and controls an unwilling subject" (Goldfish 2003: 12–3). The proliferation of terms of possession in Judaism roughly paralleled the possession idiom in Christianity, or preceded it, as Hobbes had it. In the Greek version of Hebrew scriptures, the Septuagint, *ru'ah* is rendered as *pneuma* and distinguished from *daimon*; an early distinction of the good breath of God (in-spiration) linked to wisdom, *sophia*, versus the pernicious, often violent enthusiasms of the Devil, *daimon* (Heron 1983: 33–5). Islam, of course, has its own lineage. Here I am trying to think through the doxic rules of the West, which then informed translations of diverse ritual events into the problem of spirit possession.
4. Concomitantly, as Marion Gibson (1999) argued, the English genre of the "witchcraft pamphlet", which had flourished from 1597 to 1602, began to be purged of the issue of possession after 1612. Witchcraft pamphlets thereafter speak little of possession, as though possession had delegitimized the genre (perhaps by emphasizing the victimhood of the "perpetrator").
5. Consider the play of "possession" in modern novelistic applications to sexual congress as a salve to alienation, one of the best examples of which appears in Alberto Moravia's 1961 *La Noia* (Boredom, or the empty canvas), translated in the French edition as *L'ennuie*, where the painter-protagonist sexually penetrates his accomplice over and over again *ad nauseam*, in a desperate attempt to possess "her". His staring blank canvas is the crushing reminder of his failure, as well as of the elusiveness of just where "she" resides. Another good example is Rousseau in his *Confessions*: "When I possessed her I felt she still was not mine; and the single idea that I was not everything to her caused her to be almost nothing to me" ([1781] 1953: 395).
6. From Montaigne's interviews with three Tupi circa 1560, on the basis of which he composes one of his most famous essays, "De Caniballes" ([1580] 1993). Just few decades later, Shakespeare used the text in Gonzalo's descriptions of the ideal commonwealth, in *The Tempest* (Act Two, Scene 1). In the following century, Rousseau depended heavily on it, ending the *Discourse on the Origins of Inequality* ([1755] 1992) with the words of Montaigne's Tupi, by then so famous as to require no citation whatsoever.
7. By the late eighteenth century, possession-phenomena began to appear more frequently as a constitutive component of orientalist writing about South Asia (Hugh Urban, oral communication, 16 April 2009). In chronological terms, writing on spirit possession always indexed colonial lands possessed. Frederick M. Smith (2006: 4–8, 12) argues that in India, spirit possession has always been marginalized by purifying efforts by Brahmins to generate values of control, self-awareness and a

discrete self. But "spirit possession" as such was rarely addressed in a frontal attack, even by British colonial authorities (*ibid.*: 23).

8. T. K. Oesterreich's *Possession: Demonical and Other* of 1921 is exemplary: "I shall begin with primitive civilization, as regards which the data concerning spontaneous possession are still exceedingly scanty. The majority of the relevant documents which I can produce relate to Africa, where happily the main regions furnish their contribution so well that we may consider possession as a frequent phenomenon widely disseminated throughout this giant continent" ([1921] 1966: 132). Latour (1993) and Keane (2007) demonstrate how purification efforts inevitably yield new hybrids. That rubric, "purification", already appears in Kant's *Dreams of a Spirit Seer* ([1766] 2002), in relation to religion.
9. David Hume made a similar move in linking superstition and enthusiasm as the two corruptions of "true religion", in his essay of 1741: "That the corruption of the best things produces the worst, is grown into a maxim, and is commonly proved, among other instances, by the pernicious effects of superstition and enthusiasm, the corruptions of true religion." Ultimately, though, he placed superstition and enthusiasm as opposed forces, with only the former leading to political tyranny: "My third observation on this head is, that superstition is an enemy to civil liberty, and enthusiasm a friend to it" ("Of Superstition and Enthusiasm", http://infomotions.com/etexts/philosophy/1700-1799/hume-of-738.htm [accessed 7 May 2009]). The association of Africa with a lack of developed personhood was occasionally inverted, as in Swedenborg's 1758 *Treatise Concerning the Last Judgement, and the Destruction of Babylon*, where he identifies Africa's interior lands with persons of the greatest interiority, precisely because they receive spiritual communications in unmediated form, unlike "Mahometans and Papists" (Swedenborg [1758] 1788: 48): "The Africans are a more interior people than the rest" (*ibid.*: 49). Noteworthy is how geography and anthropology are understood to mirror and replicate each other. See Rotberg (2005). Keane (2007) has best articulated the relationship between ideas and practices related to the status of "things", and notions of personhood.
10. The idea of the self as a possession to be gained is reprised, albeit in a different sense, by Sartre's version of existentialism, among others: "Mais si vraiment l'existence precede l'essence, l'homme est responsible de ce qu'il est. Ainsi, le première demarche de l'existentialisme est de mettre tout homme en possession de ce qu'il est et de faire repose sur lui la responsabilité totale de son existence" (1996: 31).
11. During the same period, Christian salvation was translated into the terms of property: Quaker writer Richard Vickris published a tract in 1697 about how to acquire and keep the "Heavenly Possession", for example.
12. Raymond Williams traces the emerging ideas about the idea of "the individual", and what is "private", in the sense of exclusive and with limited access, to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, at the intersection of economic, social and religious ideas about the self and society (1983: 161–5; 242–3).
13. Hobbes asserts that the two things assuring contracts are (i) the fear of Invisible Spirits, and (ii) pride ([1651] 1985: 194–200).
14. In de Léry's account, "being tormented by evil spirits" is described with the term "passions". Thanks to Michael Lambek for directing my attention to the close proximity between "passions" and possession.
15. The "propensity to truck, barter and exchange one thing for another" was likewise for Adam Smith the central distinction of the human from the animal: "Nobody ever saw a dog make a fair and deliberate exchange of one bone for another with another dog" (1976, I: ii).
16. "It came in my head to ask him an idle question, because I thought it not very likely for me to see him again, and I had a mind to know from his own mouth, the account of a common, but much credited Story, that I had heard so often from many others, of an old Parrot he had in *Brasil*, during his Government there, that spoke, and ask'd, and answer'd common questions like a reasonable creature; so that those of his Train there, generally concluded it to be Witchery or Possession; and one of his Chaplains, who liv'd long afterwards in *Holland*, would never from that time endure a Parrot, but said, They all had a Devil in them" (Temple 1692: 76–7). Locke quotes the story at length from William Temple's *Memoirs of What Past in Christendum*.
17. Hume's essay "Of National Characters" (1748) also invoked a parrot from the world of slavery: "In Jamaica, indeed, they talk of one Negro as a man of parts and learning; but it is likely he is admired for slender accomplishments, like a parrot who speaks a few words plainly" (1825: 521–2).

18. The Sovereign, argued Hobbes, may be installed by either institution (consensual establishment of the so-called Rules of Propriety [234]), or acquisition (Hobbes [1961] 1985: 228, 251ff).
19. Cuba underwent very similar processes, aggravated by repeated witch hunts against Afro-Cuban religions, whose practitioners were accused of cannibalizing white children. From the Havana newspaper, *El Día*, in 1918: "Until after the triumph of the revolution blacks raised white children without eating or abusing them. The war has ended...Cuba has been liberated from Spanish tutelage, legal equality and rights of all citizens have been recognized and those people have begun to drink the blood of white girls, and even to martyrize their own daughters, under the impression that they are the tainted members of the family. Where is progress, then, where is civilization?" (in Bronfman 2004: 39). "Proxemics" is Edward Hall's term ([1966] 1990).
20. Rodrigues wrote that this was "unfortunately" said by others, but nevertheless lamentably true.
21. The spectre of possession was not only a vehicle for making the rational individual subject in lettered circles. It was also marshalled to spectacular popular displays of science, above all through the trajectory from demons to ventriloquist stage-shows. As Leigh Schmidt's article, "From Demon Possession to Magic Show" (1998), documents, the key moment in this shift came with the publication of Joannes Baptista de La Chapelle's *Le Ventriloque, ou engastrimythe* in 1772, a text that systematically set out to debunk the history of spirits speaking through persons. It became the anchor of entries in encyclopedias such as the *Britannica* (1797) and was hastily translated into multiple languages. Supernatural voices speaking from the belly (the *ventre*) were now a natural phenomenon explained by the generation of aural illusion by the throat and tongue. If the wave of debunking spectacles that followed in nineteenth-century Europe and the US were first and foremost a showcase of gender relations, with scientific men exposing deceitful women, Schmidt shows how the new theatre of evidence also quickly interpolated savage religions – from Eskimo shamans to disrupted black revival meetings. Just as Kant had invested substantial time and money in his investigations of Swedenborg from 1763 to 1766, later scholars of religion from Tylor to William James were frequently in the audience of spiritualist séances. Yet, paradoxically, "the fate of these altered voices echoed the larger process by which the travails of the soul became matters of the self – one in which the divine struggle of demonic possession passed into a bleak diagnosis of the divisibility of personal identity". As in the earlier example of Locke's thought experiment that split the identities of "man", "soul" and "person", at once defining the rational person and deeply problematizing it by showing its gaps, mimicry and fabrications, the unending modern freak-show of possession hinted that the real and the perceived are not easily discerned, and may not be separable whatsoever. James's "pragmatic" approach to religious experience may be read in a sense as a response to this conundrum.
22. Andrew Willford (2006: 91) argues something similar: "In Freud, it is not simply that narcissistic and animistic residues are uncanny in their inevitable returns – that is, the surmounted pasts in the service of the ego-ideal. Rather, it is the frightening 'automaton' of socially conditioned reason that is the uncanny alien 'double' within, with its contingent morality overwhelming and enveloping the subject through its impossible demand for obedience."
23. To take just one of many examples, consider Judy Rosenthal's writing on the Ewe of West Africa: "My own writerly presence here is obviously not mine in the property sense, and it is not present in any metaphysical way. Like Ewe and Gorovodu being, it is a nexus of 'Others,' crisscrossing personhoods, stories, political events, cultural transformations, bodies and spirits both dead and alive, and so many other texts" (Rosenthal 1998: 3); thus, "this is a text issued from the vodus" (*ibid.*: 7). "I was seduced by all I saw and heard and I wanted very much to merge into the trance state with the spirit hosts" (*ibid.*: 7). Spirit possession is a set of techniques for "becoming Foreign Others" (*ibid.*: 30); thus, "Vodu identity is peculiarly and radically modern (or post-modern)" (*ibid.*: 31); "My longing is for the gorovodus to remain positioned to seize or possess theory" (*ibid.*: 32).
24. Slavery appears elsewhere in Hayes's description as well: the *exus* are "slaves" of the *orixás*, for example (2011: 253). Analogously, Rosalind Shaw's work has shown how contemporary notions of sorcery, as the "consumption" of people, is a direct legacy of the slave trade (2002).
25. Here we must note the complexity of the ideas of possession in relation to the *orixás* of Candomblé, since a devotee in a sense also is the "owner" of his/her specific deity, as in the phrase "João's Ogun", or "Sheila's Oxum", as Stefania Capone has usefully described (2010: 20).

26

Psychedelics, animism and spirituality

Andy Letcher

In her book *Wild: An Elemental Journey*, the travel writer Jay Griffiths describes a vision occasioned by her drinking the Amazonian hallucinogenic brew ayahuasca, under the guidance of shamans in Peru. She felt herself transformed into a jaguar and then, clear as day, transported back to her university town of Oxford where she prowled through the reading rooms of the Bodleian library, "roaring in anger and disgust at how my culture can know so little for knowing so much" (Griffiths 2008: 98). Her anger was triggered by the chasm she perceived between dry Western epistemology and the oppressed "wild and wet" knowledge of the rainforest. "Amazonian shamans", she writes, "feel they are drinking knowledge when they take ayahuasca ... people don't just learn *about* plants, they learn *from* certain plants called 'plant teachers' or *doctores*, which teach people medicine. This is a contradiction in terms to the Western mind – it balks at there being intelligence in anything other than humankind" (*ibid.*: 17).

Griffiths's story is arresting but it arouses conflicting reactions in me. As a writer and part-time university lecturer living in Oxford, I spend a good deal of my working life in the Bodleian library. I feel humbled, privileged, that I can just wander in; that, with a few deft clicks of a mouse, I can call up, handle and read rare manuscripts, obscure texts, or expensive reference books. Indeed, that any of us can study the *exact* words of a long-dead Greek philosopher or medieval poet, or that *you* might be reading this long after I have been reshelved, seems to me one of the most remarkable achievements of Western civilization.

And yet I share if not Griffiths's rage then her sense of frustration at the seemingly impregnable self-belief of Western epistemology, its certainty that, eventually, it *will* know everything. I have never drunk ayahuasca but I have had a fifteen-year relationship with my own, local, hallucinogen, the psilocybin-containing magic mushroom or Liberty Cap, *Psilocybe semilanceata*. Under the influence of these tiny, goblin-hatted mischief-makers – which spring every autumn in great profusion from the upland pastures of Britain – I have had a range of experiences that I struggle to explain in terms permissible to Western epistemology. I can only honestly describe them as shamanistic or animistic

(perhaps "shamanimistic"). My "tripping self" has imbibed knowledge that my "library self" finds difficult to countenance. Unwilling or unable to efface one side or the other, I am engaged in a strange kind of internal dialogue or colloquy, my quest, if you will, to find whether these two selves, these two ways of knowing, can ever meet or must forever peer at the other with mistrust and misunderstanding. To borrow Griffiths's imagery, I am looking for that strange, mythical connecting corridor in the Bodleian where dry Western rationalism meets wet indigenous shamanism; where the book shelves are made of living wood, the ceiling is a vaulted canopy of leaves and where knowledge is shared in the round about the ruddy glow of a well-tended fire.

I happen to think that the books of this room would make fascinating reading, be of profound importance, and yet contemporary culture actively bars any attempt to uncover them. Psilocybin mushrooms remain a Class A scheduled drug with possession carrying a potential prison term. Shamanic knowledge is not just off epistemological limits: it is strictly forbidden.

Nevertheless, the absence of any systematic study of psychedelics and culture remains a lacuna in the academic project. The political backlash against the psychedelic hippy movement in the late 1960s brought to an end what had been a rapidly expanding research field in the academy, investigating the use of psychedelics in psychotherapy and in understanding cognition. The potential avenues that psychedelics offered philosophy and consciousness studies went unexplored. Only anthropology, insulated to a certain extent by the sheer distance between its institutions and its object of study (and, perhaps, an attitude of "what goes on in the field, stays in the field"), was able to research the use of hallucinogenic drugs, albeit solely in indigenous contexts. Though chinks have begun to open in this discursive fence, with major government-funded science research projects using psychedelics on human volunteers occurring in both Britain and the US,[1] we are very far from seeing "Departments for the Critical Study of Psychedelics" mushroom on university campuses.

And yet, psychedelics never went away. In spite of a forty-year prohibition, psychedelic undergrounds have continued to flourish, through clubs, festivals, books, zines, websites, seminars and conferences. Rave normalized drug-taking for a generation,[2] and in its wake there are a number of psychedelic spiritualities, diverse in outlook, practices and drug preferences, but all centralizing the non-ordinary experiences afforded by these potent agents (Saunders *et al.* 2000; Partridge 2003, 2004).

Aside from the obvious political and legal obstacles to an emerging "Psy-Crit", the study of psychedelics in contemporary cultural contexts presents problems that cut straight to the heart of the academic project, problems with which anthropology has long been familiar. Imagine, for example, that you are attempting to understand the worldview of an Amazonian tribe for whom the harvesting, preparation, consumption and interpretation of ayahuasca are central. To observe without participating – if indeed that were locally permissible – would be at best to miss out on something of vital importance, at worst to miss the point completely. On the other hand, to participate might mean compromising the rational, observing self upon which the academic project is founded. People, as we know, do not turn into jaguars, especially not scholars.

Anthropology has traditionally answered this dilemma with the taboo against "going native".[3] When Michael Harner drank ayahuasca among the Jívaro of Ecuador and decided he wanted to *be* a shaman, he forfeited his place in the academy (Harner 2003). Other

scholars who have drunk ayahuasca but remained cognitively on-side, playing by the ethnographic rules, have not.

Under the pressure of post-structuralist critiques the taboo against going native has started to buckle (see, for example, Phillips & Jørgensen 2002), but it is here, I think, that we still feel the lack of a Psy-Crit most acutely. As even the most banal and trivialized drug clichés and stereotypes suggest, the experiences occasioned by psychedelics ask profound questions of Western-sanctioned epistemologies and ontologies, but we lack a considered, critical phenomenology that might provide us with answers. We have instead a ragbag accumulation of exactly these clichés and stereotypes, myths and folktales, invoked by insiders looking to justify their drug preferences and outsiders their drug prejudices.

Who says psychedelics compromise the rational observing self, and on what basis have they reached that conclusion? Is it a conclusion arrived at by reasoned argument or discursive arm waving? Is it a conclusion we can all share? Alternatively, might it not be the case that no matter how many times an observer consumes ayahuasca, say, the bounded nature of their cultural outlook will always prevent them having an indigenous psychedelic experience? Won't the rational self always remain insulated by worldview? Or, to put it another way, would Griffiths's shamans ever find their visionary way into the Bodleian library? We assume the answers to these questions, rarely debate them, perhaps because we are afraid *even of the possibility* of opening cracks in our impregnable epistemology. What would it mean to take Griffiths's feline transformation seriously?

In this chapter I do, figuratively speaking, by examining how the language of animism and shamanism has come to inform the way some insiders harvest and consume psilocybin mushrooms, here in the UK. In particular I focus on a small summer solstice celebration nicknamed "the University of the Hedge". As a piece of work, this chapter follows directly on from my book *Shroom: A Cultural History of the Magic Mushroom* (Letcher 2006) and a paper, "Mad Thoughts on Mushrooms: Discourse and Power in the Study of Psychedelic Consciousness" (*ibid.*: 2007) all of which can be seen as public "workings out" of the internal dilemma between my library and tripping selves. (If the revelation that *I* am the principal informant rings alarm bells, then I trust that even if you disagree with my arguments and conclusions you will concede that my rational, library self has certainly not been compromised.) But it is also my hope that, along with those other works, this chapter will contribute towards the return and re-emergence of Psy-Crit.

MUSHROOM PICKING

Picking magic mushrooms is as important to me as consuming them – possibly more so. Each year I make a journey – no, a pilgrimage – to Wales, to a discreet field where I can make my harvest unobserved. Picking allows me to build a direct relationship with the plant (strictly speaking, the fungus) – or, to use A. Irving Hallowell's term, with this other-than-human person (see Hallowell 1960; Bird-David 1999; G. Harvey 2005a); after all, you only really get to know someone when you have seen them at home. I have learned when to find the mushrooms, where to find them, the places they like to grow, their *oikos*. These days I have a feel for a likely mushroom field. It just looks right.

Liberty Caps do not appear with sufficient abundance or frequency in my home range, hence the need to go to Wales, the closest region where they do. It's a two-hour drive each

way so I have to gauge the moment exactly to avoid disappointment. Proper ecological studies are lacking but a cool autumnal day after a good drop of rain, but before the first frosts, seems to be about right.

Mushroom picking is an art. In a good year they appear with superabundance and yet I have friends who are atrocious pickers, who gather everything but the ones they want. The first time I went out I took a seasoned expert with me but I knew the right kind as soon as I saw it. It stood out like a steadily twinkling lighthouse, as if it *wanted* to be seen. Small and delicate, no bigger than your little finger, it had an elfin beauty and a definite *presence*.

You have to get your eye in, of course. On a practical level it takes a while to work out what colour they are on the day – olive green when fresh, turning yellowish brown as they dry – how tall or short they are, and so on; but on another, some internal shift is required, like a sympathetic string in need of tuning. I'll hunt for a while and eventually spot one. Bending down to pick it I'll see a second close by. And then, as if a veil has been lifted, I'll realize that I am surrounded by mushrooms, hundreds of them. Until that moment they were quite invisible.

For me, picking mushrooms is a sacred act. I pray to them as I go, little improvised nursery rhyme songs: "Hey little mushrooms, sacred sacred mushrooms." Mushrooms, or carpophores, are the fruiting body of the organism and so I always leave ones that have not yet opened or dropped their spores. I pray to the land too, making sure to lift my eyes from the turf to take in the staggering view. This is a wild, rugged landscape of steep valleys and craggy peaks. Ravens own the sky. Once a red kite hovered silently above me like a benediction.

TALKING MUSHROOMS

That I engage with the mushrooms in this animistic fashion – by which I mean that I seek an appropriate relationship with them as other-than-human persons – immediately locates me historically. As I demonstrate elsewhere, the language we use in the West to talk about psychoactive mushrooms is discursive and has changed with time (Letcher 2007). When magic mushrooms entered the historical record in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries they did so only via the medical records. Consumption was always accidental, the effects regarded by both patients and physicians as potentially life-threatening symptoms of poisoning, to be treated with leeches, emetics and the stomach pump. Like all poisonous fungi "magic mushrooms" were called, simply, toadstools.

It was only subsequent to the discovery of LSD in 1943, and the eventual synthesis of psilocybin, the mushrooms' principal active ingredient, in 1958 that favourable discourses emerged by which their effects came to be thought desirable. Psychologists believed mushrooms, and psychedelics more generally, revealed the deep structures of the psyche, or made manifest repressed material from the unconscious (*ibid.*: 2006). More mystically inclined writers – most famously Aldous Huxley, who wrote about his experiences with mescaline in *The Doors of Perception* ([1954] 1994) – thought psychedelics occasioned a classic Jamesian noetic, transient, passive and ineffable encounter with the Godhead (James [1902] 2002).

When the American banker Robert Gordon Wasson (1898–1986) discovered the use of magic mushrooms in Mazatec Mexico in the 1950s, his yearning for mystical experience

was such that he failed to pay proper attention to indigenous worldviews and interpretations. He imagined Mazatec mushroom vigils to be the last surviving vestige of an original, mushroom-inspired, ur-religion, of which he was the last witness before its inevitable fall to the forces of modernity. The vigils were, in fact, syncretic, adaptive, religiously framed healing rituals and his popular writings did much to hasten the very onslaught of modernity he decried by encouraging innundations of magic mushroom tourists (Letcher 2006).

In the "archaeology" of popular psychedelic discourse, therefore, indigenous voices have tended to be drowned out by Westerners clamouring to find answers to their discontents in the noble savagery of "the primitive". The man who did most to popularize the magic mushroom in the last decade of the twentieth century, the psychedelic guru, orator and writer Terence McKenna (1946–2000), remains open to this charge, of simplifying, universalizing and romanticizing indigenous worldviews. Nevertheless, besides discovering how to cultivate *Psilocybe cubensis* (work he achieved in collaboration with his brother, Dennis), his enduring achievement was to reframe the psychedelic experience within a potent and popular shamanistic discourse.

McKenna saw in rave, ecological protest movements and fin-de-siècle millenarianism the beginnings of what he called an "archaic revival" of shamanistic styles and techniques (McKenna 1991). For McKenna, the magic mushroom, which he championed above LSD, was not a drug but a living conscious agent with whom a relationship could be forged and meaningful dialogue established: at high doses, he said, the mushroom would literally *speak*: "I don't necessarily believe what the mushroom tells me; rather we have a dialogue. It is a very strange person and has many bizarre opinions. I entertain it the way I would any eccentric friend. I say, 'Well, so that's what you think'" (*ibid.*: 47).

He famously published a passage, allegedly copied down verbatim, in which the mushroom claimed to be of extraterrestrial origin and desirous of a symbiotic relationship with humankind (McKenna 1994). In return for propagation and dissemination, it would, in turn, reveal the shamanistic knowledge necessary for our ecological survival. "The mushroom states its own position very clearly. It says, 'I require the nervous system of a mammal. Do you have one handy?'" (McKenna 1991: 47).

McKenna's many ideas vary from the interestingly plausible to the logically inconsistent and fantastical (the title of one of his books ought to give an idea of the breadth of his interests: *The Archaic Revival. Speculations on Psychedelic Mushrooms, the Amazon, Virtual Reality, UFOs, Evolution, Shamanism, the Rebirth of the Goddess, and the End of History*: McKenna 1991) and I have criticized them in detail elsewhere (Letcher 2006). However, my own mushrooming practices remain informed by his striking shamanimistic worldview, and are self-evidently bolstered by the new scholarly approach to animism of which this book forms a part. There is no way out of discourse, no unequivocal way to determine which is the "correct" language to describe the experiences elicited by mushrooms: pathological, psychological, mystical or shamanimistic. But like Jay Griffiths, and in spite of my library self, I have come to the conclusion that a shamanimistic discourse offers me the most enriching and faithful worldview. Consequently I only consume mushrooms in contexts where I can pay full attention to what the mushrooms, as other-than-human persons, might want to bring to my attention. One of those contexts is an annual celebration of the summer solstice, nicknamed "the University of the Hedge".

THE UNIVERSITY OF THE HEDGE

People consume magic mushrooms in a variety of contexts. Though a Class A scheduled drug in the UK, it is still possible to buy cultivated mushrooms (typically *Psilocybe cubensis*) or harvested Liberty Caps via the internet or a small black market. Anecdotal evidence suggests that most people consume mushrooms recreationally, at clubs or parties, for the pleasure that tripping brings. Psilocybin's well-documented pharmacological effects introduce a gripping and steadily unfolding novelty into consciousness, one that, if received favourably by the subject, can intensify environments already constructed for maximum sensory delight. As party drugs, alcohol and MDMA provide the discursive template here (Letcher 2007).

McKenna advocated a more austere setting: high doses of mushrooms, consumed on an empty stomach in silent darkness. Only by adopting such an ausculatory attitude, he argued, could one begin to pay attention to what the mushrooms might reveal.

Neither context quite suits my relationship. Without exception, I've always found taking mushrooms in a human-centred environment (pub, club, city) to be profoundly unpleasant, while having to sit still feels unbearably proscriptive. I have never heard McKenna's "mushroom voice", but the thoughts, concepts, ideas, images and connections that course through me come with an emboldened certainty, as if they are being presented to my consciousness rather than arising from it. The consistent "message", if you will, that I receive is that my day-to-day human concerns are infuriatingly solipsistic and narcissistically culture-bound. The mushrooms "demand" that I notice the other-than-human world, in particular, the plant kingdom. This is why I always take mushrooms outdoors, away from the unbemushroomed and other human disturbance. I need to step outside the ordinary human environment to hear what the mushrooms have to say.

Since 1988, whenever possible, I have celebrated the summer solstice with friends at Avebury stone circle. The popularity of Avebury and Stonehenge as solstice destinations has meant that Avebury is much rowdier than once it was. These days I go to a discreet location at the edge of the World Heritage Site, where it is still possible to be in the Avebury landscape but also to have a fire, to play acoustic music without the accompaniment of samba drumming, and to consume mushrooms in an intentional and attentive, though never po-faced, setting.

A core group of friends assembles each year: veterans from the road-protests of the 1990s, psychedelic enthusiasts and musicians, earth mystics, freaks, all of whom share a sense that the time and place are sacred. The nickname "University of the Hedge" comes from the fact that several of us now have PhDs. It is as close to my ideal Bodleian reading room as I think it possible to get: we take mushrooms, drink tea, sit around the fire playing music and discussing all manner of "out there" ideas. Wittgenstein, Heidegger, Bergson and prime number theory are as likely to be examined as ley lines, McKenna, the meaning of Avebury and whether what we are doing has any wider import. It is a thrilling yet relaxed intellectual environment in which ideas can be examined by curious minds through the even more curious lens of psilocybin consciousness.

The vigil begins with us watching the sunset and then collecting sufficient wood for a fire to last the short night. A fire serves the practical purpose of providing warmth, light and kettles of boiling water for tea, but it offers a ceremonial and symbolic focus too. A fire invites you to sit in the round. Tending it becomes a shared activity: the fire literally

fuels the gathering. When it is dark, mushrooms are shared by whoever has brought them: this is to be a communal experience, a journey to be undertaken together.

Along with the fire, tea and mushrooms, the other important ingredient is music. Music, especially improvised music, seems to have a unique ability both to shape, and give expression to, a trip. In spite of many good attempts, trip-lit always risks sounding pretentious or solipsistic and often works contrary to its purpose by distancing the reader from the experiences it describes. By contrast, the melodies, timbres, rhythms and harmonic progressions of music seem to fit the unfolding experience more faithfully, or to suggest it again afterwards. Since its inception, Western psychedelic music has flourished in a diversity of forms.

Briefly, the kind of music we play belongs to a very British tradition of pastoral, psychedelic folk, that harks back to bands from the 1960s and 1970s like The Incredible String Band, Comus, Gryphon and The Amazing Blondel, and further still to Elizabethan and medieval music (see R. Young 2010). The 1990s road protests gave the genre a more political and ecological focus, spawning bands like Space Goats, Heathen's All, the Dongas Tribe and my own Jabberwocky, and saw a series of cassette-only releases of bardic performers captured in the field at campaigns, called Tribal Voices. For all involved, a low-impact protest lifestyle informed and shaped the music: a Romantic eco-bardism played on mandolins, bouzoukis, bagpipes, whistles and hurdy-gurdies, with an emphasis on the importance of drones. This music came to be called tribedelica or troubadelica and it fits mushroom trips exceedingly well.

Someone will start playing an improvised phrase or lick. One by one others will join in until everyone is jamming. The music builds in intensity, one chord progression morphing into another, singers extemporizing over the top, until quite naturally, and with no one leading or giving a signal, the music stops. Time for more tea and talk before another jam or song begins.

Jay Griffiths describes how ayahuasca shamans sing *icaros*, haunting songs that somehow guide the trip and act as "lifelines" for participants when the experience becomes overwhelming. We are perhaps a long way from finding mushroom *icaros*, or indeed from discovering whether *icaros* are appropriate in this context at all, but I like to think that with tribedelica we are making a good start.

What draws the members of the "Hedge" together is a shared sense that what we do "fits" or is appropriate to the spirit of place. In no way do we pretend to know what meanings the "original" builders of Avebury (whoever they may have been – see Gillings & Pollard 2004) had in mind; nor are we trying to reconstruct some original practice (I remain unconvinced that mushrooms were used in prehistory: see Letcher 2006). Rather, we offer our way of doing things in a respectful manner: most people come by bicycle, foot or public transport, for example. Lead singer of the Space Goats, Pok, coined the term *enhurument* for that feeling produced by the combination of music, mushrooms, sacred time and sacred place. The band's catchphrase was "Get thee enhurued." At the University of the Hedge we most certainly do.

It is also at the University of the Hedge that I have had some of my most profound shamanimistic experiences. I have already mentioned that mushrooms seem to direct my attention towards plants. In childhood, plants were inanimate objects to me and nothing would give me more pleasure than to thwack a stand of nettles into pulpy oblivion. But on mushrooms, plants appear quite clearly as other-than-human persons, the humblest

"weed" as significant and important as the most magnificent tree, to whom respect ought to be paid, not violence.

I always know when I'm coming up because I become aware of the plants, their aliveness, their presence; that they have noticed *me*. The way I apprehend them has changed permanently. I do not think that some cognitive system or perceptual mechanism has been damaged. Rather, just as when once you have noticed it, it becomes impossible to shut out the sound of a ticking clock, so, having seen plants in this way, I cannot now unnotice how they are. The idea that plants can speak to you, as Griffiths recounts, seems wholly possible after mushrooms.

I have also had more "classic" shamanistic visions. Once, a relative of mine was dangerously ill. She appeared to me in my inner imagination as a strange, complex, ever-moving three-dimensional shape, a sort of biomechanical machine. A part of her mechanism was stuck, moving repetitively but ineffectively like a mayfly snagged in a cobweb. I could see exactly why she was ill and what to do to make her better. "Shamanize! Shamanize!" demanded my inner voice. And so I did. I make no claim to have healed her – the team of surgeons who operated on her did that – but I like to think that what I did worked, perhaps, on a parallel sickness of spirit, the "why" of her illness, not the "how".

At least, this is how it seemed to me at the time. But in the clear light of day my library self demands to know: what if I am mistaken? Ought not parsimony, or failing that, pressure from the dominant materialist discourse of our age, lead me to a psychological explanation for these non-ordinary experiences? Aren't they projections, or worse, hallucinations, and quite to be expected in a consciousness unhinged by drugs?

My private quest to find an adequate answer to these questions has led me to seek answers in philosophy and thence to the thought of Henri Bergson. If definite answers are unforthcoming, then I believe his insights nevertheless contain important implications for Psy-Crit and for the academic project in general.

TIME AND SPACE

How do you feel? Perhaps you are happy, sad, or grumpy, though not, I hope, bored. We are used to defining ourselves in this familiar, definite way but in his first major work, *Time and Free Will* (Bergson [1913] 2005), Bergson challenges us to think again. Whatever you are experiencing right now, you have never felt it before. You may think you are sad because that is how you described yourself the last time you felt similarly, but in fact the feeling is not the same. It is infused with and informed by memory. Consequently, "the same feeling, by the mere fact of being repeated, is a new feeling" (*ibid.*: 200).

In dreams, one person can simultaneously represent two or three or more people or qualities; so it is with our internal condition. This latter exists as pure quality, what Bergson calls a "confused multiplicity", which we name, as happy, sad or whatever, for the purposes of social interaction. But to name how we feel is to do violence to the very complexity of this multiplicity by fixing in space that which unfolds through time, or rather, what Bergson terms *duration*. "The brutal word, which stores up what is stable, common, and therefore impersonal in human impressions, crushes, or at least covers over, the delicate and fleeting impressions of our individual consciousness" (Bergson, cited in Guerlac 2006: 73). Our immediate experience of duration "will always be

incommensurable with language, which crushes duration through its very iterative structure" (*ibid.*: 2).

For Bergson, the fundamental error – which we are drawn to make because of the way our brains have evolved – is to misconstrue time as space. We *measure* time, by the *distance* travelled by hands around a clock face or sequentially in the pages of a diary. But duration is rather something which continually unfolds. "Cognitive thinking represents things in space – this is what all forms of symbolic representation do – which is why it cannot think duration, but only time. Duration can only be lived" (*ibid.*: 63). Or, as Bergson puts it: "'Can time be adequately represented by space?' To which we answer: 'Yes, if you are dealing with time flown; No, if you speak of time flowing'" (Bergson [1913] 2005: 221).

Bergson therefore distinguishes two aspects to consciousness: immediate consciousness, which exists in pure duration; and reflective consciousness, which, by the very way it grasps the data of immediate consciousness through language, symbol, logic or mathematics, renders duration as time, which is to say, as space. These aspects correspond to two selves: "a passionate self, in touch with the heterogeneous real" and "a superficial self that conforms to social conventions and the pressures of language" (Guerlac 2006: 70). In this, Bergson prefigures post-structuralist thought, but unlike, say, a queer theorist like Judith Butler, he allows a self unscripted by discourse, his passionate self. The risk is that by confusing the superficial for the passionate we become automata. The task of philosophy therefore is to pay attention to immediate consciousness, to try to apprehend it, not via some return to naïve experience, but through intuition, which itself requires "a vigorous effort of analysis" (*ibid.*: 71).

Bergson's insights are subtle yet surprising and have important consequences which, I argue, open up a legitimate place for Psy-Crit in the academic project. First, Bergson's distinction between immediate consciousness and reflective consciousness is instructive. When tripping on psilocybin, the visions, thoughts and ideas that occur seem to arise as if they were being *presented*. They bubble up in duration as a stream of novelty and wash over immediate consciousness like an ever-breaking wave. And yet no matter how intense the experience, there is always the sense of an uncompromised reflective consciousness observing and grasping, performing the hermeneutic task of interpreting just what the hell is going on. McKenna concurred on this point: however bizarre the experiences it elicits, psilocybin, unlike some other drugs, leaves an observing "I" intact (McKenna 1991).

As I lie on my back, clutching the grass to steady my nauseous body, a face looms out of the endless play of hallucinations behind my closed eyelids. It has a single eye and looks as if it were made of wood or is some fluid, octopus-like creature. Slightly menacing, it seems to be observing me. Tentacles spring from its back and lunge towards me like mycelia. Frightened, I open my eyes and the vision breaks. After a short moment, my inner voice speaks with authority. "That was the mushroom spirit, come to pay you a visit."

What happened here? A face arose within the provoked sensorium of immediate consciousness and I immediately interpreted it via reflective consciousness. I *could* have interpreted it many different ways, and, indeed, was aware that I had a choice, but rendered it meaningful in terms set by the shamanimistic discourse.

Thus, Bergson's framework gives us grounds for arguing against the popularly held opinion that the rational observing self – his reflective consciousness – is compromised by psychedelics: the phenomenological experience of taking psilocybin is otherwise. To

participate in a psychedelic experience is not, therefore, necessarily to have crossed an unacceptable ontological line.

In any case, and secondly, as soon as I write down what has happened I am necessarily engaged in a process of critical recollection. I endure, but the me writing the account is not the me who had the experience, nor is my account the experience but a spatialized rendition of it, tailored to the social expectations of genre. Given that this is true of all ethnography – that all ethnography is selectively recalled, after the event – there is no *a priori* reason why autobiographical "tripography" cannot meet the standards required of critical scholarship. Writing must be judged on its own merits and not simply on its subject matter.

Of course, ethnography has traditionally ruled the data of immediate consciousness to be of limited or non-existent value in what is supposed to be an objective academic exercise. I say traditionally because in the so-called "reflexive turn" the insider/outsider dichotomy has been challenged, if not effaced, with anthropologists owning all manner of non-ordinary, insider experiences (most famously described in Young & Goulet 1994). Even so, scholars are never expected to justify or explain their subjective involvement in their chosen discipline: it is taken as given or simply ignored. Why do we study this particular religion or tribe or culture? Why do we invoke this theory or philosopher and not another? Are we guided by pragmatism or enthusiasm?

In spite of every new philosophical school's claim to have solved all the problems of its forebears, no philosophical system has achieved completeness (perhaps it is a law of philosophy that no system ever will). The post-Kantian, Romantic philosopher Johann Gotleib Fichte (1762–1814) warned that all philosophical systems rest on axioms that cannot be proved from within the systems themselves: which system we adopt therefore remains a matter of personal choice (R. Richards 2002). Bergson concurred: we are drawn to an idea, not by its logical consistency or brilliance but qualitatively and subjectively by how well it conforms to our existing tastes:

> The beliefs to which we most strongly adhere are those of which we should find it most difficult to give an account, and the reasons by which we justify them are seldom those which have led us to adopt them. In a certain sense we have adopted them without any reason, for what makes them valuable in our eyes is that they match the colour of all our other ideas, and that from the very first we have seen in them something of ourselves. (Bergson [1913] 2005: 135)

In other words, the reason why I am writing about Bergson here, and encouraging you to follow up his ideas, is that I find his thought reflects my experiences of tripping and provides me with a sympathetic philosophical structure with which to apprehend them. Bergson chimes for me in a way that, say, Wittgenstein does not. Likewise, though it is true that I have settled on the shamanimistic discourse as the most fruitful way of interpreting my psilocybin experiences, the fact is that I am persuaded of it because it fits with what I already "know", or rather *feel*, to be the case.

But if this is true of me, then it is true of all of us who are passionately involved in our subjects. My third point, then, is that, seen through the lens of Bergsonism, the idea of a disinterested, objective self starts to look more like a convenient fiction than an established fact. By its nature, Psy-Crit forces us to put ourselves back into the analytic

frame (how could it not?) but Bergson exposes the way scholars *routinely* smuggle their passionate selves into what is supposed to be a rational and detached activity. If Psy-Crit is ruled invalid *a priori* on the grounds of subjectivity, then so must the rest.

SCHOLARS AND JAGUARS

If my Bergsonian defence of Psy-Crit is sufficient to hoist potential detractors on their critical petards, then the likelihood of my one day finding that ideal Bodleian reading room, an institutionalized University of the Hedge, ought to be increased. But is there really any chance of reconciliation between Western, materialist and indigenous, shamanimistic epistemologies? Isn't the ontological chasm between the scholar and the jaguar just too great?

Scholars have long pointed to similar difficulties that obtain with regards to the study of mysticism (see Sharf 1998). Mystics (and some scholars) point to the extraordinary nature of mystical experience as indubitable proof of the truth claims of the worldview in which it occurred. But experience – mystical or otherwise – remains a private matter and we only ever have access to *accounts*, accounts that, being culturally bound, may point to nothing beyond themselves. Accounts, in other words, are dubitable. The same is true of psychedelic experiences. Lacking anything resembling an Archimedes point from which to assess the truth claims of trip reports, whether we side with the scholar or the jaguar comes down, as Fichte warned, to a matter of personal choice.

Given that shamanimistic discourses are already on the loose here in the West, prowling through the outer reaches of psychedelic and other alternative spiritualities, my aim in this chapter has been to initiate critical dialogue by highlighting them and describing how they have bitten me – or, at least, my tripping self. And yet my library self finds this open, relativistic and inconclusive ending all a bit disconcerting. I still want to know whether plants talk or not. Can shamans actually heal people or not (placebo effect aside)? Bergson, perhaps, offers us an answer.

What marks Bergson as a particularly unusual and forward-thinking philosopher is that far from viewing reason as something *a priori* or God-given, he regards it as a necessarily limited product of our evolution. Intellect, he argues, exists solely to enable us to act upon the world. Poke a squid and its tentacles retract. Poke me and I can choose all manner of responses by virtue of possessing intellect. As the product of intellect, science divides the world and embarks on a continual process of refining and reticulating those divisions in order that we might act more artfully and with greater precision (Bergson 1912). But, as we have seen, intellect cannot grasp duration without misconstruing it in terms of space, as time. In other words, *a priori*, science can never obtain a complete picture of the world.

Could it be that when we take psilocybin or ayahuasca we are plunged back into the sensorium of immediate experience, a stream of data that science is incapable of grasping, but one in which seeming is being and where the shamanimistic view is fundamentally correct?

Well, I would say that, wouldn't I?

NOTES

1. An extensive and up-to-date list can be found at www.maps.org/research/
2. On the extent of drug use in England and Wales, see Hoare & Moon (2010).
3. Literature on the so-called insider/outsider debate is extensive, but two useful entry points are: McCutcheon (1999) and Blain *et al.* (2004).

27

Spiritual beings: a Darwinian, cognitive account

Stewart Guthrie

SOMETHING OLD AND SOMETHING NEW

Belief in spiritual beings, termed animism by E. B. Tylor, appears culturally universal. Nowadays, animism in the sense of "spirits everywhere" is often associated with people in small-scale societies, such as hunter-gatherers. Jean Piaget (1929, 1954) defined animism somewhat differently: as the attribution of agency to the biologically lifeless. Piaget associated this, as many still do, with children.

However, both associations are too narrow, since animism is common in industrial societies and adults. Moreover, according to Darwin, higher mammals may be animists as well. We all are fundamentally similar, he wrote, and all may see inanimate objects as inhabited by agents, as when his dog, seeing a parasol moved by wind, barked and growled fiercely.

Animism still puzzles us. Where does it come from? How does it relate to religion? Was Darwin's dog an animist? New work on cognition is relevant. A particular view of religion is buttressed by this work and, in turn, provides a context for applying it to animism.

A COGNITIVE THEORY

The underlying argument here first appeared as "A Cognitive Theory of Religion" (Guthrie 1980). Three of that paper's propositions – detecting intentional agents is of special concern, our sensitivities to them are correspondingly well developed, and we inevitably over-detect – have been adopted in varied cognitive approaches to religion. Still, the theory struck some as leaving an important question unanswered: if, as it holds, gods, ghosts and other humanlike agents, including their traces and messages, are anthropomorphisms, why are they frequently represented as invisible and/or immaterial, when actual humans are not? And if invisible, why are they plausible?

The 1980 paper (and Guthrie 1993) deals with this in two ways. First, it notes that not all gods are invisible and intangible. To hide, for example, Homer's gods must produce cloud or smoke. Second, invisibility and immateriality are not unique to gods. Many animals in their habitats, and humans in camouflage, are invisible until they move. Like gods, such agents are revealed more by their actions than their shapes. Further, some life forms simulate intangibility, as by schooling or flocking, which make individuals hard to see, or by small size, as in bacteria and viruses.

Thus, neither invisibility nor intangibility may distinguish gods. As Burkert notes in *Creation of the Sacred* (1996), dealing with unseen gods may differ little from dealing with unseen distant merchants. Nonetheless, some have urged that gods such as Abrahamic ones may be absolutely invisible and that this is different, so I have continued to mull the question.

Guthrie (1980) made three general assertions concerning religion and anthropomorphism. First, religious thought and action resemble and are continuous with secular thought and action, and spring from the same cognitive processes. This now is widely conceded (although it seems to contradict another current claim, that religions are counterintuitive).

Second, anthropomorphism – attributing human characteristics to non-human things and events – pervades thought and action, mostly unconsciously. It occurs in ordinary perception, as when we hear a wind-slammed door as an intruder, see AIDS as punishment, or find design in nature. Acknowledgements of this pervasiveness keep arriving.

In cognitive psychology, for example, Wegner (2005: 22) notes our "compelling inclination to perceive even ... geometric figures" as agents. Mar and Macrae (2006: 110) write, "we routinely view quite abstract nonliving representations as if they were intentional agents". In archeology, Lahelma writes that "some of the earliest ... paleoart feature[s] anthropomorphism" and that a jasperite pebble carried into a South African cave by a hominid two to three million years ago evidently was chosen because it had natural "eyes" and a "mouth" (2008: 135). Similar anthropomorphism infuses the history of art and appears even in science (Guthrie 1993).

My third general proposition was that religion is a systematized form of anthropomorphism: that is, over-detection of humanlike agency. Feuerbach, Hume, Spinoza and others also called religion anthropomorphism, but lacked a convincing explanation of anthropomorphism itself. Such an explanation is the heart of the 1980 paper and my ongoing work. Simply put, anthropomorphism, and hence religion (systematized thought and action concerning humanlike beings such as gods, ghosts and demons), results from a strategy of interpretation. The argument is as follows: in trying to grasp the world, we must guess how to construe phenomena. That is, perception is interpretation. It is interpretation because phenomena are chronically ambiguous, since every stimulus has more than one potential cause (a tickle on the skin may be a loose thread or a spider, a thump in the night may be a door closed by wind or a burglar). Ambiguity starts with the simplest percepts – for example, lines and edges – and continues up to our most comprehensive pictures of the world, typically those we call religious.

As Ernst Gombrich puts it, perception is betting (Guthrie 1993: 42). In my terms, it is betting about what phenomena represent: about what – or who – causes them. In this betting, we choose the most significant possibilities we know: the spider, not the thread; the burglar, not the wind.

The most significant possibilities usually are organisms, especially humans. Practically, humans are most significant because their organization makes them most powerful and

able to generate the widest range of effects. Intellectually, as models for understanding the world, they also are most significant, generating endless inferences, for the same reasons.

Their presence, however, may be hard to detect because, like most animals, they exacerbate the uncertainty of perception by camouflage and other deceit. Indeed, their behaviour is so protean that almost nothing, from catching smallpox to global warming, can be excluded as an effect of human or humanlike action. Thus we bet high, involuntarily and unconsciously, on humans – or other intentional agents – even though we are often mistaken.

This strategy has evolved, based on a good principle: better safe than sorry. Walking in the woods, it is better to mistake a stick for a snake, or a boulder for a bear, than the reverse. If we are right, we gain much, and if wrong, we lose little.

That this strategy is, in fact, a product of evolution and is innate is indicated by several kinds of evidence. First, one inevitable consequence of the strategy, anthropomorphism, is a human universal, as noted by the cognitive psychologists cited above as well as by philosophers such as Bacon, Spinoza and Hume and anthropologists including E. B. Tylor and Lévi-Strauss. Second, aspects of our sensitivity to at least some humanlike features, such as eyespots and faces, are modular: they have restricted input and output (e.g. eyespots must be presented in a roughly horizontal plane, not one above the other, and our response to them is automatic) and are present in newborn infants.

Third, these modules appear as part of a neurological "person system" (Farah & Heberlein 2007), a set of diverse areas of the brain so linked that stimulation of any of them activates some or all other areas of the system. For example, activity in brain areas representing eyes, general bodily form or motion (as in stick figures or in motion represented by lights attached to moving bodily joints), or goal-oriented behaviour activates varied other "person" areas. This system as a whole is notable for its automaticity and its high sensitivity and low threshold.

Fourth – as one would expect of a strategy that is both evolved and fundamental to survival – similar resultant patterns of perception and behaviour appear in non-human animals as well as in humans (Guthrie 2002; Foster & Kokko 2008). Sensitivity to eyespots, for example, exists throughout all classes of vertebrates (even in newborns), and all display what looks like better-safe-than-sorry behaviour regarding possible other animals.

Because intentional agents, especially humans, are our human hair-trigger default models for an uncertain world, we necessarily interpret that world as more humanlike than it is. The results are broad: plagues appear as punishments, earthquakes as messages, and the universe as designed.

A key question concerning both anthropomorphism and animism follows: what exactly is "humanlike" in a model? What do we think we see in the world, that we (mis)identify as gods or spirits, or as their traces or messages? I have held that what we primarily search for, and readily find, is not physical forms but minds and behaviours. Wegner (2005: 22) agrees, noting our "readiness to perceive minds behind events" and that our "faculty for mind perception is a strong guiding force in perception more generally". Central to human mind and behaviour, in turn, are language and other symbolism. Because we are deeply linguistic and symbolic, all events – taps on the window, comets, illnesses – seem to signify.

A related question was, and is: what is not humanlike, in gods, spirits and demons? It is difficult to find a clear distinction, and none may exist. Rather, gods, we, and other

animals appear on a continuum or, better, on various continua. Gods have various human qualities: they may be born, eat, drink, grow old, get sick and die.

Yet gods also frequently are invisible and intangible. So the question becomes, do humans share these features, or are they distinctive? Since both spiritual beings and humans are intentional agents, to answer this is to say how we conceive agents. Here, work on cognition gives new answers.

RECENT COGNITIVE SCIENCE ON AGENCY

Folk-psychological, or intuitive, agency resembles spiritual beings in at least five ways. First, it is informed by intuitive mind–body dualism, as scholars in several disciplines note (e.g. Koch 2008) in religious studies. Anthropologists, for example, report dualism, with material body and immaterial mind (or near equivalents, often plural), around the world. Absent evidence of worldwide transmission, this distribution suggests that dualism itself is intuitive or innate. In psychology, Bering (e.g. 2002) shows that although young children understand physical death, they intuitively expect that a mind survives it, in part because they consider mind separate; and Paul Bloom argues extensively that dualism is not merely intuitive but is innate, appearing even in infancy.

How do mind and body rank in our conception of agents? This brings us to the second aspect of agency: mind (widely conceived as the immaterial or ethereal basis of identity, sentience and volition) has priority over, and independence of, body. Although morphology (e.g. eyes, a mouth, bilateral symmetry) provides cues for detecting agency, behaviour (motions compatible with mind) is more important.

Again, several disciplines indicate mind's priority and independence. In anthropology, Gell (1998) notes "distributed agency": we act not only through our body but also through our artefacts, at a distance and over time. For example, a soldier, by laying mines, can go on killing even after he is dead. Maurice Bloch (2007) writes that by symbolic interaction, we produce similar states in each other's minds, making the location of ideas, thoughts and agency indeterminate. In philosophy, Leder (1990) draws on medicine to argue that we think of ourselves as minds because we're unaware of our bodies except when they bother us, as in sickness or disability. Similarly, Lakoff and Johnson (*Philosophy in the Flesh*: 1999) say humans consider their essential selves immaterial (and therefore immortal).

In psychology, studies of infant and adult perception also show that no animal-like body, or even a bounded body, is necessary for agency, since we perceive even a collection of dots moving together as an agent (Bloom & Veres 1999; Csibra *et al.* 1999; Scholl & Tremoulet 2000). Kelemen (2004) notes that children, by about three or four, represent immaterial agents, and Kuhlmeier *et al.* (2004) argue that five-month-old infants do not see humans as material objects, since they are not surprised at discontinuous motion by humans, unlike material objects. Lillard and Skibbe (2005: 281) doubt that theory of mind is domain specific, noting, for instance, that people say of the sky, "It wants to rain". Finally, a computer scientist, Turchin (1997: 1), writes that "an agent is a representation of an action ... We do not see agents, we see only what they are doing".

A third aspect of agency is that teleology is central to it. But teleology also appears independently, as when our prior sense that the world shows design leads us to infer a designer. Csibra *et al.* (1999: 265) show that infants attribute goals even to a non-self-propelled

moving object, without prior ontological commitment as to type of object. This contradicts proposals that purposeful objects first must be seen as agents. Thus teleology is not domain specific, and infants have the teleological stance as a "primary interpretational system". Kelemen (and Kelemen & DiYanni 2005) also writes extensively that young children are teleologists, indeed making them "intuitive theists" (Kelemen 2004). Children find purpose and design in the world "promiscuously" and, from them, infer a designer. Hume said the same of adults (Guthrie 1993: 69, 283).

A fourth aspect of agency is that perceiving it is unconscious and uncontrolled. Hassin *et al.* (2005), Lillard and Skibbe (2005: 282), and Scholl and Tremoulet (2000) all write that detecting intentionality and animacy is not conceptual but perceptual, and thus rapid and automatic. Seeing one circle pursue another on a computer screen, we cannot help inferring agency.

A fifth aspect of agency is that the threshold for perceiving it is low. As noted, we see even a moving collection of dots as an agent. Mar and Macrae (2006: 118) write specifically that we have a "low threshold" for the intentional stance. Indeed, we scan actively for intentionality. As Nietzsche wrote, "I notice something and seek ... an intention in it, and above all someone who has intentions, a subject, a doer: every event a deed" (1901/1967, in Cziko 2000: 13).

These five aspects of agency in intuitive psychology (dualism, priority of mind, teleology, unconsciousness and low threshold) constitute a proclivity for finding disembodied agents everywhere. Now we can see why invisible and intangible spirits are plausible and even compulsory: they are precisely how we conceive agency itself.

Why should we conceive agents this way, when modern biology does not? I end with a Darwinian suggestion that parallels my theory of anthropomorphism, by pointing to a perceptual problem and a strategy for solving it. The problem again is identifying intentional agents in an uncertain world, in which their embodiments are both camouflaged and innumerable and thus defy simple searches. Their goals and purposes, however, are fewer and more consistent: for example, to eat, reproduce and avoid being eaten. Our strategy, then, is to build our notions of agency around goals, purposes and corresponding behaviours. The constraint of looking, first, for goal-oriented behaviour makes finding the myriad forms in which agents are embodied more nearly possible.

CONCLUSION

We began with three questions: Where does animism come from? How does it relate to religion? And was Darwin's dog an animist? My answers are much the same as in my 1980 paper and ongoing work.

Animism in both senses – belief in spirit beings and giving life to the lifeless – comes from our need to discover any agents in an uncertain environment. Animism is basic to religion, if not sufficient for it. As for Darwin's dog, it certainly shared our need to find agents hidden in an ambiguous world. Since it apparently also shared our strategy of betting readily that we have found them, we have good reason to think Darwin was correct.

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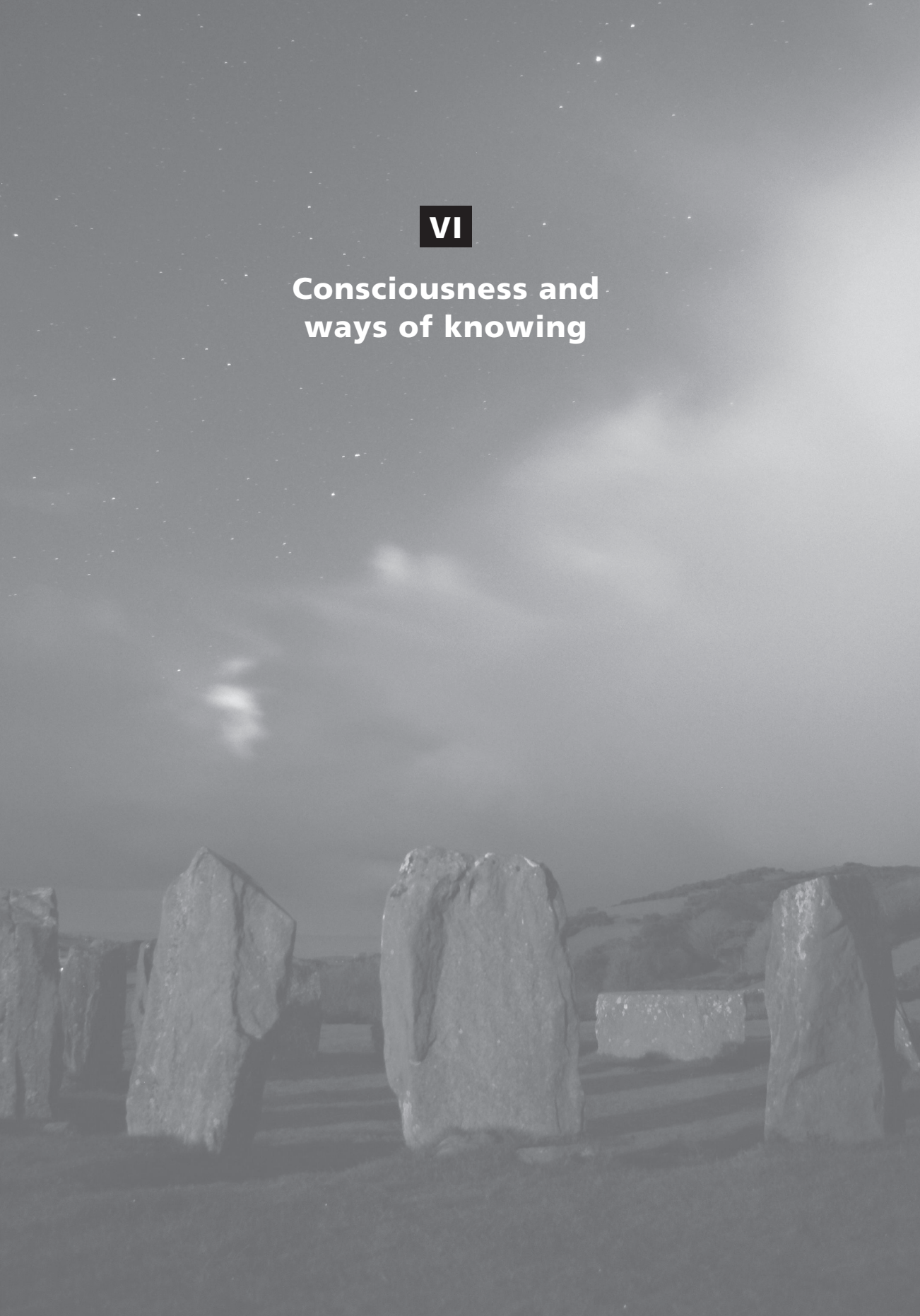

VI

Consciousness and ways of knowing

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INTRODUCTION

Large questions about ontology and epistemology have already been addressed. Indeed, a significant cause of the renewed interest in animism is its entanglement with knowledge and knowledge-seeking about the world and humanity's place in it. Part VI brings together chapters that expertly address the state of knowledge about consciousness. They range widely (surveying a variety of sciences concerned with matter, Gaia, plants, animals, human bodies, scholarly methods and trance). Cutting-edge research about consciousness promises to enrich debate about animism precisely because both domains of debate entail questions about the relation of matter and consciousness.

Max Velmans opens his chapter by asking, "Are we the only conscious beings?" While he does not mention animism, his expert presentation of current thinking about consciousness is vital to attempts to understand contemporary animism(s). Vast implications arise for the way the world is treated by animists, on the one hand, when they act on the assumption that everything is at least theoretically a living person (in some sense), and when (some) modernists, on the other hand, act on alternative assumptions of matter's inertness. Here, and in Velmans's larger work (e.g. 2009), we are not offered proof that animists are right about anything, but we are invited to consider the likelihood that consciousness is widely distributed and has been present in matter or, perhaps more accurately, *as* matter, for as long as anything has existed.

Stephan Harding continues to explore scientific questions, but explicitly seeks a path "toward an animistic science of the Earth". "Science", he says, "has made us clever, but it has not made us wise". Nonetheless, he does not reify an opposition between science and animism. Rather, he follows leads which reveal that a trend within science can be identified as a kind of animism. These include the possibility of seeing chemicals not as inert cogs in some vast machine but as entailing some kind of proto-subjectivity. Harding's argument that scientists can do science (i.e. experiment) without rejecting animism (including experiencing and participating) also addresses the hypothesis of Gaia, the tight coupling of life and the non-living environment in an ever more complex system.

In the following chapter, Matthew Hall presents a botanist's view of plant–human relationships. He provides pointers to recent botanical evidence of the intentional choices made by plants as they relate with others. Plants are evidently aware, communicative and cognitively competent. While animists *might* project human likeness where it is unwarranted, Hall adduces significant evidence that characteristics or abilities that have been attributed solely to humans or "higher animals" are also to be found among plants. He also notes some ethical implications for the ways in which plants might be treated, for example in research, that follow from this verdant relationality.

In a similar vein, Marc Bekoff summarizes evidence from the forefront of cognitive ethology. He defines this as the "comparative, evolutionary and ecological study of non-human animal minds, including thought processes, beliefs, rationality, information processing, emotions and feelings, and consciousness". Bekoff proposes that detailed and time-consuming observation of animal behaviours will provide a richer philosophical understanding and enhance scientific theorizing. Again, Bekoff does not mention animism, nor does he prove that animists are correct about, for instance, animals' wisdom. However, the relationality and personhood of animals in animistic multi-species societies requires at least some notion of their cognitive competence and communicative ability.

Adrian Harris presents himself as "an Eco-Pagan insider" who was led "to undertake academic fieldwork among UK Eco-Pagans living at protest camps and in more conventional urban settings". Here he offers evidence that there is a kind of embodied knowledge that is deeper than our self-aware, self-conscious, rational thinking. It has something to do with our intimate participation in relationships with other-than-human persons in the larger-than-human world. Harris's research and reflection aid his struggle to articulate, against the resistant bulk of dominant ways of speaking, something about the nature of persons who are not only constituted materially (by conscious matter) but also relationally. Where or what is the "self" when "I" am made, at each moment, by conversations with waterfalls, streams, plants, animals and other humans?

In her chapter, M. J. Barrett focuses on the implications of animist relationality, presence and participation for conducting research. She asks us to consider the benefits of pursuing research questions by animistic methods. "Research", she argues, is not a preliminary or prior phase to "presentation", something that can be undertaken differently (more or less participatively perhaps). Rather, research and presentation are conjoined in the construction and dissemination of knowledge. If we tell the story wrongly we and our readers or other respondents will understand wrongly. Positively, varying the ways we research and present will invaluably enrich our engagement with a larger-than-academic, larger-than-rationalist world.

Jenny Blain's chapter concerns "consciousness, wights and ancestors". It draws on her previous research, for example among Heathen *seidr* practitioners (Blain 2002a), and her recent experiences – both of such ancestrally informed and locally rooted practices as well as of walking in ancestral lands – to explore ideas about altered consciousness and modes of paying attention. Blain insists that the pervasive relationality of animism includes not only stones and sparrows but also social scientists like herself. Thus, like Barrett, she seeks to understand how animist knowledge-seeking might influence anthropological or sociological theories which attempt to account for "spiritual" practices and experiences.

28

Sentient matter

Max Velmans

THE DISTRIBUTION OF CONSCIOUSNESS

Are we the only conscious beings? We know that *we* are conscious, but what is the wider distribution of consciousness? How did consciousness evolve? And what kind of universe could have produced it? Dualists and reductionists alike have expressed many different views on these matters. As all the data needed to *decide* these matters are not currently available, all views are partly speculative.

Why are all views about the distribution of consciousness on our own planet or in the wider universe partly speculative? Because we do not even know the necessary and sufficient conditions for consciousness in our own brains! As E. R. John (1976) pointed out, we do not know the physical and chemical interactions involved, how big a neuronal system must be to sustain it, nor even whether it is confined to brains – and over thirty years later we are little wiser (see the review of the neurophysiological evidence in Velmans 2009, chapter 11).[1] Given this under-determination by the data, opinions about the distribution of consciousness have ranged from the ultra-conservative (only humans are conscious) to the extravagantly libertarian (everything that might possibly be construed as having consciousness *does* have consciousness).

The view that only humans have consciousness has a long history in theology, following naturally from the doctrine that only human beings have souls. Some philosophers and scientists have elaborated this doctrine into a philosophical position. According to Descartes only humans combine *res cogitans* (the thinking stuff of consciousness) with *res extensa* (extended material stuff). Non-human animals, which he refers to as "brutes", are nothing more than non-conscious machines. Lacking consciousness, they do not have reason or language. Eccles (in Popper & Eccles 1976) adopted a similar, dualist position – but argued that it is only through human language that one can communicate sufficiently well with another being to *establish* whether it is conscious. Without language, he suggests, the only defensible option is agnosticism or doubt. Jaynes (1979), by contrast, argued that

human language is a *necessary condition* for consciousness. And Nicholas Humphrey (1983) adopted a similar view, arguing that consciousness emerged only when humans developed a "theory of mind". He accepts that we might find it useful for our own ethical purposes to treat other animals *as if* they were conscious, but without self-consciousness of the kind provided by a human "theory of mind" they really have no consciousness at all! There are other, modern variants of this position (e.g. Carruthers 1998) but we do not need an exhaustive survey. It is enough to note that thinkers of very different persuasions have held this view. Early versions of this position appear to be largely informed by theological doctrine; later versions are based on the supposition that higher mental processes of the kinds unique to humans are necessary for consciousness of any kind.

It is easily shown that this extreme position has little to recommend it *when applied to humans*, let alone other animals. Phenomenal consciousness in humans is constructed from different exteroceptive and interoceptive resources and is composed of different "experiential materials" (what we see, hear, touch, taste, smell, feel and so on). It is true that our higher cognitive functions also have manifestations in experience, for example, in the form of verbal thoughts. Consequently, without language and the ability to reason, such thoughts would no longer be a part of what we experience (in the form of "inner speech"). But one can lose some sensory and mental capacities while other capacities remain intact (in cases of sensory impairment, aphasia, agnosia and so on). And there is *no* scientific evidence to support the view that language, the ability to reason and a theory of mind are *necessary conditions* for having visual, auditory and other sensory experiences (see Velmans 2009, chapter 11). Applied to humans, this view is in any case highly counter-intuitive. If true, we would have to believe that, prior to the development of language and other higher cognitive functions, babies experience neither pleasure nor pain, and that their cries and chuckles are just the non-conscious output of small biological machines. We would also have to accept that autistic children without a "theory of mind" never have any conscious experience. To any parent, such views are absurd.

Such views confuse the necessary conditions for the *existence* of consciousness with the added conditions required to support its many *forms*. Consciousness in humans appears to be regulated by global arousal systems, modulated by attentional systems that decide which representations (of the external world, body and mind/brain itself) are to receive focal attention. Neural representations, arousal systems, affective systems and mechanisms governing attention are found in many other animals (Jerison 1985; Panksepp 2007). Other animals have sense organs that detect environmental information and perceptual and cognitive processes that analyse and organize that information (see the review of consciousness in non-human animals in Velmans 2009, chapter 8). Many animals are also able to communicate and live in complex social worlds. Overall, the precise mix of sensory, perceptual, cognitive and social processes found in each species is likely to be species-specific. Given this, it might be reasonable to suppose that only humans can have full *human* consciousness. But it is equally reasonable to suppose that some non-human animals have unique, non-human forms of consciousness.

Even *self-consciousness* (of a kind) may not be confined to humans. Gallup (1977, 1982), for example, found that individually housed chimpanzees, given access to a full-length mirror, initially threatened and vocalized towards their mirror images as they would another chimpanzee. However, within two or three days their behaviour changed. They began to use their mirror reflections to groom themselves, remove food particles from

between their teeth, and inspect parts of their body that they could not otherwise see. On the eleventh day the chimps were anaesthetized and a spot of red dye was placed above one eyebrow and on top of the opposite ear. On recovery, the chimps, who were unable to see the spots, took no notice of them, touching them only rarely. However, once the mirrors were reintroduced they gave clear indications of noticing the change in their appearance. The frequency of touches to the marked spots increased twenty-five-fold, and, on occasion, they would touch the spots and then inspect and lick their fingers (although the dye was an indelible one). In short, after a few days of familiarization with mirrors, the chimps gave every indication that they recognized the mirror image as a reflection of themselves. Similar findings have been obtained with orang-utans (Tobach *et al.* 1997), gorillas (Shillito *et al.* 1999) and tamarins (Hauser *et al.* 1995); mirror recognition has also been found in elephants (Plotnik *et al.* 2006) and dolphins (Reiss & Marino 2001).

Given the evidence for the gradual evolution of the human brain, it seems unlikely that consciousness first emerged in the universe, fully formed, in *homo sapiens*. As the naturalist Thomas Huxley observed in 1874,

> The doctrine of continuity is too well established for it to be permissible to me to suppose that any complex natural phenomenon comes into existence suddenly, and without being preceded by simpler modifications; and very strong arguments would be needed to prove that such complex phenomena as those of consciousness, first make their appearance in man. (Cited in Vesey 1970: 138)

IS CONSCIOUSNESS CONFINED TO COMPLEX BRAINS?

One cannot be *certain* that other animals are conscious – or even that other people are conscious (the classical problem of "other minds"). However, the balance of evidence strongly supports it (Dawkins 1998; Panksepp 2007; Beshkar 2008). In cases where other animals have brain structures that are similar to humans, and that support social behaviour that is similar to humans (aggression, sexual activity, pair-bonding and so on), it is difficult to believe that they experience nothing at all. But if one does not place the conscious/non-conscious boundary between humans and non-humans where should one place it?

It might be that consciousness is confined to animals whose brains have achieved some (unknown) critical mass or critical complexity. In the human case, only representations at the focus of attention reach consciousness, and then only in a sufficiently aroused state (an awake or dreaming state, but not coma or deep sleep). But we need to be cautious about treating such conditions as universal. Within the animal kingdom creatures that sleep include mammals, birds, many reptiles, amphibians and fish, and even ants and fruit flies. However, not all active animals appear to sleep (for example, fish that swim continuously in shoals), and while sleep is generally thought to be restorative, its precise biological function remains unknown. Given that sleep is associated with *diminished* consciousness, it seems in any case unlikely that having a sleep-wake cycle is a prerequisite for consciousness.

Selective attention might seem to be a more likely condition, and it is also found in many other animals – even fruit flies (van Swinderen 2007). In humans the mind/brain receives simultaneous information from a range of sense organs that simultaneously

monitor the external and internal environment, and this information needs to be related to information in long-term memory, and assessed for importance in the light of ongoing needs and goals. In short, there are many things going on at once. But we cannot give everything our full, undivided attention. As Donald Broadbent pointed out in 1958, there is a "bottleneck" in human information processing. The human effector system is also limited. We only have two eyes, hands, legs, and so on, and effective action in the world requires precise co-ordination of eye movements, limbs and body posture. As a result, the mind/brain needs to select the most important information, to decide on the best strategy, and to co-ordinate its activity sufficiently well to interact with the world in a coherent, integrated way.

To achieve this, it is as important to *stop* things happening in the brain as it is to make them happen. As William Uttal observed,

> There is an a priori requirement that some substantial portion, perhaps a majority, of the synapses that occur at the terminals of the myriad synaptic contacts of the three-dimensional [neural] lattice must be inhibitory. Otherwise the system would be in a constant state of universal excitement after the very first input signal, and no coherent adaptive response to complex stimuli would be possible.
> (Uttal 1978:192)

To prevent information overload, not to mention utter confusion, attended-to information needs to become *dominantly* active and conscious, while information outside the focus of attention is inhibited (and similar inhibition of eligible activities takes place during dreamless sleep).

WHAT IS IT ABOUT NEUROPHYSIOLOGICAL ACTIVITY THAT MAKES IT CONSCIOUS?

In 1976, the neurophysiologist E. Roy John confessed that,

> We do not understand the nature of ... the physical and chemical interactions which produce mental experience. We do not know how big a neuronal system must be before it can sustain the critical reactions, nor whether the critical reactions depend exclusively upon the properties of neurons or only require a particular organisation of energy and matter. (E. R. John 1976: 2)

Over thirty years later, we still don't know. In the human brain, the level of activation appears to be important. However, at any given moment, very little of the brain's activity reaches consciousness, and only some activities, such as the results of perceptual processing, appear to be eligible for consciousness. It is also generally accepted that activities in the human brain that are eligible for consciousness have to *compete* for dominance, and the mechanisms commonly thought to play a role involve heightened activation of dominant activities, combined with inhibition of non-dominant activities. For example, top-down influences of attentional systems on neural representations of input are likely to be one means by which their activation is heightened and competing activity suppressed. Such

neural activities may also become dominant by entering into phase-locked synchrony with other neural assemblies, thereby forming winning coalitions and suppressing competing coalitions (Crick & Koch 2007; W. Singer 2007). As attention shifts, new information is selectively activated and/or released from inhibition,[2] new coalitions form, become integrated, and conscious. Dehaene and Naccache (2001) and Edelman and Tononi (2000) similarly suggest that entry of information into a "global workspace" and, more specifically, *dominating* the information in the global workspace is what makes neural information conscious.

What is perhaps most surprising about these converging views is that *no special, added ingredient may be required for consciousness*. Neural assemblies that are eligible for consciousness might be more or less active, and they might or might not enter into phase-locked synchronous firing with other assemblies which allow their firing patterns to become integrated and dominant. But doing *more* of what they normally do, or doing this in *synchrony* with other neural assemblies, does not fundamentally alter the nature of such neural activities. In short, eligible neural activities that remain unconscious may not be *different in kind* from those which become conscious, any more than the sound of individual voices at a football stadium are different in kind to the concerted singing of the crowd that drowns them out. If so, consciousness might be a *natural* accompaniment of certain forms of neural representation, and while having an attentional system allows a choice of *what* will be conscious in complex brains that have many options, this might not be required by simple brains, with few options, to be conscious of anything at all.

It goes without saying that the neural states that support everyday *human* experiences must be extremely complex. The contents of consciousness are constructed from different sense modalities, and, within a given sense modality, experiences can be of unlimited variety and be exquisitely detailed. Complexity might also be a means whereby neural coalitions compete for dominance (Tononi 2007). However, it does not follow from this that *only* brains of similar complexity can support *any* experience. Once again we need to distinguish the conditions for the existence of consciousness from the added conditions that determine the many forms that it can take. The mechanisms required to select, coordinate, integrate and disseminate conscious information in the human brain may not be required for simpler creatures, with simpler brains. Complex, highly differentiated brains are likely to be needed to support complex, highly differentiated experiences. But it remains possible that relatively simple brains can support relatively simple experiences.

FROGS, WORMS AND MOLLUSCS

The visual system of the frog, for example, appears to be structured to respond to just four stimulus features: a sustained contrast in brightness between two portions of the visual field, the presence of moving edges, the presence of small moving spots and an overall dimming of the visual field. This is a far cry from the variety and detail provided by the human visual system. But there seems little reason to jump to the conclusion that the frog sees nothing. Rather, as Lettvin *et al.* (1959) proposed, the frog may see just four things relating to its survival. A sudden dimming of the light or a moving edge may indicate the presence of a predator and is likely to initiate an escape response. Sustained differences in brightness may allow the frog to separate water from land and lily pad. And moving spot detectors may allow the frog to see (and catch) a moving fly at tongue's length.

As one continues to descend the evolutionary ladder, the plausibility of extrapolating from human to non-human animal consciousness becomes increasingly remote. There may, for example, be critical transition points in the development of consciousness which accompany critical transitions in functional organization (Sloman 1997a,b). Self-awareness, for example, probably occurs only in creatures capable of self-representation. That said, phenomenal consciousness (of any kind) might only require representation. If so, even simple invertebrates might have some rudimentary awareness, in so far as they are able to represent and, indeed, respond to certain features of the world.

Planarians (flat worms), for example, can be taught to avoid a stimulus light if it has been previously associated with an electric shock (following a classical conditioning procedure). And simple molluscs such as the sea-hare Aplysia that withdraw into their shells when touched respond to stimulus "novelty". For example, they may habituate (show diminished withdrawal) after repeated stimulation at a given site, but withdraw fully if the same stimulation is applied to another nearby site. Habituation in Aplysia appears to be mediated by events at just one centrally placed synapse between sensory and motor neurons (Uttal 1978). This is very simple learning, and it is very difficult to imagine what a mollusc might experience. But if the ability to learn and respond to the environment were the criterion for consciousness, there would be no principled grounds to rule this out. It might be, for example, that simple approach and avoidance are associated with rudimentary experiences of pleasure and pain.

IS CONSCIOUSNESS CONFINED TO BRAINS?

It is commonly thought that the evolution of human consciousness is intimately linked to the evolution of the neocortex (e.g. Jerison 1985) and it seems likely that mid-brain as well as cortical structures play a central role in determining the forms of consciousness that we experience (see the review in Velmans 2009, chapter 11). However, whether consciousness first emerged with the development of such subcortical and cortical structures, or whether there is something special about the nature of brain cells that somehow "produces" consciousness is less certain. As Charles Sherrington has pointed out, there appears to be nothing special about the internal structure of brain cells that might make them uniquely responsible for mind or consciousness. For:

> A brain-cell is not unalterably from birth a brain-cell. In the embryo-frog the cells destined to be brain can be replaced by cells from the skin of the back, the back even of another embryo; these after transplantation become in their new host brain-cells and seem to serve the brain's purpose duly. But cells of the skin it is difficult to suppose as having a special germ of mind. Moreover cells, like those of the brain in microscopic appearance, in chemical character, and in provenance, are elsewhere concerned with acts wholly devoid of mind, e.g. the knee-jerk, the light-reflex of the pupil. A knee-jerk "kick" and a mathematical problem employ similar-looking cells. With the spine broken and the spinal cords so torn across as to disconnect the body below from the brain above, although the former retains the unharmed remainder of the spinal cord consisting of masses of nervous cells, and retains a number of nervous reactions, it reveals no trace of recognizable

> mind ... Mind, as attaching to any unicellular life would seem to be unrecognizable to observation; but I would not feel that permits me to affirm that it is not there. Indeed, I would think, that since mind appears in the developing source that amounts to showing that it is potential in the ovum (and sperm) from which the source springs. The appearance of recognizable mind in the source would then be not a creation de novo but a development of mind from unrecognizable into recognizable. (Sherrington 1942, cited in Vesey 1970: 323)

UNICELLULAR ORGANISMS, FUNGI AND PLANTS

Indeed, given our current, limited knowledge of the necessary and sufficient conditions for consciousness in humans, we cannot, as yet, rule out even more remote possibilities. If the ability to represent and respond to the world, or the ability to modify behaviour consequent on interactions with the world, are the criteria for consciousness then it may that consciousness extends not just to simple invertebrates (such as Planaria) but also to unicellular organisms, fungi and plants. For example, the leaflets of the Mimosa plant habituate to repeated stimulation, that is, the leaflets rapidly close when first touched, but after repeated stimulation they re-open fully and do not close again while the stimulus remains the same. Surprisingly, this habituation is stimulus-specific. For example, Holmes and Yost (1966) induced leaflet closure using either water droplets or brush strokes, and after repeated stimulation (with either stimulus) habituation occurred. But if the stimulus was changed (from water drops to brush strokes or vice versa), leaflet closure re-occurred (see also Applewhite 1975 for a review).

For many who have thought about this matter, the transition from rudimentary consciousness in animal life to sentience in plants is one transition too far. Perhaps it is. It is important to note, however, that a criterion of consciousness based on the ability to respond to the world does not prevent it. Nor, on this criterion, can we rule out the possibility of consciousness in systems made of materials other than the carbon-based compounds which (on this planet) form the basis for organic life. For example, silicon-based computers can in principle carry out many functions that, in humans, we take to be evidence of conscious minds. So how can we be certain that they are not conscious?

One should recognize, too, that even a criterion for the existence of consciousness based on the ability to respond or adapt to the world is entirely arbitrary. It might, for example, be like something to *be* something irrespective of whether one *does* anything! Panexperientialists such as A. N. Whitehead ([1929] 1979) have suggested that there is no arbitrary line in the ascent from microscopic to macroscopic matter at which consciousness suddenly appears out of nothing. Rather, elementary forms of matter may be associated with elementary forms of experience. And if they encode information they may be associated with rudimentary forms of mind.

DOES MATTER MATTER?

Many would regard Whitehead's views as extreme. But there is one position that is even more extreme – the view that the nature of matter doesn't matter to consciousness at

all. At first glance, it might seem preposterous to claim that matter does not matter for consciousness. But, surprising as it might seem, it is a logical consequence of *computational functionalism*, one of the most widely adopted, current theories of mind. As John Searle has noted, it is important to distinguish this position from the view that *silicon robots* might be conscious. For him, human consciousness, in spite of its subjectivity, intentionality and qualia, is an emergent *physical* property of the brain. If so, a silicon robot *might* have consciousness. But this would depend not on its programming, but on whether silicon just happens to have the same causal powers (to produce consciousness) as the carbon-based material of brains.

Computational functionalists take the further step that, apart from providing housing for functioning, material stuff is irrelevant. *Any* system that functions *as-if* it has consciousness and mind *does* have consciousness and mind. If a non-biological system functions exactly like a human mind then it has a human mind, as the only thing that makes a system a "mind" is the way that it functions. In its usual reductionist versions, computational functionalism finesses questions about the distribution of first-person consciousness, routinely translating these into questions about how different systems function (see the review in Velmans 2009: ch. 5).

It is not my intention to rule out the possibility that the functioning of a system determines the experience of that system. In my estimation, however, *panpsychofunctionalism* (the view that anything that has a function is conscious by virtue of having that function) is too extreme. If experience depends *solely* on form (or function) and *not at all* on substance (the matter or medium which embodies those functions), then virtual minds embodied in symbol-manipulating programmes would have normal human experiences provided only that they mimic the mind's internal causal relationships. While one cannot rule this out *a priori*, it seems unlikely that the flesh and bone and brain of human embodiment provides no essential contribution to the experienced "qualia" of human life. In any case, to be a conscious entity or being, one would first have to be an entity or being. And it is by no means self-evident that any system that mimics the functioning of a given conscious entity would itself be a conscious entity of the same kind. One could, for example, simulate symbol manipulation within the human mind by having the population of China passing notes to each other. But it is by no means self-evident that such activities would make the population of China a "mind" in the required sense.[3] Finally, functioning is observer-relative. For example, thermostats made of bimetal strips bend with changes in temperature – and, viewed from the human perspective, their function is to monitor changes in temperature. However, lacking human thermoreceptors and the neuronal systems that support them, there is little reason to believe that thermostats experience temperature changes in the ways that human do. So even if a thermostat composed of a bimetal strip does have some "metallic" experience, there would seem to be no grounds for assuming that the nature of this experience is determined by its functions in human affairs.

CAN ONE DRAW A LINE BETWEEN THINGS THAT HAVE CONSCIOUSNESS AND THOSE THAT DO NOT?

Where, then, should one draw the line between entities that are conscious and those that are not? Theories about the distribution of consciousness divide into *continuity* and

discontinuity theories. Discontinuity theories all claim that consciousness emerged at a particular point in the evolution of the universe. They merely disagree about which point. Consequently, discontinuity theories all face the same problem. What switched the lights on? What is it about matter, at a particular stage of evolution, which suddenly gave it consciousness? As noted above, most try to define the point of transition in functional terms, although they disagree about the nature of the critical function. Some think consciousness "switched on" only in humans, for example once they acquired language or a theory of mind. Some believe that consciousness emerged once brains reached a critical size or complexity. Others believe it co-emerged with the ability to learn, or to respond in an adaptive way to the environment.

As noted above, such theories confuse the conditions for the *existence* of consciousness with the conditions that determine the many *forms* that it can take. Who can doubt that verbal thoughts require language, or that full human self-consciousness requires a theory of mind? Without internal representations of the world, how could consciousness be *of* anything? And without motility and the ability to approach or avoid, what point would there be to rudimentary pleasure or pain? However, none of these theories explains what it is about such biological functions that suddenly switch on consciousness.

Continuity theorists do not face this problem for the simple reason that they do not believe that consciousness suddenly emerged at *any* stage of evolution. Rather, as Sherrington suggests above, consciousness is a "development of mind from unrecognizable into recognizable". On this *panpsychist* or *panexperientialist* view,[4] all forms of matter have an associated form of consciousness.[5] In the cosmic explosion that gave birth to the universe, consciousness co-emerged with matter and co-evolves with it. As matter became more differentiated and developed in complexity, consciousness became correspondingly differentiated and complex. The emergence of carbon-based life forms developed into creatures with sensory systems that had associated sensory "qualia". The development of *representation* was accompanied by the development of consciousness that is *of* something. The development of *self-representation* was accompanied by the dawn of differentiated self-consciousness and so on. On this view, evolution accounts for the different *forms* that consciousness takes. But, consciousness, in some primal form, did not emerge at any particular stage of evolution. Rather, it was there from the beginning. Its emergence with the birth of the universe is neither more nor less mysterious than the emergence of matter and energy.

Most discontinuity theorists take it for granted that consciousness could only have appeared (out of nothing) through some random mutation in complex life forms that happened to confer a reproductive advantage (inclusive survival fitness) that can be specified in third-person functional terms. This deeply ingrained, pre-theoretical assumption has set the agenda for what discontinuity theorists believe they need to explain. Within cognitive psychology, for example, consciousness has been thought by one or another theorist to be necessary for every major phase of human information processing, for example in the analysis of complex or novel input, learning, memory, problem-solving, planning, creativity, and the control and monitoring of complex, adaptive response. It should be apparent that continuity theory shifts this agenda. The persistence of different, emergent biological forms may be governed by reproductive advantage. If each of these biological forms has a unique, associated consciousness, then matter and consciousness co-evolve. However, conventional evolutionary theory does not claim that *matter itself* came into

being, or persists through random mutation and reproductive advantage. According to continuity theory, neither does consciousness.

Which view is correct? One must choose for oneself. In the absence of anything other than arbitrary criteria for when consciousness suddenly emerged, I confess that I find continuity theory to be the more elegant. Continuity in the evolution of consciousness favours continuity in the distribution of consciousness, although there may be critical transition points in the *forms* of consciousness associated with the development of life, representation, self-representation and so on.

NOTES

1. For a more detailed discussion of all the issues in this chapter, see Velmans (2009: ch. 14).
2. A simple example of the inhibition of conscious experience consequent on redirection of attention is provided by hypnotic analgesia (see Oakley & Eames 1985; Crawford *et al.* 1998). Conversely, dramatic evidence of the effect of release from inhibition on action and consciousness occurs with alien hand syndrome in split-brain patients. Dimond (1980) and Scepkowski and Cronin-Golomb (2003) review evidence that in such patients the left hemisphere continues the attempt to assert dominance over the right in the control of action, although with the corpus callosum severed and the consequent inability to inhibit right-hemisphere activity, it cannot always successfully do so. Sperry *et al.* (1979) also review evidence that once the corpus callosum is sectioned each hemisphere has a distinct associated consciousness of its own (although this issue is controversial). A general review of the role of release from inhibition in selective attention is given by Arbuthnott (1995).
3. What unifies the consciousness of a particular being or entity is a deep question that I will not elaborate on here. In our own case, we have the subjective impression of having a relatively unified consciousness in which the whole of our being participates, although it may be that, at any given moment, only a given subpopulation of cortical neurones form the actual neural correlates of consciousness. Under normal circumstances, we do not have separate hand consciousness, foot consciousness, cellular consciousness and so on (a pain in the foot is "our" pain rather than the foot's pain). How this occurs is not well understood – although neural binding, inhibition of non-attended states, and widespread dissemination of attended-to information are likely to be contributory factors. It is tempting to speculate that there may also be some more general process associated with the manner in which the individual components of entities lose their separate, physical identities once they are integrated into the higher-order entities of which they are parts. In so far as the parts have any associated experiences, these may be integrated, in parallel fashion, into some unified global experience.
4. There have been many defenders of panpsychism, including Spinoza, Leibniz, Lotze, Fechner, Wundt and James.The nonreductive unification of matter and consciousness that is implicit in panpsychism has, in recent years, led to a resurgence of interest in this position, particularly in the form defended by Whitehead (see, for example, the review of panpsychism by Skrbina 2005; De Quincey 2002; and the readings on Whitehead in Weber & Desmond 2008). A physicalist version of panpsychism has also recently been defended by Strawson (2006).
5. Although in complex life forms such as ourselves, much of this consciousness may be inhibited, for example when information is not at the focus of attention.

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Towards an animistic science of the Earth

Stephan Harding

At first sight, science and animism appear to be irreconcilable. Whereas over the last four centuries science has held sway with the view that nature is nothing more than a vast lifeless mechanism that can be understood and controlled by means of experiment and detached analytical reasoning, "animists", in their various guises (including shamans, poets, priests, philosophers and psychologists), have for millennia professed an intuitive knowing of nature as a great soul, mind or psyche; as alive, redolent with purpose and meaning; as saturated with mysterious creativity.

Clearly, modern science and technology have brought us many benefits and are without doubt among humanity's greatest intellectual achievements, but they have also unwittingly contributed to the massive global crisis we are now facing. In essence, science has made us clever, but it has not made us wise. If we are to have any chance of surviving the looming catastrophe that science and technology have inadvertently helped to create we will need more wisdom, not more analytical capacity, of which there is a plentiful supply. And so, along with a growing number of fellow scientists, philosophers and activists, I believe that we now urgently need to develop a new approach in science that integrates analysis with wisdom, fact with value and nature with culture (Goodwin 2007). We think that this can be done by replacing our demonstrably unwise (and until recently, unconscious) assumption that the world is an inert machine with the arguably wiser and more accurate metaphor of the world as a vast animate (and hence "sentient") being. Thus, strange and trite as it may seem, the survival of civilization itself could in part depend on a fusion of science with animism. Furthermore, given the very real dangers that seem set to befall us as a result of our impact on our planet's climate, there is perhaps no better way to begin this work than with an animistic reformulation of our scientific understanding of the Earth.

The first question we need to explore is what an animistic approach to nature actually entails. Graham Harvey (2005a) points out that "animism" has two connotations – an old, disparaging one used by colonial anthropologists who disrespected the nature-spirit

worship of the cultures they studied (and helped to subjugate), and another, more modern version of the term which he suggests has more to do with respecting "persons" in the widest sense of the word. We could of course refer here to the many indigenous cultures of the world, some, if not all of whom were inspired by animistic cosmologies and ways of living, but in the light of Harvey's comments it seems more appropriate for us to bring to light the animistic sensibilities and insights that lie hidden within Western culture itself, since this is where modern science and technology originated.

SOME PRECURSORS OF SCIENTIFIC ANIMISM IN THE WEST

We begin with Thales of Miletus, the eminent pre-Socratic Ionian philosopher of the sixth century BCE who is widely recognized as one of the progenitors of modern science. He, along with several other Ionian philosophers of the time, taught that we could understand nature by focusing on the physical forces that underlie the workings of the natural world rather than on the actions of the capricious supernatural gods who were widely believed at the time to be the prime movers behind all things. Of interest to us in our quest for an animistic science was Thales's assertion that all matter is alive, or "full of gods". He seems to have reached this conclusion by observing that the attractive powers of rubbed amber and magnets were akin to the equivalent powers within biological entities. The emphasis on matter as sentient was never completely lost in the West, despite the gradual schism between mind and matter that gradually took root during subsequent centuries.

A major revival of these animistic ideas took place during the Renaissance, when Marsilio Ficino (1433–99) and other hermeticists (such as Pico della Mirandola [1463–94]) explored the view that the material world is saturated with the enlivening influences of the *anima mundi* (the soul of the world), which in turn derives its power from a transcendent divine intellect. The hermeticists were inspired by (and named after) Hermes Trismegistus, a legendary figure supposed to have been the source of much ancient wisdom and learning. For these thinkers and magi, true knowledge required an understanding of how the Ideas in the divine intellect manifested in matter and in the world at large (Wertheim 1997: 88). A prominent hermeticist was Giordano Bruno (1548–1600), who thought of the planets as huge animals each with its own soul, and who regarded solar systems (like our own) as the fundamental units in a universe as vast and limitless as the divine intellect itself.

However, by the end of the sixteenth and during the early seventeenth centuries the Church had instigated its murderous activities against the magi and hermeticists, of which about one million women – the so-called "witches" – perished at the hands of the clerics and their agents. This was the time when the new mathematical science was in the ascendency, led by the infamous Marin Mersenne (1588–1648), a Minim Monk, the sworn enemy of the heretical hermeticism, of the *anima mundi* and hence of animistic thinking in general. Mersenne favoured a purely mechanistic conception of nature compatible with the Catholic Church's ideas about the relationship between God and his creation (Dear 1988: 3–4). One of Mersenne's allies was the priest Pierre Gassendi (1592–1655), who described the universe as a collection of inert atoms obeying mathematical laws imposed from above by a transcendent God. In the words of Margaret Wertheim, it was through Mersenne and Gassendi that "the animating spirits and souls of the world were drained

away like the blood from a slaughtered calf. The self-activating universe of the magi was killed off, and in its place stood an inert machine" (1997: 94). But it wasn't easy for the early mechanists to establish their dominance; they needed a champion who would conclusively demonstrate the supremacy of the mathematical way of knowing. According to Wertheim (1997), to a large extent it was Rene Descartes (1596–1650) who fulfilled this role in declaring that there was a fundamental division between the human mind (the *res cogitans*) and the rest of nature, which was, of course, a vast dead machine (the *res extensa*). Thus, according to Wertheim (*ibid.*) and others (e.g. Merchant 1980), Descartes established the principle that only a detached mathematical intellect could gain reliable knowledge of nature.

Clearly, we now urgently need to adopt a view of the world that overcomes this fundamental dualism. Father Thomas Berry (2000) sums up the worldview shift that is now needed with wonderful succinctness when he says that we need to understand that "the universe is not a collection of objects, it is a communion of subjects". In other words, we need to abandon the billiard ball view of the universe as a set of isolated, inert objects that interact in only the most superficial of ways, and move instead to a view in which every entity is an experiencing subject, full of creative agency, which is deeply changed through its interactions with every other entity around it. Berry points out that every so-called "object" is in fact a subject with its own experience, no matter how rudimentary; it feels like something to be an electron, an atom, a molecule, an organism, an ecosystem, a planet, a universe.

GOETHE

An animistic science would therefore take account of this inward, "soulful" nature of things. Perhaps the most important exponent of such an approach in science was Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832), who developed an intuitive method for connecting us with the inwardness of natural phenomena which in fact can be traced back several centuries before him to Ficino and Paracelsus, and before them to the hermetic tradition. In this method, careful attention is paid to any given phenomenon being studied without attempting to reduce the experience to quantities, explanations or theories.

Goethe's method begins with *exact sensorial perception*, the careful observation of the phenomenon one is working with by means of detailed drawings that show how whatever one is studying reveals itself to our physical senses. In the case of a plant, one begins the drawing at the ground (or even with the roots), and then works one's way up to the flowers and seeds. In the next stage, *exact sensorial imagination*, one closes one's eyes and visualizes the coming into being of the phenomenon in great detail based on the observations made in the previous stage. In the case of a plant, one visualizes the growth of the plant stage by stage and leaf by leaf until one can see the dynamical coming into being of the plant clearly in one's mind's eye (Colquhoun & Ewald 1996).

If this works as it should, one can have the intuitive perception of the phenomenon as an active, soulful presence *within oneself*, and not as an object *outside* one's own being. This sense of deep relatedness to the world transforms consciousness into a means for holistic perception through which we are able to apprehend the intrinsic qualities of things as well as their inherent wholeness (Bortoft 1996). Goethian science leads us to the

conclusion that "mind" or "soul" is not, as Descartes thought, located within the human skull and nowhere else. We realize instead (through our intuitive faculty) that these qualities are distributed throughout the universe, which is therefore, as the ancients have said, a great mind or soul in its own right.

GREGORY BATESON

This idea of the extended mind can be found in the writings of several key contemporary thinkers. One of the most important was Gregory Bateson (1904–80), whose work has been ably analysed and summarized by Charlton (2008), whose synthesis I draw on in what follows. Bateson proposed that mind exists within the relationships between the material parts of a system, which in turn must be of sufficient complexity for mind to emerge. Mind therefore certainly exists in biological systems, but not necessarily in the abiotic realm of rocks, air and water. "News of difference" constitutes the informational content of these relationships, which leads either to corrective (negative) feedback or to self-amplifying (positive) feedback within the system as a whole. This news of difference takes many forms, including changes in hormone levels, temperature, acidity, rainfall and so on, and it also manifests in communicative signals such as bird calls and insect warning colouration. For Bateson, mind is organized in nested patterns – the mind of an individual organism is found within the physiological relationships that maintain it as a seemingly discrete entity, and the organism is itself part of the larger minds of the local population of its species, its ecological community and so on up to the planet as a living whole. Thus, every living being is part of an "eco-mental" system that includes its wider surroundings, such that if we create "insanity" in a lake by treating it badly, we will eventually feel this insanity when it feeds back into our own mental life and experience. Learning is thus a key characteristic of the process of mind. Charlton (*ibid.*: 48) points out that Bateson's insights imply a widening of our concepts of awareness and perception, since awareness, which for Bateson is a characteristic of all mental systems, does not depend on consciousness or even self-consciousness as we experience them in our own human experience. Clearly, this view is in part justified on the grounds that almost all of our physiological functioning takes places without the involvement of consciousness.

Charlton (*ibid.*) suggests that "Bateson's understanding of the systems of the world as 'minds' is a much needed insight, an ontological re-visioning of the living Earth that we should learn to value and accept", and it is easy to see how one can fruitfully use Bateson's notion of mind to postulate the existence of a global mind constituted by the complex relationships among the planet's various components, including the human realm of being. This, as we shall see below, creates an excellent basis for an animistic science of the Earth.

BIOSEMIOTICS

Another fruitful area of thought that lends itself well for incorporation into an animistic science of the Earth is biosemiotics, which seeks to understand living beings not only on the basis of their chemical and physical (or purely "mechanical") properties, but also

by observing how they interpret signs and meaning. The basic move here is to deny the validity of Descartes' categorical assertion that only humans have minds – biosemioticians regard all biological beings as "minded", in the same way that they share the basic properties of cellular structure, biochemistry and physiology. Every living creature literally knows what is happening to it since it responds to signals received from both within itself and its environment using a style of knowing unique to each species that is not necessarily symbolic or logical or even conscious in the human sense, but which nevertheless involves a mind that *interprets* the signals that are being received. Biosemiotics therefore places the emphasis on mental acts of cognition and interpretation by minds that are ubiquitous in the biological realm. Hence there are as many minds – as many viewpoints on the world – as there are individual living creatures. The biological world is a tangled mental web woven together into a coherent whole by means of a phenomenally diverse range of signals and signs that include physical, biochemical and behavioural stimuli.

Biosemiotics is a new and growing field within science that has much to offer those who wish to transcend the dualism imposed by Descartes and his successors. In the words of Donald Favareau (2010: 32), a key player in the field:

> If biosemiotics has any one single most constructive message to give the mainstream scientific community, surely it is precisely this: a semiotic process is not a ghostly, mental, human thought process. Rather, it is, in the first instance, nothing more nor less mysterious than that natural interface by which an organism actively negotiates the present demands of its internal biological organization with the present demands of the organization of its external surround. And the fact that this is done incessantly – by all organisms, and by us – should not blind us to the significant fact that such moment-to-moment activity is always and perpetually an *enacted accomplishment* – and thus one that is going to have to be explained, if we are ever to understand the biological side of living organisms' material interactions.

GAIA

This mind-like "enacted accomplishment" manifests at global ecosystem level as Gaia, our living planet. Gaia is the ancient Greek divinity of the Earth – the living soul of the sacred Earth – the ancient one – the first born of primordial Chaos – the Mother of the Gods (Hesiod, 500 BCE). To paraphrase Jules Cashford, for the ancient Greeks the physical form of Earth – "the foundation", the ground we and other beings stand upon, swim through or fly over, in fact, "everyone in the world" – took its reality from the sacred realm, which we acknowledge by understanding Earth as our Mother and Mother of all (Cashford 1995, 2010). Gaia was the primordial mythical image by which the ancient Greeks ordered and understood their lives, but, to our massive detriment, this image was lost to us long ago – the Earth was last formally revered as sacred in the West about 2,500 years ago (Cashford 1995, 2010).

But as the ecological crisis deepened during the twentieth century it was as if the *anima mundi* (or the wider mind, the collective unconscious) needed to be recognized once more through a powerful archetypal image that would inspire us all once again to revere the

Earth as sacred. It is a great irony (and also a huge surprise) that the mythical image of the Earth that we so badly needed emerged within the bowels of the very enterprise that had for centuries denied the animate nature of the Earth – namely science itself.

This happened through the British scientist James Lovelock, who adopted Gaia as the name (suggested to him by his friend William Golding) for his theory of a living, self-regulating Earth. It was in 1965 that Lovelock first glimpsed Gaia while working for NASA in their quest to find life on Mars. His investigations into the atmospheric compositions of the atmospheres of Earth, Mars and Venus led him formulate the bold and startling hypothesis that living beings on this planet have not only generated our atmosphere, but also actively regulated it, keeping it at a composition favourable for life over thousands of millions of years.

This was a radical suggestion, for until recently scientists believed that life could not have had such major impacts on the atmosphere, since living things were, after all, no more than second-class planetary citizens. It was, they said, the non-living world of rocks, atmosphere and water which determined the Earth's key surface properties such as temperature. Living beings had to adapt to the conditions created for them by the non-living world or perish.

In contrast, the key insight of the most recent version of Lovelock's insight – his Gaia theory (Lovelock 2005) – is wonderfully holistic and non-hierarchical; it suggests that it is the *Gaian system as a whole* that does the regulating, that the sum of all the complex feedbacks between life, atmosphere, rocks and water give rise to Gaia, the evolving, self-regulating planetary entity that has maintained habitable conditions on the surface of our planet over vast stretches of geological time.

Gaia theory suggests that life and the non-living environment are *tightly coupled*, like partners in a good marriage. This means that what happens to one partner happens to the other, and implies that all the rocks on the Earth's surface, the atmosphere and the waters have been deeply altered by life, and vice versa. The self-regulation arising from this tight coupling is an *emergent property* that could not have been predicted from knowledge of biology, geology, physics or chemistry as separate disciplines. Gaia has evolved as an entirety over geological time and, like a beehive or a termite colony, is a superorganism, which for Lovelock (1991: 64) is "an ensemble of living and non-living components which acts as a single self-regulating system". Thus the atmosphere is as much the product of life as is a cat's fur or the bark of a tree. In essence, Gaia is an archetypal image, and if it is true that we need a new myth to live by in our imperilled times (Cashford 1997), there can be no doubt that Gaia is eminently suited to the task. And of course, there is no better image for those who seek to create an animistic science of the Earth that reunites Logos (rational thought) with Mythos and Imagination (the intuitive faculty of the mind that connects us with the anima mundi).

JUNG

Before we can begin to explore how we can weave together the various strands alluded to so far – the "magical" thinking of Ficino and the hermeticists, the phenomenological science of Goethe, Bateson's concept of mind, the insights of biosemiotics, Gaia theory, Logos and Mythos – into a coherent animistic science of the Earth, there is one more step

that needs to be taken: a brief exploration of the ways of knowing that we humans are capable of. Here we bring in the work of C. G. Jung (1875–1961), the great Swiss psychologist who revolutionized our understanding of the psyche in its widest sense. Based on his empirical work with his many patients, Jung realized that we have four fundamental ways of knowing the world, which are, in brief, thinking, feeling, sensing and intuition. These occur as dyadic opposites, so that a person whose dominant function is thinking will be inherently less motivated to develop their feeling (and vice versa) – likewise for intuition and sensing. Thinking and feeling are evaluative, whereas intuition and sensing are not. Thinking evaluates through reason, logic and analysis, feeling through a "gut-knowing" about what is right (or wrong) in any given situation. Hence feeling in this context is more about ethics than emotion, but an ethics born not from reasoning but from a deeper, more embodied reading of the world. Similarly, we receive information about the sensual qualities of our outer surroundings via our senses, whereas intuition is an inner knowing, a "spontaneous perception of wholeness" (Bortoft, personal communication) that is presented to us often fully formed from regions of the psyche beyond consciousness.

BRINGING THE THREADS TOGETHER

It is now time to bring the various threads that we have explored above into a coherent outline of what an animistic science of the Earth might consist of. I will use Jung's four ways of knowing as a template for this task, since it seems to me that the sort of science we are looking for needs to involve the entirety of the human psyche, and not just the thinking function which has dominated science as we know it. Thus, for me, an animistic science of the Earth needs to integrate our thinking, feeling, sensing and intuition into a valid way (or multiple ways) of knowing our living planet that will allow us to participate fully in her creative evolutionary journey.

One can start with the thinking function by considering Gaia as a system at a variety of different scales. We start with the chemical elements. Here, we speak of CHNOPS – carbon, hydrogen, nitrogen, oxygen, phosphorus and sulphur – the six major chemical elements that are of vital importance for life on our planet. An animistic science of the Earth teaches us that chemistry need no longer be thought of in merely mechanical ways, as if "chemicals" are nothing more than dead, static cogs. Chemical properties are sublimely fluid – they are the ways in which different aspects of the inner natures of the elements reveal themselves in different contexts and circumstances, just as our own behaviour is dependent to some extent on the social setting in which we find ourselves. The inner nature of the chemical elements must entail a kind of proto-subjectivity, since, in the words of philosopher J. McDaniel (1983: 306), "our own subjective experiences are highly developed forms of what there was in the beginning, sub-microscopic matter", and "'matter' and 'mind' are simply names for different types of actual occasions of experience". For philosopher Christian De Quincey (2002: ix, referring to the insights of great philosophers such as A. N. Whitehead), "matter tingles with interiority" and "matter *feels* to its deepest roots". Thus, we can no longer treat matter with disrespect, because it is, after all, *sentient* in some sense by virtue of having a creative agency and capacity for experience that demands our ethical consideration. We realize the profound wisdom in

the etymological root of the word "matter", which comes from the Latin for "mother" (mater), and "matrix", or womb.

If this approach is correct, then, in contrast to the mainstream view (of matter as "dead stuff"), we can conceive of matter as "alive" – as inherently creative. For animistic scientists, matter and psyche are therefore indissoluble, for the psyche of the world resides nowhere else but in matter itself. Thus the great archetypes of Gaia and anima mundi that figure so importantly in the human soul could well be prefigured in some mysterious way not in some abstract realm far from this world, but in the very molecules and atoms that constitute our palpable, sensing bodies, and also in the very materiality of the Earth herself. Perhaps psyche becomes visible when the relationships among a community of interacting agents are powerful and complex enough to call it forth from within the very matrix of matter itself. If this is true – if psyche is indeed revealed in the very thick of relationship – then Gaia may well be a domain in which the presence of living beings so quickens and intensifies the planet-wide interactions among atoms, rocks, atmosphere and water that the Earth literally awakens and begins to experience herself as alive and sentient.

This view of the elements allows us to study their chemical properties with conventional scientific exactitude, but then also to *personify* them in the sense proposed by James Hillman (1992: 16), which involves the realization that "To understand anything at all, we must envision it as having an independent subjective interior existence, capable of experience, obliged to a history, motivated by purposes and intentions." This is clearly different to anthropomorphism, in which we attribute human traits to non-human entities without due care, empathy and rigorous scientific consideration. Each person's personifications will of course bear the stamp of their own particular creativity, but all will capture something of the inherent subjectivity of, in this case, the chemical elements. Thus, careful study of the chemical properties of Gaia's key elements (involving a consideration of their locations in the periodic table, and hence their reactivity as revealed by the configuration of their electron orbits) has led me to personify carbon as a cooperative princely character, oxygen as a "passionate Italian", hydrogen as a youthful being longing to eschew the Earth's domain for its original home in outer space, and calcium as a dynamic, entrepreneurial princess (Stephan Harding 2009). It is as if the insights of the hermeticists have taken on a modern form, for these personifications allow animistic scientists to participate with the chemical elements as fellow beings in the body of Gaia and hence to feel more truly at home in the soul of the world.

From the chemical elements we move up in scale in our thinking to the living realm. As far as we know, the first organisms on this planet were the bacteria, which appeared some 3,500 million years ago. It is widely agreed among biologists that bacteria are the principal force that is at work in shaping Gaia (Markoš 1995). Soon after their appearance, these tiny unicellular organisms (they are typically a few thousandths of a millimetre in length) invented the biochemical art of using water as a source of hydrogen in a novel kind of oxygen-producing photosynthesis that has been fuelling the planet with solar energy ever since. Bacteria are also essential for recycling many of Gaia's nutrients, and are the only organisms that can cycle nitrogen (a key nutrient of life) in and out of the atmosphere at ambient temperatures.

Bacteria are amazingly abundant – one gram of soil contains about 40 million bacterial cells – a millilitre (one thousandth of a litre) of freshwater contains about a million

bacterial cells. Thus, bacteria make up most of the biosphere's biomass. We humans harbour about ten times as many bacterial cells relative to the number of our own cells, mostly in our large intestine, but also on our skin.

Bacteria are vastly important for an animistic understanding of the Earth because their astounding communicative abilities mean that they have created an ancient (but constantly updated) global network of information transfer that constitutes a vastly intelligent global "mind" of the sort described by Bateson. The signals (in the biosemiotic sense) that are made, transmitted and actively interpreted in this network are genes, specific signalling molecules and even structural elements such as bacterial "nanowires" that move electrons over relatively large distances in ways that could be analogous to the electrical activity in our own brains (Gorby, interviewed by Brahic [2010]). Bacteria trade genes like we trade emails; they release small packages of genetic instructions (sometimes via viruses), coding for all manner of metabolic innovations into their surroundings that any other bacterium anywhere on Earth can incorporate into its own individual genome for read-out and implementation (Markoš 1995; Markoš *et al.* 2010). There is thus in effect only one global bacterial species (with many types) that shares a global thesaurus of genetic information constituting a global bacterial superorganismic mind that is the foundation of the wider life and mind of Gaia as a whole.

Bacteria also produce a multitude of specially crafted signalling molecules in tiny amounts that diffuse into their surroundings, thereby giving rise to the phenomenon known as "quorum sensing" whereby these molecules can be taken up and interpreted by nearby bacteria, allowing the bacterial population as a whole to monitor its own density (Ben-Jacob 1998). When a given bacterial cell registers that the concentration of a specific signalling molecule (or a complex set of them) has reached a threshold concentration, it "realizes" that it is time to change its behaviour and proceeds to turn the appropriate genes on or off.

Bacterial chemical communication is of such startling complexity that it resembles the basic grammatical structures of human language, so much so that scientists are now talking about bacterial syntax and even about bacterial social intelligence. This sophisticated bacterial language allows for such tight co-ordination among different species in microbial colonies that they are best described as multicellular superorganisms. As in human language, the meaning of a given bacterial signal depends entirely on context, so that the same molecule will trigger a whole range of responses depending on what is going on both within and outside an individual cell. A key researcher in this field, Eshel Ben-Jacob, speaks of bacteria leading "rich social lives", of developing "collective memory" and "common knowledge", of having "group identity", of being able to "recognise the identity of other colonies", of "learning from experience", of "improving themselves" and of engaging in "group decision making", all of which add up to a social intelligence analogous to that of "primates, birds and insects" (Ben-Jacob *et al.* 2004).

The relevance of all this for an animistic science of the Earth is that we can no longer think of bacteria as nothing more than mere mechanical bags of chemicals. Bacteria are deeply sentient creatures that live in a rich, meaningful communal world partially of their own making to which they respond creatively and with exquisite sensitivity. This great bacterial web is, in a way, rather like the unconscious processes that operate key aspects of our own metabolisms. There must be a seamless transition from this bacterial sentience to our own, for our very own cells are associations of once free-living bacteria

that now engage in sophisticated intra-cellular communication. If our cells (and those of all other animals, plants, fungi and protoctista) are fundamentally bacterial, then a continuous thread of sentience and intelligence runs from us all right back to our earliest bacterial ancestors. The mind of Gaia is truly a bacterial mind.

The next level to consider is that of the ecosystem. We will focus on fungi because these organisms are critical for the survival of all terrestrial ecosystems. They decide which plant species grow in any given ecosystem, and therefore determine the composition and hence the mind-like communicative signalling of entire ecological communities. Without fungi there would be no waggle dancing bees, no bird song, no music.

Fungal bodies are networks of hollow tubes made of pipe-shaped cells joined end to end called hyphae. Hyphae are decidedly microscopic; their width varies from one five hundredth to one hundredth of a millimetre. Cellular fluids flow freely and easily along the growing hyphae, which branch and fuse, creating a complex network of fungal pipelines known as a "mycelium". These fusions between the individual hyphae hugely amplify the distributive power of mycelial networks and are often so numerous that mycelia often resemble cotton wool.

Some mycelia can be massive in both age and size. Perhaps the largest organism on Earth is a 2,200-year-old *Armillaria* root-rot fungus that grows in 2,400 acres of forest soil in eastern Oregon – a veritable behemoth that periodically kills the forest, producing deep rich soil in which taller trees can grow before their turn comes to be felled by their fungal master (Stamets 2004). The biomass of these fungal networks of mycelium is immense: several tonnes of mycelium can exist in one hectare of Swedish forest.

The Gaian significance of fungi is that they specialize in interconnecting other living entities, and even other living kingdoms. They have invented the most important nutrient transport system on the planet – the mycorrhizas ("fungus-roots") – in which fungal tubes engage in intimate associations with the living roots of plants. These associations are essentially mind-like in Bateson's sense, since complex signalling molecules are required to make these associations work. Mycorrhizal fungi are like umbilical cords; they channel sugars from trees actively photosynthesizing in the light to nearby trees that are starving in the shade. They also allow plants to send information (for example, about predators) to each other via special plant signalling molecules transported along fungal tubes from plant to plant, thereby mediating a networked intelligence within the world of plants.

Mycorrhizal fungi have allowed plants to colonize much of the Earth's surface. They turned the Earth green and made it possible to fix huge amounts of carbon dioxide from the air in the bulky bodies of trees, thereby influencing the Earth's temperature. The extent of mycorrhizal support for trees is staggering. Recent estimates suggest that an individual tree can be associated with hundreds of thousands of kilometres of fungal hyphae.

What is of great interest to animistic scientists is that fungi possess an eerie intelligence, and probably a peculiar sense of self to boot. This is in part because individual hyphae in a mycelium allow fungi to create networks of phenomenal communicative power that strongly resemble our blood system or the neuronal connections in our brains. The parallel with the nervous system is more than merely metaphorical, for, like bacteria, mycelia are in some sense sentient and aware. According to Paul Stamets (*ibid.*), mycelia are nothing less than the "neurological network of nature" which sense the movements of organisms upon the land and the impact of falling tree branches on the ground (potential food for decomposing fungi) thanks to complex signalling molecules

that course through the communal spaces of their interlocking pipelines. Mycologists Alan Rayner and Christian Taylor describe fungi as "brains in the soil" that have no need of the bodily appendages and organs which encumber animals such as ourselves. Fungi lack our sense organs and our high degree of neurological development, but they have a keen taste for the chemical environment around them. Like all good brains, fungi solve problems (where to find food and mates, with whom to make partnerships). Fungi think slowly. They lack the fast-track neuronal paraphernalia of the animal kingdom, but this gives them time to make good decisions.

Finally, we arrive at Gaia – the level of the global ecosystem. Here animistic scientists are interested in the complex networks of information transfer that give the planet its coherence as an intelligent, self-regulating living entity. The key to these networks is the communicative interface between the living and non-living components of the planetary system. Perhaps the most important process here is the long-term carbon cycle which has regulated the planetary temperature within the narrow limits suitable for life over thousands of millions of years. What kind of mental processes could be involved here, and where do they take place?

One key site is the interface between silicate rocks, such as granite and basalt, and soils. The first step takes place when rainwater combines with carbon dioxide from the atmosphere to create carbonic acid, which then chemically weathers the rock, thereby combining carbon atoms in the carbonic acid with calcium ions within the rock, producing a solution of calcium bicarbonate which holds within it carbon atoms that were once in the atmosphere. Hence the weathering of granite and basalt cools the Earth. So far, only the proto-intelligences of the chemical realm have been involved, but the process would fail without the participation of the more sophisticated sentience of the biological world. Plant roots are important here, because in their incessant hunt for nutrients they physically fracture the rock and exude their own acids onto it. They also contribute to the formation of soil, which, as we have seen, houses abundant communities of bacteria and fungi which also fracture the rock and secrete rock-dissolving acids. The entire soil community also exhales carbon dioxide onto the multitude of rock particles that result from their physical fracturing of the rock. Furthermore, rainwater easily reaches the rock particles through the porosity of the soil. Thus the combined intelligences of the biota help to amplify the chemical rock weathering of granite and basalt by up to a thousand times.

The calcium bicarbonate is washed to the sea by rivers, where it is absorbed by tiny marine algae which solidify it into chalk – calcium carbonate. When these algae die the chalk (and hence the carbon it contains) is deposited in ocean sediments that are slowly transferred to subduction zones at the edges of the continents by the conveyor belt process of plate tectonics. Here, some of the chalk is subducted and melted deep under the Earth, releasing carbon dioxide which returns to the atmosphere via volcanoes.

When thought of mechanistically, the whole system appears as no more than a negative feedback: the planet's temperature increases when volcanoes spew out carbon dioxide, and so does rainfall, since more water evaporates from the oceans in a warmer world. The rock-weathering biota grow better and weather more silicate rock, which takes carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere, thereby cooling the planet. But now, on a cooler and hence drier Earth, the rock-weathering biota grow less well and so weather less silicate rock, which allows carbon dioxide to build up in the atmosphere via volcanoes, once again warming the Earth.

An animistic interpretation of the feedback radically changes our view by revealing how mind at the planetary level emerges through many kinds of signals at each step of the process. The hugely complex biological signalling that takes place between living beings that weather silicate rocks changes the nature of the simpler signals (involving chemical bonding) among the chemical elements in the rock such that it dissolves, thereby removing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. The resulting reductions in temperature and rainfall eventually feed back to influence the rock-weathering beings, whose exquisitely sensitive interpretations of these signals cause them to reduce their rock weathering, allowing carbon dioxide to build up in the atmosphere from volcanoes. In the mechanistic view we are detached observers, whereas in the animistic view there is a greater feeling of participation in the wider mind of the Earth.

FINALE

So far we have used mostly thinking to elucidate some key features of an animistic science of the Earth, but such a science cannot be complete without contributions from our sensing, intuition and feeling. As animistic scientists, we bring the four functions together through sensory experience, visualization and contemplation. We go into the woods and immerse ourselves experientially in the semiotic communicative web of our animate Earth. We realize that *everything* is language – the call of the birds as much as the sounds and sights of the wind in the trees (Abram 1997, 2010). Then, sitting on a boulder perhaps, we use Goethe's approach to turn inwards, using our scientific knowledge to carefully build up a step by step visualization – like that of a plant growing from a seed – of Gaia's long evolutionary journey. We see the planet coalescing from a disc of gas some four and half thousand million years ago, we see her crust solidifying and see her global ocean, some three and half thousand million years ago, suddenly populated by green photosynthesizing bacteria. We see the first continents appearing some two and a half thousand million years ago and witness the birth of the long-term carbon cycle as the first bacteria on land begin the weathering of silicate rocks. We sense oxygen slowly building up in the atmosphere, and we experience the huge explosion of multicellular life some six hundred million years ago that quickened Gaia's intelligence, making her ever more adroit at regulating her temperature. Then, if we are lucky, we might be granted a powerful intuitive experience of being *Gaia'ed* – of the palpable sacred reality of the huge, round sentient *personhood* (beyond concepts – beyond description) of our breathing, turning world in whom we deeply and joyfully participate. Once again we witness the return of hermeticists' animating spirits of the world in a manner consistent with modern science relevant for our times. With this comes a spontaneous ethical feeling of wanting to act to benefit all beings who inhabit the Earth – from rocks to humans – an ethics in which we feel that all beings have intrinsic value simply because they exist (Naess 1990). We have come home to Gaia, and now, with this inspiration, we can get down to the work of finding our peaceful and rightful place within her turning lustrous body.

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Talk among the trees: animist plant ontologies and ethics

Matthew Hall

Plants form the basis of life on earth and constitute the bulk of the visible biomass in the biosphere. Exploring cultural relationships with plants is therefore important for understanding the relationship between human cultures and the wider ecosystems and landscapes in which they live. In the "old animism" of Tylor and Frazer, the relationships between animistic cultures and the natural world were characterized as childish, savage and primitive, a stance which many of the chapters in the current volume explicitly reject. In this chapter I wish to complement this work by specifically reappraising similar characterizations of animistic interactions with the plant kingdom. I do so using more current anthropological evidence of human–plant relationships, as well as a substantial body of pioneering research in the plant sciences which demonstrates a remarkable convergence with indigenous animist knowledges of plant ontology. Such convergence prompts a discussion of animist-based models for a human–plant ethics – embedding our knowledge of plant behaviour into human behaviour towards them.

FROM SOUL TO WORSHIP

To the scholars of the "old animism", the descriptions of animists' interactions with the plant kingdom were comprised of three parts: plants have souls, plants are worshipped, animist relationships with plants are primitive.

Plants have souls

In his *Primitive Culture*, Tylor discusses the "plant soul":

> Plants, partaking with animals the phenomena of life and death, health and sickness, not unnaturally have some kind of soul ascribed to them. In fact, the notion

> of a vegetable soul, common to plants and to the higher organisms possessing an animal soul in addition, was familiar to medieval philosophy, and is not yet forgotten by naturalists. But in the lower ranges of culture, at least within one wide district of the world, the souls of plants are much more fully identified with the souls of animals. (Tylor 1920: 474)

Having incorporated plants into the realm of ensouled beings, Tylor acknowledged that the exact status of the plant soul is hard to determine. On one hand the idea of the transmigration of souls (see the following section) meant that some plants (including trees) were "animated by human souls", while on the other, the widespread "belief in tree-spirits" necessitated an alternative, but perhaps not mutually exclusive, idea of the "tree soul" (*ibid.*: 476). Throwing another version of the soul into this mix, in *The Golden Bough*, Frazer also described a dedicated plant soul (not simply exclusive to trees) within a discussion of Malay and Dyak rituals with rice:

> They imagine that in the fibers of the plant, as in the body of a man, there is a certain vital element, which is so far independent of the plant that it may for a time be completely separated from it without fatal effects, though if its absence be prolonged beyond certain limits the plant will wither and die. This vital yet separable element is what, for the want of a better word, we must call the *soul* of a plant, just as a similar vital and separable element is commonly supposed to constitute the soul of man; and on this theory or myth of the plant-soul is built the whole worship of the cereals. (Frazer [1890] 1922: 414)

In *Primitive Culture*, the nature of the human soul "among the lower races" is "the cause of life and thought in the individual it animates; independently possessing the personal consciousness and volition of its corporeal owner" (Tylor 1920:429). In Tylor's understanding, through transmigration of human souls (with the human noticeably prior), similar natures can be migrated into plants (*ibid.*: 476). In addition, the ensouled animals and plants also have non-transmigrated, more intrinsic natures, which to varying degrees are reflections of the nature of the human soul. In a discussion on the nature of the plant soul, Tylor makes reference to the fact that, unlike in the Aristotelian conception of the plant soul (purely conferring the capacity of growth), in "the lower cultures", the plant soul is more closely associated with the animal soul, which is possessed of mind and sentience (*ibid.*: 475). As Gilmore summarizes, "Trees have souls, feel pain, and even hold conversation, and this is not confined to the larger growths, being extended to plants or shrubs, and some skilled humans have had the knowledge of plant language" (Gilmore 1919: 83–4).

Plants are worshipped

According to Tylor, "the practice of tree-worship involves notions more or less closely coinciding with that of tree-souls" (Tylor 1920: 476), and to Frazer ,"to the savage ... they have souls like his own, and he treats them accordingly" (Frazer [1890] 1922: 111). In the history of religion, according to Frazer, numerous peoples, from ancient Germans to Native American Iroquois, have (or had) to some extent indulged in the savage practice

of tree worship. Frazer dedicated three chapters of *The Golden Bough* to the occurrence of "tree worship" and chronicled an array of practices, which he grouped under this umbrella. Noticeably, the bulk of these practices relate not to elaborate "worship rituals", but to simple acts which express care and consideration for living trees, such as the reticence of the Ojibwe in cutting living trees, or the country-folk in Austria who will not allow trees to be cut without "special cause" (*ibid.*: 112).

Animist relationships with plants are primitive

Although Tylor notes that the idea of "plant soul" is "readily appreciable" (Tylor 1920: 477), the title of his *Primitive Culture* leaves little to the imagination regarding his view of the cultural beliefs and practices he was documenting. Scattered throughout are carefully chosen adjectives such as "savage", "crude" and "backward". In his opposition to the weird and wonderful "ethical" practices which constitute "plant worship", Frazer is even more vocal. He dismisses the idea of plant souls as "savage dogma" (Frazer [1890] 1922: 112) and that of tree worship as "preposterous and absurd" – a phenomenon that was a sure-fire sign of primitive and superstition-filled belief systems (*ibid.*: iv). These dismissals of "plant souls" and "tree worship" are primarily based on the *a priori* decision that animist culture in its entirety is "savage" and "primitive" in comparison with a more advanced, scientific, Western culture. As Tylor's historical timeline of culture goes, "the main tendency of culture from primaeval up to modern times has been from savagery towards civilization" (Tylor 1922: 21). Animist "views" are portrayed as mistakes principally because they directly challenge the observer's established epistemological frameworks (Wittgenstein 1979).

PLANT ONTOLOGIES

In Tylor's *Primitive Culture*, the discussion of plant souls in animist culture is influenced by his understanding of a broadly "Hindu"[1] philosophy (Tylor 1871: 9–11). In an elaboration on "animism", Tylor writes: "To the Hindu, the body is but the temporary receptacle of the soul, which, 'bound in the chains of deeds' and 'eating the fruits of past actions,' promotes or degrades itself along a series of embodiments in plant, beast, man, deity" (*ibid.*: 9).

From the perspective of a modernist soul/body dualism, Tylor projected this understanding of soul (and indeed a Thomistic notion of soul) onto other examples gleaned from indigenous cultures (Bird-David 1999; M. Hall 2011). Thus the Polynesian concept of *varua*, the Dayak recognition of a living principle and the Karen understanding of *la* are all translated as "soul" or "spirit". In this understanding of "soul" or "spirit", the human soul is demonstrably prior and all other instances of "soul" are in some way derivative. Thus, describing the "soul", Tylor states: "It is a thin unsubstantial human image ... able to enter into, possess, and act in the bodies of other men, of animals, and even of things" (Tylor 1920: 429). Yet, as other chapters in this volume demonstrate, the soul/body dualism and the associated essentialist split between human and non-human are not applicable in indigenous animist cultures (see also Descola 1992; Bird-David 1999; G. Harvey 2005a). Tylor's notion of residing spirits or souls in plants (and animals and rocks) is increasingly rejected in favour of the idea that in indigenous cultures plants

are actually understood (and related to) as other-than-human persons (M. Hall 2011). The basis of plant personhood is not a "primitive" belief in souls, but the recognition of a shared kinship between plants, animals, humans, rocks and so on, which forms part of what Salmón (2000) calls a "kincentric ecology". In contrast to the dualistic hierarchies that are characteristic of Western concepts of nature, this shared ontology is part of a heterarchical continuum of persons.

Across a number of animistic indigenous cultures, shared kinship is genealogical in nature, with humans and plants recognized as sharing common, earth-born, ancestry. In Australian Aboriginal cultures, the Dreaming beings who walked the earth and created the local landcapes are ancestral to all components of the natural world and "from them it is possible, and indeed imperative, to trace kinship among the things of the world" (D. Rose 1996: 29). The Dreaming stories provide basic ancestral genealogies that "for Indigenous peoples typically do not confine themselves to the human" (Whitt *et al.* 2003: 4).

Plants and animals are also situated within the landscape, and within a network of kinship relationships, owing principally to the actions of Dreaming beings. In the Flinders Ranges of Southern Australia the *Iga* tree owes its existence in country to the Dreaming beings who travelled south from Queensland, to find a woman in the country of the Adnyamathanha. In the act of digging for *ngarndi* roots, they were startled by something and transformed into *Iga* trees (Tunbridge 1988). Through the shared ancestry with these Dreaming beings, the *Iga* tree is close kin to the Adnyamathanha people. A similar story is told of the ancestry of the red lily in the country of the Ngulugwongga in the Daly River region of northern Australia. The Dreaming ancestor Yilig-moi-indih, or "Red Lily Woman", came across country carrying lily roots, which she planted in the ground as she went (Berndt & Berndt 1989). The plants share kinship with human beings because of their shared origin in the Dreaming.

Maori people also share a creation story, which unites plants and people in genealogical descent, or *whakapapa*. In the Maori homeland, Hawaiki, the Sky Father Ranginui and the Earth Mother Papatuanuku were "lovers locked in an age-long embrace, during which they had many children" (Henare 2001: 202). These children are the ancestors of all the beings in the natural world, including plants, rocks, seas, winds, animals and human beings. In Maori philosophy, all share *whakapapa* from Papatuanuku and Ranginui, as well as from the god of the forest, Tane-mahuta, whose actions created the earth. As a result of these shared origins, plants and humans are close kin. Therefore, for Erenora Puketapu-Hetet the flax plant *harakeke* "is a descendant of the great god Tane-mahuta ... [and] today's Maori are related to *harakeke* and all the other plants, Tane is their common ancestor" (Whitt *et al.* 2003: 5). Similarly, to the Raramuri peoples of North America, all the things of the natural world are related by descent. Before the origin of this world, "people were part plant ... [and when] the Raramuri emerged into this world, many of those plants followed. They live today as humans of a different form" (Salmón 2000: 1328).

From the platform of this shared descent, animist cultures recognize plants as other-than-human persons. As other-than-human persons, plants exhibit the capacities and faculties which Tylor and Frazer attributed to the "plant soul". As "proper persons" (Descola 1992: 115), plants are recognized as relational beings with sensation, awareness, knowledge, intelligence and the capacity to communicate with other persons.

For the Oglala peoples of North America, the entire cosmos is permeated by sacred power, *wakan*, which connects all beings. The beings within this world are therefore

considered as "power centers, intentional manifestations of power who act according to their particular character" (Detwiler 1992: 238). Their nature comprises "inherent worth, integrity, sentience, conscience, power, will, voice, and especially the ability to enter into relationships" (*ibid.*: 239). Humans, therefore, are only one type of person; they "share their world with *Wakan* and non-human persons, including ... stone persons, four-legged persons, winged-persons, crawling-persons, standing-persons (plants and trees), fish-persons, among others" (*ibid.*).

In Aboriginal Australia, persons are embedded within the framework of a local landscape that is itself considered to be a subject. Here, the land, which is commonly referred to as "country", is "seen to have a will, a life force of its own ... it can know individuals or be ignorant towards them" (D. Rose 1996). Aboriginal country is a "nourishing terrain" that "gives and receives life", a place that has its own volition and consciousness. Within this landscape, personhood is ubiquitous – as Deborah Rose explains: "Subjectivity, in the form of consciousness, agency, morality and law is part of all forms and sites of life, of non human species of plants and animals, of powerful beings such as rainbow snakes, and of creation sites, including trees, hills and waterholes" (D. Rose 1999: 178).

Such attributes are commonly expressed in creation stories, many of which detail a process of metamorphosis, often from an initial humanity into the other-than-human persons that exist in the landscape today. In one Gunwinggu Dreaming story, the *Pandanus* trees are a transformed human couple, Namalbi and Ngalmadbi, who left their camp after a quarrel with their family (Berndt & Berndt 1989). The Gunwinggu tell another story of Mananda, an old man from South Goulbourn Island. He was unable to walk very far, so one day he told his sons that he would sit and remain in one spot while they carried on. Sitting there, Manada transformed into a plant – he "just sat there for so long that he became a long yam" (*ibid.*: 62). Similarly, in the Koyukon of Alaska age of creation known as *Kk'adonts 'idnee*, or "Distant Time": "During this age 'the animals were human' – that is, they had human form, they lived in human society, and they spoke human (Koyukon) language. At some point in the Distant Time, certain humans died and were transformed into animal or plant beings, the species that inhabit Koyukon country today" (Nelson 1983: 16).

These stories which begin with an initial humanity resemble those of Tylor, in which it is the human soul which colonizes non-humans. However, in the context of Bird-David's (1999) "relational epistemology", it may be more appropriate to view these tales not as an anthropomorphism, but as a significant way of portraying personhood; a way of "representing interiority" or subjectivity in plants (Mathews 2003: 79).

As well as being a method for encountering personhood in the world, these stories also indicate a directly shared substance, which itself contradicts essentialist categories. At the end of Distant Time, a great flood covered the earth and although some plants and animals were able to survive, "they could no longer behave like people" (Nelson 1983: 17). All human beings were also killed and raven had to make them again. The neighbouring Tlingit people say that raven made these new people out of wood and leaves, sharing plant substance with human beings (Mauze 1998: 238). Similarly, the Tsimshian people say that the elder bush gave birth to human beings, bestowing on human beings their soft skin, as well as their mortality (*ibid.*). Another common expression of this shared substance is the existence of shared blood, a common motif in animistic tales from Pagan Europe (M. Hall 2011). For Bill Neidjie, this shared blood unites humans and plants as close kin:

That's your bone,
your blood
it's in this earth,
same as for tree. (Neidjie 1985: 51)

PRIMITIVE SCIENCE

These animist relationships with plants were dismissed by Tylor and Frazer largely on the basis of an *a priori* value-hierarchy in which these "primitive" cultures were ranked inferior to Western, scientific culture (Wittgenstein 1979). In the context of the current paper, it is also significant that animist relationships with plants were deemed "primitive" because they were based upon a childish, naïve and unscientific understanding of plant ontology. Although Tylor was prepared to admit some logic in the recognition of the plant soul (after all, plants are alive), the fact that he coupled it to the long rejected idea of plant soul in Western thought (Tylor 1920) – rejected by botanists such as Joachim Jung (M. Hall 2011) – also placed this idea firmly beneath more "logical" ideas of modern science (Tylor 1920). In discussing such ideas of soul, Tylor concludes that "Suffice it to point out here that such speculation dates back to the barbaric condition of our race" (*ibid.*: 435). Likewise, Frazer ([1890] 1922: 414) dismissed this plant "soul" as a myth on the basis of the "myth of the human soul"; a superstitious religious idea overturned by scientific logic. The logic espoused by Frazer is that of the scientific law; a Cartesian mechanics in which the pieces of nature operate in automatic passivity (Frazer [1890] 1922).

In this passive Cartesian universe, the idea of an active plant soul and the subsequent activities of plant worship are ridiculous. Along with the rest of nature, plants are unminded, and lack agency, volition, sensitivity and awareness. The recognition of such faculties and the construction of human–plant relationships in animist cultures is therefore part of a primitive anthropomorphism. Within the scientific and Presbyterian framework of Frazer, the savage notion of plant worship (or care and consideration for plants) is also problematic because it inverts the established hierarchy in which human beings are superior to plant life, and are free to do with plants what they wish (M. Hall 2011).

CONTEMPORARY PLANT ONTOLOGIES

In this reconsideration of human–plant relationships in animism, it is interesting to scrutinize this "scientific" understanding of plant ontology by contrasting it with a substantial body of evidence in the botanical sciences which demonstrates that plants are active, responsive, autonomous and intelligent organisms. While this evidence is at the cutting edge of plant science (and obviously not available to those who first chronicled animist cultures), it is important to consider it here because it provides the appropriate context in which Western minds should situate an understanding of human–plant relationships in animist cultures. From within an extensive literature, three aspects of plant ontology stand out: plant awareness, communication and cognition.

Awareness

Plants are sensory organisms with a detailed, and active, awareness of their environments. In order to increase fitness and ensure physical survival, plants retrieve information from both their biotic and abiotic surroundings. Plants are aware of, and actively respond to, a range of environmental factors, including touch (Wassim-Chehab *et al.* 2009), gravity (Blancaflor & Masson 2003), light (Whippo & Hangarter 2006), sound (Yi *et al.* 2003) and chemical stimulation (Pei & Kuchitsu 2005). Having gathered sensory information, from both above and below ground, plants are able to employ it within their life history strategies.

In many ecological studies, the active growth of plant roots has led to researchers evaluating it using the model of foraging behaviour (McNickle & Cahill 2009). Root systems in plants use a combination of touch and chemical signalling in order to direct roots away from competitors and towards patches of underground resources, such as minerals and water. Similarly, non-photosynthetic parasitic plants use chemical signals in order to select their preferred host (Runyon *et al.* 2006). Climbing plants use the perception of touch in order to actively direct the growth of their tendrils, again to maximize the amount of available light. One of the most complex examples of light perception has been recorded in *Nicotiana longiflora*, which uses the perception of far-red light in order to predict the growth patterns of its neighbours, and to begin growth responses which lessen shading (Izaguirre *et al.* 2006). Such active awareness of the environment often involves processing information gleaned from previous experiences (Galis *et al.* 2009; Ripoll *et al.* 2009), a form of plant memory (Trewavas 2003).

Communication

Using the sensory information they glean from the environment, plants are in almost constant communication with a host of other organisms. In this context, researchers describe plants as "social organisms", whose interactions with other plants of the same species can form the basis of "plant societies" (Baluška & Mancuso 2009). A well-researched form of "plant socializing" involves the sharing of information about attacks by herbivores, through the release of volatile organic chemicals (VOCs) (Dicke & Bruin 2001). A number of communicative strategies are at play here. Plants which have been attacked can release VOCs which communicate with, and attract, predatory enemies of the attacking herbivores (D'Alessandro *et al.* 2009). More socially, plants which have been attacked can release VOCs which reduce the herbivore damage incurred by their neighbours (Karban 2008; Dicke 2009), a strategy which recent research suggests is part of a process of kin-selection (Karban 2009).

Other communicative strategies involve below-ground interactions with neighbours of different species. Plant roots are primarily used as communicative tools to sequester vital resources such as water, nitrogen and trace minerals. Communication occurs through the production of root exudates, an umbrella term for an extremely diverse collection of chemical compounds also known as secondary metabolites (Walker *et al.* 2003). The secretion of these secondary metabolites allows plants to communicate with and establish symbiotic, mutually beneficial relationships with other organisms in the soil (Kawaguchi 2010). In legume plants, the production of flavonoids involves a specific chemical "signature" which enables soil symbionts to distinguish the roots of their symbiotic partners (De Weert *et al.* 2002).

But below-ground communication is not always social. Plant species actively attack each other below ground using secondary metabolites, in a process known as allelopathy. Far from being shrinking violets, plants which engage in allelopathy are involved in aggressive, "war-like" interactions with other species (Baluška & Mancuso 2009). One of the most cited instances of allelopathy involves the shrub community of the Mojave Desert in North America. In this water-stressed environment, the common shrub *Larrea tridentata* suppresses the growth of its neighbour, *Ambrosia dumosa*, by secreting a readily diffusible inhibitory substance from its root system (Mahall & Callaway 1991). While somewhat antisocial, the effect of this allelopathic interaction is to reduce the interspecific competition for water (Mahall & Callaway 1991).

Cognition

As well as being sensitive and communicative, plants display a remarkable ability to adapt their morphology in order to best secure resources, a phenomenon known as *phenotypic plasticity*. Plants assess the prevailing environmental conditions and then select the appropriate available responses in order to maintain their physical integrity and maximize their capacity to reproduce. Roots are particularly plastic and root morphology rapidly changes in order to facilitate the detection of new, more nutritious patches of soil in other locations (Forde 2002). The plant perceives the rapidly changing resource levels and enacts the most beneficial growth and development responses.

Trewavas (2003) has labelled this as part of a plant *intelligence*,[2] while other researchers have termed this *plant cognition* (Baluška & Mancuso 2009). As in other cognitive organisms, plant cognition relates to "the (more or less) continuous assessment of system needs relative to prevailing circumstances, the potential for interaction, and whether the current interaction is working or not" (Lyon 2006). Increasingly, it is being recognized as involving a system-like process of "information acquisition, storage, processing, and the making of decisions" (Baluška & Mancuso 2009: S3).

Plants monitor the physical environment, using specialized tissues which translate sensory information into physical motor responses. In order to deal with a complex of environmental variables which change rapidly over time, plants must make real-time assessments of stimuli and actively respond according to current and previous developmental states (Trewavas 2003). Within the field of *plant neurobiology* it is believed that this computation of information is achieved by a "plant neurobiological" apparatus which involves the transition zone of the root apices acting as a kind of "command centre" (Baluška *et al.* 2006) analogous to the brains of animals (Baluška & Mancuso 2009). Such neurobiological systems in plants are believed to allow forms of decision-making in plant behaviour (Kelly 1992) as well as the recognition of self/not-self (Gruntman & Novoplansky 2004).

PLANT AUTONOMY AND ETHICS

Increasingly, plant science is recognizing plants as active, communicative, cognitive and autonomous organisms, and scientific evidence also suggests that plants and animals are phylogenetically closely related, based upon shared developmental traits which are absent in fungi and other organisms (Stiller 2007).

This scientific position is remarkable for a study of animism, because it increasingly resembles the animist recognition of plants as persons and as close kin – as organisms which are relational, volitional and mentally aware (M. Hall 2011) – thereby directly contradicting the understanding that animist plant ontologies are in some way naïve or mistaken. In both Western science and indigenous animisms, plants are recognized as active, autonomous entities, whose purpose is "not to fulfil any end or purpose of any external agents but entirely to maintain their own functioning integrity" (Lee 2005: 64).

Despite this convergence, in discussions of human–plant relationships, indigenous animisms remain distinct. At present, in our globalized Western societies, contemporary science recognizes plants as close kin and as cognitive, autonomous organisms, but as yet, this has not filtered through into our behaviour towards them. Plants are treated as useful objects, with which we can do as we wish. Compared with animals, plant lives are regarded as blank existences, which can be arbitrarily taken, and with little complaint. Plants are framed as resources, and any notion of ethical treatment of plants is ridiculed. This instrumentalization of plants is a major source of environmental injustice (M. Hall 2011).

Animist relationships with plants do not operate in the same framework as Western human–plant relationships, in which plants are treated purely as resources, placed on the earth for humans to do as they see fit (*ibid.*). Nor do they occur in an inverted Western hierarchy in which plants (rather than God) are placed at the top (rather than the bottom) of the hierarchy, in a position of worship (*ibid.*). Rather than backgrounding plants or reversing this dualism and worshipping them, indigenous animist relationships with plants are comprised of a mixture of communication, respect and moral consideration. At a time of massive anthropogenic environmental degradation, and in view of the contemporary knowledge of plant ontology, animism provides a significant behavioural model for relations between human beings and the plant lives which sustain the biosphere.

At the basis of most good relationships is communication. In order to construct relationships with plant persons, it is necessary to communicate with them, and recognize their presence. This is a dialogue which commonly involves human speech and language in the recognition of plant presence. In Yanyuwa country, when the humans address songs directly to the cycad trees, they are not "worshipping" them, they are singing in order to keep the trees healthy (perhaps to keep them relating?) and to respectfully request that they continue to produce cycad fruits, which are a staple of the traditional diet (Bradley *et al.* 2003: 183). In the Pacific Northwest of North America, the Bella Coola people tell stories of a time when human beings and trees could freely talk to each other. While this common language has been lost in our time, the stories relate that trees can still understand human speech and the trees can be spoken to and addressed with prayer (Mauze 1998: 239). Rather than worship, this communication is often a way of expressing gratitude to plants for their role in sustaining life. As Frazer himself remarked of the Iroquois, to "each species of tree, shrub, plant ... it was their custom to return thanks" (Frazer [1890] 1922: 111).

Across the continent of Australia, Aboriginal peoples repeatedly communicate with the landscape. It is recognized that communication flows constantly through country "between individuals, groups and species" (D. Rose 2005a: 297), and part of the human relationship with other-than-human persons is to be aware of their communicative capacities. In the far north of Australia understanding communication between other-than-human persons enables human beings to live. In Wik-Mungkan country, when the *thanchal*

tree flowers, it indicates that the local oysters are fat enough to eat (Kilham *et al.* 1986: 208), while on Bathurst and Melville islands, for the Tiwi people, the flowering of the tall wet-season grasses indicates the end of the wet season and the arrival of migrating birds, many of which act as food for human beings (Stevenson n.d.: 5). Deborah Rose designates this understanding of ecological communication as part of an indigenous *philosophical ecology*, which involves the repeated recognition of "pattern, benefit, and connection" (D. Rose 2005a: 295).

As kin and as proper persons, plants are recipients not of worship, but of respect and moral consideration. Indeed, under the umbrella of "plant worship", Frazer himself details a number of practices which are better understood from this ethical perspective. As animate persons, plants are sensitive and aware, and any actions which harm plants must be done with this in mind. In this framework, the reticence of the Ojibwe in chopping down living trees is an ethical act rather than an act of worship (Frazer [1890] 1922), as is that of the Indonesians who "naturally treat it [rice] with the deference and the consideration which they show to their fellows" (*ibid.*: 425).

Importantly, these ethical relationships occur simultaneously with relationships of predation. Although "the first thing a philosopher says to a tree is sorry" (Kohák 1993: 376), ethical relationships with plants must accommodate the need to sometimes cause harm and destruction. In Amazonia, the Achuar women cultivate manioc with the same care and consideration with which they rear their own human children (Rival 2001: 60). Although the women view the plants as their children, this does not prevent the use of the plants for human sustenance. The plants that have been cared for as kin will be killed and eaten. Likewise in Maori culture, the *kumara*, which is genealogical kin to human beings, must be dug up and eaten for human beings to live. In many cultures, plants and animals must be killed and eaten *in order* to show respect (Fienup-Riordan 2001), because life "is for others as well as for itself" (D. Rose 2005a: 296). Although plants and animals must be killed, the recognition of personhood, and the communication with other-than-human persons, urges humans towards respectful use of others. This is the essence of moral consideration. Plants live their lives full of intelligence and awareness; their lives are not blank existences. When we take them, like the Ojibwe (Frazer [1890] 1922), we take them only when necessary.

NOTES

1. A number of Indian religious texts do describe plants, animals and humans all as *jiva*, a term which is commonly translated as *soul*. In the *Bhagavadgītā*, it is stated that all living beings are in possession of *jiva*. Also, in the Jain *Acaranga Sutra*, plants are recognized as *jivatthikayal*, living or ensouled bodies. Upon death, the soul moves upon the wheel of life to another incarnation, an idea which first occurs in the *Chandogya Upanisad* (Hall 2011).
2. It is interesting to contrast this with Frazer's wry comment that a large tree in a valley in Upper Missouri is "supposed to possess intelligence" (Frazer [1890] 1922: 111).

31

Action in cognitive ethology

Marc Bekoff

Understanding the actions that animals perform during different contexts is central to learning about what animals know, desire, intend, believe and feel. While philosophical discussions of action theory focus almost exclusively on humans, there is quite a lot of information stemming from cognitive ethological investigations of animals, which can inform discussion among people who do not spend much time watching other animals, or who focus on non-human primates to the exclusion of other groups.

Cognitive ethologists are breaking new ground almost daily about the surprising cognitive abilities of a wide range of animals, and these data are essential for informing philosophical inquiries about the nature of animal minds – what is in them and how they process information. Because of the rapid accumulation of comparative data, there is less guesswork about what animals know, desire, intend, believe and feel. Cognitive ethology is the comparative, evolutionary and ecological study of non-human animal minds, including thought processes, beliefs, rationality, information processing, emotions and feelings, and consciousness. Cognitive ethology traces its beginnings to the writings of Charles Darwin and some of his contemporaries and followers. Their approach incorporated appeals to evolutionary theory; interests in mental continuity (where it is argued that differences among species are differences of degree rather than of kind); concerns with individual, intraspecific (within species) and interspecific (between species) variation; strong interests in the worlds of the animals themselves; close associations with natural history; and attempts to learn more about the behaviour of animals in conditions that are as close as possible to the natural environment where selection has occurred. In addition, cognitive ethologists are concerned with the diversity of solutions that living organisms have found for common problems; they emphasize broad taxonomic comparisons and do not focus on a few select representatives of limited taxa such as laboratory rats, pigeons, or non-human primates. People often inform their views on cognitive ethology and on the cognitive and emotional capacities of animals by appealing to studies of non-human primates, especially of the great apes, and ignore the fact that there are many

other animals who also show interesting patterns of behaviour, which lend themselves to cognitive analyses and explanations that broaden action theory. The rise of modern cognitive ethology is dated from the publication of Donald Griffin's *The Question of Animal Awareness* in 1976.

Cognitive ethology helps to broaden the perspective of cognitive studies in two ways. First, it helps to situate the study of cognition in an evolutionary framework. It should be a necessary condition for postulating a cognitive state in a human being that the existence of this state is at least consistent with evolutionary history. Although lip service is sometimes given to this constraint, talk of evolution in cognitive science is often metaphorical. Cognitive ethology has the potential to make cognitive science take evolution seriously. Second, because cognitive ethology sheds light on similarities and differences among closely and distantly related species, the sorts of studies undertaken within it contribute to making cognitive science more broadly comparative. Many people are more willing to countenance cognition in computers, or in aliens from space, than in rodents, amphibians, or insects. Even in cognitive studies there is a tendency to view cognition as "essential" to humans, and as instantiated to various degrees – usually lesser – only in those species that are phylogenetically close to humans. With its view of cognition as a strategic evolutionary response to problems that might have been faced by a variety of diverse organisms, cognitive ethology can help to overcome this form of parochialism.

Cognitive ethology also is critical for learning about the reasons why animals perform certain actions in specific contexts – what they desire, intend, or believe. Behavioural studies usually start with the observation, description and categorization of behaviour patterns of animals. The result of this process is the development of an ethogram, or behavioural catalogue, of these actions. Ethograms present information about an action's form or morphology. Descriptions can be based on visual information (what an action looks like), auditory characteristics (sonograms, or pictures of sounds), or chemical constituents (for example, pictorial output of chromatographic analyses of glandular deposits, urine, or faeces). It is essential that great care be given to the development of an ethogram, for this is an inventory that others should be able to replicate without error. Permanent records of observations allow others to cross-check their observations and descriptions against original records. The number of the actions and the breadth of the categories that are identified in a behavioural study depend on the questions at hand; but generally it is better to split rather than lump together actions in initial stages, and then lump them together when questions of interest have been carefully laid out. Detailed analyses of what animals do are central to learning about what animals are thinking and feeling, and also for informing philosophical inquiries into what animals believe, desire and intend, and if they have a theory of mind. There is no substitute for these sorts of studies, although they are extremely time-consuming and grating on one's patience.

Comparative cognitive ethology is an important extension of classical ethology, because it explicitly licenses hypotheses about the internal states of animals in the tradition of classical ethologists such as Nobel laureates Niko Tinbergen and Konrad Lorenz. However, although ethologists such as Lorenz and Tinbergen used phrases like "intention movements", they used them quite differently from the way they are used in the philosophical literature. The phrase "intention movements" in the ethological literature refers to preparatory movements that might communicate what action individuals are likely to undertake next, and not necessarily to their beliefs and desires, although one might

suppose that the individuals did indeed want to fly and believed that, if they moved their wings in a certain way, they would. This distinction is important because the use of such terms does not necessarily add a cognitive dimension to classical ethological notions, although it could.

In 1963 Niko Tinbergen published a classic essay, titled "On Aims and Methods of Ethology" and dedicated to his friend Konrad Lorenz. This essay is a landmark in the development of ethology. Here Tinbergen defines ethology as "the biological study of behavior" and seeks to demonstrate the "close affinity between Ethology and the rest of Biology" (1963: 411). In his early work Tinbergen identified four overlapping areas with which ethological investigations should be concerned: evolution (phylogeny), adaptation (function), causation and development (ontogeny). His framework is also useful for those interested in animal cognition. The methods for answering questions in each of these areas vary, but all begin with the careful observation and description of the behaviour patterns exhibited by the animals under study. The information provided by these initial observations allows a researcher to exploit the animal's normal behavioural repertoire so as to answer questions about the evolution, function, causation and development of the behaviour patterns exhibited in various contexts.

The tractability of cognitive questions involves the application of a diverse set of comparative methods in order to draw inferences about cognitive states and capacities. Cognitive research may include staged social encounters, playback of recorded vocalizations, the presentation of stimuli in different modalities, observation of predator–prey interactions, observation of foraging behaviour, application of neurobiological techniques, and studies of social and other sorts of learning. Computer analyses are also useful for those who want to learn what kind of information must be represented in an adequate computational model. There are no large differences between methods used to study animal cognition and methods used to study other aspects of animal behaviour. Differences lie not so much in what is done and how it is done, as in how data are explained. Thus Allen and I (1997) argue that the main distinction between cognitive ethology and classical ethology lies not in the types of data collected, but in the understanding of the conceptual resources that are appropriate for explaining those data.

Dale Jamieson and I drew a useful distinction between "weak cognitive ethology" (WCE) and "strong cognitive ethology" (SCE) (Jamieson & Bekoff 1993). WCE is the most common form of cognitive ethology. It countenances the use of a cognitive vocabulary for the explanation of behaviour, but not for its description. SCE underwrites a range of research programmes in which both cognitive and affective vocabularies are willingly employed for purposes of interpretation and explanation.

ANTI-PREDATORY BEHAVIOUR IN WESTERN EVENING GROSBEAKS AND ITS RELEVANCE TO ACTION THEORY

The application of the cognitive ethological approach and its usefulness in the study of action is nicely shown in a study of anti-predator behaviour in western evening grosbeaks. The study was laborious: single frames of videotape had to be analysed every twentieth of a second, so that information about the birds' behaviour was not lost. I found that western evening grosbeaks modified their vigilance or scanning behaviour in accordance with

the way in which individuals were positioned with respect to one another: whether they were organized in a circle or in a line. Grosbeaks and other birds often trade off scanning for potential predators and feeding. In essence (and with oversimplification), some birds scan while others feed, and some birds feed when others scan. Thus it is hypothesized that individuals want to know what others are doing and to learn about others' behaviour by trying to watch them.

My study of grosbeaks showed that, when a flock contained four or more birds, there were large changes in scanning and other patterns of behaviour that seemed to be related to ways in which grosbeaks attempted to gather information visually about what other flock members were doing. When birds were arranged in a circular array, so that they could see one another easily, after having been arranged in a line, which made the visual monitoring of flock members more difficult, birds who had difficulty in seeing one another (a) were more vigilant, (b) changed their head and body positions more often, (c) reacted to changes in group size more slowly, (d) showed less co-ordination in head movements, and (e) showed more variability in all measures. The differences in behaviour between birds organized in circular arrays and birds organized in linear arrays were best explained in terms of individuals' attempts to learn, via visual monitoring, about what other flock members were doing. These results say something as to whether birds attempt to represent to themselves flock members, and as to how they would do it. It may be that individuals desire to know what other birds are doing; form beliefs about it, or about what others are likely to do in a given situation; and predicate their own behaviour upon these beliefs.

As a result of this study, I argued that cognitive explanations were simpler and less cumbersome than non-cognitive rule-of-thumb explanations (for instance, "Scan this way if there is this number of birds in this geometric array" or "Scan that way if there is that number of birds in that geometric array"). Non-cognitive rule-of-thumb explanations did not seem to account for the flexibility in animals' behaviour as well, or as simply, as did explanations that appealed to cognitive capacities in the animals under study. And it should be emphasized that flexibility in action depending on the context individuals find themselves in is the rule rather than the exception among most species where individuals find themselves in groups that vary in size and composition.

SOCIAL PLAY BEHAVIOUR AND ACTION THEORY

Social play is another behaviour that lends itself nicely to cognitive inquiries that can inform action theory. The study of social play involves issues of communication, intention, role-playing and cooperation, and the results of these types of research projects yield clues about the ability of animals to understand each other's intentions. Play is also a phenomenon that occurs in a wide range of species and affords the opportunity for a comparative investigation of cognitive abilities, extending the all-too-common narrow focus on primates, which dominates discussions of non-human cognition.

While we all recognize animal play when we see it, the study of play continues to challenge students of animal behaviour. Researchers are still discovering new facts about this fascinating activity by asking questions about how and why animals play and, for example, how animal play may be related to evolution and to the development of fairness,

justice and social morality (Bekoff & Pierce 2009). Almost all mammals who have been studied engage in play, and so do many birds and, perhaps, fish, reptiles and amphibians. While play is difficult to define and study, it is recognized as a distinctive and important category of behaviour.

What is play? This deceptively simple question has troubled researchers for many years. A well-received definition of social play is the one I developed with John Byers: social play is an activity directed toward another individual in which actions from other contexts are used in modified forms and in altered sequences. Our definition centres on what animals *do* when they play, or on the structure of play. Our definition also highlights the fact that, when animals play, they use actions which are also used in activities such as predation (hunting), reproduction (mating) and aggression. Full-blown threatening and submitting occur only rarely, if ever, during play. During play actions may be changed in their form and intensity and combined in a wide variety of unpredictable sequences. Among polecats, coyotes and American black bears, biting in play-fighting is inhibited by comparison with biting in real fighting. Clawing in bears is also inhibited and less intense. Also, play in bears is non-vocal, and biting and clawing are directed to more parts of the body of another individual during play than during aggression.

It is extremely difficult to describe or explain play behaviour without using a cognitive vocabulary. One and the same bodily movement can represent fighting, preying, mating, or playing. The difference between a movement that is aggressive and one that is playful is naturally described in terms of one animal's intention and another animal's appreciation of the intention. There are also differences in the form and duration of the same basic actions, such as biting or hip-slamming one's playmate. Similarly, the cognitive vocabulary appears to provide the resources for explaining some play behaviour. For example, suppose that we want to know why Zeke (a dog) permitted Jethro (another dog) to nip at his ears. One explanation may be that Zeke believes that Jethro is playing. This gives rise to further questions, such as whether Jethro believes that Zeke believes that Jethro is playing.

To learn about the dynamics of play, it is essential to pay attention to extremely subtle details, which are otherwise lost in superficial analyses. Dogs and other animals keep track of what is happening when they play, so we need to do this too when we study it.

By studying play we can learn about what may be going on in other individuals' minds, what they are thinking about, what they want, and what they are likely to do during a social encounter. Because of the intermingling of actions from various contexts in unpredictable sequences, it is important to ask questions such as "How do animals know that they are playing?"; "How do they communicate their desires or intentions to play or to continue to play?"; and "How is the playing mood maintained?"

A detailed study of the structure of play signals and play sequences in canids (primarily young dogs, wolves and coyotes) conducted by myself showed that the "bow" – a gesture by which an animal crouches on its forepaws, elevates its hind end, and may wag its tail – is not only used to solicit play, but also (and very often) *immediately* before and *immediately* after an action which can be misinterpreted and disrupt ongoing social play. Bows occur almost exclusively in the context of social play. To gather these data, animals were videotaped while playing, and single frames were then analysed, so as to reveal where the bows were performed during an ongoing play sequence. An earlier study established that the bow is a highly stereotyped, ritualized action, which is used as a social signal to

solicit play: it stimulates recipients to engage in, or to continue to engage in, social play (see Figure 31.1 and details in the accompanying caption).

To illustrate how animals communicate their intentions and desires to play, consider domesticated dogs and their wild relatives. A dog typically asks another to play by bowing. Bows occur throughout play sequences, but most commonly they are performed at the beginning or towards the middle of playful encounters. Bows help to establish a "play mood". Play bows are always more stereotyped when they are performed at the beginning rather than in the middle of ongoing play sequences.

It is important for individuals to tell others that they want to play with them and not to fight with them, or eat them, or mate with them; and this message is sent by

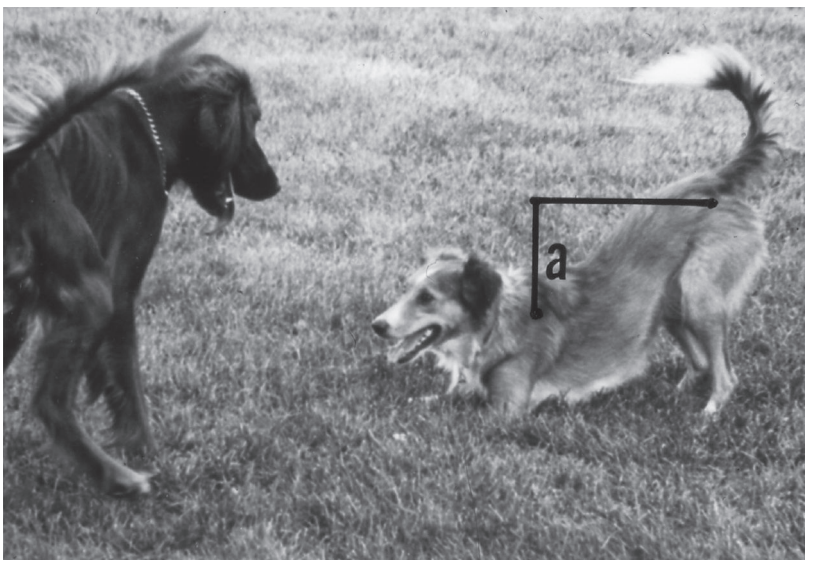

Figure 31.1 Dog (right) performing a bow to initiate play with his friend (left). To learn more about the structure of bows — an action that is critical for animals to be able to play with one another and for us to know that play is the name of the game — detailed film analyses were conducted of this action. Animals were photographed with a super-8 or 16-mm movie camera (film speed, 64 frames per second). Films were analysed with a single-frame analyser. Camera speed was checked prior to each analysis to correct for possible error. Both duration and form were measured for bows that occurred at the beginning of a sequence (that is, the first act) and during a sequence. Duration was measured by counting the number of frames during which the individual remained crouched. The number of frames was then multiplied by 0.0156 seconds (= 1 frame) to convert to a measure of time. Means, standard deviations and coefficients of variation were then calculated. Form was measured as declination of the shoulders relative to standing height on a grid system (= a in the figure). In order to standardize for individual differences in size as well as for changes in size with age, the height of the body at the shoulders was divided by ten, and a grid system of ten equal segments was used. Each grid unit was divided into fourths. Two observers independently took measures for each data point, and measurements were taken only when vertical displacement of the shoulders could be observed unambiguously. Inter-observer agreement was consistently between 90 and 95 per cent. For each group of animals, data from different rearing conditions were lumped, because no significant differences were detected. In addition, data for the wolves and wolf-malamute hybrids were combined, because the two groups were indistinguishable. Photo from Bekoff (1977).

play-soliciting signals such as the bow. In canids and other mammals, actions such as biting, accompanied by rapid side-to-side shaking of the head, are used in aggressive interactions and also during predation, and could be misinterpreted when used in play. I hypothesized that, if bites accompanied by rapid side-to-side shaking of the head or other behaviour patterns could be misread by the recipient and could result in a fight, for example, then the animal who performed the actions that could be misinterpreted might have to communicate to its partner that this action was performed in the context of play and was not meant to be taken as an aggressive or predatory move. On this view, bows would not occur randomly in play sequences: the play atmosphere would be reinforced and maintained by performing bows immediately before or after actions that could be misinterpreted.

To solve the problems that might be caused by confusing play with mating or fighting, many species have evolved signals such as the bow, which function to establish and maintain a play "mood". I discovered that infant domestic dogs, wolves and coyotes used bows non-randomly, especially when biting accompanied by rapid side-to-side shaking of the head was performed. Youngsters were intentionally using bows with a purpose in mind. Bows are used right at the beginning of play, to tell another dog, "I want to play with you", and they are also used right before biting, being accompanied by a rapid side-to-side head shaking, as if to say, "I'm going to bite you hard but it's still in play", and right after vigorous biting, as if to say, "I'm sorry I just bit you so hard but it was play". Biting accompanied by rapid side-to-side shaking of the head is performed during serious aggressive and predatory encounters and can easily be misinterpreted if its meaning is not modified by a play signal. Bows essentially serve as punctuation, an exclamation point (!), to call attention to what the dog wants to tell his friend. Bows reduce the likelihood of aggression.

Play signals are what ethologists call "honest signals". There is little evidence that social play is a manipulative activity, and play signals are rarely used to deceive others. My own long-term studies of young dogs, coyotes and wolves show that deceptive signalling is so rare that I cannot recall more than a few occurrences in thousands of play sequences. Cheaters are unlikely to be chosen as play partners; the others can simply refuse to play with them and choose others. Infant coyotes who mislead others into playing so as to dominate them have difficulty persuading other young coyotes to play with them. The message is clear: don't bow if you don't want to play.

The results of my study of different canids support the inference that bows provide information about other actions, which follow or precede them, and about the goals, beliefs and intentions of the players. When an animal (Jethro) performs a play bow to ask another animal (Zeke) to play, Jethro intends to play and, if Zeke responds in a playful manner, he believes that Zeke wants to play too and will abide by the rules of the game. When a play bow is used before a hard bite, it signals, say, Jethro's intention to play despite what he is going to do; and when Jethro performs a bow after a hard bite he is telling Zeke that he still wants to play, and wants Zeke to forgive this transgression. The basic rules of social play are: ask first; be honest; mind your manners; and admit when you're wrong. Non-cognitive rules-of-thumb. "Play this way if this happens" and "Play that way if that happens" are far too rigid explanations for dealing with the flexible behaviour that the animals show when they are playing.

The study of anti-predatory behaviour in western evening grosbeaks and the analysis of social play behaviour in various canids show clearly that cognitive ethological

investigations are essential for coming to terms with what animals do in certain contexts and why. We can learn much about intentions, beliefs and desires, for example, by taking the time to study the actions that are performed in different situations. Then a richer understanding of philosophical theorizing will surely follow the resurgence of time-consuming studies of animal cognition.

32

Embodied Eco-Paganism

Adrian Harris

I am an Eco-Pagan insider who became aware of the existence of a "somatic, physical knowing" through my personal practice (Harris 1996: 151). Questions about this powerful but peculiar phenomenon led me to undertake academic fieldwork among UK Eco-Pagans living at protest camps and in more conventional urban settings (Harris 2008, 2011). I found that many Eco-Pagans explain their intimate relationships with the organic environment in terms of the *genius loci* – the spirits of place – and I developed an embodied situated epistemology to understand this process.

As Graham Harvey explains, contemporary animists are concerned with "particular ways of being related to the world" that challenge "discourses that divide spirit and flesh, soul and body, subject and object ... people and environment, and so on" (G. Harvey 2005b: 83). I offer a model of embodied situated cognition that illustrates how this way of being might operate. It both deepens our understanding of this radically non-dual way of being and affirms that it is more fundamental to human experience than conventional Western dualist consciousness. This chapter thus makes a significant contribution towards the ongoing discussion of relational epistemologies and ontologies (*inter alia* Bird-David 1999) and the "new animism" (G. Harvey 2005b: 83).

I propose that embodied situated cognition depends on an affective, sensual mode of being-in-the-world that reveals a fundamental integration between what we conventionally understand as "self" and "world". An awareness of how we can think *with* and *beyond* the embodied situated self enables Eco-Pagans to enter into a true communion with places, flora, fauna and spirits. As well as being profoundly healing, these intimate local relationships, which Barry Patterson describes as "listening to the threshold brook",[1] offer a pattern for a sacred relationship to the world.

ECO-PAGANISM

The term "Eco-Paganism" has emerged to describe earth-based "spiritualities within the British protest movement" (Letcher 2005: 556). Worthington claims that "[f]rom the beginning the road protesters demonstrated a raw, untutored form of grass-roots eco-paganism that went further than any previous protest movement in embracing the land as sacred" (Worthington 2005: 214). Although many protesters would not call themselves "Pagan", boundaries blur between Eco-Pagan[2] and protester, and a "Pagan discourse" underlies the protest movement (Letcher 2000).

The organic environment is sacred to most Pagans and they are almost universally animists. Both beliefs are expressed very practically in Eco-Paganism. Clifton and Starhawk agree that "participation in the natural cycles of the region empowers people" (Davy 2002: 92), while Eco-Pagans often have an emotional, embodied understanding of the *genius loci*. Although many lack "specific knowledge" about local ecology, protest-site Eco-Pagans "often feel intense emotional bonds with the tree in which they live, or the land they are defending" (Letcher 2005: 557).

Embodied knowing is particularly significant in Eco-Pagan spirituality, as intuition and "gut feelings" have priority over intellectual approaches and understanding emerges from physical involvement. This engenders a sensual relationship with the organic environment. What emerges is the kind of "embodied sensitivity to nature" which is essential if we are to "come to know the 'genius loci' – the spirit(s) of a place" (Letcher 2001).

My fieldwork illustrates that though Eco-Pagans consider every bit of land as sacred, many feel very attached to particular places. Emily felt she was "indigenous" to an "actual patch of land",[3] while Mary's sense of "the Land" was grounded in "that bit of land down there that I look at every day and is so beautiful".[4] This sense of connection was rarely expressed in the abstract: it is being somewhere that woos you "to lie down on the ground and hug it and stroke it. Just that feeling of being in the right place. ... Where something in me, my spirit, but more than that, who I am, in my body needs to be in that place at that moment" (Sally).[5]

This intimate relationship with somewhere specific can enable Eco-Pagans to sense sacred relationship in itself: "Paganism is ... about making sacred relationship with the world that's around you. [Pause] And that could be with the spirit of your house or it could be with the dandelion in your drive or the tree or the old lady who lives next door to you" (Zoe).[6]

Just as the tiniest fragment of a hologram holds a perfect image of the whole, so a relationship with the "dandelion in the drive" or "honour[ing] the little weed in the garden" (Jocelyn)[7] can pattern a sacred relationship to the world.

EMBODIED KNOWING

Although Western culture privileges rational self-conscious thought, we intuitively know that our understanding is shaped by feelings that lie beyond the realm of "objective knowledge" and conscious cognition. Extensive research[8] concludes that these processes are in some sense embodied. Although as yet there is no fully articulated epistemology of embodied cognition, a consistent interdisciplinary model is emerging as researchers are

apparently discussing the same phenomena from disparate but consistent perspectives. A consensus has emerged that embodied cognition is situated and grounded in practical activity. This process is largely non-verbal and pre-reflective, and depends on an affective, sensual mode of being-in-the-world that reveals a fundamental integration between what we conventionally understand as "self" and "world".

When Merleau-Ponty articulated the phenomenology of the embodied mind he concluded that in knowing the world we become part of it, and thus the conventional subject–object distinction is illusionary. Abram applies Merleau-Ponty's work to develop an embodied environmental philosophy which understands the body as "a sort of open circuit that completes itself only in things, in others, in the encompassing earth" (Abram 1997: 62). Thus:

> Each place has its own mind, its own psyche. Oak, madrone, Douglas fir, red-tailed hawk, serpentine in the sandstone, a certain scale to the topography, drenching rains in the winter, fog off-shore in the summer, salmon surging in the streams – all these together make up a particular state of mind, a place-specific intelligence shared by all the humans that dwell therein. (*Ibid.*: 262)

Abram asserts that oral cultures are fully aware that we are "corporeally embedded" in a "living landscape" (*ibid.*: 65), but anyone can experience this reality under certain circumstances. He explains how his fieldwork experiences shifted his senses so that he began to perceive the world in a new way:

> When a magician spoke of a power or "presence" lingering in the corner of his house, I learned to notice the ray of sunlight that was then pouring through a chink in the roof, illuminating a column of drifting dust, and to realize that that column of light was indeed a power ... influencing the whole mood of the room; although I had not consciously seen it before, it had already been structuring my experience. (*Ibid.*: 20)

Abram opines that perception is participatory in that it always involves "the experience of an active interplay, or coupling, between the perceiving body and that which it perceives" (*ibid.*: 57).

Ingold comes to a similar conclusion in his discussion of Hallowell's study of the Ojibwa: "For the Ojibwa, knowledge is grounded in experience, understood as a coupling of the movement of one's awareness to the movement of aspects of the world. Experience, in this sense, does not mediate between mind and nature, since these are not separated in the first place" (Ingold 2000: 11). This "poetics of dwelling" is grounded in a relational notion of personhood where the self inheres "in the unfolding of the relations set up by virtue of its positioning in an environment" (*ibid.*). In this fully embodied ecology the organism integrates with its environment: "'organism plus environment' should denote not a compound of two things, but one indivisible totality" (*ibid.*: 9). Body and mind are thus simply different ways of describing the same process, "namely the environmentally situated activity of the human organism-person" (*ibid.*: 171).

Gendlin – a philosopher and psychologist – develops Merleau-Ponty's ideas in a somewhat parallel way to show how interaction is more fundamental than perception: our

perceptions function as part of our interaction with the world and so become part of how we behave in any given situation. The "body senses the whole situation, and it urges, it implicitly shapes our next action" (Gendlin 1992: 345). In everyday language we lack a language to name this body sense, but in the therapeutic practice of Focusing it is called the "felt sense" – an embodied tacit knowing that Gendlin describes as "a body-sense of meaning" (Gendlin 1981: 10). Although Gendlin describes the felt sense as a "bodily sensed knowledge" (*ibid.*: 25), we need to be clear that his approach requires "a new conception of the living body" as a *process* by which "the body means or implies" (Gendlin 1997: 19) such that the Gendlian "body" extends beyond the skin.

EMBODIED SITUATED COGNITION

In his survey of the field of cognitive neuroscience Peterson notes that for a "significant number of researchers ... to understand the mind/brain in isolation from biological and environmental contexts is to understand nothing" (Peterson 2003: 43). Although the term embodied situated cognition (ESC) emerged from artificial intelligence research, it has come to describe an interdisciplinary field enabling advances in psychology, philosophy of mind and social interaction theory (Almeida e Costa & Rocha 2005). For ESC researchers embodiment means "the body-in-space, the body as it interacts with the physical and social environment", and they conclude that it "is not just that the body shapes the embodied mind, but that the experiences of the body-in-the-world also shape the embodied mind" (Rohrer 2007: 344–5).

Embodied cognition and embodied knowing are complementary perspectives on a single complex phenomenon that cannot be adequately understood from either viewpoint alone. A dance serves as a useful metaphor: we can analyse the choreography, music and physical execution of a dance, but this can't tell us how it *feels* to perform or watch it. Similarly, we can interview the dancers, the audience and perhaps dance the steps ourselves, but we will still not understand how and why the choreography is effective. I thus adopt two complementary perspectives: one focused on the phenomenological and experiential intimacy of embodied *knowing* and the other on the physiological body engaged in embodied situated *cognition*. My experiential analysis draws primarily on phenomenology and anthropology, while my more physiological perspective focuses on the cognitive science of embodied situated cognition.

ENACTIVISM

Varela and colleagues build on Merleau-Ponty's work to develop a model of cognition as "embodied action", a process they call "enactive" (Varela *et al.* 1991: xx). By emphasizing action they highlight that cognition is an aspect of the sensory body (*ibid.*) and that "knower and known, mind and world, stand in relation to each other through mutual specification or dependent coorigination" (*ibid.*: 150).

Varela presents several "fundamental insights" of enactivism which he claims to be "established results" (Varela 1999: 71). The first fundamental is that the mind is embodied and therefore "*[t]he mind is not in the head*" (*ibid.*: 72; original emphasis). Because the

mind is embodied and arises out of "an active handling and coping with the world", then "whatever you call an object ... is entirely dependent on this constant sensory motor handling". As a result, an object is not independently "out there", but "arises because of your activity, so, in fact, you and the object are co-emerging, co-arising" (*ibid.*: 71–2). Thus the mind "cannot be separated from the *entire* organism" (*ibid.*: 73; original emphasis) or the "outside environment" (*ibid.*: 74).

THE ENACTIVE PROCESS MODEL

Despite a broad consensus about the nature of embodied situated knowing/cognition, the work of weaving the many disciplinary strands into a coherent pattern has barely begun. With that caveat, I will outline my own attempt to integrate the current research. In the next section I use this model to interpret my fieldwork in terms of what we might call an embodied animism.

Enactivism is currently the most fully developed model of ESC and is consonant with other key thinkers: for example, Abram, Bateson and Ingold have an enactivist approach. Gendlin can also be understood as an enactivist, although he does not identify himself as one.

By combining enactivism with Gendlin's philosophy of the implicit, I synthesize a model of embodied situated cognition with more explanatory power than either has alone. Because it draws primarily on enactivism and Gendlin's process philosophy (Gendlin 1997), I refer to this synthesis as the enactive process model.[9] The model integrates the work of several thinkers I have not yet introduced, notably Clark's discussion of extended cognition (Clark 1997), Lakoff and Johnson's embodied metaphor theory (Lakoff & Johnson 1999) and Gibson's ecological psychology (J. J. Gibson 1979). We are still at an early stage in ESC research, and this is not an attempt to construct a comprehensive theory: I do, however, claim that this model illuminates my fieldwork and offers a new approach to understanding animism.

My "cognitive iceberg" diagram (Figure 32.1) schematically illustrates the enactive process model. It is inevitably an oversimplification and presents the local environment and physical body as more separate than the enactive process model actually suggests.

In summary, the whole "iceberg" triangle represents the body-mind, with the "cognitive unconscious" (Lakoff & Johnson 1999: 10) in the lower section. The body-mind is engaged in a dynamic relationship with the local environment through perception, extended cognition (see, *inter alia*, Clark 1997; Aydede & Robbins 2009), and what Gibson calls "affordances" (J. J. Gibson 1979). Cognitive neuroscience estimates that 95 per cent of embodied thought occurs below our consciousness (Thrift 2000: 36) so most of this processing never reaches everyday awareness, which is at the iceberg's tip.

At the top of the triangle – the tip of the proverbial iceberg – is everyday conscious awareness, which is a very small percentage of who we are. Consciousness is simply what we are aware of and this is usually just a small aspect of a very complex system. But because we identify the "self" with consciousness, we tend to discount the deeper processes that actually govern much of our behaviour. The level of awareness represented at the iceberg's tip is usually quite narrowly focused and tends to heighten our impression of a subject/object distinction.

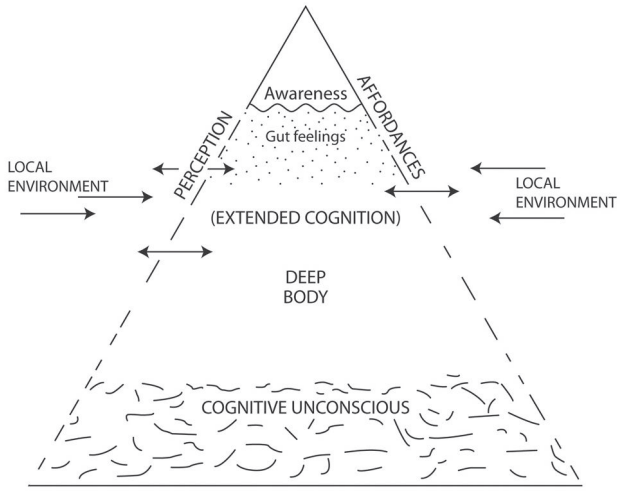

Figure 32.1 The cognitive iceberg: everyday conscious awareness (copyright Adrian Harris).

The dotted area just below the apex designates "gut feelings" or felt senses. Further down the triangle, awareness widens out into what I call the *deep body*, becoming less focused and blurring the distinction between self and other, shown in the graphic by the gaps appearing in the sides of the triangle. This is the level where the process sometimes called extended cognition operates.

Certain circumstances and techniques allow our normally shallow conscious to deepen, enabling us to become more aware of the blurred boundary between self and world. This process can be illustrated using the cognitive iceberg diagram. Most of the time we are unaware of the deeper processes of ESC; as shown in Figure 32.1, our consciousness is focused at the narrow tip of the iceberg. But at other times our normally shallow awareness begins to slide down the cognitive iceberg into the deep body, sometimes bringing a sense of expansion and a blurring of the boundaries between self and world. This process is apparent in even quite ordinary circumstances. Leder vividly describes an occasion when he was walking in the woods, caught up with his own concerns: "a paper that needs completion, a financial problem. My thoughts are running their own private race, unrelated to the landscape ... The landscape neither penetrates into me, nor I into it. We are two bodies" (Leder 1990: 165).

On my model, Leder's awareness is focused at the tip of the cognitive iceberg and he is caught up in the familiar dualistic mode of experience that our culture takes as normal.

But the "rhythm of walking" and the peace of the wood calm his mind and induce an "existential shift" so that he begins to notice the beauty around him. Gradually, "[t]he boundaries between the inner and the outer thus become porous ... I feel the sun and hear the song birds both within-me and without-me ... They are part of a rich body–world chasm that eludes dualistic characterization" (*ibid.*: 165–6).

Leder's awareness has slipped down the cognitive iceberg, broadening out into the deep body, blurring the distinction between self and world and enhancing Leder's sense

of connection. As Leder's awareness slides down into the deep body he begins to sense how the "organism and environment enfold into each other and unfold from one another in the fundamental circularity that is life itself" (Varela *et al.* 1991: 150).

THE PROCESSES OF CONNECTION

There are many ways to access the deep self and I call these the "processes of connection". These interrelated processes can usefully be placed into two groups: first, those which are usually used intentionally, for example, ritual, trance, meditation and entheogens; and second, those which sometimes work outside our conscious awareness, for example, the felt sense and the influence of the organic environment.

All these processes deepen our sense of connection and often alter our sense of self: they thereby enable a communion with the other-than-human realm which informs Eco-Paganism. For the purposes of this article, I will focus on three processes of connection: the felt sense, a sensitivity to place I refer to as the threshold brook experience, and ritual (loosely defined so as to include dance). As we shall see, Eco-Pagans frequently describe encounters with the *genius loci* (and other spirits) that are facilitated by the processes of connection.

THE FELT SENSE

The felt sense is a form of embodied knowing that plays a key role in Eco-Pagans' animist relationships. When used intentionally, the felt sense is closely related to meditation, but it sometimes operates outside full awareness in the threshold brook experience and ritual. Although they do not use Gendlin's term, many Eco-Pagans describe experiences of a felt sense in their spiritual practice. Gordon[10] notes that rather than following the traditional dates of the Pagan Wheel of the Year,[11] he senses the "changing pulse" of the seasons, while Barry explains that a "conversation with a tree is first and foremost a feeling in your body" (B. Patterson 2005: 136). Emily likewise has "quite a strong sense of tree species" and some plants give her a feeling with a very specific meaning. She describes how "if I meet ivy I have a kind of a sense of that's a question to me to reconnect with my motivation". Mary's experience of attuning to trees and places using the felt sense offers another example. Mary explains how she sometimes experiences feelings which she assumes are from a particular tree or place: "The feeling is how it makes my body feel."

Barry has a highly developed felt sense of plants. During one section of the interview Barry explained his animist "pattern of consciousness", and I asked if there was a physical sense associated with this pattern:

> BARRY: Definitely. Absolutely definitely. ... when you said the physical sense, and I focused there and I went there ... and what I got was a sense of embodiment which was much richer and more strange than your normal body awareness. Um, and so in a sense what happens is the hawthorn buds about to burst into May blossom became a physical sensation within my body ... You know what I mean?
> ADRIAN: Kinda. Whereabouts in the body?

> BARRY: OK. I'll do hawthorn buds. Oh, yeah, there is a practice I do that's related to this locating it in the body. Hawthorne buds are very much in my upper arms, and my chest. [Pause] My shoulders. Like a kind of – You couldn't call it a buzz, I'm not talking about a buzz – I'm talking about a kinda, something, delicate.

In each case the felt sense enables people to engage in a meaningful relationship with some aspect of the organic environment through an embodied conversation.

THE THRESHOLD BROOK

It is well known that spending extended periods in the organic environment can have a profound psychological impact (see, *inter alia*, Greenway 1995; Harris 2011). This phenomenon, known as "the wilderness effect", is closely related to a phenomenon which Barry calls the "threshold brook ... experience". This is a subtle embodied communion with what may appear to be an insignificant aspect of the local environment. The fundamental importance of this communion with place, and the wisdom it can bring, is eloquently expressed by Barry:

> [I]f you have a little threshold brook,[12] if there's a little stream like this running through your garden, every day you get up and you go to work, it's just there, it's the background. You're not giving it any attention. That threshold brook is life passing you by, it's a source of delight to the sensitive soul like Keats. And yet the accountant, with his head in the cloud, and the deadline and a horrid commuting journey in the car through the rush hour traffic, doesn't pay any attention to the threshold brook. And their life is impoverished as a result. ... The threshold brook is there. Now how about I actually spend some time with it? How about I actually show some appreciation to it? And how about one day, after maybe months or weeks or however long it takes, maybe how one day no matter how cynical or jaded or sceptical or clever, or overanalytical I was, that one day this special brook actually did speak to me. And told me what I needed to hear. And then I got up from sitting by the threshold brook and walked back into my world a different person. And that blessing that comes through threshold brooks, using that as a designator for that kind of experience, ... is a very healing thing, and if everyone were doing that then we'd all have more respect, and we'd moderate our behaviour and we'd get on better.

Such fine-tuning of our awareness requires time and effort. Michael told me: "For a long time I was only interested in human activity then slowly came to notice things – or take extra notice of things – maybe that's the key – I started to take extra notice of things and I tried to get closer to the animals and the birds."[13] An important part of his approach "is not to use the mind ... so that I can feel rather than think".

Barry's "threshold brook" symbolizes the subtle power of the sensory richness of specific places and he notes that if "we spend enough time by the threshold brook, and listen to it, we hear more and more". As Barry – and all my participants – understand, this is a deeply healing process.

RITUAL AND DANCE

Bateson suggested that dance could serve as an "interface between conscious and unconscious" (Bateson 1972: 138), offering a means of understanding messages that the dancer is consciously unaware of. This process is apparent in Greenwood's description of Gordon's dance with his spirit family:

> As the drumming increased, it was evident to me that there was a participatory communication between Gordon and the spirits in process, the other-than-human was coming through into the human form. At times there seemed to be a non-verbal discussion going on as Gordon's body appeared to act out questions and answers in a swirling profusion of expressive movements. (Greenwood 2005: 94)

This is a perfect example of how trance functions within the enactive process model; Gordon shifts his awareness to a deeply embodied self that melts the boundaries between subject and object, enabling communication with the other-than-human.

Ritual dance speaks a language beyond words, thus revealing two interrelated aspects of embodied cognition: first, the dance allows the *genius loci* or other spirit to communicate with the dancer at the level of the deep body; secondly, the dance can serve as a bridge between the dancer's deep embodied knowing and his or her conscious awareness. These aspects work together when a spirit communicates with the dancer through a deep embodied knowing that must be expressed in dance to become conscious.

This process becomes apparent in my interview with Zoe, who explains how her body has "a different way of moving" that is "like a dance" when she is connecting to a place. When Zoe's "body moves then something is able to move" and this dance enables "inspiration and the expression" to "flow through". The "something" that moves is "what the place is trying to tell me", which can be "an insight" or "a sense of my ancestors or the ancestors of the place being around me". The *movement* of the dance is fundamental and without movement there is no contact: "If ... I'm frozen in some way physically, then I can't hear. I can't listen. Nothing will flow through me. So I have to move in some way with it, however simple it is, I have to move physically in some way."

Although a felt sense is usually carried forward by a word or phrase, a gesture or movement can be more appropriate (Gendlin 2000: 263), and this is often how Zoe's dance functions. Her embodied knowing is often expressed with a typical felt sense: "if there's something difficult that's trying to speak, then there will be a lump in my throat, um, grief will be further down my body, will be quite heavy round my hips and belly".

At other times she will use "dance and movement as well ... [l]istening to what's there and seeing how it wants to move. So, kicking out or swirling or just rocking or something like that to bring that out of my body so that I know what it is." The movement helps her to understand what a sensation is about:

> I'll get an idea, of what it's about. "Oh, this is about grief." But I won't necessarily understand the depth of it or how that moves until I move. ... there are patterns that my body makes repeatedly. Um. Ways in which my body moves that I'm getting used to that indicate that something's going on. You know, something needs to rise to the surface and come out. So that I can understand it a bit better.

A felt sense also facilitated Zoe's communication with the *genius loci* of a particular site:

> Halfway up the hill, there's an old hawthorn tree. So I would always stop there as I felt she was the guardian of the outer ring. I've no idea if anyone else ever felt this, but I would have to stop there ... ask her permission, and then wait for the answer. And the answer would come in a bodily sense. ... It's like a sense of permission in my body.

This permission was sensed as a slight pressure on her back: "It was like a propelling forward motion from behind. Like 'Yes!' You know. Pushing me gently forward." Once past this stage Zoe would come to "the inner level" where she would often "receive a 'no'. That would be like a frontal sense – like a closing down. I could feel it, yeah, it's definitely a front of body closed down. [Holds her open palms in front of her body.] Like someone's just drawn a curtain or shut a door in front of me."

These examples are typical of Gendlin's description of a felt sense (see, *inter alia*, Gendlin 1981), where someone experiences a meaningful bodily feeling and is – sometimes at least – able to become consciously aware of its significance. Lauren spontaneously experienced this process when she saw a shaft of autumn sunlight illuminate a small Scottish waterfall: "And there was this one little waterfall, and when it started it was nothing but, suddenly the sun, just caught it, and it was just so alive with colours. It was pink, and then there was white – the middle central stream was absolutely white, this shining whiteness out of this dark water, dark and inky." The waterfall was not only beautiful, but also eloquent: "And I just looked at it, and had this amazing feeling of just, sort of talking to the Earth. I can't describe it any other way – It was as though the Earth was just talking to me." This is clearly a felt sense that she could understand consciously:

> But standing here, I also – you know – got this message about all sorts of things – I really kind of got sorted out. I just stood there, and my head just went through things, and it was as though logically, I knew what I had to do about X and me, and I knew what I had to do about the woodland and, I knew what I had to do about Y and Z and it was all there coming to me. And it was a feeling more than words. It was just – you know, my mind was making words out of the feeling. It was fantastic.

Her experience of "a feeling more than words" that her mind could make "words out of" is a perfect description of what Gendlin calls "Focusing", the process of listening to a felt sense (Gendlin 1981). Focusing formalizes what some people do intuitively, so Lauren's spontaneous experience is not surprising (*ibid.*: 4).

Lauren's experience was profound and powerful: "It was [like] when I first found out I was pregnant – I just wanted to run down the hill and tell everyone, saying 'I've just been spoken to by the Earth!' I mean I really felt that connected with this one site."

As Merleau-Ponty says, "[i]t is the body which points out, and which speaks", and this "immanent or incipient significance in the living body extends ... to the whole sensible world" such that we can "discover in all other 'objects' the miracle of expression" (Merleau-Ponty [1962] 2002: 230).

We can continue to unpack this experience by applying the enactive process model: Lauren has lived a long full life, so on my model her deep body – the source of Gendlin's

implicit bodily knowing – will have a very rich sense of the world. This deep sense is inarticulate so is, at best, a source of *potential* knowing. The understanding that is implicit in this richness may never become explicit if it is not evoked by experience, but in the case of Lauren's waterfall a particular place at a particular moment *does* evoke some of that deeply embodied potential knowing: one day Lauren stands before a waterfall and its beauty calls forth an implicit knowing into explicit awareness. In an important sense she *is* "talking to the Earth", because the explicit knowing is co-created by Lauren and that particular place. Lauren is thinking with the place, and the ambiguity of that phrase is fortuitous: in a sense she is *using* the place to evoke her embodied knowing, but on a more sophisticated reading Lauren and the place are thinking *together*, through the process of extended cognition. Both perspectives over-simplify somewhat, as to some extent they use the subject/object paradigm which this article problematizes, and it is clear from the enactive process model that at a more fundamental level "Lauren" and "the place" are aspects of one ongoing process. We can never fully articulate this mystery because it is implicit, and thus we gain understanding of spiritual communion with the other-than-human world without diminishing it. A sense of the ineffable remains because the ultimate source of understanding will always remain implicit and mysterious, and yet it can be evoked by ritual, poetry or experiences in the organic environment.

BLURRING BOUNDARIES

The processes of connection can encourage a recognition that "organism and environment enfold into each other" (Varela *et al.* 1991: 217). Rob described how he felt one evening in the woods when a deep realization of environmental destruction came to him:

> I felt like Gaia was really screaming out through me, saying please help me. Please help me, and like I started screaming myself and started saying these words. I felt so connected, so at one with the Earth that this violence was being done towards me. Um, not me personally, any ego or anything like that, but me as in life, as in this whole unity which I'm connected with.

Rob's identification with a sense of life itself, which is emphatically not his ego, is particularly striking. His experience illustrates how life in the woods can "facilitate the arousal of nonegoic awareness" (Greenway 1995: 133). As we have seen, such experiences are not uncommon. Taylor found that "no small number of activists report profound experiences of connection to the Earth and its lifeforms" (Taylor 2005: 47), while Eco-Pagan Jodie concluded that site life constructed "a different form of consciousness whereby a person felt a part of nature" (Greenwood 2005: 107).

CONCLUSION: EMBODIED ANIMISM

Eco-Pagans learn to become aware of the deeper cognitive processes of the embodied self, thus enabling communion with the other-than-human world. By expanding awareness

into a more embodied consciousness, practitioners open to aspects of "a larger Mind of which the individual mind is only a subsystem" (Bateson 1972: 467).

Within the deep body there are degrees of merging between self and other, the two gradually smudging together as awareness slides down the cognitive iceberg. At some level the mind/body/place matrix is "one indivisible totality" (Ingold 2000: 9), and the self/other distinction ceases to function, as evidenced by the phenomenological experience of deep trance. But any kind of animist relationship would be impossible if that were the only dimension. It takes two to tango, and Eco-Pagan animists typically experience the world in terms of the human person "here" and the other-than-human spirit "out there". We can interpret this relationship as a kind of conversation between the more individualized self towards the top of the cognitive iceberg and the mind/body/place matrix lower down. This conversation, mediated by the processes of connection, allows the wisdom of the deep body to be offered up to conscious awareness.

My academic analysis is similar in many respects to Barry's understanding of his shamanism. He has concluded, in general accord with enactivists like Varela, that we are a "kind of [pause] panoramic unconditioned presence", part of a system "rather than an object or a subject". At times "the system that generates the virtual image of Barry and the system that generates the virtual image of the genius loci ... engage with one another and they become one system. And there's no limit to what that could be." When this happens "you become one facet of awareness in a vaster and bigger and wider and richer and deeper kind of reality than the one we usually inhabit".

Barry's words echo Gendlin's description of the body: "Your physically felt body is in fact part of a gigantic system of here and other places, now and other times, you and other persons – in fact, the complete universe. This sense of being bodily alive in a vast system is the body as it is felt from inside" (Gendlin 1981: 77).

Conventional language makes it difficult to clearly express these ideas and the shadow of dualist assumptions hovers over my words. From all that I have written, it is clear that our usual notions of "self" and "other" are inadequate here, so I will rehearse my core metaphor once again. Embodied animism is like a dance of deep communion. The steps of the dance are ancient, and when we make those old familiar moves we are once again in tune with the other-than-human world. There is a point where self and other bow and acknowledge one another before the dance begins. This is the ethical relationship of "self" and "other" upon which Levinas founds his ethics. But in just a few fluid steps the self/other dance becomes a process in itself. If I learn the steps well, then suddenly – phenomenologically and spiritually – "I" am no longer the dancer but the dance, at which point "I" am not.

This plunge into the deep body awakens us from the dualistic dream that we are separate from the other-than-human world. We experience this psychological shift phenomenologically as a sense of spiritual connection that allows us to "attune ... to the natural world", and it can feel "[l]ike being in a great big dream, relevant messages are being spoken everywhere, telling me things I need to hear, and to which I need respond" (Fisher 2002: 103).

Such messages were spoken by Lauren's waterfall and the threshold brook, and they have the power to change lives. Inasmuch as the immanent sacred is that which enables communion with the world and offers spiritual knowing, its source is the deep body which blurs into our organic environment. However deeply we drink from this source – a

threshold brook perhaps – its wisdom will never be drained and full communion remains ineffable.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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NOTES

1. Interviewed in Coventry, 19 April 2007. Further references to Barry, unless citing his publications, are to this interview.
2. Usage varies. I capitalize the term Eco-Pagan throughout.
3. Interviewed in Coventry, 20 April 2007. Further references to Emily are to this interview.
4. Interviewed in Devon, 26 May 2007. Further references to Mary are to this interview.
5. Interviewed in London, 23 May 2007.
6. Interviewed near Glastonbury, 24 May 2007. Further references to Zoe are to this interview.
7. Interviewed in London, 8 August 2007.
8. I have reviewed the literature on this subject in detail elsewhere (Harris 2008), so will simply refer to a few key thinkers here to give a sense of the breadth of the consensus.
9. For more extensive and detailed discussion of this model, see Harris (2008).
10. Interviewed in Buxton, 29 May 2007.
11. Eight evenly spaced festival dates that mark the changing seasons.
12. The phrase "threshold brook" is from John Keats's poem in *The Human Seasons*: "Fair things pass by, unheeded as a threshold brook": www.poetryfoundation.org/poem/173737 (accessed 14 April 2013).
13. Interviewed in London, 14 May 2007.

33

Researching through porosity: an animist research methodology

M. J. Barrett

There is much to be gained if animists, those who regularly experience insight as communications from other-than-human persons, and academics come into conversation with one another (cf. G. Harvey 2006b). Such communications can help disrupt the human–nature binary that is consistently identified as a key root cause of many current environmental problems. It can also enable access to much wisdom and innovative insights, if humans are willing and able to listen. Yet structures and rules defined by a culture that generally does not support animism can make it particularly challenging to research *through* animism as both epistemology and ontology, particularly in most academic contexts. Given that particular ways of knowing and being have higher status than others (Bowers 1997), there are plenty of manuscripts that talk *about* animism, but few explicitly identify animism as the epistemological and ontological framework through which they are researched and "written".

Drawing on my doctoral dissertation which examines ways in which an over-reliance on Western forms of rationality limit our ability to effectively conduct research which honours and engages with the more-than-human natural world, I briefly outline a research methodology and methods that move beyond the Newtonian view of matter and supports engagement with a universe of "knowers", many of whom are not human (Stuckey 2010). I also highlight the role of discourse in maintaining animist research as an (im)possibility, and identify ways in which hypertextual representation of research can support openings to animist sensibilities.

I write this chapter as an academic, animist and trained practitioner in a variety of energy-healing modalities. My research and its (performative) representation was prompted by increasing calls for epistemological and ontological diversity in research approaches, as well as the need for different ways of thinking and forms of consciousness to address pressing ecological concerns. Animism, together with a variety of intuitive energy-shifting processes such as Yuen Method Chinese Energetic Medicine, support an opening to such difference, which I refer to as porosity. Porosity reflects the

episto-ontological position from which I write. It refers to an openness to and engagement with animate Earth, particularly in the process of knowledge acquisition and meaning-making. It also refers to the ontological possibility of shifting discourse through focused intent. The notion of porosity is premised on understandings that thought and matter are, to a great extent, manifestations of energy[1] (Hawking 1988; Stapp 1993; Tiller 2004) and as such, face-to-face and non-local communication with the more-than-human is both an epistemological and ontological possibility. The word *porosity* underscores the porousness, or lack of boundaries, between human beings and that which exists well beyond the physicality of human thought and body. It is related to, and extends beyond animism. Depending on one's starting point, opening to porosity may require shifting understandings of the very nature of the reality in which we live.

My research develops a dialogic[2] method(ology)[3] and form of representation that supports researching beyond socially constructed human–nature–spirit boundaries. I use a variety of intuitive knowledge-making practices, energy work, and a multi-media hypertextual form to de-centre the privileged position of the human intellect, and *research and write through* (rather than just about) animist ways of knowing, and being. In doing so, I simultaneously invite the reader to engage the "text" beyond normative Western epistemological and ontological frames and develop my primary argument: more space needs to be provided for inclusion, and acknowledgement, of contributions of animate Earth (plants, animals and spirit) to research and its representation.

To engage a dialogic method(ology) entails moving beyond the limits of Western epistemologies and ontologies; it also supports a decolonizing of the self, and as such, more decolonized relations with those who are not human. The study is both deconstructive and reconstructive, and addresses three research questions: (a) How might a researcher intentionally and respectfully engage with and acknowledge animate Earth and spirit as key sources of knowledge in the process of academic inquiry? (b) In the field of education, what are some of the discourses which have made the twinned acts of research/representation in ongoing dialogue with animate Earth and spirit difficult to engage and acknowledge? (c) Recognizing that all forms of representation have limitations, what kinds of representation might be congruent with the epistemological and ontological premises of animism?

To complete the study required drawing on scholarship from a number of theoretical perspectives and disciplines, including feminist, queer, post-structural and anti-racist theory, as well as literature from anthropology, research methodology, religious studies, energy-healing practices and, more peripherally, trans-personal psychology and quantum theory. Coming to a dialogic method(ology) required identifying and moving beyond conventional and well-inscribed Western ways of (academic) knowing, *and* coming to terms with the fact that these ways of knowing are accessible to all peoples. As I wrote in 2009 (see www.porosity.ca),

my "choice"
to write, create this way

took
release.
escape from

tentacles of
old etchings.

Dissolving sedimented

human
nature line

Methodology and methods, as well as the hypertextual representation of the research "text" underpin the intentional disruption of rational linear thought while simultaneously supporting shifts in consciousness that are often required to engage animist sensibilities in knowledge production.

THE METHODOLOGY

Key steps of a dialogic method(ology) are identified below. Coming to the research methodologies and methods used in this dissertation required listening for new (old) processes of knowing to emerge. While listed separately and in linear order, most of the steps intersect and overlap with one another.

1. Quieting the mind;
2. Being open and attuned to porosity;
3. Finding methods and practising;
4. Finding ways to simultaneously engage in and re-present this process so that both researcher and reader can make meaning *through* rather than just *about* animism and porosity;
5. Maintaining a deep sense of respect for the wisdom of the more-than-human world.

Specific methods include (but are far from limited to) various forms of meditation (e.g. Bai 2001), dowsing (e.g. Hansen 1982), dreaming (e.g. Castellano 2002; Bernard 2007) and non-local communication (e.g. Sheldrake 2003). They also include artistic practice (e.g. Lipsett 2002, 2005) and simple, quiet attention. Messages received can be perceived as visual images, dreams, a felt sense, or a feeling. They may be experienced as a gut feeling, serendipity, a sense of being drawn to pick up a particular book, go a particular place, or as words that pop into one's head. Some messages are metaphoric and require significant interpretation,[4] while others appear to be more literal (G. Harvey 2006a). Insights arrived at through porosity can often (but not always) be distinguished from everyday thought in that they are frequently ideas one has never thought before, proposals that are clearly from outside of one's normal frame of reference, or even beyond one's wildest imagination (such as the idea that I should represent my dissertation in hypertext using short bits, rather than a more linear prose comprising chapters). Most methods require that the constantly thinking conceptual mind "gets out of the way" to enable access to wisdom and insight through a different form of consciousness. These forms of consciousness may not be far removed from a normal working/waking state, but are often not accessed nor acknowledged given the cognitive and methodological imperialism demanded in academic

discourse (L. Smith 1999; Battiste & Henderson 2000). Such "imperialist" discourses make it difficult to engage that which "has been muted or repressed and gone unheard in representations of our practice" (Lotz-Sisitka 2002: 118). To engage such epistemologies often requires leaving behind academic structures and thought systems.

Since the processes of knowledge production and acquisition that support porosity exist beyond the intellect and are often not explainable within conventional Western frameworks of knowing (see Bai 2003, 2009; Stuckey 2010), they are frequently marginalized and seldom explicitly taught or acknowledged in most academic contexts (for some exceptions, see Braud & Anderson 1998; Dillard 2006a,b). This "shadow knowledge" (Abram in Abram & Jardine 2000: 176) is sometimes assumed to be spiritual in origin (Castellano 2002; Aboriginal Elder-in-Residence, personal communication, July 2007) and referred to as "derived knowledge" (D. M. Smith 1998), or "revealed knowledge" (Castellano 2002: 24). For many who have been raised in colonial contexts and work in the academy, to actively engage these ways of knowing requires particular resilience in the face of many powerful discourses which daily reinscribe the methods as not legitimate forms of knowledge production.

IDENTIFYING DISCOURSES

Discourse analysis is particularly helpful in identifying sets of meanings that are in the way of researching and writing through an animist ontology, and porosity. Post-structural theory, which guided the analysis of discourses in this study, can be used to highlight ways in which certain meanings can be made in certain contexts, among specific communities of people, and using particular social and textual processes (J. Scott 1988). It can also make visible how particular "regimes of truth", created through discourse, work to maintain assumptions about what it means to be academic and perform academic in appropriate ways, for example: writing in traditional forms; using readily recognizable and peer-reviewed references; and using accepted and normalized (within particular academic contexts) research methods and episto-ontological frames (Dillard 2006b; Lather 2006). In other words, post-structural analysis helps make visible ways in which power and discourse work together to place boundaries around who one can be and what kinds of research methods "count". It can also make visible ways in which particular discourses are daily reinscribed by speech, action and physical spaces, determining the subjectivities one is able to perform (Butler 1995). Often, simply naming a discourse has potential to decrease its power (Davies 2000); on other occasions, the naming reinscribes its power to constrain.

In the context of this research project, each of the discourses named below had varying degrees of power to affect ways in which I was able to engage porosity in the completion of the study:[5]

- socially constituted epistemologies and ontologies that assume that the more-than-human world (Abram 1997) does not have consciousness nor interact with humans in a dialogic relationship;
- consistent privileging of the conceptual over the perceptual (M. J. Barrett 2007; Bai 2009);

- norms about how knowledge should be represented (Richardson 2002; Dillard 2006a,b);
- norms about what constitutes legitimate research (Robottom & Hart 1993; St Pierre & Roulston 2006);
- accusations of appropriation of indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing (L. Smith 1999; Battiste & Henderson 2000; G. Harvey 2003; O'Riley 2003);
- a culture of busy-ness that makes it difficult to slow down enough to hear the earth's many voices (Bai 2009);
- Western school science curricula that define rocks and similar beings as inanimate (Aikenhead & Michell 2011);
- claims that expressions of awe, love, and so on *vis-à-vis* nature (e.g. Bowerbank 1998; Sandilands 2002) are simply instances of socially constructed romanticism;
- "methodological atheism" (Ezzy 2004: 118), and avoidance of the "S" word (spirit) in discussions of research methodology (see Shahjahan 2005; Dillard 2006a,b);
- many Christian discourses which are often very human-centred and wary of earth-based spiritual practices (Berry & Tucker 2006; Taylor 2009);
- a range of suspicion, fear (Ezzy 2004) and delegitimization (Dillard 2003) of ways of knowing and knowledge that do not have rational explanations (Radin 1997; Findlay 2000; Hufford 2003; Jonas & Crawford 2004);
- continual reinscription of conceptual reasoned thought as the primary and privileged way of knowing in most academic pursuits;
- shamanophobia (including my own) (R. J. Wallis 1999b; Walter & Fridman 2004);
- reinscription of humans (and perhaps other animals, particularly mammals) as the sole holder(s) of consciousness and intentionality and the unmarked norm against which all others are measured (Bell & Russell 2000; Plumwood 2002);
- ontologies that support the above and deny (or ignore) the energetic connections among all things as articulated by quantum theory (Hawking 1988; B. Greene 1999) and indigenous science scholars (e.g. Cajete 2000).

These discourses are layered onto the perceived (and sometimes experienced) risks of inappropriately performing as a human and an academic as they are currently conceived. Some of these include:

- the risk of not being part of the academic club (see Boler 1999), and thus being excluded from publishing and presentation opportunities if I use languages, research methodologies and forms of representation not readily acknowledged in academic research;
- the risk (and reality) of being told "your hands can't know" (comment from a senior faculty member in response to me describing aspects of my research methods);
- the risk (and tension) of living contradictory subjectivities/identities simultaneously in both my personal and professional lives – one which I could reveal, and the other which often (though less frequently now) remains hidden;
- the risk of inappropriately performing as a human, or an academic, as they are currently conceived, in Western and academic contexts (and the associated risk of being told I am crazy) (see Plumwood 2002; Jensen 2004; G. Williams 2005);
- the risk of being accused of appropriation of indigenous knowledge and ways of

knowing (L. Smith 1999; Battiste & Henderson 2000; G. Harvey 2003; O'Riley 2003) or being labelled an Indian wannabe (O'Riley 2003);

- the risk of being explicit about using a dowser as an important research tool (I was told by a committee member to go ahead and use it, but *not* mention it in my dissertation; another committee member encouraged me to talk about how hard it is to talk about);
- the risk of not getting a job (I was applying for a tenure track position during the time the study was being conducted);
- the risk of not conforming to the seven-page guidelines for formatting dissertations, published by the Faculty of Graduate Studies;
- the risk of not receiving appropriate approvals from my dissertation committee, the Faculty of Graduate Studies, the external examiner, or one of the many other gatekeepers of the academy.

This research was supported by a variety of academic trajectories, including a push towards epistemological and ontological diversity in research methodologies (Denzin & Lincoln 2005a), the self-reflexive turn in anthropology (see Marcus & Fischer 2986; Young & Goulet 1994), and increasing attention to the link between representation and ways of coming to know (e.g. Cole *et al.* 2004).

Being attentive to technologies of power (disciplining by others) and technologies of self (disciplining of the self) (Foucault 1980, [1976] 1988) was essential in challenging these discourses, not succumbing to the apparent risks of researching *through* animism as an epistemological and ontological stance, and finding a variety of openings to porosity and the wisdom it enables. Together, the hypertextual form and many cracks in hegemonic consent (marino 1997) enabled the completion of the research and its successful defence.[6] In spite of initial resistance, and a ten-month delay in defence in order to enable a change in regulations for dissertation formats (Barrett in press), I was able to offer a porous hypertextual re-presentation of the research as a way to maintain congruency between ontology and form, as well as to support dissertation readers' take-up of porosity. The method(ology) and the reading form demand continual movement beyond normally sanctioned Western frameworks of knowing, and as such, offer ongoing practice in decolonizing the self and one's relations with those who are other-than-human. This research was supported by a variety of academic trajectories, including a push towards epistemological and ontological diversity in research methodologies (Denzin & Lincoln 2005b), the self-reflexive turn in anthropology (see Marcus & Fischer 1986; Young & Goulet 1994), and increasing attention to the link between representation and ways of coming to know highlighted in fields such as arts-based research (e.g. Cole *et al.* 2004) and other forms of academic inquiry (Dillard 2003).

CRACKS IN CONSENT[7]

The representation of the dissertation in hypertext is designed to offer multiple invitations to read through animist sensibilities. The layout, which includes multiple small "bits" of text, makes it difficult to travel through the dissertation using one's rational mind alone and is more effectively experienced than described (see www.porosity.ca). Because of its symbolic (and literal) porosity and somewhat forced intuitive choices, the

hypertextual representation constitutes one way to encourage readers to read through porosity. Rather than reinscribing "the tyranny of the languaged consciousness" (Bai 2003: 49) through a continuous essay form (as I am doing here), I use poetry, collage, music, prose, recorded human voice and photographic images together with multi-media hypertext to open spaces for one's non-discursive, psychically and animistically informed knowing to be foregrounded. In practical terms, this means that decisions about what to read and the order of reading are most easily made from beyond the limits of conventional intellectual knowing.

NOTES

1. I recognize that "energy" is a very overused and ill-defined word, yet it is the only word that, at this point in time, is sufficient to explain the ontological and epistemological "reality" of porosity.
2. I give credit to Val Plumwood (2002) for introducing me to the phrase "dialogical methodology" which I then adopted and wrote as "dialogic methodology". Graham Harvey (2006a) also uses the term.
3. Method(ology) denotes the intimate intertwining of methodology and methods while at the same time acknowledging that they are not synonymous.
4. Similar to all research data, these are always interpreted within cultural frames.
5. These discourses and the following list of risks are adapted from the "Academic Openings" web page of Barrett (2009).
6. The dissertation was shortlisted for two nationally recognized dissertation awards: the Canadian Association for Curriculum Studies Dissertation Award, and the American Educational Research Association Outstanding Dissertation Award (Research Methodology).
7. I thank dian marino (1997) for this phrase.

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Consciousness, wights and ancestors

Jenny Blain

The "new animism" is influencing not only many directions within religious practice, notably Paganisms, but interpretations (of these and other practices) within religious studies and anthropology. This chapter has, therefore, a dual focus. Historically within social sciences, "animism" has been used to signal otherness, a "superstitious" belief or faith in directive or authoritarian non-human entities. If, rather, "animism" is interpreted to mean the possibility of relationships between human and other-than-human people, within a "living landscape", in which all players, be they stones, sparrows or social scientists, have their part, how does this influence both spiritual practices and the anthropological or sociological theories which attempt to account for those practices?

This chapter explores some dimensions of how relationships are constructed and reported in practitioner discourse, as engagements in altered consciousness states or "trance", with examples from contemporary seidr as a "Western shamanism". It interrogates meanings constructed within the seidr ritual and in discussions with practitioners and audience. It deals also with the interactions with landscape and with "wights" (beings, people) which are implicit within place and movement in the spaces in which today's animic practitioners sojourn, and hence with importances of ancestors and landscape for identities for today. And it deals with how we, as reflexive practitioners of social research, can reflect, theorize and learn from these happenings.

POSITIONING THE AUTHOR WITHIN SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

When I began this chapter I envisaged an academic discussion of some of the issues within anthropology and sociology of religion, and religious studies, today, concerning the past meanings attached to animism as (per Tylor 1871) superstition and fear, a "crude childlike natural philosophy", contrasting these with the "new animism" developed by Graham Harvey (e.g. 2005a) following Bird-David and others. Indeed, I am still hoping to do some

of this, but rather by demonstration than by argument. Since my first proposal, I have found myself dealing directly with landscapes of northern England and lowland Scotland, as far as Angus, thinking and speculating about how various creatures, beings, plants and animals live within these, and the histories of my own particular lines.

I am a social scientist, trained in social anthropology and sociology. I am by choice a Heathen, a follower of the old ... well, most people say "gods" of North Europe, but to me these are less important than the worldviews our "ancestors" (in the cultural and historic, not necessarily "genetic" meaning) hold, of the centrality of all beings within their environments. Increasingly, it seems to me that the stories that can be told, of places or times, are not only the stories of human people. The problem is accessing them, and it is a problem shared, of course, with those stories of human people who have been marginalized or erased. Most of the living world, therefore, shares an absence from "history" in that our stories are not public in a conventional sense. We are not celebrities. The blackbirds and frogs in my garden are not celebrities; my ancestor James Philp, ship carpenter of Leith, is not a celebrity; but all of them, all of us, do what they do, or did what they did, on a daily basis, and pay attention to what matters at the time, for them.

That "paying attention" is a large part of my topic here. Consciousness can be an academic term, or a popular term, but can mean much more. In talking with students about issues of belief and power, I ask them what they "attend to" and how this changes within the everyday. They, and I, walk through our campus to reach classrooms, the library, or tutors' offices, and on this older campus that involves walking by trees, grass, vegetation. In the spring, sometimes one sees human people looking up into trees where the great tits are calling "teacher, teacher", or a song thrush is repeating his phrases; others go past without looking, without listening, possibly without consciously hearing. Walking up the campus talking with colleagues or students is different from walking through on one's "own". Rain or sunshine, warmth, snow, demand different levels of attention or enjoyment.

Paying attention is of course not only a human activity. That song thrush has his own concerns, whether of attracting a mate, seeking food, maintaining a watch for predators. Birds who are "used to" human presence may have less awareness of the passing students and staff than of the possible presence of fox, cat, sparrowhawk, or competitors for food.

How we perform "attending to" our surroundings can be discussed on a number of levels. This chapter focuses chiefly on "feelings" but also on how these are adjudicated. If I hear a bird but do not know if it is (say) a thrush or a blackbird, I can have recourse to bird-book descriptions, online sound files, or simply asking a friend. Birdsong is verifiable. We have developed a number of aides – sound CDs, binoculars, telescopes – to assist with bird identification. If, however, I "sense" something about a place, an ancestor, a connection or relationship, it is hard to demonstrate the trustworthiness of this "sensing", which may be based on many stimuli or observations but not necessarily documentable, and hence dismissed as "intuition".

Within many forms of spiritual practice, though, the practitioner uses such non-documentable "intuition" and creates surroundings to facilitate its performance. In this chapter I will focus on the use of "seidr" as a style of knowing and as a ritual form which enables a connection between human and other-than-human entities, to create some form of relationship, and the more immediate connections between self, landscape and ancestors that are created through attempts to "know" ancestors, whether of the far past or the more immediate family history.

ANCESTORS AND SHAMANIC PRACTICE

Discussing seidr involves, to some extent, discussing "shamanism" and how the term is interpreted and used today, both by academics across a wide range of disciplines, and by those who consider what they do "shamanistic" or "shamanic" today. Seidr is today constituted within Western-based ideas regarding what is possible and how "shamanic" ways of knowing assist these, derived in part from theoretically informed academic understandings.

The West's interest in "shamanism" seems to have stemmed from the accounts of travellers in the eighteenth century, and the reception their tales were accorded (Flaherty 1992); an exposure of an Enlightenment audience to stories of people whose lives and social organization were "other", whose magico-religious specialists behaved in ways that seemed exotic and obscure, with the Tungus *saman* appearing as the epitome of this difference. These tales caught the public eye. In a Europe developing its own forms of rationalism and scientific investigation, such stories of decontextualized "irrational" and obscure beliefs and practices, heightened in the telling to have "strangeness" and difference from emerging middle-class European practices highlighted, would frame the tellers as sophisticated, critical, unsuperstitious and so forth. The word "shaman" came to describe people who seemed to do similar things to those Tungus-Evenki practitioners. So, during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, "shamanism" came to be what "shamans" do, viewed as individual behaviour, in an exotic setting, facilitated by a general "superstition" which enabled the shamanic worker to delude or trick an audience within the context of shamanic ritual "performance" – in itself a rather problematic and polysemic word (Blain & Wallis 2006).

In the twentieth century travellers' tales were replaced by a more methodologically rooted anthropology, which, however, continued to produce accounts of shamanic otherness. For researchers such as Czaplicka (1914) and Shirokogorov (1935), the shaman was a culturally based figure who was privileged to break cultural taboos, and displayed mastery over "spirits" – whatever these were. At the same time, older presentations of shamanism as original, primeval religious practice and animism as original, primeval anthropomorphic understanding of self and environment continued. (Indeed, websites displaying "shamanism" as the "original religion" or as the foundation of religion are quite common today.) A commonality of shamanic practice was pointed to by Mircea Eliade in the book that would become a classic, *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy* (1964, originally published 1951), where, examining accounts of Siberian and circumpolar peoples, and indeed hunter-gatherer and nomadic groups worldwide, he outlined a specific set of characteristic practices defining a *Shamanic complex* – belief in a sky-god, old-animist worldview, a cosmology with upper, middle and lower worlds, with individual practitioners who entered ecstatic trance through a variety of means (including fasting or other privations, use of entheogens or psychoactive substances, dancing and music, notably drumming) to enable a journey to upper or lower worlds – though Eliade tended to focus on the ascent to the sky-world. The journey permitted work to be done for others, such as healing or conveying the dead to another world (as a psychopomp). Eliade therefore defined "shamanism" as technique-based, "shamans" as those gifted individuals who could gain that state, and the ecstatic journey and ability to shamanize as the mark of the practitioner, and matched descriptions of "actual" shamanisms against this created

idea type. Among those that he felt didn't quite match was seidr as pre-Christian North European ecstatic practice.

Anthropology, meanwhile, was developing its own (largely positivist, initially functionalist and later structuralist) accounts of shamanism, sorcery, witchcraft and spirit possession. Reinterpretation of shamanic practice, within anthropology and related disciplines, occurred with understandings that shamanic ritual took place within a community context and had meaning and implication for this. Within various successor paradigms it was viewed as a contributor to community solidarity or an expression of cultural uniqueness, with the shaman a gifted individual who became capable of interpreting a cultural script within, and to, cultural demands and constraints that included cosmology and mythology, spirits and gods – with these to be understood as "symbol" and "metaphor" manipulated by the magico-religious practitioner as part of their "role".

There are some elements notably missing from this picture, which I will turn to in a moment, and in today's anthropology some notable changes, but these discourses of shamanism – as inspired individualized practice, as exotic, as primordial "religion", and hence as "closer to nature" – have migrated via Eliade and other writers (notably Michael Harner, the anthropological founder of "core shamanism") from academic into popular books on *how to be a shaman*. In these the shaman becomes a lone figure, bent on self-healing, or on the healing of other individuals; and in some forms of group practice the purpose of ritual is to attain an "altered state of consciousness" and to then send healing of some sort to the environment ("nature" or "the earth") or the social world. In Harner's "core shamanism", attempting to avoid appropriating specific beliefs or spirits from indigenous cultures in marketing "shamanism" for Western consumers, techniques are highlighted, drumming tapes provided, and hence primordial religion is seen as accessible to anybody. Other writers borrow lavishly, particularly from North American cultures: feathers, dreamcatchers, bead necklaces and other artefacts that appear "Indian" are to be found in any New Age shop, and they are (along with anything "Celtic") bestselling items. Magazines such as *Shaman's Drum* are full of advertisements for workshops, drums, artefacts, techniques and courses. "Western Shamanism" is an industry selling, often, a romantic image: the cover of the fiftieth issue of *Shaman's Drum*,[1] in winter 1998, showed "some shamans, medicine people, and mystics from the Lakota, Clayoquot, Q'ero, Aboriginal, Mentawei, Tungus, Mazatec, Tibetan, and Nepali cultures, featured in past issues of *Shaman's Drum*".

WHAT IS MISSING FROM THE ACADEMIC ACCOUNTS: VOICE, CONTEXT AND SPECIFICITY

So, what is missing from mainstream academic accounts is, notably, the practitioner's voice, what is done within that trance state, and how that connects with – arising from, and reconstituting – the ongoing political, social and spiritual processes within the communities for which the shaman works; the interplay between self and community, between politics and culture, between spirit and human worlds structured within very specific geographic and climatic conditions – not isolated or timeless, but dynamic, with the "shaman" an active agent within political change. As an example of post-colonial anthropology, Taussig's *Shamanism, Colonialism and the Wild Man* (1987) examines the

political construction – present-day and historical – of specific shamanisms and specific practitioners in Colombia. What shamans do is, in his work, deeply embedded within political process and context. Similarly, Brian Greene's Peruvian shamans (1999) creatively expand their practice and repertoire by drawing on Western medical techniques. These and other instances should disabuse us of the idea of preservation of primordial religion. Others have spoken of ways in which the conventional accounts, by disregarding the experiences described by generations of interviewed shamans, continue to foster ideas of cultural and intellectual superiority of Western rationalisms.

Thus, Young and Goulet (1994) have critiqued anthropology for failing to "take seriously" the reports of practitioners. Likewise, Desjarlais (1996) took issue with anthropological accounts as "focus[ing] on the ideational, rhetorical, or symbolic aspects of ritual healing" (*ibid.*: 149) and not on what happens to and between patient and healer. He and others have distinguished intellectualist and symbolic positions, both attempting to deal with (or should we say "explain away"?) that question of why shamanic ritual may be effective: through setting up, and attempting to fulfil, assumptions and expectations within those concerned (the intellectualist approach) or through symbolic/metaphorical transformation. He finds both to be wanting. (See also Blain & Wallis 2006 for a more detailed version of this and other critiques.) The intellectualist paradigm is too clearly an attempt to find measurable processes, such as the power of suggestion, to explain both ritual and results. The symbolic, based in structuralism and semiotics, goes some way to providing an understanding, but in dealing only with the symbolic, neglects the "reality" both of what is experienced within trance states, and of the ways in which transformation is experienced – or challenged – by those for whom shamanic events are "performed".

And, as Edith Turner (1994: 71) comments:

> Anthropologists have long been interested in what [practitioners] believe about spirits and the ritual events which surround spirit encounters. But it is the [practitioner] reports of experiences with spirits that are regarded as appropriate anthropological material, not the experiences themselves ... Scholars of religion tend to explain accounts of spirit encounters in terms of metaphor. The issue of whether or not spirits actually exist has not been faced.

Turner here builds on the work which she did with her husband, Victor Turner, and in her 1994 article re-analyses an event in which they participated. She comments that some more recent anthropologists may, by refusing to look even as deeply as Victor Turner could (in presenting challenge to a then largely positivist field), present surface, shallow accounts thus avoiding any risk of dealing with the question of what spirits may be or how they are constituted. Today we are more likely to recognize that ethnographic representation does not give "objective truth" but rather a construction, by the ethnographer, of what is experienced or seen, and a further construction of theory based on selection of observations. Still, there is the question of what can constitute observation, and whose observations fit within an academic analysis. Today we are more inclined (informed by post-modernism) to rejecting overarching metanarratives and in particular reject the privileging of "outsider" over "insider" account. Yet, there are questions of how these accounts are themselves analysed. An approach based on narrative, by looking for form and cultural context rather than content, may lead to ignoring the shaman's narrative

as an account of experience and rather look to how the narrative, itself, is structured to produce an effect on an audience, which is presumed to be the human audience. This can be contrasted with the notable work of Schieffelin (e.g. 1998) who has looked at perceptions of "performance" of healing ritual where the practitioners' accounts during the event are taken by the human audience to be indicative of different processes – indeed of the "performance" of spirit-helpers of the two competing healers in this account.

NARRATIVES, SEIDR AND LANDSCAPE

So, with ideas of paying attention, of what is attended to, and of academic attempts to possibly downplay that attention, let us turn to seidr and landscapes of North Europe. First, what is meant by *seidr*?

Broadly speaking, the term is used today within communities of practice of North European spirituality, and some others, including Wiccans, to refer to descriptions from the Icelandic Sagas and attempts by today's Heathens to emulate the practices described; but in these communities of practice specific focuses are generated and there is considerable recognition that seidr today is not and cannot be "the same as" in the described past. Reasons are simple. Seidr is seen as embedded within specific worldviews, and our ways of theorizing the world(s) today arise from where we are, in a post-Enlightenment era. Even the word "seidr" (a useful transcription of *seiðr* or more recently *seiður*, which is, however, an Icelandic nominative case from a root *seið*, of somewhat uncertain meaning) is problematic, and was so apparently even in saga times, with no clear definition and considerable contestation relating to its status and its practitioners.

Concepts on which most practitioners agree is that seidr requires connection from the cultural/spiritual group to something else, seen variously as communities of gods, ancestors, other spirit-beings; and that it includes elements of ritual performance, notably those of song or trance, a staff which marks the status of the practitioner, and often a raised platform or seat from which she or he may speak or chant future possibilities or charms. Descriptions and academic discussions of seidr in the past include, within archaeology, Price (2001), on pre-Christian seiðr in the sagas, Strömbäck (1935) (in Swedish) and recently Tolley (2009), who discusses seiðr as a development from more general "Indo-European" practices, within the specific geography of Northern Europe, while Dubois (1999) has discussed links between seiðr and practices of nearby "shamanic" cultures, notably Sámi shamanism. Differing types of seidr practice in today's communities are analysed by Blain (2002a,b, 2005) and Lindquist (1997).

The description most relied on comes from the Saga of Erik the Red. This describes the visit of a seeress or *spákona,* named Þorbjörg, to a Greenland farm, approximately around the year 1000 CE. The farm is in desperate straits with famine threatened, and she is invited there to forespeak, to tell of the future fate of the farm and community. Though there is no evidence that the account describes a particular "real" individual, it is one of the most detailed of any individual person within the sagas; describing the seeress's clothing and shoes, staff, cloak, even eating utensils which she brings. She wears a hood of lambskin lined with catskin, and has white catskin gloves. Her gown is girdled with a belt of touchwood, from which hangs a bag to hold magical items. Her cloak is blue, fastened with straps and adorned with stones, and stones stud the head of her staff. Her calfskin

shoes are tied with thick laces, with tin buttons on their ends. She is asked to predict the progress of the community; she eats a meal including a porridge made from goat's milk or colostrum and of the hearts of the farm animals – this in a community threatened with famine – and the next day a "high seat" or platform is made ready for her, with a cushion stuffed with hen's feathers, where she will sit to foretell. Her ritual practices require a special song to be sung to call or bind "the powers" or spirits, in order that she may gain their knowledge, in trance. The next day she sits on the raised platform (*seiðhjallr*), and from there she speaks. Here is a recent translation of the account:

> Later the following day she was provided with things she required to carry out her magic rites. She asked for women who knew the chants required for carrying out magic rites, which are called ward songs (*Varðlokur*). But such women were not to be found. Then the people of the household were asked if there was anyone with such knowledge.
>
> Gudrid answered, "I have neither magical powers nor the gift of prophecy, but in Iceland my foster-mother, Halldis, taught me chants she called ward songs."
>
> [After some persuasion] The women formed a warding ring around the platform raised for sorcery, with Thorbjorg perched atop it. Gudrid spoke the chant so well and so beautifully that people there said they had never heard anyone recite in a fairer voice.
>
> The seeress thanked her for her chant. She said many spirits had been attracted who thought the chant fair to hear – "though earlier they wished to turn their backs on us and refused to do our bidding. Many things are now clear to me which were earlier concealed from both me and others." (Kunz 2000: 658)

Her speaking indicated that the farm would survive – as would the individuals within it, notably Guðríðr, her lead singer, who is one of the main characters in the saga (transliterated as Gudrid in the quote above). The account of Þorbjörg has formed a basis, together with other descriptions of practice, for today's practice of *oracular seiðr*, also known as *high-seat seiðr* or spae-working, reconstructed in different ways by groups focusing on different points in the account. Yet we have no evidence that this particular episode happened. The account and the writing of the saga date from at least two hundred years after the described incident, and we are told about it as background and introduction for the heroine, Guðríðr. However, the details in this account may indicate much about how seeresses were thought of by people claiming to be their descendants or inheritors and retaining stories of their practice, including their costume, their way of life, how they might be regarded in time of crisis, how they were expected to behave, and what they would need to talk about with the spirits. This is how I regard the account, and likewise how other practitioners of today read it. There is a sense here of the ability of the seeress to foretell, based in her own skills but also in her reading of the cultural and environmental situations. The "sacrifice" of animals so that she may have a meal of their hearts is not minor and, however much the account is exaggerated or invented, points to a serious respect for the idea of the practitioner of seidr.

The account also points to the community nature of this seidr practice. The seeress does not work alone – the singers are needed, and what they do is highly interesting from an animist perspective. They sing, led by Guðríðr, to attract and hold "spirits" who

have been previously reluctant. Who or what these spirits are is not detailed. The word in the Icelandic manuscript is *nátturur* which is obscure, but seems to relate to nature spirits of some kind. What form they take is not given. There are various connections with other-than-human persons in the account of preparations. The seeress sits on a cushion filled with hen's feathers, she eats the special meal of the hearts of farm animals. Can it be that this gives a connection to spirits associated with the farm itself? While the account is usually taken to indicate prophesy (designed by the teller of the saga to fit the story of Guðríðr) there is another possible reading suggested by Borovsky (1999): of the seeress as actively creating the future in which the farm will prosper, through the agency of these initially reluctant helper spirits who have been attracted by the song. This connects with another account of seidr performed for community purposes, again to avert famine.

In *Landnámabók*, which translates as 'the book of settlements' (Pálsson & Edwards 1972), stories are told of leading early settlers. Among these was Thurídr sundafyllir, who gained her name "sound-filler" by, again, work for the community at a time of crisis. In sounds or bays around the coast of Norway, where people were reliant on fishing, the fish did not appear, so Thurídr's contribution was to travel along the coast performing seidr in which she sang to the fish, calling them into the sounds where they could be caught.

These examples link seeress or seidr performer with other-than-human people within specific landscapes – farm or nature spirits, fish – and along with other more fleeting mentions they have formed a basis for construction of seidr by practitioners today. There are many ritual forms that their practice may take (see Blain 2002a; Lindquist 1997 for detailed accounts of practice). Some groups hold highly structured sessions in which gods are invoked and ritual accoutrements (costume, staff, jewellery) used along with singing to develop a sense of that event described for the Greenland farm, often for an audience who are not themselves familiar with the stories of the north (for instance at large-scale Pagan festivals). Specific songs have been developed which draw on stories from mythology or attributes of deities who (in the literature) perform seidr, and these circulate within linked seidr communities, along with guidance for practice, and practitioners are explicitly drawing on symbolism and symbolic performance to create an effect. The effect, however, is not the objective of the ritual or event, but rather a necessary stage in its construction: Diana Paxson, developer of one form of "oracular" seidr, commented to me that a heavy use of symbolism and narration of myth increases the likelihood that the "original material that follows" – the narrated experiences of the seidworker – will fit the cosmological framework of practice, and so be "seidr" rather than another cultural/historic type of shamanic experience.

Small-scale events may be much less formal, with singing – often free-form voicing, or chants developed by individual practitioners or small groups and particular to those groups – used to create the link between human and other-than-human communities or individuals. The landscape and its beings or "wights" may create their own linkages also. I have found a difference in practice between seidr in North Europe and that developed in North America, with the European experiences (as described by Lindquist and others, and as observed or performed by me) being much more immediate in the relationship to landscape, though this may of course be due to the particular groups and their styles of working. Large-scale "performed" seidr is contested on a number of levels by practitioners, as being too complicated or in terms of "not doing it right", for instance by

incorporating ideas of the shamanic "journey" described by Eliade rather than bringing spirits into the location of the seidr.

A narrative for today, relating to the story of Thurídr and making an explicit link between human-person and fish-person, comes from a practitioner, Rauðhildr, who was at the time of telling in California. On a Californian fishing expedition, she told me, one person had caught no fish.

> I touched his line and "sang along it" to the fish. I asked them to please give one more of their kind to this good man. I said he would make offering to the gods and wights of the sea for the prosperity of all their folk in return. I sang of the man's worthiness to receive such a gift. How a great fish giving himself to this man would bring honor to all parties. I sang of his power and his bravery as a warrior (the gent was a Vietnam Veteran). Lastly I thanked them for listening to my song. I took my hand off the line and a fish hit his line so hard I heard the line slap against the side of the boat. Two minutes later he had the fish on the deck. I don't like the practice, but on the big trip boats, they will sometimes club the fish. But this one didn't need it. The gentleman knelt down and touched it, said "thank you" and the fish stopped moving. It was very powerful. No more than two minutes after that, the boat limited out and the lines were pulled out of the water and we headed home. (Blain 2002a: 98–9)

This description focuses on the relationship between seidworker, fish and fisher, and in so doing goes some way to address Turner's previously quoted point that "the issue of whether or not spirits actually exist has not been faced". To understand Rauðhildr's story and its importance for her, it becomes necessary to treat her description not as metaphor but as a sense-making process for her. This is somewhat different to saying that these spirits are "real" but is a way to accept that while she draws on symbolic expression and roots her account in a particular discourse of seidr practice, there was an event, and something occurred between the three people involved.

Here we can return to the Turners, and ideas of shamanic performance (here as seidr) as more than symbolic. Victor Turner (e.g. 1967) challenged earlier functionalist accounts by attempting to see ritual and symbolic behaviour as cultural phenomena rather than epiphenomena, not merely "reflecting or expressing social structure and promoting social integration" (1974: 57) but working to "achieve genuinely cathartic effects, causing in some cases real transformations of character and of social relationships" (*ibid.*: 56). He described people engaging with a rich symbolic structure, and addressed how practitioners manipulated symbols within this structure or cosmology, creating social drama, with specific purpose, whether towards healing or another effect. Edith Turner (1994) has discussed tensions and ambiguities in Victor Turner's work, acknowledging that her husband, while working within the exigencies of the anthropology of his day, was attempting to reflect the experience and "voice" of Ndembu practitioners who regarded those "symbols" not as "objects of cognition, mere sets of referents" but as "powers" (*ibid.*: 90, in which E. Turner draws on V. Turner's [1967: 298] words). The fish spirit or fish collective to whom Rauðhildr sang can likewise be understood as a "power", someone who acts to create an outcome which has been requested by appropriate means, and there is a "performance", an engagement between parties, which underlies the cultural performance of

a narration of the events. Csordas, too, has drawn attention to these underlying dimensions of spirit-work, often unexplored by academics, and comments that:

> The shaman's formal narration of his journey to the realm of spirits is taken as data by anthropologists, but he is rarely questioned about the qualities of that realm and what it is like to move about in it. The shaman's narrative is treated as an element within the ritual performance – is it not the case, however, that the experience he narrates has the structure of performance in itself, prior to narratization? (Csordas 1996: 94–5)

The example of Rauðhildr's singing does not include a shamanic journey. The experience happens on a boat and she remains there, connected to water and fish (a fish collective?) through the line. Much seidr work, though, does involve a journey. An informal example comes from my own fieldnotes, when interviewing in Newfoundland in 1997, and it is much more clearly based in symbolism and involved only personal healing with no external "evidence" of process.

> I spent some time at D's this afternoon, interviewing her and drinking sage tea. Earlier I was attempting to play her new eltic harp. I asked her to drum for me, to enable me to trance. L arrived during this session and joined in the drumming.
>
> I had thought of doing a short invocation or a runerow, but D commenced drumming, and I sat cross-legged on the rug and made myself focus steadily, on the runes, hearing and visualizing them. Fehu ... Uruz ... Thurisaz ... Ansuz ... by the time I reached the end, I was already drifting, moving onwards, starting to run through the forests, with wind on my fur as I was greeting my wolf-friend, playing and nuzzling.
>
> For some time we ran. Then rather abruptly the feel of the air changed, and I was on a ship, a longboat or maybe a trading vessel, standing on deck and looking at the approaching land, seeing and hearing the gulls overhead and feeling the salt spray stinging my cheeks, and seeing three turf-roofed longhouses standing by the shore. I could hear the slop of the waves on the boat, and voices of people talking as they prepared for landing.
>
> Back to the forest, again with the wolves, and a touch of fear as the black bear-shape moved ahead of us, and a sense that together the pack was a match for any bear. I could sense a dance, a whirling within me, and my person-shape began to dance again, whirling and leaping as the drumbeat picked up speed.
>
> I opened my eyes and straightened, putting my hands to touch the floor with fingertips, feeling the dance still within me, and used its power to trace a circle of protected space, somewhere, anywhere it may be useful, dancing around it again and again, as the speed increased still further and further to the climax, then ceased. I felt very much better, grounded and aware.

These are the sorts of images reported by others, and the cultural context is evident. But why "journey" at all? Rauðhildr explained why she did not invite spirits to her when she performed "high seat", ritualized seidr, but rather went from the human space into other space, often to the place of ancestors known to Heathens as Hel or Helheim.

> My reasoning for going to the spirits, rather than calling them to us is not grounded in anything but my darker self, my suspicious nature and my mistrust of the behavior of other human beings.
>
> This culture has no training or grounding in how to respectfully treat the spirits that come. Forgive this harshness, but I have seen a great, disrespectful stupidity in many pagan communities, including our own.
>
> If the wights are offended it can damage the luck of the offender for life. There are dozens of cases of this in folklore and myth. My feelings about this are simple – Not on my watch, never. Even if the individual does something to richly deserve it. Not on my watch.
>
> If the wights are sufficiently angered, this can turn on the seer/ess as well. I will not willingly endanger my own luck, or the luck of another seer or his/her well being. I will not endanger my own well being without profound need.
>
> (Email discussion, 1999, sent to me by Rauðhildr)

She gave examples of how spirits might become angered: one individual attending seidr sessions repeatedly asked the same question, one which the seeress was advised by an ancestral spirit to not answer. The ancestral spirit eventually became angry: "Her own ancestress was willing to strike out in frustration and told me I was not allowed to answer her. It was odd and I am glad the ancestress had not been called into the space as one of the spirits coming to answer."

She gave an example of where a known wight became angry with a person within their own space:

> I have been in a space with a wight, normally kindly, who was disruptive and angry because of a single person in the space. Things fell down and broke when the individual entered. When the individual left, everything was wonderful and peaceful again. I immediately went and put down an offering as an apology for bringing the person into the wight's space.

Again the sense-making process here includes concepts of relationships formed between human and wight or other-than-human individuals, with the seeress as a mediator or broker between communities. These spirits, ancestors or other wights, are discussed in the seidworker's narrative as doing something, participating or withholding information, indeed becoming angry and behaving in ways different to their usual "performance". There are parallels here with the New Guinea spirit-helpers discussed by Schieffelin (1996, 1998), referred to previously, whose performance is discussed and critiqued by a knowledgeable audience. Rauðhildr, though, would note a distinction. Her audience does not know how to behave toward the wights, and therefore she must make her seidr differently in order to protect those (in both communities) to whom she has responsibility.

ANCESTORS IN A LANDSCAPE

In this chapter I have raised issues about who, within seidr or shamanic engagement, "performs" or acts, and moved from the concept of what is "attended to", through some

discussion of shamanism and anthropology, to explore some narratives of seidr. In doing this, I have hinted at ideas of ancestors, whether ancient or historic, or immediate and personal, and have mentioned landscape. However, landscape has appeared mostly as a stage for the performance of seidr, whether by seer/esses, fish or ancestors, although I briefly mentioned differences in the "feel" of seidr on the two sides of the Atlantic. To conclude this piece, I would like to say more about both landscape and ancestors, which involves a little bit of personal history.

I grew up in Scotland; almost all my known ancestors are lowland Scottish or Irish, with a few from the north of England. The landscapes I grew up in or visited have changed from the time of my ancestors, but would be still known to them. The poems, legends and mythology with which I was familiar were those of the "Celtic" and "Norse" people. But I left for Canada, and it was there that I learned to make seidr and started investigating these practices and their construction as a social scientist, interviewing Rauðhildr and others and participating in ritual events. Narratives of seidworkers have only been touched on in this chapter, but others are in my book on seidr and in articles (e.g. Blain 2002a, 2005; Blain & Wallis 2006; and, of male practitioners particularly, Blain & Wallis 2000). On returning to Britain in late 1999, I started to notice a difference in my own seidr practice, which seems to relate to the proximity of these ancestors, and the known qualities of landscape.

I also reconnected with some of the "sacred sites" visited in childhood and indeed have explored some of the practices and policies around use and appropriation of prehistoric monuments and the concept of "sacredness" of place (for which see Blain & Wallis 2007; Wallis & Blain 2011). Yet how are some places more "sacred" than others, or how do some hold more meaning? There are issues here of how we (humans, sparrows, wights) interact with landscape, of the placeness or being-ness of specific landscapes. Ingold (e.g. 2004, 2008) and others have discussed walking within landscape as something which involves many senses, an embodied placing and movement in a landscape which is lived, experienced and learned through the movement. Olwig, for instance, describes how "The touched, smelled and heard proximate material world is ... woven into the walker's sensory field, leading him or her to experience the landscape as a topological realm of contiguous places" (Ingold 2008: 88) in comparison to the flattened, abstractions of most landscape art. And not only humans walk or move over, through or above place. In walking, the landscape is party to the knowledge created.

Landscape, however, tends to be seen, in geography and archaeology, as a passive partner. While landscapes experience their own processes of erosion, silt-deposition, and so on, what still concerns most social science perspectives is how humans deal with landscape. In archaeological discourse, humans inscribe meaning in landscape – that is, we create understandings and share them with others, we treat landscape in the ways we do depending on its meanings for us – farm, taskscape, temple and so forth. Landscape, therefore, becomes *cultured* – interpreted by people in terms of their social needs, stories, theories, with a particular category of "*cultural* landscapes" defined as those which in some way exemplify particular kinds of human interactions with place. The UNESCO website states that: "Cultural landscapes – cultivated terraces on lofty mountains, gardens, sacred places ... – testify to the creative genius, social development and the imaginative and spiritual vitality of humanity. They are part of our collective identity."[2]

Sacred sites become, in archaeological or heritage discourse, examples of these cultural landscapes, and theories about landscape turn out, in the main, to be theories of people. Can we theorize, though, how "landscape" inscribes meaning in us? In an attempt to do this, Plumwood (2006) deconstructs "cultural landscape" as emphasizing human agency while denying agency to other-than-human processes, and though recognizing "cultural" as an initial move away from the hyperseparation of a nature/culture dualism, calls for "a new dialectic of nature, culture, and boundaries" (*ibid.*: 145). Is it possible, therefore, to view landscape as *culturing*, historically and temporally in interaction with all those who have lived on it, and indeed holding the stories and memories of these interactions? A start to developing Pagan and animic theories of landscape may be found in *The Wanton Green*, edited by shamanic practitioner Gordon MacLellan and Susan Cross (2011), for whom a number of practitioners have written their accounts of personal engagement with place.

I will conclude this chapter by returning to my own experiences of place, ancestors, other-than-human people, being in landscape and making connections there. I stand in the churchyard of South Leith parish kirk, look around, and walk to the place where, I have been told, the ship carpenters of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries had their burial ground, attempting to send my consciousness beneath today's surface or inscriptions, attempting to "know" these ones who have given me part of my inheritance of place. My ancestors James Philp and Mary Bell were not celebrities and they have no headstones. Yet they are in the ground and, in one way or another, have become part of this place, the kirkyard which they would recognize although the buildings around are newer than their time. And the seagulls whom I can hear calling, as my attention shifts towards the shore and the boats, are the descendents of those whom they would have heard, two centuries ago.

NOTES

1. This magazine ceased publishing in print in 2010. It is apparently moving to an online-only version, to be accessed via www.shamansdrumfoundation.org/.
2. See http://whc.unesco.org/en/culturallandscape (accessed 11 July 2011).

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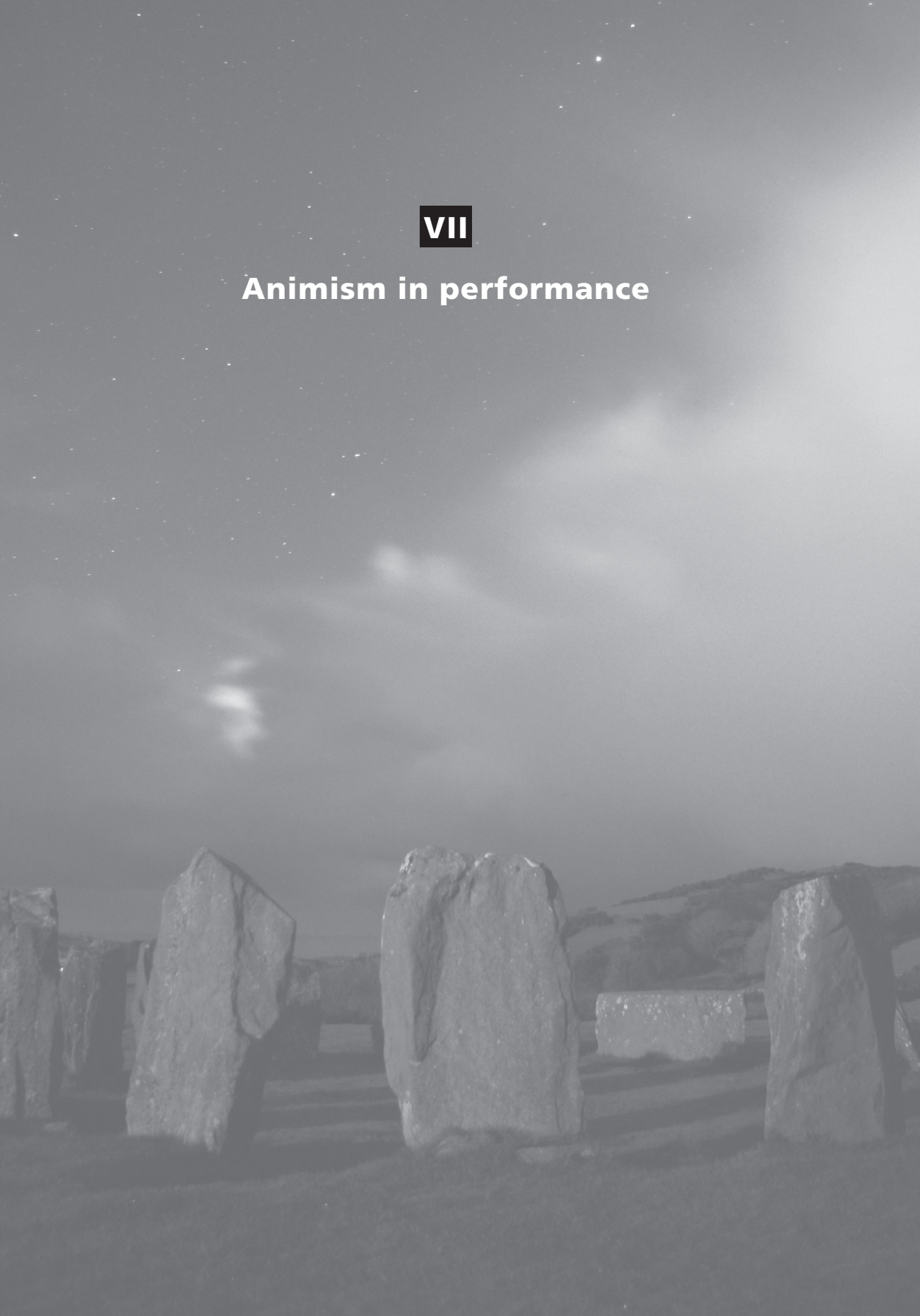

VII

Animism in performance

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INTRODUCTION

This final part engages with various ways in which forms or aspects of animism are performed. These include literature, rituals, music, drumming, film and ritual.

Before her untimely death, Val Plumwood had begun to express her feminist and ecological (or ecofeminist) philosophy as a "philosophical animism". In her chapter, "Nature in the active voice" (first published as Plumwood 2009), she expresses the hope that writers and readers, and by implication everyone, will "free up your mind, and make your own contributions to the project of disrupting reductionism and mechanism". With her usual wit and insight, she rejects as inadequate, uncritical, unimaginative and unengaged (and probably dull and deadly) those philosophical and popular views and engagements with the world that are neither participatory nor committed to the well-being of life.

My own chapter builds on an excellent essay by Harry Garuba (2003), a Nigerian poet and academic at the University of Cape Town, South Africa. His argument is, in part, that to understand what is happening in Africa today one must engage with what he calls "animist materialism". This is a rich concept, illustrated in "animist realism", a genre of novels and poetry, produced especially by indigenous writers, that expresses similar sentiments to that of more traditional myth-tellers. I celebrate some of the animist characters, moments, themes and plots of various indigenous novels produced by African, Native American and Maori writers. I hope this amounts to an encouragement to read and make use of such creative works in further thinking about contemporary animism.

In "The third road: *Faërie* in hypermodernity" Patrick Curry pursues a parallel track. With reference to works by J. R. R. Tolkien and other writers of "fairy tales" or tales of wonder, Curry clarifies ideas about disenchantment and enchantment, or modernity and its alternatives. He twists Latour's (1993) phrase to assert that "we have never been *completely* modern". Unless we are psychotic, Curry says, we cannot be completely disenchanted. Neither, however, are we entirely enchanted. He identifies the modern predicament as one that results from the simultaneous continuity of enchantment and disenchantment, illustrated in the wonder of fairytales and the glamour of advertising.

In a seeming contrast, Casey Brienza examines Japanese *anime* and *manga* genres, animation films and comic books that bear some relation to Shinto. These involve what could be described as "the personified forces of nature". While they might therefore be expected to contest dualities such as nature/culture, human/spirit or animal/machine, a considerable consumerism surrounds them. Casey reinforces the understanding that "animism" is not a categorical opposite to "modernity". Capitalism is animated by fetishistic economic power relations and animists pursue power and stability in their relational acts. Our analyses need to eschew too much neatness or partisanship.

Olu Taiwo's "Dance of the Return Beat" concerns participants in workshops in which Taiwo facilitates complex, engaging movements, drawing on his rich intercultural heritage and performance training. Using animal guising, masking, martial arts and other forms of movement, accompanied by drumming and interactive technology, he aids participants to re-embody and re-act *with* and *towards* a cosmos that, Taiwo argues, is inherently and definitively itself "an improvised performance" of continuous movement. Taiwo's work is both a celebration of human participation in the always animate cosmos and a mode of performing research about possible ways of being and understanding.

Performance and participation are also the key themes of Ronald Grimes's engaging, inspiring and provocative "incantatory riff for a global medicine show". Once again, the term "animism" does not occur in this chapter. Nonetheless, from the title's riff on Gary Snyder's phrase, "Performance Is Currency in the Deep World's Gift Economy" (Snyder 1990: 75), to the concluding invitation to perform ritual gestures, the chapter resonates with the refrain that knowledge requires some degree of participation. A resolute non-participant observer will gain some understanding of the "gift economy" of the larger-than-human world as understood by some people who might be identifiable as animists. Grimes's challenge is to provoke us to do something about the ideas that have got into our heads from the words we have read and/or the debates we have participated in.

35

Nature in the active voice

Val Plumwood

NEED FOR A THOROUGH RETHINK

It seems increasingly possible that our immediate descendants, and perhaps many of those now living, will face the ultimate challenge of human viability: reversing our drive towards destroying our planetary habitat. Two important recent books, one by Jared Diamond (2005) and the other by Ronald Wright (2005), show how cultures that have been unable to change a bad ecological course have gone down. The appearance of ecological crises on the multiple fronts of energy, climate change and ecosystem degradation suggests we need much more than a narrow focus on energy substitutes. We need a thorough and open rethink which has the courage to question our most basic cultural narratives.

Imagine this scenario: the northern tribe of Easter Islanders never question the desperate religious cult that has devastated their section of the island as they try to placate with tree sacrifice the angry gods who withhold the rain. Instead, their leaders look around for new sources of trees, casting their eyes perhaps on the still-forested lands of the smaller tribe to the south. Meanwhile, their clever men, their scientists, are set to search for tree substitutes – other types of vegetation perhaps. But the need to consume the trees, given by the religion, is never questioned.

Most public discussion in our society is dominated by the tyranny of narrow focus and minimum rethink. A rethink deficit is a poor rational strategy in a situation where so many cracks are appearing in the empire, where multiple ecological problems are compounding and converging. Strategies that limit us to casting about for simple substitutes are dangerous. We revamp those hazardous sources good sense has led us to resist so far – nuclear fuels for example. Rethink deficit strategies do not encourage us to question the big framework narratives that underpin our extravagant demands or the associated commodity cult of economic growth. Or to question our right, as masters of the universe, to lay waste to the earth to maintain this cult's extreme lifestyle. So, getting back to my case study, where could my putative Easter Islanders go to find intellectual help? In my

scenario, science does what it is told by power, and scientists are not encouraged or intellectually equipped to address the bigger questions. So the Islanders need more than science, and maybe a different kind of science. The Islanders of my scenario obviously need people with the courage to look about them and speak up for change. They need ecological knowledge and memory to help them recognize how nature supports their lives. Most crucially, they also need people who can open their culture to self-criticism, and make them think harder about their big assumptions, such as their high-consumption religion, and its suitability for their very limited support context.

Perhaps what my Easter Islanders need is a college of philosophers, backed up by a full choir from the humanities? Supposedly, the subject area with the brief for the full rethink is philosophy, whose best traditions have claimed to hold everything open to question. As a feminist philosopher, I would say that philosophy does not always live up to these ideals, and itself has a significant self-reflection deficit. Much of it is far too uncritical of the canon, to which I myself feel very little loyalty. (My own allegiance is to certain kinds of philosophical argument and methods but not to the canon.) Obviously philosophy with an excessive respect for tradition will not help the Islanders' rethink problem. They might get help though from the more radical strand of philosophy that, in Foucault's words, "endeavour[s] to know how and to what extent it might be possible to think differently, instead of legitimating what is already known" (1986: 8–9). Could the recent area of environmental philosophy help the Islanders to "think differently" about the dogmas that are ruining their island?

ENVIRONMENTAL PHILOSOPHY

First appearing in academia in the area of value theory in the early 1970s, environmental philosophy has now made itself felt across the whole discipline of philosophy, taking in core areas such as political philosophy, justice ethics, history of philosophy, moral epistemology and metaphysics. In all these areas philosophers have exposed the dangerous logic of current frameworks that devalue and background the non-human world. Some have argued that our human-centredness weaves a dangerous set of illusions about the human condition right into the logic of our basic conceptual structures (see Plumwood 2002).

Environmental philosophy remains marginal, many would say, in academia.[1] There have been some great recent contributions to environmental philosophy (for example Mathews 2003, 2005), but my overall assessment from over thirty years of involvement is that the discipline needs re-commitment and renewal, and presently is not sufficiently addressing our planetary ecological crisis or providing us with adequate guidance. (Perhaps the increasing influence of money in our learning systems would help explain why this area has been neglected.) Certainly environmental philosophy no longer holds the premier place it held in the 1970s and 1980s among non-science disciplines. In Australia, the area has faced neglect or outright hostility from conventional philosophy, and has receded. In the humanities, the baton has been picked up by emerging stars – eco-politics, eco-anthropology and eco-criticism in literature. I will have more to say about their important contributions later.[2] Is this a race against time to remake the culture? You would not think so from the low priority of these areas in the humanities and in philosophy programmes and discussion.

Perhaps one reason the Easter Islanders may not get much guidance from environmental philosophy is because the college has been conventionally divided since the early 1970s into the shallow and the deep sections, depending on whether their concern is with humans or non-humans. Australian environmental philosophers have contributed in a major way on both sides. John Passmore argued in 1974 for the adequacy of a "humans only" tradition, and was balanced by local theorists from the same period on the deep side. Deep ecology and deep green theory were major brand names that emerged in the 1970s. Themes of respect for nature, critiques of human arrogance and human-centredness, and debates about intrinsic and instrumental value appeared in 1970s' papers. Deeps focused on a better deal for non-humans – with other human-oriented ecological issues counted as shallow.[3] Many argued for an expansion of ethics to non-humans, or for their inclusion in a larger ethical community, with very different views about how to constitute it. People like Peter Singer (1975) wanted to extend the ethical community minimally to those most like humans (certain animals), while others, including myself, wanted a much larger, less humanized community, with an ethic of respect and attention needing no stopping point.

On the other, "shallower" wing, philosophers like John Passmore (1974) argued that a position considering only human interests would be enough to get us by, that it is dangerous to question human supremacy; they advocated minimum rethink – a cleverer instrumentalism was needed. Non-human harm only matters when humans suffer too. I would argue against this minimizing rationality of instrumentalism that genuinely sustainable systems cannot be ones that allocate merely minimum resources for providers' survival, as egoist economic rationality currently dictates. They must encourage greater levels of consideration for providers' long-term well-being. This rules out instrumental, servant or slave-like relations as well as competitive market relations (to name a few of those that encourage us to cut costs at the provider's expense), and rules in mutualistic forms of rationality.

This is why I think the conventional deep/shallow division is a pernicious false choice. A rigid division that makes us choose between human and non-human sides precludes a critical cultural focus on problems of human ecological identity and relationship, and is also bad for activism. It assumes a fallacious choice of self/other, taking an us-versus-them approach in which concern is contaminated by self-interest unless it is purely concern for the other. Most issues and motivations are double-sided, mixed, combining self/other, human and non-human interests, and it is not only possible but essential to take account of both. Both kinds of concerns must be mobilized and related.

Philosophy, I think, must understand humans as immersed in a medium that is both deep and shallow (although not in the same place). Our shift into a mixed framework enables us to see that human-centredness can have severe costs for humans as well as non-humans. Global warming is a case in point. Humans will lose, and so will non-humans. I think a more promising approach is to redefine what is "deep" as that which challenges human-centredness. Then we can address both kinds of issues, human and non-human, in a deep way. Human-centredness is a complex syndrome which includes the hyperseparation of humans as a special species and the reduction of non-humans to their usefulness to humans, or instrumentalism. Many have claimed that this is the only prudent, rational or possible course.

I argue contrary to this that human-centredness is not in the interests of either humans or non-humans, that it is even dangerous and irrational.[4] My argument is that one of its

results is a failure to understand our embeddedness in and dependency on nature, that it distorts our perceptions and enframings in ways that make us insensitive to limits, dependencies and interconnections of a non-human kind. Where mind is taken as coincident with the human, hyperseparation is expressed in denying both the mind-like aspects of nature and the nature-like aspects of the human: for example, human immersion in and dependency on an ecological world. When we hyperseparate ourselves from nature and reduce it conceptually, we not only lose the ability to empathize and to see the non-human sphere in ethical terms, but also get a false sense of our own character and location that includes an illusory sense of agency and autonomy. So human-centred conceptual frameworks are a direct hazard to non-humans, but are also an indirect prudential hazard to self, to humans, especially in a situation where we press limits.

This is one of many places where insights drawn from feminist theory can be helpful. Male-centredness (a good parallel in some ways to human-centredness) can be damaging to men as well as to women. It makes men insensitive to dependencies as interconnections, as well as devaluing women. It has to be tackled from many sides, by changing men and by changing women, changing individuals and changing institutions. Human-centredness is similarly double-sided, and we have to see the denial of our own embodiment, animality and inclusion in the natural order as the other side of our distancing from and devaluation of that order. Human-centred culture damages our ability to see ourselves as part of ecosystems and understand how nature supports our lives. So the resulting delusions of being ecologically invulnerable, beyond animality and "outside nature" lead to the failure to understand our ecological identities and dependencies on nature.

This failure lies behind many environmental catastrophes, both human and non-human. The inability or refusal to recognize the way non-humans contribute to or support our lives encourages us to starve them of resources. It has justice aspects because we refuse to give other species their share of the earth, and it has ethical aspects because we fail them in care, consideration and attention. This means that our "deep" human-centred ethical failures and our "shallow" prudential failures are closely and interactively linked.

NUCLEAR POWER

A corollary is that a deep analysis that challenges human-centredness can have much to say to human sustainability. The deep aspects come from the need to see ourselves as more limited beings, constrained by the ecological needs of the larger biospheric community. There is definitely a deep side to the energy and climate issues, although we don't hear much about it.

A classic example is nuclear power. There are major concerns about human welfare, but the issue definitely has a deep side, both in terms of ecojustice for non-human lives and systems, and in terms of technological overconfidence and the approach to risks and limits. I think the illusion of ecological invulnerability appears in the way advocates of nuclear power fail to imagine or take seriously its enormous ecological risks and costs – the risks of storing radioactive wastes for up to half a million years, for example, and the enormous risks involved in transport and storage.

We get nuclear instead of rethink. Nuclear advocates would inflict a horrendous burden of waste disposal and other risks on many future generations of humans and

non-humans, none of whom will benefit or be consulted (see Routley & Plumwood 1980, 1982). Why? So we can put off the inevitable rethink for another fifty years and continue the energy extravaganza that derives from seeing ourselves as masters of the universe. The deep aspect of climate and energy issues is the need to rethink ourselves as more limited and responsible beings in the biosphere. This also implies rejecting technologies that demand future human invulnerability and perfection, such as perfectionist forms of nuclear and genetic tinkering.

REDUCTIONISM AND HUMAN/NATURE DUALISM

Contemporary human societies seem to have many similar problems to the Easter Islanders: failure to understand our ecological situation, being out of touch with what is happening to our ecological world and with ourselves as ecological beings. Can environmental philosophy perhaps help us understand how we got into this situation? I think it can. We need to understand the history and the logic of some key concepts to see how the trap we are in has been put together. Then there is a chance we might work out how to get out of it – although, sadly, causative insight provides no guarantee of escape.

The hyperbolized opposition between humans and the non-human order I call human/nature dualism is a Western-based cultural formation going back thousands of years that sees the essentially human as part of a radically separate order of reason, mind, or consciousness, set apart from the lower order that comprises the body, the woman, the animal and the pre-human (see Lloyd 1984; Plumwood 1993). Human/nature dualism conceives the human as not only superior to but different in kind from the non-human, which is conceived as a lower non-conscious and non-communicative purely physical sphere that exists as a mere resource or instrument for the higher human one. The human essence is not the ecologically embodied "animal" side of self, which is best neglected, but the higher disembodied element of mind, reason, culture and soul or spirit.

The other side of this is the reduction of nature that is part of the dualist formation. On the one side of this hyperseparation, we set ourselves sharply apart from everything else as essentially mindful beings. On the other side we get the concept of nature as dead matter, all elements of mind and intelligence having been contracted to the human. The idea of nature as dead matter, to which some separate driver has to add life, organization, intelligence and design, is part of human/nature dualism.

This ideology of dualism and human apartness can be traced down through Western culture through Christianity and modern science. With the enlightenment, human apartness is consolidated and augmented by a very strong form of reductionist materialism, whose project, in Descartes' formulation, is "the empire of man over mere things". This framework identifies mind with consciousness, solidarizes the human species as uniquely conscious agents, and reduces non-human forms to "mere matter", emptied of agency, spirit and intelligence. Reductive concepts that restrict even the vocabulary of mindfulness and moral sensibility to humans naturalize the treatment of non-humans as slaves or mere tools – making it seem natural that they are available for our unconstrained use and are reduced to that use (are "resources").

Reductionism, as an important cultural development associated with modernity, actually relies on a reified separation that took place a lot earlier, through a process of

splitting and a hegemonic construction of agency and identity. According to a typical hegemonic pattern, the most general form of mind/body dualism, matter itself (chaos) is not creative, but is silent and formless. Being is split into an uncreative, featureless material part and a hyperseparate, externalized and often dematerialized "director" or "driver", usually intelligence, mind or reason, on the other side. The "driver" is the real author of change, as a separate mechanism or intelligence driving the materially reduced organism from outside, and it is to this external driver that true agency and respect is attributed. Plato plays this out in the *Timaeus* with cosmos (rational principle) as driver of chaos – itself prior, formless, empty and inchoate matter.

It is important to understand how the reductive materialism that defines modernity derives from this older construction that splits mind from matter and devalues the material. It is not a bold new beginning, launching out into the void in an explosion of brave new rationality. It simply affirms universally one side of this older dualism, denying the spirit side of the original dualism completely or confining it to humans (or gods). That is, the reductionist materialism that is regarded as the new beginning to modernity is actually just a truncated dualism which preserves at its heart the original splitting and reducing process, stripping mind, intelligence and agency out of materiality and awarding it to a separate driver. It represents nature as passive and uncreative, real creativity coming only from (various) mind-identified drivers, usually humans or humanoid. Modernity's philosophical contribution so understood is less impressive: a contribution that kills off the driver without questioning the reduced concept of materiality that was its other side. This truncated dualism is what underpins the empire of man over mere things, what propels its commodity spirituality.[5]

Modernist reductionism is highly relevant to the ecological crisis. This ideology has been functional for Western culture in enabling it to colonize and exploit the non-human world and so-called "primitive" cultures with less constraint. But it also inherits the dangerous illusions that deny human embeddedness in and dependency on nature. It generates modernity's dominant narratives of scientific progress, unconstrained commodity culture and unlimited growth. By consolidating the narratives of the empire of man over mere things, reductionist rationality removes key constraints at the dawn of commoditization and capitalism. This is no coincidence of course. I think we do have to understand philosophy in social terms, not as a collection of individual philosophical ideas.

SCIENCE CONSOLIDATES THE EMPIRE

Science is crucial in consolidating the empire of man over mere things. In the new scientific fantasy of mastery, the new human task becomes that of remoulding nature to conform to the dictates of reason to achieve salvation – here on earth rather than in heaven – as freedom from death and bodily limitation. The idea of human apartness emphasized in culture, religion and science was, of course, shockingly challenged by Charles Darwin in his argument that humans evolved from non-human species. But these limited insights of continuity and kinship with other life forms (the real scandal of Darwin's thought) remain only superficially absorbed in the dominant culture, even by scientists. The traditional scientific project of technological control is justified by continuing to think of humans as

a special superior species, set apart and entitled to manipulate and commodify the earth and other species for their own exclusive benefit.

This world is conceived as an aggregation of material objects, meaningless in themselves and only given meaning or form by their driver. This has been called "the death of nature" (Merchant 1980). The organismic idea of nature as a realm of creative and self-organizing systems has to be killed off by capitalism/reductionism because nature in the active and intelligent voice cannot so easily be backgrounded, appropriated and destroyed for human gain. Scientific reductionism assumes a mindless meaningless materialist universe open to endless unrestricted manipulation and appropriation: nature is the suppressed slave collaborator – a mere resource, or transparent enabler of projects.[6]

Now most modern philosophy has supported this materialist reductionism in the name of defending "hard-headed" scientific rationality. Australian philosophers (with many other English-speaking philosophers standing behind them), many operating under the rather misleading label "empiricism", have been in the lead, insisting that no other rational possibilities exist. Alternatives are debunked as involving superstition and primitivism, even animism, in contrast to science and rationality. I think it is a serious mistake to identify science and rationality with materialist reductionism. More respectful forms of science are not only possible but are better forms of rationality.

This minimizing rationality makes the least of the non-human other; it is not materialism in the sense that it respects the material order or works generally in its favour, and in my view it should not really be called "materialism" at all. Of course, some materialist philosophers concede that often it is a better predictive assumption to think as if there were some mindfulness to the non-human world (what Dennett calls the "intentional stance" [1989, 2005]), but they add that we do not really have to take that mindfulness seriously – it is all just a metaphor! This way we can preserve the exploitation benefits of reduction without all the costs of sacrificing knowledge and order. As a philosophical animist, I argue that this is doublethink, and that we do have to take the intentional stance quite seriously for non-humans (see Plumwood 2002, chapter 8). We will lose the justification for empire – an empire of growing human, cultural and biological poverty – but can open another door to a richer world, and can begin to negotiate life membership in an ecological community of kindred beings. This is a better rationality.

CREATIONISM

This analysis casts the contemporary position known as creationism in an interesting new light. I see creationists as affirming the original reductionist split that deprived nature of creative power, meaning and mind. Creationists say things like:

- I'm not a mere accident.
- I am not "a cosmic accident of a chaotic medium".
- I am not just a "fluke of nature".
- I'm a product of unnatural selection, not natural selection, the product of a designer, a creator.
- I'm not the descendant of apes. I was put here by a designer.
- It [nature] couldn't have got there by itself. It needed a designer.

Several interesting things are happening here: an insistence on human apartness, and an insistence on nature's blindness and lack of mind. Apartness forces creationists to deny the fluidity of the human that the evolution story requires, its flowing on into the non-human, both at death, and in historical, evolutionary terms from non-human as well as human ancestors. The Creationist Museum in Kentucky, for example, denies the existence of "missing link" fossils, asserting that humans have always been as they are now. Supposed "missing links" are actually deformed people (see Bates 2006).

It is clear that in rejecting the "random selection" of evolution and calling for a designer, creationists are affirming the very same reduced concept of material order as "mere things" posited by reductive materialism. Nature is an accidental, chaotic and basically meaningless sphere lacking genuine creativity. In this impoverished creation narrative, mere things have no creativity; only an external designer can have it. Creationists are endorsing the reductionist, debased, "mere matter" concept of nature supplied by reductive science, following in the Platonic footsteps. Creationism is about reaffirming human apartness and the reduced concept of matter associated with it (including the mind/matter split), together with a project to reinstate the original driver/father, or something very like him.[7]

Creationists distance themselves from the meaningless "mere things" they see science as revealing, as well as expressing the faith that the missing meaning will be returned by an all-powerful creator in the future paradise to come. Creationism is very much a reassertion of human apartness, plus the assimilation of the world of nature to the mindless and meaningless sphere left after the external driver is done away with. Nature – portrayed as random, heartless and lacking – is reduced to mere accident, a chaotic sphere evolving through blind chance and meaningless accident, and thus incapable by itself of delivering the culmination of history – the human mind, as uniquely exhibited in our own species! Meaning, intelligence and communicativity belong to the external driver, who is to be found only in the human or humanoid sphere (see Plumwood 1993: 110). At bottom creationism buys the very same reduced framework as reductive materialism. We can see contemporary creationism as a reaction to and as conceptually parasitic on reductionism.

Of course, creationists are right in wanting to reject the meaningless universe, but wrong in endorsing the driver/materiality split or in demanding restoration of the original defunct driver. Both positions are guilty of the same fault of denying and suppressing nature's own mindfulness and creativity. Science has been busy generating wondrous narratives (usually told by the scientific community in very inhibited, mind-evacuated vocabularies, and in mutually censoring ways) about this self-creativity (see Noble 2006). These narratives are usually much richer and more attentive to the world around us than the simplistic patriarchal narratives of the creationists in which the world is the recent invention of a humanoid god.

But science is severely hampered in countering the creationist worldview, and in representing and celebrating the creativity of nature it discloses, by its traditional identification of rationality with reductive materialism. In a way, reductive forms of science have themselves to blame for creationism. A sufficiently stripped-down, dualized machine nature demands an external, anthroform designer. So reductionist science has helped produce the demand for a designer through its own mistaken reductionist and mechanistic stance.

So to the creationist, the philosophical animist would say: Your story of creation is really impoverished compared to the incredible, infinite complexity of the real earth story

written in the rocks and in the bodies of living things, species diversity and evolution. Without the draining out of spirit and creativity from matter and its centralization in your god figure, we have creative, active and mindful matter all around us.[8] In an intentional universe we can have it both ways, a dispersed creativity and a decentralized intentionality. For this, we need to spread concepts of agency and creativity more widely into what we have thought of as the dead world of nature.

THINKING DIFFERENTLY

So reductionism (reductive materialism) represents a very incomplete rejection of the original spirit/matter dualist framework. A genuine rejection would be an enriched materialism that puts back the mindful and creative properties that had been stripped out and handed over to the defunct driver. However, the debate usually assumes a false choice of reductive materialism versus creationism, with conventional science calling on us to defend the extreme reductionism and human hyperseparation that it so wrongly identifies with rationality.

The debate has assumed a false choice of creativity as the prerogative of the pinpoint agency of a singularized creator, versus creativity as confined to the human knower (culture) and stripped from non-agentic nature. The real alternatives are not creationism versus reductionism, but creationism/reductionism versus animism (as enriched materialism), where animism would spread mind and creativity out much more widely. That the opportunity is available philosophically to do this via openness to the intentionality of the world I argued in my 1993 book, *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature*. Monopolizing mind may make us feel superior but it is not helping our accommodation to the earth.

An animist materialism has a different answer to creationism than reductive materialism identified with science (which really doesn't have an answer at all except self-promotion). It advises science to re-envisage materiality in richer terms that escape the spirit/matter and mind/matter dualisms involved in creationism. Forget the passive machine model and tell us more about the self-inventive and self-elaborative capacity of nature, about the intentionality of the non-human world. If the other-than-human world has such capacities, we do not need an external designer to put them in. It is its own designer, to the extent that design is in question.

Recent work in ecoanthropology supports this possibility for thinking differently. It finds that many indigenous cultures have much more animated, agentic and intentional views of the world of nature. Writers such as Tim Ingold (2000), Deborah Bird Rose (2004) and Graham Harvey (2005a) have shown how our concepts of rationality have misunderstood and misrepresented indigenous animism in our own dualistic terms. Colonial ethnocentrism saw "animism" as holding that humanoid (often demonic) spirits inhabit and animate material objects as separate drivers, which could be welcomed, influenced or evicted. This ploy enabled them to read our own dualisms back into other cultures, and thus to present this major alternative to reductionism as primitive and anti-rational. In this way they were heading off the possibility of anyone (at least anyone rational) being able to think differently.

So the big question is: can we think differently? Can what has been stripped out of our conception of the material world be put back? Can we begin to entertain the hypothesis

that the world of nature around us may have many of the intelligent and creative powers the splitters hive off to the designer? Suppose that instead of splitting and denigrating the intelligence of the non-human world and attributing creation to an external deity or driver, we began to try to see creativity and agency in the other-than-human world around us. Although it helps to reveal the wondrous creativity of life, science has been doing an ambiguous job in conveying this message of evolutionary theory, because of its ideological commitment to reductionism and its mistaken identification of this narrow and human-centred outlook with rationality.

We need to rethink concepts of meaning and accident in relation to the non-human world, and to question the reductive and human-centred frameworks that depict places in nature, often rich in narrative, as the product of meaningless coincidence. Ancient places like the Stone Country of Arnhem Land confront us sharply with the difficult knowledge of our own limitations as knowers, for in the complex and intricate narrative that explains the emergence of the correspondingly complex and intricate stone forms we see around us, we can as human observers never know a full story that matches the intricacy we observe. We can discern only a few of its broader outlines: that these extraordinary formations have evolved through the ancestral processes of sea, rain and wind that have sculpted them through deep tides of time. To save face, our instrumental culture conveniently dismisses the rest under the rubric of coincidence, contingency, accident, or formless chaos, belittling all complexities we cannot know or control.

Thinking differently is (in part) about recognizing creativity and intelligence in nature and in evolution. Why can we not see evolution, for example, as a form of experimentation, of testing and learning, like trial and error, a form of wisdom? Why can we not consider evolution as a demonstration of mind in nature, of the intelligence involved in species differentiation and elaboration, the intelligence of forms, "the wisdom in the wing" (Dennett 1996) in the form of the species body and its adaptation (via species difference and elaboration) to a particular creative ecological niche via a process of evolutionary learning? Dispersing creativity and agency, we can think the possibility of creative, mindful matter. We don't need to make the choice between materiality and meaning the creationists create.

Philosophical alternatives that discern wisdom and intelligence in the material world can help move us from the monological to the dialogical, from domination to negotiation with our very material ecological context. They make possible respect and renarrativization, as ways to combat the regime of anonymous commodities, and have an important role to play in reducing overconsumption. We need new origin stories that can disrupt the commodity regimes that produce anonymity by erasing narratives of material origins and labour, and replacing them by narcissistic dreams of consumer desire and endless, consequenceless consumption and growth.

THE ROLE OF WRITING

The enriching, intentionalizing and animating project I have championed is also a project that converges with much poetry and literature. It is a project of re-animating the world, and remaking ourselves as well, so as to become multiply enriched but consequently constrained members of an ecological community. Opportunities for re-animating matter

include making room for seeing much of what has been presented as meaningless accident actually as creative non-human agency. In re-animating, we become open to hearing sound as voice, seeing movement as action, adaptation as intelligence and dialogue, coincidence and chaos as the creativity of matter. The difference here is intentionality, the ability to use an intentional vocabulary. Above all, it is permission to depict nature in the active voice, the domain of agency.

> The path has a mind of its own but a body shared by hundreds. It is a way through the woods, a way made by the five-toes, the four-toes, the cloven hooves and a few big clodhoppers like mine. This is a path with a memory, a remembrance of passings, and it offers itself to the future for those who recognize a way worth taking. A raven rasps its rapid cries into a strong, south-westerly wind, which rakes through treetops of ash, small-leaved lime, beech and oak. In holly thickets the wind stirs goldcrests and they sing like jingling pockets of change. Old hulks of crashed elm speak of an older wood. When they were alive, a track to take out timber and charcoal cut across the slope. The elms are long fallen and so are the woodsmen whose ghost road leads nowhere. The path only slides down the steep bank to glance along old fragments of the track and then swerves back into the trees, as if deciding it a bit too unsafe to follow the abandoned way. The path touches on the history of the hedge bank too: its mound and ditches perhaps medieval, maybe older, are also under lost trees that have shaken loose of the hedge and risen 15m into the air. And above them a pair of crows play in the updraught, tumbling through the wind, snapping at the strings of their own ways through the sky. Midway, between the canopy and the ground, a hard whirring sound: a hornet, slow in the cool air, finds its hole in the hollow lime trees and closes itself into the darkness there. On the narrow, wandering line below, gouged out of clay by hoof, pad, claw and the occasional boot, I follow – a passing thought. (Evans 2006: 22)

Notice that in this passage there are many active, agentic subjects, which give the passage its life. Every sentence except one is in the active voice, and all involve intentionality. Although none of these subjects is human, we can all understand the passage quite well, and it does not cultivate the gothic or strike one as outlandish. I think most of us would find it beautiful.

Writers are among the foremost of those who can help us to think differently. Of course, artistic integrity, honesty and truthfulness to experience are crucial in any rediscovery of "tongues in trees". I am not talking about inventing fairies at the bottom of the garden. It is a matter of being open to experiences of nature as powerful, agentic and creative, making space in our culture for an animating sensibility and vocabulary.

But there are certain critical concepts that are used to stop us thinking differently, that are used in inhibiting and delegitimating any new or old animating sensibility. The concept of anthropomorphism, of "presenting non-humans illegitimately as more like humans than they really are", plays a major role here. This charge of anthropomorphism is often invoked when someone is found guilty of presenting the non-human world in more agentic and intentional terms than reductionism allows.

Anthropomorphism is a very tricky concept, with many functions. But one of its main recent roles is that of policeman for reductive materialism, enforcing polarized and

segregated vocabularies for humans and non-humans. Its covert assumption is usually the Cartesian one that mentalistic qualities are confined to the human, and that no mentalistic terms can properly be used for the non-human. Attempts to apply intentional terms for the non-human can then be said to involve presenting them in unduly humanlike terms.

For example, in reviewing the recent movie about king penguins *The March of the Penguins*, many critics took particular exception to the film's intentional description, to the idea that the king penguins could be said to "love" one another. In terms of the cluster of behavioural criteria for applying the term "love", such as being willing to suffer in major ways for the loved one, the application of the term to the penguins seems well warranted. True, penguin lovers may move on next breeding season, but why require permanence? A high redefinition of love as lasting forever would certainly rule out most human loves.

Of course, this charge of anthropomorphism completely begs the question of non-human minds. That has become its major function now, to bully people out of "thinking differently". It is such a highly abused concept, one often used carelessly and uncritically to allow us to avoid the hard work of scrutinizing or revealing our assumptions, that there is a good case for dropping the term completely. (I believe there are some valid uses of the term, such as pointing to failures to respect non-human difference, but these uses are now so enmeshed with the problematic ones that they are best stated in other terms. For a more extended discussion of the concept, see Plumwood 2002, chapter 2.) Stop hiding behind that wall of Greek, and try saying what you mean in simple direct language! If your thesis is to be stated as "This film/book presents non-humans as much more like humans than they really are", be prepared to be asked "In what respect?" If your reply is "Only humans can have minds, or the capacity to love", be prepared to defend this indefensible claim, which is now out there in the open for all to see and engage in counter-arguments with.

Otherwise, my advice is: free up your mind, and make your own contributions to the project of disrupting reductionism and mechanism. Help us re-imagine the world in richer terms that will allow us to find ourselves in dialogue with and limited by other species' needs, other kinds of minds. I am not going to try to tell you how to do it. There are many ways to do it. But I hope I have convinced you that this is not a dilettante project. The struggle to think differently, to remake our reductionist culture, is a basic survival project in our present context. I hope you will join it.

NOTES

1. I am not happy about confining the term "philosophy" to academic or written philosophy, as some want to do. Arguably, environmental philosophy is not just a recent academic invention but at the heart of the life practice of indigenous people in Australia for whom relations with the land were at the centre, not the margin of life.
2. The emerging transdisciplinary area of the ecohumanities has some important contributions to environmental thought, but also some problematic ones, the latter emerging especially from forms of post-modernism. Indeed, the humanities harbours its own forms of reductionism and idealism about nature that maintain human self-enclosure and hinder the rethink. For example, a major recent humanities preoccupation has been developing idealist concepts and arguments that reject all concepts of nature as presenting limits and treat nature as a human construction. These sorts of positions are unlikely to help the Easter Islanders come to terms with their major problem of

recognizing how nature supports their lives. For a critique of these tendencies, see Plumwood (2005, 2006).

3. Major cultural shifts were required. Many studies supported the idea that the past and present lives of indigenous people showed what could be done in the way of decreasing demands, living less conflictually with nature and giving respect to the natural world (contraction and convergence strategy).
4. Our shift in framework enables us to see that human-centredness can have severe costs for humans as well as non-humans. Under the old criterion of depth, in which consideration of costs to humans is inevitably "shallow", it is not possible to consistently raise the question of how far human-centredness is a disadvantage to humans themselves.
5. I argued the case that reductive materialism was a truncated dualism in *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* (1993). This analysis also explains why it is a mistake to locate the entire problem in modernity, as many green thinkers do. I think we must go further back and draw in an older range of positions, such as monotheism. This means that the crucial development marking modernity is not the loss of Christianity or some other monotheistic faith, but the adoption of such a secondary reductionism.
6. On the knowledge model involved here, see Plumwood (2003: ch. 2).
7. The parallel here is an Aristotelian-style theory of reproduction, involving the suppression of the female party and the promotion of father as true creator. (Suppression means use plus denial.) The narrative that underpins these concerns links women, nature and materiality.
8. Monotheisms have much to answer for here too. Monotheisms have long aimed to expel the creative from all but their chosen pinpoint of reverence, and they have been able to conspire together to represent this as the normal orientation of religions. Creationist theory posits God as an external creator concentrated into a single, minimum point of intentionality and agency, a personally responsive mind who can provide salvation from the mortal estate if properly invoked or placated. But many so-called "primitive religions", as Vine Deloria (2002: 127) points out, have been profoundly different in acknowledging revelations of the sacred as appearing at many points and in diverse spheres. Further, according to Deloria, "The eastern stream in which Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism interact develops from forms of animism to the idea of a cosmic order, a way of balance and harmony following which brings stability and calm of mind, and peace and right order in society. In this stream, there is little stress on one Absolute being or God. ... Hinduism, Buddhism and Shintoism lack one other distinction so fundamental for our Christian thinking: the belief in the basic essential difference between creation and Creator" (*ibid.*: 129, quoting Ernest Benz). "Why the compulsive separation, which so many panentheist theologians have rejected? Why not be satisfied with saying: the world makes sense to us and we can operate safely within its rhythms" (*ibid.*: 130).

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Animist realism in indigenous novels and other literature

Graham Harvey

Contradiction riddles the phrases "indigenous novels" and "animist realism". Often, routinely and casually, indigeneity is glossed as orality and traditionalism. Indigenous religions (when this contested phrase is permitted) are said to be oral, or when they do manifest in textual form they are considered degenerate. They are almost always set over against or, rather, hierarchically beneath the literate religions eulogized as "world religions". Locality and illiteracy are attributed to them. Indigenous cultures attract most interest when they are (supposedly) traditional, pure, unalloyed, without influence from other religions. The very notion that they might have influence or impact is negated by polemical words like "syncretism" (as if hybridity were a peculiarity rather than a norm). They are expected to be primitive or, at best, primal. They are not desirable when modern(ized). Conversely, novels and novel writing are modern. They (the things and the acts) privilege the subjectivity of individual interiority or the individuality of interior subjectivity ... They are rewarded most when written and read in European languages, especially those languages that promise success in attracting global readerships rather than local ones. Even romantically rural novels seem aimed at cosmopolitan urban strangers, not at local, indigenous, intimate kin.

Nonetheless, not only are there indigenous novels and indigenous religions, but there are further contrarinesses about indigeneity. As ever, lived realities contest simulations (and it does not matter which are simple and which are complex). The existence of people, cultures, stories, rites and dictions subjected to deliberate and/or casual (but) genocidal colonization for so many centuries is a contradiction against the dominating peoples, cultures, stories, rites and dictions. But far more than this mere act of survival, extraordinary as that has been at times and in places, is intended here. Indigeneity is not only contrary because it exists. For one thing, indigeneity is contrary because it insists on doing two things at once: (a) it deliberately stands over against modernity, not by dualistically negating it but by (b) promiscuously accommodating, absorbing, adopting and utilizing the properties and performances of modernity. Indigenous novels are but one example of this foundational

and characteristic indigenous contrariness. Animist realism is another. Another contrary confronts us after we read the novels, and enjoy or struggle with animist realism, and then take another look at that which is supposedly different to indigeneity. We then find that the "literate religions" and "globalized culture(s)" turn out to be as performative, communal, embodied, hybrid, locally adjusted, and even oral/aural as the supposedly indigenous ones. Perhaps modernity too is neither as secure nor as disenchanted as some have asserted.

In this chapter I seek to do little more than add some further examples of animist realism in indigenous novels to those worthily honoured in Harry Garuba's "Explorations in Animist Materialism: Notes on Reading/Writing African Literature, Culture, and Society" (2003). Garuba's title alone indicates that he does far more than discuss literature, though he does so in important ways. I offer a summary of his essay in order that my less expert consideration of some indigenous novels should not be mistaken as saying that animism is only or primarily evidenced in stories. In addition to summarizing Garuba's article, I provide examples of different aspects or kinds of animism in some selected creative writing. Note too that animist realism is alive and well in a host of other kinds of literature – including some (but not all) fantasy and future fictions, some (but not all) "nature" poetry, and many eco-dramas – and that it is not only produced by authors who might identify (or be identified) as indigenous. This is hardly surprising; given that we all live in one interconnected and participative world and that we all read and hear each other often, we are bound to influence one another in myriad ways. In this chapter, however, I focus on indigenous publications.

CONTRARY CHANCES

Although Garuba's work orientates my perspective and engagement here, I also acknowledge the influence of Gerald Vizenor's tricky use of "contradiction" in relation to Anishinaabe literature (1993). Vizenor regularly outdoes Lewis Carroll's Humpty Dumpty in making words "work hard" to mean surprising things, but as Humpty Dumpty says of his own practice, "When I make a word do a lot of work ... I always pay it extra" (Carroll [1872] 1962: 274–5). I find that Vizenor's use of words resonates with Tom Robbins's provocative assertion that while a joke at the right time may be amusing, "a joke in the *wrong* place at the *wrong* time can cause a leap in the consciousness that is liberating to the human spirit" (Purdon & Torrey 2011: 35). Thus, when Vizenor writes that "Written languages and translations were contradictions in most tribal communities" he does not mean that they did not exist. On the contrary, he continues, they were

> chances to overcome tragic reason and the loss of tribal memories. The visions of birds and words once heard were roused in the imagination and remembrance of readers, a new tribal hermeneutics. The translations and interpretations ... are the remembered shadows of the heard visions and stories of tribal survivance, the memories that walk with birds in the sky and sing across the water. These memories are the primal union of visions, humor, and stories. (Vizenor 1993: 3–4)

This is not only so of translations of older, "traditional" stories into new forms in new languages, it is also evident in the pictomyths, geoglyphs, hieroglyphs, rock art, *khipu*,

cosmo-architecture, wampum, tattoos, *bata*-drumming, and other indigenous means of recording, portraying and transmitting ideas, events and teachings. Importantly, too, I note Te Pakaka Tawhai's evocation of the continuously varying application of his people's "*korero tahito* (ancient explanations)" in everyday as well as high ceremonial situations (Tawhai 2002: 239). In the face of all kinds of challenges (such as the need to feed guests or fend off the threat of invasion), a contrariness has often been expressed, in relevant forms, that reaches for solutions, continuity, betterment and the embrace of new possibilities and hybridities. The "tradition" of these reaching efforts is vitalized by change and petrified by fixity. Impermanence, change, novelty, variation and flow are positive signs rather than negations of lived indigeneity. That is, people have always taken existing material and applied it (sometimes with creative twists) to the needs of the day – and that is what is pervasively considered the proper performance of tradition.

In recent and contemporary indigenous novels, especially those that exemplify "animist realism", chances (to return to Vizenor's theme) are also taken to "overcome tragic reason" (such as the assertion of defeat, cessation, obsolescence, primativity, illiteracy and resistance to progress) and the "loss of tribal memories" (such as that caused by the separation of humans from the larger-than-human social world). It is not the existence of contraries that is damaging, quite the opposite. As William Blake asserted, "opposition is true friendship" ([1793] 1958: 105): the absence of contest, debate, challenge, restriction, denial, difference and other "contraries" (*ibid.*: 94) would negate liveliness and eventually life itself. Contraries and contrariness, however, are not (necessarily) merely dual (this versus that) but plural, accumulative and absorbing. As Eduardo Viveiros de Castro says in relation to a different contradiction: "Virtually all attacks on Cartesian and other dualisms consider that two is already too much – we need just one (one principle, one substance, one reality). As far as Amerindian cosmologies are concerned, it would appear that two is not enough" (2004: 482). Plurality or multiplicity, evolution and transformation are (in such venues) celebrated.

Part of the genius of Garuba's discussion of animist realism is the clarity with which such pluralist, contrary and chancy dynamics are elaborated. Thus, I now offer an extended summary of his initiatory essay for a richer orientation to animist realism and its contexts and manifestations.[1]

GARUBA'S ANIMISM

Garuba opens his article (2003) by introducing a statue of Sango which/who stands outside the headquarters of the National Electric Power Authority of Nigeria. He tells us who Sango was in history and is in myth (not meaning false history, but resonant provocations for engaging in life). He notes that Sango and other deities are appropriated by particular groups and deployed in particular ways. This allows Garuba to make good use of Wole Soyinka's representations regarding the tendencies of Yoruba and other African peoples and cultures to absorb and accommodate. He cites Soyinka: "The deistic approach of the Yoruba is to absorb every new experience, departmentalize it and carry on with life. Thus Sango (Dispenser of Lightning) now chairmans the Electricity Corporation, Ogun (God of Iron) is the primal motor-mechanic" (Soyinka 1988: 9).

Garuba allows Soyinka to interpret himself by citing:

> European scholars have always betrayed a tendency to accept the myth, the lore, the social techniques of imparting knowledge or of stabilizing society as evidence of orthodox rigidity. Yet the opposite, an attitude of philosophical accommodation, is constantly demonstrated in the attributes accorded most African deities, attributes which deny the existence of impurities or "foreign" matter, in the god's digestive system. Experiences which, until the event, lie outside the tribe's cognition are absorbed through the god's agency, are converted into yet another piece of social armoury in its struggle for existence, and enter into the lore of the tribe. (Soyinka 1976: 53–4)

Against the colonizing imposition of fixity and stability, Soyinka and Garuba celebrate the philosophy, practice and performance of absorption and accommodation. The challenge of meeting others provides the potential of enrichment and growth. This is missed, petulantly one begins to feel, by those (Euro-colonialist?) scholars who "bypass the code on which this world-view is based, the continuing evolution of tribal wisdom through an acceptance of the elastic nature of knowledge as its only reality, as signifying no more than reflections of the original coming-into-being of a manifestly complex reality" (Soyinka 1976: 53).

Contradictions confront each other. Garuba's effort is to elaborate the "code on which this world-view is based". Following some further examples of accommodation by which previously alien ideas and practices are brought home, domesticated and naturalized, Garuba engages with their relevance to understanding the presence of "tradition" in modern(ized) Africa. He contests notions of regression or residualism, and proffers the "manifestation of an *animist unconscious* [operating] through ... a *continual re-enchantment of the world*" as a richer explanation (Garuba 2003: 265, original emphasis).

Garuba seeks to head off potential charges of essentialism and cultural dualism by referring to the rich theoretical resonances of the terms he offers for consideration: "animist materialism", "animist unconscious" and "re-enchantment". He draws

> attention to the obverse of the process that Weber describes, a process whereby "magical elements of thought" are not displaced but, on the contrary, continually assimilate new developments in science, technology, and the organization of the world within a basically "magical" worldview. Rather than "disenchantment," a persistent re-enchantment thus occurs, and the rational and scientific are appropriated and transformed into the mystical and magical. (*Ibid.*: 267)

This said, Garuba offers his first definition of the term animism, not as the name of a specific religion (putatively in contrast with Christianity and Islam), but rather as an elastic and embracing term for a mode of religious consciousness. He writes:

> Perhaps the single, most important characteristic of animist thought – in contrast to the major monotheistic religions – is its almost total refusal to countenance unlocalized, unembodied, unphysicalized gods and spirits. Animism is often simply seen as belief in objects such as stones or trees or rivers for the simple reason that animist gods and spirits are *located* and *embodied* in objects: the objects are the physical and material manifestations of the gods and spirits. Instead of erecting

> graven images to symbolize the spiritual being, animist thought spiritualizes the object world, thereby giving the spirit a local habitation. (*Ibid.*)

What interests Garuba is not primarily the "religious" dimensions of animism, but the broader social and/or cultural reproductions of animism, especially in literature. He is careful to attend to the social, material, political and everyday dimensions of cultural production, reproduction and circulation, and insists that "Even when discourses are based on mystification, they still possess real effects and, through the power of normalization, exert an influence on subjects and an impact on culture" (*ibid.*: 268).[2] The remainder of his essay

> is concerned with the manner in which an animistic mode of thought is embedded within the processes of material, economic activities and then reproduces itself within the sphere of culture and social life. Being so structurally implanted, it is no longer just an epiphenomenon or simply an effect but becomes a producer of effects and therefore acts as a driving force in the formation of collective subjectivity. (*Ibid.*: 269)

He does so especially in relation to indigenous novels, poetry and other literatures, some of it "subaltern" and "critical" in various ways.

Insightfully, Garuba takes literature that can be (indeed has sometimes been) misread as the agonistic struggle of indigenous, colonized or post-colonial people confronted by colonial, late- or post-modernity. He reads it differently, finding less stability and neatness. He contests the idea that indigenous novels straightforwardly narrate either the difficult road of progress towards modernization and away from tradition or, conversely, the resistance of tradition to Westernization. The framework of indigeneity (and its earlier myth-telling and other discursive, political and cultural modes) is rich enough to embrace, accommodate and/or absorb new themes, ideas, materials, performances, structures and so on. "Animist culture thus opens up a whole new world of poaching possibilities, *prepossessing the future*, as it were, by laying claim to what in the present is yet to be invented. It is on account of this ability to prepossess the future that continual re-enchantment becomes possible" (*ibid.*: 271, original emphasis).

As Sango, deity of lightning, took control of industrial power generation, so the proliferating domains of modernity could be assigned to other divine or ancestral nouveau-bureaucrats. Great cosmic powers could accrue to themselves functions akin to ministerial political office: taking on the portfolio for energy, agriculture, environment, defence and so on. In some contexts perhaps the chief function of beings that have come to be defined in European languages as deities was and is to be larger-than-human ministers of this kind. Certainly this is what Tawhai argues for in relation to the *tamariki* (children) of Papatuanuku (MotherEarth) and Ranginui (FatherSky) of Maori "ancient explanations" (Tawhai 2002: 240–41; citing a speech by Arnold Reedy). But, once again, Garuba is less interested in discourses and practices that might be delivered into the ghetto typically demarcated by the term "religion" (when understood as a relation of transcendence). He finds animist accommodation and absorption rife in all the entangled domains that creative and critical literatures might consider. The whole world of material and performative possibility is, at least potentially, re-enchanted. Or, rather, animists continuously

re-enchant it. In novels, poems and other literatures, as well as in the singing of songs, the making of music and other oralities/auralities, alongside carving, weaving and other plastic artistry, a world is made and remade that seems to require a less linear, less stable, less fixed tale.

Garuba's discussion of "animist realism" builds on previous scholars' interest in "magical realist"[3] novels but argues that in fact magical realism is a subspecies of animist realism. Gabriel García Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1970) is the preeminent example of magical realism, and within it the effect of a magnet is exemplary of the "magic" at its core:

> the gypsy artist Melquiades ... went from house to house dragging two metal ingots and everybody was amazed to see pot, pans, tongs and braziers tumble down from their places and beams creak from the desperation of nails and screws trying to emerge, and even objects that had been lost for a long time appeared from where they had been searched for most and went dragging along in turbulent confusion behind Melquiades' magical irons. "*Things have a life of their own*," the gypsy proclaimed with a harsh accent. "*It's simply a matter of waking up their souls.*"
>
> (Márquez 1970: 9, quoted with emphasis added in Garuba 2003: 272)

This and other magical realist novels – or episodes of magical realism in novels – only work because of the narrative possibility of similar notions and practices. The aliveness and responsiveness of some pieces of metal to others, explained as their possession of a "life of their own" and as the possibility of that life (as "soul") migrating, makes it possible for the novel writer to advance his or her plot. This form of realist description and characterization requires elements of strangeness or "magic" to succeed.

Garuba goes further, seeing that such magical acts are made possible by factors inherent in the wider, framing and animating possibilities of animist realism. For instance, if "having a life of their own" is a metaphor, in animist realist novels it is potentially a description of observable, material, performative, social and cultural reality. When the ascription of "a material aspect or existence to what are perhaps only really ideas or states of mind in the manner in which animism imputes a spiritual dimension to material objects" (Garuba 2003: 272) frames entire narratives, we have gone beyond magical realism and entered the world of animist realism. Elsewhere, Garuba says, he has "employed the term *animist realism* to describe this predominant cultural practice of according a physical, often animate material aspect to what others may consider an abstract idea" (Garuba 2003: 274, citing Garuba 1993: 23). He demonstrates this with reference to Wole Soyinka's novel *The Interpreters* (1970) and Toni Morrison's novel *Beloved* (1987).

Soyinka's *The Interpreters* begins with the sentence: "Metal on concrete jars my drink lobes" (1970: 9). Although he notes that this "cannot really be called a magical realist text by the usual criteria", nonetheless it is because of "this *materialization* of ideas, this habit of giving a concrete dimension to abstract ideas" that Garuba sees it as exemplary of the "representational mode of animism" (2003: 273). He is able to illustrate his point about the embeddedness of the habit and the genre with reference to his grandmother's casual but impassioned plea to the (metaphorical?) ever-thirsty calabash in a drunken relative's gut. Similarly, he discusses Morrison's use of a "tobacco tin lodged in [the] chest" of Paul D that, for a while, locks unspeakable horrors away, pressed down like tobacco,

in the secret chambers of his heart. In the same novel we encounter the "chokecherry tree" whip-marks on Sethe's back which, when Paul D "rubbed his cheek on her back [he] learned that way her sorrow, the roots of it; its wide trunk and intricate branches" (T. Morrison 1987: 113, 17). Garuba writes that

> This careful attention to the living, growing dimension of the roots of her sorrow (the roots grow into a tree, complete with branches and leaves!) and the willful involuntary spilling of the contents of the tobacco tin in Paul D's chest are just two further instances of the deployment of the techniques of animist representation. (2003: 274)

They are "larger in scope and dimension than the concept of *magical realism* could possibly describe" and require the "more encompassing concept" of animist realism (*ibid.*: 274–5).

Garuba cites other examples from more of Soyinka's writings and plays which allow him to develop the theme of metaphor and cultural representation coinciding in concrete lived realities. For example, someone who, following an accident, has different length legs is considered to have "one leg in this world and the other in the afterworld". The broad and assumed context of a pervasively animate world is required to make sense of the otherwise utterly baffling coupling of "the realistic and the fantastic" in works that go far beyond magical realism.

Animism and its brand of realist discourse, cultural production and circulating re-presentations is, however, more than a means of keeping people entertained. Re-enchantment is, necessarily, more than this because it contests the classic tropes of modernity's bureaucratic disenchantment and social alienation. Animist realist novels and other indigenous literatures are contradictions of stasis and conquest by their very intervention and circulation beyond local margins and marginality. They may not all succeed, though many of these works have addressed readers and/or theatre-goers in metropolitan global centres. Their success may also be judged in the degree to which they are read intra-indigenously, that is, when they reach a responsive audience who share similar experiences but differ in ancestry (ethnicity and nationhood) or location (citizenship and dwelling). Although this is a different point to those Garuba makes, it arises from his recognition of animist realism's underlying "logic of inclusion rather than exclusion; its assimilative reach admits of no binarisms and therefore no contradictions in our usual sense of the words" (*ibid.*: 276). These works speak to all manner of readers. In support, Garuba cites Chinua Achebe's Igbo-philosophy-based argument that "Wherever Something stands, Something else will stand beside it. Nothing is absolute. *I am the truth, the way, and the life* would be called blasphemous or simply absurd, for it is well known that man may worship Ogwugwu to perfection and yet be killed by Udo" (Achebe 1975: 161, cited in Garuba 2003: 276).

There *are* contradictions – Garuba and Achebe offer more than one – but they are not binary or dualistic. It is not that Igbo philosophy cannot connect with quotations from Christian biblical preaching, nor that animism cannot include scientific rationality. Rather, the "irreducible sociality and [particular] historicity" of animism finds ways to relationally embrace and include all manner of possibilities, albeit that there will be twists and bends in the process of weaving extraneous matter into a new vision. In citing the creative deployment of animism and of Marxist secularity in the work of Niyi Osundare

(e.g. 1992), further contradicting any tendency to separate poetry from politics, or metaphysics from journalism, Garuba concludes that "Animist cultures actively resist the goal of Weberian rationalization and secularization by cornering the instruments and technologies of the modern world and bringing them into their orbit of operation" (Garuba 2003: 283).

Garuba is not blind to the service animist traditionalism has been put to by local and regional elites, but he also provides a powerful lens through which to examine everyday, popular routes to and expressions of agency among the dispossessed in colonial and postcolonial Africa (*ibid.*: 285).

In its varied, sometimes contradictory manifestations, animist materialism (the materialization of animism in lived reality) and animist realism (the realization of animist re-enchantment in indigenous novels) provides a vital expression of – as well as an important approach towards understanding – what is going on in Africa and among other indigenous nations.

DIFFERENT REALISMS

Garuba's article makes good use of novels, poetry and plays by Achebe, Morrison, Osundare and Soyinka, and it at least mentions others by Duro Ladipo, Amos Tutuola and Ben Okri. In my summary I have noted Garuba's reference to some animist characteristics and motifs. Without pretending to catalogue all possibilities, and certainly not systematically, I will offer examples of at least some significant elements of animist realism in indigenous novels. I preface my examples, however, by pondering an implication in Ato Quayson's assessment of Garuba's "bold claim in outlining the place of magical realism in African literature and how this might be related to the mode of writing that goes under the term in discussions of world literature" (Quayson 2009: 161).

The fact that Quayson does not use Garuba's phrase "animist realism" in this sentence demonstrates that he is unconvinced that magical realism is, as Garuba argues, a subspecies of animist realism. This is evidently based on his view that "there are other underlying dimensions of literary magical realism that go beyond the belief in a spirit world animating the objective universe" and that what is central to Garuba's "animist realism" is the "sense that the world of objects and phenomena is inherently populated by spirits" (*ibid.*: 161–2). The inherent multivocality of the term "animism" in contemporary discourses of different kinds suggests a resolution. Not all animists and not all animist realist novels are particularly concerned with either "spirits" or "magic" – although, given the vagueness, uncertainty or promiscuous plurality of these words' uses, it is hard to be sure that someone might find spirits and magic in many places. There is a broad context, deliberately performed and habitually assumed, in which a larger-than-human social cosmos is attended to or presumed, and within which it is possible (or deemed necessary) for particular people to focus on relating with certain animals, plants, spirits, ancestors, deities, strangers or other co-inhabitants of the world. Out of this context and these specific acts of relationship (which may entail celebration or repulsion) authors may write novels, poems, plays and other works that can, with Garuba, be identified as "animist realist". It is not an emphasis on spirits that make them animist but the radically pluralist community of the world. Magic may be deemed an appropriate activity or

attitude in this world, or (quite differently) may be deemed a useful label for activities that seem strange, uncanny or even irrational – and therefore "magical realism" is, as Garuba says, a subspecies of the literature evoking the animate world.

There are, then, novels that Edward Tylor would have recognized as animistic in that they make much of ghosts and other spirits. Also, there are novels that Irving Hallowell might have recognized as animistic in that they engage with a personalist, relational world. In some novels, magical elements or the porosity of time, personal identity and/or location aid the development of the action without any hint that other-than-human persons (rocks, plants or animals for example) might play roles as agents of the action. Haruki Murakami's *The Wind-up Bird Chronicle* (2003) may illustrate this. This unique thriller includes shifts between quite mundane events in one Japanese man's life and what at least one critic (cited in the cover blurb) judges to be hallucinations. Since even the most bizarre elements serve a similar literary function to episodic biographical narratives of the Japanese occupation of Manchuria – that is, advancing the plot and developing the characterization – they require consideration as a kind of realism. Perhaps (in light of Tom Robbins's digest, in Purdon & Torrey 2011: 141) this is a surrealist realism. However, even the eponymous "wind-up bird" gives no hint that the action concerns a particularly diverse community, only humans and perhaps some sinister otherworldly beings (though this is never certain). At any rate, it is not my intention to collapse the complex possibilities of animist, magical, surrealist or realist novels into anything too neat. Rather, I invite consideration of some of the possibilities of using elements that might be labelled "animist" in indigenous novels.

SOME MORE NOVELS, SOME ANIMIST ELEMENTS

Since Tylor got in first with his definition of animism as a "belief in spiritual beings" I begin this pointer to works additional to those already noted with a few indigenous novels in which spirits and/or ghosts play roles.

In Amos Tutuola's *The Wild Hunter in the Bush of Ghosts* (1989),[4] the contested, never entirely separable domains of village and forest, and their human and ghostly inhabitants, act in creative tension. A world not entirely under human control and requiring care (in ritual and everyday activities) is more than the scene of action. Ghosts are as necessary to the plot as the current generation of humans. This is true too in Ben Okri's works, especially his *The Famished Road* (1991), in which, Quayson says, "we arrive at what is indisputably the most sophisticated expression of magical realism in African literature today" (Quayson 2009: 172). In *The Famished Road* the narrator is an *abiku*, a child endlessly born and reborn, and therefore experiencing uncanny criss-crossing familiarities and disjunctions with both this "real world" and the "spirit world". Both are, of course, "real" in the novel, and in animist rituals, myth-tellings and cosmologies. The interplay of what seems normative or acceptable in each world (and appears bizarre and unacceptable in the other) makes for powerful telling.

Something similar happens in Patricia Grace's *Baby No-eyes* (1999) as the brother of a baby killed in a car crash makes space for her ghost to live alongside him. Far more than an incidental detail, the theme of making space enables the author to weave Maori cosmology, traditional knowledge, cultural practice, recent colonial history, life stories,

educational practice (studying "between the lines of history" [*ibid.*: 291]) and much more into a narrative about places and gaps, belonging and absence. Space-making for increased relational intimacy and the realization of potential (of all kinds) is a pervasive theme throughout Maori culture.

Another novel in which ghosts play central roles, Leslie Silko's *Almanac of the Dead* (1992), offers a disturbingly apocalyptic, wide-ranging and lengthy consideration of what happens when people do or, conversely, do not attend to ancestors and ghosts. Some of these ghosts are victims of genocide, some are deceased initiators of resistance (such as the Ghost Dancers who play important roles in the book). Some have become angry because they have been ignored, others remain eager to support their descendents (*ibid.*: 746). Without the assumption of a larger-than-human or larger-than-everyday reality this and other indigenous novels would not work.

It might be stretching matters too far to identify Sherman Alexie's books as clearly animist realism, but there are moments when his characters or plots require appreciation of a larger-than-empiricist realism. In *Flight* (2008) he gives us a character who encounters emblematic historical and recent traumas of Native American experience – from US cavalry assaults to being adopted out, and much else in between. The main character encounters ghosts (*ibid.*: 87) but, more significantly, gains the perspective of participants in other dangerous times. Central to Garuba's recognition of re-enchantment as synonymous with animist realism is a notion of a more fluid sense of time. He cites Kumkum Sangari's statement that "absence of a single linear time need not be read as the absence of a historical consciousness but rather as the operation of a different kind of historical consciousness" (Garuba 2003: 271, citing Sangari 1990: 231). Alexie's time-travelling lead character illustrates the author's rich historical consciousness and the necessity of placing contemporary experience in a wider but not necessarily linear context. He makes similarly good use of this different temporal sense to give a distinctive tempo to works like *Reservation Blues* (1996) and *The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven* (1997). Typically, however, in all his books, Alexie resists too many flights of fancy, too much magic. In *Flight* he has a character who is running away from a cavalry charge momentarily imagine that his horse might grow wings and fly away. But then he says,

> No, of course not. It doesn't grow wings. How can a horse grow wings?
>
> That kind of extraordinary magic is not permitted here. No, the only magic here is ordinary. It's so ordinary that it might not be magic at all. It might only be luck.
>
> But I'll take luck. (Alexie 2008: 96)

In a novel that only works because of a kind of transmigration of souls, or at least of serial fusions of identity, the "ordinary magic" of "luck" that enables survival – and thus contributes to the narration of resistance against oppression – suggests something more than everyday realism. This is, perhaps, Alexie's version of the Ghost Dance and thus an evocation of an animate world with larger-than-human reasons.

The animate cosmos is also a necessary context for the short stories of Patricia Grace's *The Sky People* (1995). The opening story, "Sun's Marbles", is built from Maori ontological/evolutionary narratives that involve relationships between Earth, Sky, Sun, deities and ancestors. In thinking about their actions towards humans who are making the world their own, EarthMother and SkyFather "began to ask themselves where they'd gone

wrong. Was it because of their separation that these children had become so grasping, so out of control? Had Sky become too distant? Had Earth been too over-compensating? What could they have done about it anyway? Was it all a question of Light?" (*ibid.*: 16).

As is traditional in Maori oratory, the point of such stories is to provide a space from which other stories can emerge and flourish, seeding yet other stories and active responses. Thus, *The Sky People* explores difficult contemporary human lives in relation to Maui, the first ancestor, and his assault on the sun. Contrarily, this violent assault is not a model for good behaviour but does illustrate that the world might not be so habitable were it not for at least occasional acts of extremism. Humour, passion and acute observation make Grace's novels and short stories important in a host of ways. Their regular reiteration of the animist theme that the cosmos is personal, relational and participative is a radical move to support not merely resistance and survival but the betterment of indigenous people and larger-than-human communities.

Ancestors and animals (as agents) are significant in Witi Ihimaera's *The Whale Rider* (1987). This novel concern an ancient whale, a human (Maori) ancestor and a contemporary community undergoing strife. The ancestor, Paikea, once rode on the whale's back to the new land, and threw spears that transformed into other objects and (other) living beings. The story could not work without the assumption that whales make choices and live relationally. These are not thin Disneyesque veils for humans, trite anthropomorphisms, but carefully observed oceanic mammals. Linda Hogan's *People of the Whale* (2008) also brings together whales and humans, alongside other inter-species relationships. In the tale of conflicting notions of indigenous vitality, tradition and authority, all entangled in the build-up to and aftermath of a whale hunt, the characters struggle with the changes that erupt around them. They try various ways to adjust to the fluidity of the present and seek to listen to the calls of kin, ancestors, other-than-humans and the world itself.

In addition to what whales bring to his novel and animals-and-agents to our consideration of animist realism, I include Ihimaera's work here to point out the commonplace, taken-for-granted multiple materializations of ancestors in Maori and other indigenous traditions. Ancestors are not merely "dead people", nor even "people who have died" (that is, their having died is not heavily emphasized). They are people who are visibly involved with their descendants in various ways throughout history. Paikea, for instance, is not merely represented or symbolized by the carving at the apex of the meeting house that honours him. He is spoken about as the carving but, more vitally, he is spoken to:

> If you ask me the name of this house, I shall tell you. It is Te Kani. And the carved figure at the apex? It is Paikea, it is Paikea. Paikea swam. The sea god swam. The sea monster swam. And Paikea, you landed at Ahuahu. You changed into Kahuria Te Rangi. You gave your embrace to the daughter of Te Whironui, who sat in the stern of the canoe. And now you are a carved figurehead, old man.
>
> (Ihimaera 1987: 57)

The phrase "you are a carved figurehead" does not indicate a cessation of Paikea's communicative abilities; he is addressed a number of times in the novel in ways that require us to speak of the apex carving not as "it" but as "he". Similarly, one of the spears thrown by Paikea travelled through time and space "with gladness" and "waited" until it eventually became the young girl who is the lynchpin character of this enchanting book

(*ibid.*: 6, 141). Artefacts remain personal and therefore relational members of the widest cosmic social complex.

Porosity of boundaries is characteristic in many indigenous novels. Whether it is in relation to the putative division between this and other worlds (whether of spirits or other species), between times, between conscious states (wakefulness or sleep) or between the everyday and the larger-than-human, boundary crossing is rife. In Louise Erdrich's *The Antelope Wife* (2002) the shape-shifting of humans into animals (women into deer) and vice versa seems far more than metaphorical. In Linda Hogan's *Solar Storms* the eventual, hope-bringing transformation of one character is narrated as: "She was moved by his new openness, his lack of skin. Tears have a purpose. They are what we carry of ocean, and perhaps we must become sea, give ourselves to it, if we are to be transformed" (Hogan 1995: 340).

In a novel so much about water – and the shifting relations between humans, land and water, impacting animals and plants and all life – this is a key moment. Once skin ceases to be an absolute boundary between discrete individuals, the possibility is opened for it to be the medium of intimacy within the ebb and flow of acts of relating.

The animate, multi-species community can also be evoked casually in these novels. Hogan writes that "the mosquitoes remembered all the letting of blood" (*ibid.*: 175), shifting the perspective of the narrator and thus the reader away from interiorized reflections on being bitten by mosquitoes and towards the long-term project of these other-than-human persons. Similarly, in Erdrich's *The Plague of Doves* we encounter a violin that sought out a new player (2008: 216). Perspectival beings (objects, animals, plants or humans) deserve respectful response, and most indigenous novels include moments of polite etiquette across species boundaries. In Erdrich's *Tracks* the offering of herbs to a drum initiates an easing into a conversation between protagonists (1989: 188).

Greetings to the land or reference to the land as animate person (individual or community of localized persons) continue this theme. Erdrich has one group of characters offering greetings to the four directions (2002: 136) and in Velma Wallis's *Two Old Women* there is an almost casual allusion to the agency of the land when Sa' says: "I was thinking about how it used to be that the land was easy for me to live on, and now it seems not to want me. Perhaps it is just my aching joints that are making me complain" (1994: 43).

The land is (at least as a possibility) a member of the community that is the animate world. As Hogan shows, however, it is vulnerable to the "reverse people" who "invented hell" by clearing forests and silencing the nights, and who thereby "destroyed all that could save them" (Hogan 1995: 86).

Leslie Silko's *Ceremony* (1977) further illustrates the accommodative and adoptive trajectories or tendencies identified by Soyinka (1976) and Garuba (2003). But it also picks up the uncertainty or fluidity inherent in the pluralism of animism. That is, there is a tension in indigeneity and in many of the novels noted here between pragmatic empiricism and the recognition of possibilities inherent in dwelling in a multi-species community. Ghosts or the desires of the land *might* explain why things happen to some people. Alexie's "extraordinary magic" is contrasted with "luck" (2008: 96). In *Ceremony*, as the narrative builds to its denouement, Tayo, the lead character, thinks "Crazy Indian. Seeing things. Imagining things" (Silko 1977: 242). The chance of disenchantment or re-enchantment is elevated. The richness of Silko's work emerges, as other indigenous novels have, from the refusal of duality and linearity. The novel does not deny that the

colonial theft of land and water, the imperious dumping of uranium tailings, the abuse of indigenous soldiers in international conflicts, the deliberate provision of alcohol, and other performances of modernity are major causes of the devastation of indigenous lives. It recognizes, however, that "witchery" and cannibalism are possible modes of relationship and may therefore explain negative experiences and require ceremonial as well as practical challenge. In short, animism and animist realism entail personalist rationales rather than merely mechanical ones. (Given that animism involves a vastly different, personal, understanding of "nature" to that of modernism it would not be appropriate to suggest that personal or personalist explanations are in contrast with "natural" or "naturalist" ones.)

One last theme that animates some novels and re-enchants readers into considering the chance that, despite the impositions of modernism, they too might have a creative role to play is that of the trickster. Several of the works noted already contain the tracks of Coyote. In Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* the telling of "folk stories" about Tortoise (1958: 68–71) is disliked by the family patriarch, setting up a pattern Achebe explores in later books, which he describes as opposition to the "cultivation of gentleness" (Lindfors 1997: 80–81). Similarly, Ngugi wa Thiong'o says of his *Wizard of the Crow* (2006) that

> I was very much influenced by the trickster tradition. ... The trickster is very interesting because he is always changing. He always questions the stability of a word or a narrative or an event. He is continually inventing and reinventing himself. He challenges the prevailing wisdom of who is strong and who is weak. ... Stories will always be there. The struggle to transform ourselves will always be there and that struggle will always be expressed in art. (Olende 2006)

Along with comedy and satire (often about authority figures in families or, in the latter case, of rulers suffering "whiteache": an incapacitating desire to be white), tricksters and the telling of trickster-tales encourage self-transformation. They also indicate the potential of each member of the whole cosmic community to be creative, to effect change in smaller or larger ways. Similar themes are evoked in the plays of First Nation Canadian playwright Daniel Moses's *Coyote City* (1988) and the poetry of Simon Ortiz (1992). In various ways these return us to Irving Hallowell and his observation that

> Human beings need the help of other than human persons not only in making a living but in other ways. This is why "our grandfathers" are omnipresent in the lives of the Ojibwa and why an inclusive conceptualization of persons occupies such a central position in their world view and structures their behavioural environment in a characteristic way. To appreciate the significance of this fact we must think of these Indians not only as members of a human society but as participants, with other than human persons, in a larger cosmic society. For this broader realm of social interaction is far from being metaphorical for them.
> (Hallowell 1992: 87–8)

Humans are not in complete control but they are inescapably participating in the ongoing process of the world's evolution. Within the pervading and perduring relationality of larger-than-human society each member is encouraged, by amusing tales as much as

by engaging rituals, to act his or her part responsibly. Novels, poems and plays continue the work of habituating people to ways of behaving in an animate world.

CONCLUSION

Animist realist novels have a relationship both to the telling of myths and folktales of intimate indigenous pasts and to the necessities of person-, community- and hope-building in the present. Many of their authors are at least bi-cultural and motivated by the potential of storytelling to inspire better futures. The best of them spend little if any time mourning past traditionalism but, rather, embrace the accumulative, adoptive and accommodating potential of animism and narrative (to paraphrase and fuse Garuba 2003 with Abiola Irele 2001). Alongside re-enchantment these works propose a restorying of the world that contrasts with the linearity and supposed fixity of the Euro-master-narrative. The key distinguishing fact in animist realism is the animate nature of the world, which may be assumed or explicitly focused upon, but requires of its characters and encourages in its readers a more active relational engagement. They are a site where (to draw on Byron Dueck's [2007] thoughts about indigenous music-making) the two trajectories of "imaginative world-making" and "face-to-face intimacy" interact, as a "broad public of strangers" (a global readership) encounters the intimacies of indigenous lives, concerns, fears, hopes and creativity. They are particularly powerful in bringing "others" into contact, inviting them to respect otherness without collapsing it into the monotony of the familiar or the inhospitality of absolute difference. Just as the characters and plots of animist realism are challenged (sometimes to be overwhelmed, sometimes to be enriched), so readers are presented with a differently realist presentation of an animate world and invited to imagine the value of being re-enchanted.

NOTES

1. I am grateful to Harry Garuba for at least considering contributing to this volume and am sorry that he had to decline due to pressure of work. I hope my summary finds the right highlights, but encourage readers to engage with everything Professor Garuba has written – including his excellent poetry.
2. This may be, in part, related to the influence of Brenda Cooper (1998) and Caroline Rooney (2000).
3. The term "magical realism" was coined by Alejo Carpentier ([1949] 2006).
4. Inspired by David Fagunwa's *Ogboju Ode ninu Igbo Irunmale* (1938) – translated by Soyinka as *The Forest of a Thousand Daemons: A Hunter's Saga* (1962).

37

The third road: *Faërie* in hypermodernity

Patrick Curry

In the eighteenth-century ballad "Thomas Rymer" the hero is abducted (without much of a struggle) by the Queen of Elfland, and their route to *Faërie* is the third road. As she says to him,

> O see not ye yon narrow road,
> So thick beset wi' thorns and briers?
> That is the path of righteousness,
> Tho' after it but few enquires.
> And see not ye that braid braid road,
> That lies across yon lillie leven?
> That is the path of wickedness,
> Though some call it the road to heaven.
> And see not ye that bonny road,
> Which winds about the fernie brae?
> That is the road to fair Elfland,
> Where you and I this night maun gae.
>
> (Child 1965, I: 323–4)

Let us explore (cautiously, as befits a wild and "perilous" place)[1] what is variously called Elfland, *Faërie* or enchantment – which is also, I shall suggest, an animist world. I have ventured there before in print,[2] but this time I will be guided by the metaphor of the three roads, and its significance. My main purpose is to better understand animist enchantment through its continuing presence in a field of British literature and literary culture, one where J. R. R. Tolkien, C. S. Lewis and, more recently, Philip Pullman have left their mark. But the literary and cultural particularities of its presence also compel attention in their right.

The view of *Faërie* as profoundly ambiguous is an old one. Its natives, as C. S. Lewis remarked in *The Discarded Image*, "are marginal, fugitive creatures. They are perhaps the only creatures to whom the Model does not assign, as it were, an official status."[3] Lewis means the medieval Christian model but it has both older antecedents and, as we shall see, subsequent heirs.

It seems to me that our personal experiences of enchantment are similarly fugitive and marginal, at least in the accounts we give of them. The third road remains the one less travelled (or at least, reported) but simultaneously, for many if not most of us, the most enticing, fascinating and ultimately meaningful. For at the dying of the light surely a candidate, at least, for what one remembers of one's life is the moments of magic (in the sense of enchantment), whatever they may have been for each of us. That includes love, at least by Tolkien's (2005: 101) definition of *Faërie*: "it represents love: that is, a love and respect for all things, 'animate' and 'inanimate', an unpossessive love of them as 'other'".

Nonetheless, just because it is wild and unbiddable,[4] the third road remains problematized, discouraged and marginalized by every official programme, whether religious or secular. This naturally affects individuals as well as organized groups. So I would like to ask: what results when those two conflicting demands, personal and formal, conflict? And when modernity has become virtually synonymous with disenchantment, what is the future of such enchantment in the twenty-first century, or what I am calling hypermodernity?

ON *FAËRIE*

First, some pointers or field-marks to enable us to recognize enchantment when we encounter it, or *Faërie* if we find ourselves there. And let me say immediately that in order to start off on the right foot we must wholly reject any foundational distinction between "state of mind" and "world", or "inner" and "outer". Although the opposing terms in these pairs can be distinguished as a matter of emphasis, it is merely a vestigial Cartesian delusion to suppose that they can be cleanly separated, and enchantment, perhaps in particular, invariably involves both.

Tolkien quotes Thomas Rhymer at the start of his essay "On Fairy-Stories" ([1964] 1988) and defines "the primal desire at the heart of *Faërie*" as "the realisation, independent of the conceiving mind, of imagined wonder". Realization, that is, in the sense both of realizing that someone or something *is* wondrous, and their wonder *becoming* real. The contrast-class is given as magic, defined as "not an art but a technique; its desire is *power* in this world, domination of things and wills" (*ibid.*: 18, 49–50). Following this lead, then, I take *wonder* to be a hallmark, and the most important one, of enchantment; and *will* its distinguishing contrary. (I have found Tolkien to be an unimpeachable guide concerning enchantment.)

Another reliable authority is Max Weber, who defines enchantment as "concrete magic". In other words, enchantment is always both material *and* spiritual, precise *and* mysterious, limited *and* unfathomable. And the contrast he draws is with the "rational cognition and mastery of nature" – paradigmatically scientific and bureaucratic, but with clear religious provenance – which, Weber (1991: 282, 155) said, results in "the

'disenchantment of the world'". This time and/or sensibility, in Tolkien's terms, is "the dominion of Men".[5]

Also instructive is the etymology of the word "enchant", coming to us from Middle English via the French, *enchanter*, itself from the Latin *incantare*, that is, *in* + *cantare*, to sing. Emboldened by Sam Gamgee's description of Tolkien's exemplar of enchantment, Lothórien – "I feel as if I was *inside* a song" ([1954–5] 1991: 369) – I interpret this to mean the experience of finding oneself *in* a song (a song one hears, or perhaps even that one is singing) and, by extension, a story of any kind.

Robert Bringhurst (2007: 248) offers a different etymology for *Faërie* from that given by the *Oxford English Dictionary*, one derived from the Greek *phêres*, meaning "creatures of the wild", and sister to the Latin *ferus*, which gave rise to feral and fierce. It is thus no playground for harmlessly imaginary supernatural beings "but the mythworld itself, which is everything outside our control". This understanding resonates with others which reiterate that enchantment is wild, perilous and natural – not supernatural, but ecological in the fullest sense of the word. As Bringhurst (1995: 15) remarks elsewhere, "In North America we call this world Nature or the Wild."

The origins of the word *Faërie* take us in still another direction: Middle English from Old French *fée*, from Latin *fata*, the plural of *fatum*: fate. And as if that is not sufficiently tantalizing, *fata* itself is the past participle of *fari*, to speak.[6] So the path of enchantment and that of *Faërie* meet where something is fatefully spoken or sung, or (I would add) written, and fatefully heard or read. And crossroads have long been places where weird things can happen; in classical myth, they were the domain of Hermes, the bearer of messages to and from the gods. "Weird" itself comes from the Anglo-Saxon *wyrd*, meaning "fate".

The metaphor of crossroads is also relevant in a different but related respect. In a brilliant reconstruction of Amerindian animism and perspectivism, Eduardo Viveiros de Castro describes it as "a universe that is 100 percent relational", in which any apparent object "is an incompletely interpreted subject" (2004: 473, 470). Transformation is then "not a process but a relation. Nothing 'happened', but everything has changed" (Viveiros de Castro 1998b). But these relations should not be understood as idealist or (purely) spiritual; on the contrary, being radically non-modern and *a fortiori* non-Cartesian, they are, like Weber's concrete magic, both bodied and minded, ensouled and enworlded.

The upshot is that animism, *faërie* and enchantment share profound common ground. *Faërie* is the place where living perspectives meet; animism is the generic term for that dynamic, and enchantment accompanies the meeting. Nor are those perspectives restricted to human ones. Animist enchantment is strictly non-anthropocentric, so all kinds of beings, including "things", can turn out to be existentially alive, and any object a subject with agency and an agenda, with whom one finds oneself in a relationship.[7] As Tolkien says, "*Faërie* contains many things besides elves and fays ... it holds the seas, the sun, the moon, the sky; and the earth and all the things that are in it: tree and bird, water and stone, wine and bread, and ourselves ... when we are enchanted" ([1964] 1988: 14).

In a modernist universe, all subjects are incompletely analysed inanimate objects and therefore ethically inconsiderable potential resources to be manipulated as part of a project of the rational mastery of nature (including human nature). In a relationship, in contrast – and enchantment is nothing if not relational – by definition, neither party is in complete control; issues of ethics, negotiation and etiquette are therefore paramount.

Of course, there are other signs of animist enchantment. (I've always thought that Kubla Khan's "flashing eyes and floating hair" were a give-away.) These markers, however – wonder, concrete magic, participation in a narrative, and non-anthropocentric relations – will do to be going on with.

DISENCHANTMENT

What is the significance of the three roads, then? First, let us note that heaven and hell are co-dependent, not only defining each other but comprising routes merely to different parts of the same truth or reality, the putatively exhaustive Model of the one true God. The two roads of righteousness and wickedness are thus actually forks of a single road, and the most radical alternative to either of them is the ambiguous "third" road to *Faërie*.

This contrast also works in another way. Weber (1991: 139) makes the point that a programme of rational mastery depends upon the "belief ... that one can, in principle, master all things by calculation". And that indispensably requires monism: a *single* principle in relation to which everything, at least in theory, can be grasped and ordered. In its absence, one could end up with more than one incommensurable truth with no overall *logos*, no theoretical way to adjudicate between them – which is the actual situation in animism and polytheism and their secular version, pluralism – and that is completely unacceptable for any programme with universalist aspirations. In short, in order "to rule them all ... to find them ... to bring them all and ... bind them" ([1954–5] Tolkien 1991: 272), the *One* ring is needed.

It follows ineluctably that the roots of disenchantment lie in religion – or rather, to be more precise, the Abrahamic religions (although I do not say they lie only there). Weber saw this point clearly, as did T. W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer ([1944] 1994: 18, 5, 8): "Reason *and* religion deprecate and condemn the principle of magic enchantment." By the same token, secular modernity, religion's even more rigorous child midwifed by Protestantism, requires precisely "the extirpation of animism", and "the destruction of gods and qualities alike is insisted upon". Both metaphysically and historically, modernity is thus founded on a rejection decidedly not of magic, whose emphasis on power, control and manipulation is grist to its own mill, and a great deal of which was absorbed by early modern science, but of animist enchantment, particularly that of a living more-than-human nature; and that is what still haunts its troubled dreams.

It also follows that the break between theism and secular rational modernism is a relative not a radical one (see Table 37.1). Truth replaces God, scientific reason replaces revelation, scientific authorities replace theologians and the nature of heresy changes, but crucial aspects of the fundamental logic do not. The origin and goal is still singular and universal;[8] there is still a royal road leading from and to it; and the enemy for both programmes remains, strikingly, "superstition" – that is, in this context, unlicensed (that is, wild) enchantment. It follows again that, as against enchantment, both religious and secular universalist programmes are different versions of the same road, with its two branches. They constitute, in effect, "two vying 'monisms'" (Jonas 1982: 16), and the noisy, tediously predictable "debate" between the so-called "New Atheists" and religious fundamentalists is largely a turf war for control over "Knowledge, Rule, Order".[9]

Table 37.1 The relations between theism and modernism.

	CHRISTIANITY (Spiritual)	SCIENCE (Material)	MODERNITY (Ideological)
Source and goal	God	Truth	Progress
Manifest in	Scripture	Laws	Manifestos
Accessed through	Revelation	Scientific reason	"Critical" reason, iconoclasm
Authorized by	Clergy (theological experts)	Scientists (technical experts)	Critics (theoretical experts)
Heresy	Superstition (heterodoxy)	Superstition (ignorance)	Superstition (tradition)

That said, there remains an important difference in principle between theism and secularism. It results from the apophatic nature of God as an ultimately unfathomable spiritual mystery, which denies the final promise of analysis and control that material reality, ultimately limited even if very complex, seems to hold out to science. Theism thus denies what scientism embraces: the prospect of *ultimate* mastery, and with it *complete* disenchantment. Nonetheless, there is common ground in so far as modernist science/scientific modernism exists in continuity and contiguity with that portion of theism which is committed to programmatic control and therefore disenchantment.

Is that a fair description? I think so, to the extent that religion wants to press enchantment into the service of God, and therefore to manage it. But enchantment cannot be managed – we might almost say, it *is* what cannot be managed – and it does not survive servitude, even to a good cause or a wholly admirable programme. Thus once again, we find that the most radical alternative to both religious and secular salvation/damnation is the third road, at once desired and feared: the way to, and of, enchantment.[10]

TOLKIEN AND LEWIS

Where does this leave the work of Tolkien and Lewis, for whom both religion *and* enchantment were so very important? Briefly, I would suggest that Tolkien ([1964] 1988: 99) availed himself of the metaphor of God as Creator to authorize his own act of literary sub-creation – "We make still by the law in which we're made" – and the idea of the Gospels as a fairytale that is, uniquely, also true in the literal sense to legitimate his own epic fairytale. (In their own terms, these seem quite legitimate strategies.) This strategy left quite a lot of room for uncertainty and ambiguity. Indeed, Tolkien (1981: 189) went so far as to reject a reader's criticism that he had "overstepped the mark" in metaphysical (meaning theological) matters by having the Elves reincarnate, arguing that no one could deny its possibility even in the "primary" world, let alone in a fictional one.

Another point is that Catholicism, although its ultimate boundaries are strictly maintained, is distinctly more capacious than Protestantism, with its sensitivity to the charge of pagan idolatry: that is, multiple deities (or rather, theologically speaking, pseudo-deities) worshipped instead of God. On that basis, I would speculate that although there

remained for both men an incompletely resolved tension between their Christianity and their love of *Faërie*, it posed a sharper problem for the Protestant Lewis than it did for Tolkien.

Of course, folk Christianity long had room for a wide range of semi-autonomous entities, from minor local spirits to grand angelic/diabolic ones, as well as saints indistinguishable in practice from deities. The Reformation and Counter-Reformation suppressed some of this, although not as effectively as mass industrialization and militarization had by the early twentieth century. But in British letters, there survived a kind of patrician demotic parallel to that tolerance in the vibrant Romantic tradition which obviously still informed and sustained Tolkien and Lewis, among others, in attempting to reconcile religion and *Faërie*.

What concerns us more here, however, is the relationship between these two ways of worlding in the reception of their work, including what Tolkien ([1964] 1988: 32) called "the effect produced now by these old things in the stories as they are". And what strikes me is that for the reading public, any such conflict does not seem to be a problem at all. At the least, is there any evidence that a significant number of readers have found *The Lord of the Rings* objectionable solely because of either its Christianity or its pagan/animistic enchantment? I doubt it. (Of course, there were and remain some modernist readers who reject it in the manner of Gollum having tasted *lembas*, the nourishing Elvish waybread: "Ach! No! ... You try to choke poor Sméagol. Dust and ashes, he can't eat that" [Tolkien [1954–5] 1991: 647]. We shall return to them.)

As is well known, Tolkien (1981: 172, 220), although describing *The Lord of the Rings* as "a fundamentally religious and Catholic work", deliberately excluded "all references to anything like 'religion'" on the basis that "the Third Age [of Middle-earth] was not a Christian world". It seems he also felt that their overt presence would be inappropriate, or counter-productive, in an effectively post-Christian world. And on balance, the wisdom of his choice has been borne out. It has enabled countless readers to enjoy his books without having to negotiate overt ideology, and even to partake of the Christian values (among others)[11] that requiring such negotiations might have prevented. Tolkien's work has therefore also suffered less from the kind of distracting controversy that has dogged Lewis's *Chronicles of Narnia*, in which Christian imagery, in striking contrast, is often unavoidable.

As Laura Miller's book (2008) shows, however, by far most childhood readers even of Lewis were either oblivious of or unconcerned by that imagery; and the more determined and thoughtful of his secular and/or atheist adult readers, too, can prevent it from destroying their enjoyment of the stories, and recover something of their original enchantment.

So why is there not necessarily a problem for us readers, so to speak – less than for the books' authors, or the critics – in the formal clash between the disenchanting power of religion and the enchanting power of *Faërie*? I think the answer is threefold. First, there is an understanding (albeit arguably a minority and somewhat unorthodox one) of God and *Faërie* as sharing some key properties, including existential wonder, unbiddability and participation in a (divine) narrative.[12] (I say "sharing"; that does not mean that one follows from the other, and any attempt along those lines, being *ipso facto* programmatic, would therefore be disenchanting.[13]) Concrete magic, in the first part of the term, might seem a stumbling-block for transcendental theism; but even here the Incarnation (*kenosis*) could be adduced in favour of the argument.

Whatever their merits, however, such theological considerations are too arcane to encompass more than a tiny minority of readers. The second reason surely pulls more weight: readers do not see a problem on account of our common ability to maintain two or more formally or even empirically contradictory views at the same time. (Countless polls have confirmed that many, perhaps most voters simultaneously support lower taxes and better public services. And the entire edifice of theodicy is based upon reconciling a beneficent and all-powerful God with "an irrational world", to quote Weber (1991: 122), "of undeserved suffering, unpunished injustice, and hopeless stupidity" – apparently with considerable success.) This knack might be decried as an all-too-common inability to think. Before doing so, however, we might remember a remark attributed to the giant of twentieth-century physics, Niels Bohr: "You are not thinking, you are merely being logical." Note, too, the affinity with John Keats's "negative capability" – an indispensable key to allowing enchantment to happen – whereby one resists "any irritable reaching after fact and reason".[14]

To my mind, however, the third reason is (like the third road) the most compelling. There is a wonderful vignette in Laura Miller's book in which Tolkien asks Lewis rhetorically, "What class of men would you expect to be most preoccupied with, and most hostile to, the idea of escape?" The answer is, of course, jailers.[15] Quite right too, but then she adds: "I, too, longed for escape, but as I saw it, *Christianity was one of the jailers*" (L. Miller 2008: 101; emphasis added). In other words, the power of narrative – one of the indispensable aspects of, and portals into, enchantment – is such that when the enchantment works, the wonder that it evokes, being wild and unbiddable, escapes even the intentions of its creators (in this case, as Christians) – let alone managers and administrators.

I do not make this point to denigrate Christianity but rather, among other things, to throw into radical question the claim of both those Christians and those atheists who claim to offer mutually exhaustive alternatives (and pretend to speak for religion and science respectively). There was a tiny but typical instance of this dialogue of the deaf when, on 16 April 2009, BBC1 TV broadcast "The Narnia Code", based on Michael Ward's *Planet Narnia: the Seven Heavens in the Imagination of C. S. Lewis*. It was not Ward's fault that the programme's director insisted on shoehorning the subject into a mutually exclusive "choice" between either God or atheism. The third road, as usual, was rendered invisible.

PULLMAN'S DILEMMA

What of the avowed atheists, modernists and followers of scientism? My guess, based on a survey of Tolkien's critical reception, is that they constitute a high proportion of those who react like Gollum – that is, as if they had been poisoned. Using Tolkien and his work in context as a microcosm, once again, of larger currents and dynamics, its reception among the literati has been striking. The highlights include "juvenile trash" (Edmund Wilson), "a black pit" (Jenny Turner) and, when *The Lord of the Rings* topped Waterstone's comprehensive poll of readers in 1996 as the most important book of the twentieth century, "my nightmare" (Germaine Greer). As *The Guardian*'s literary critic Nicholas Lezard remarked recently, "of all the means for professional suicide that are available to the writer, expressing affection for Tolkien is one of the most effective".[16] Are modernists like these allergic to enchantment, then?

I would guess the answer is yes, but they still want it. Once the most basic necessities of air, water, food and shelter are met, I do not believe it is possible to live for long without enchantment of some kind. In Tolkien's (2005: 101) words, it is "as necessary for the health and complete functioning of the Human as is sunlight for physical life". But there's the rub: what kind? I cannot avoid the conclusion that since modernism demands the consistent worship of endless, unstoppable, universal progress, its most consistent adherents must secretly seek out inadmissible, preferably unconscious, and on that account even more than usually dangerous enchantments. In this, of course, they closely mirror the schizophrenia of religious extremists.[17] But most of us manage to muddle along in more contextual and relative ways which keep a third road openly open, so to speak, even if we remain reluctant to discuss it in public for fear of ridicule.

Philip Pullman offers a fascinating literary study of someone caught in this dilemma. Briefly, here is a sworn atheist, and friend and supporter of Richard Dawkins, well known for his powerful aversion to Lewis's work on account of its Christology and the reactionary views with which that is sometimes (rather one-sidedly) associated. Pullman's dislike of Tolkien is somewhat different. It stems from the latter's Catholicism, his occasionally archaic literary style and, it seems, the fact that Middle-earth is "wholly imaginary" and never "actually" existed. (I'm not making this up, not even the extraordinary literal-mindedness; I engaged in correspondence with Pullman on the subject in 2000.) A better example of what Tolkien ([1964] 1988: 56) suspected as the true burden of the charge of escapism – namely, the Flight of the Deserter, from what these jailers are pleased to call "reality" – would be difficult to find, or even to imagine. Yet Pullman's own fiction is best described, indeed can only be described, as fantasy; the so-called real world is not noticeably populated with visible animal daemons, biological entities with wheels, and so on.

Pullman indulges in some remarkable contortions when challenged on this striking contradiction, saying that he would much rather write realistic fiction if he only could, since he strongly dislikes fantasy (including his own?). Fortunately, the psychology of the artist is not my concern. More instructive is the way even the work of this ideological atheist and would-be jailer confirms the subversive power of narrative that we found in his Christian targets. It is confirmed positively in the excellence of his storytelling in *His Dark Materials*, which has understandably enchanted many readers; and negatively, as his programmatic dislike of religion in general, clericalism in particular and Lewis above all (even hatred – which only binds him more closely to them) gradually gains the upper hand over his desire and ability simply to tell a good story ... or rather, to get out of the way as much as possible, personal opinions and all, and let the story tell itself. I am not the only reader to find a steady falling-away in quality as Pullman's three volumes progress, and the culprit, ironically, is plain. It is the same didacticism that ruined Lewis's final Narnia volume, *The Last Battle*.

How surprised should we be? When Miller was researching her book, Pullman recommended a book by John Goldthwaite (1996), a Christian writer on fantasy literature who apparently shares Pullman's loathing of Tolkien and Lewis, not least on the extraordinary grounds that "Creating a Secondary World, after all, is in effect a declaration that God's creation is deficient."[18] Small wonder that Goldthwaite goes on to describe mythic fantasy – probably the most flourishing single genre in publishing – as a "dead end". He may have meant that metaphysically but in any case, as so often in this area, the critical impulse is not used to open up a world to sympathetic understanding but rather to close

it off and shut it down. And whether that weapon is wielded by a dogmatic Christian or a dogmatic atheist does not make any significant difference.

The poet Michael Longley once observed of art that "when you capture something with precision, you also release its mysterious aura". "You don't get the mystery", he added, "without the precision".[19] (Here is "concrete magic" again.) *His Dark Materials* starts with a girl in a cupboard in a very particular room, overhearing a disturbing conversation in a richly imagined and detailed parallel Oxford. It culminates with windy denunciations of the Church, and Will and Lyra's overwrought separation. Pullman seems suspiciously determined to show – as Douglass Parker said of Edmund Wilson, another bitter critic of Tolkien's work – that he is the "Adult in the room" (Parker 1956–7: 608).

Tolkien ([1964] 1988: 63) thought that great fairy stories end with a "sudden joyous 'turn'" which rends the story "and lets a gleam come through". He called what the resulting pang conveys "hope without guarantees". In the end, Pullman gives us the opposite: guarantees without hope. His decision was, I'm sure, ideologically driven, but it was not an ideological failing. It was a failure of art.

HYPERMODERNITY

Concerning the second half of my title, I once argued that post-modernity – more as sensibility than historical period – had the potential to liberate us from modernity's relentless progressivism and, incidentally, enable us to appreciate the prescience of anti-modernists like Tolkien, if not necessarily their prescriptions. It has not quite worked out like that, of course. Encapsulating absurdly, what has happened is that while it has lost a great deal of its popular legitimacy, the modernist megamachine[20] has nonetheless kept right on going, even picking up speed. In this respect nothing has changed since Weber remarked in 1899 that "One has the impression of sitting on a speeding train, while doubting whether the next switch will be correctly set" (quoted in Schaff 1989: 14). This situation has left what remains of progressive resistance in such uncomfortably paradoxical positions as hoping for an ecological collapse bad enough to halt modernist "development" (since little else seems likely to) but not, you know, *too* bad. So where "post-modern" implies, misleadingly, that modernity is over, "hypermodernity" reminds us that it is not so. (It is also an ugly word, which is therefore apt.)

At the same time, it is very important not to attribute even more power to the disenchanters who seem to be running the show than they actually have. To paraphrase Bruno Latour (1993), we have never been *completely* modern – which is just to say, disenchanted. In lived life and in practice, we do not and cannot (unless psychotic) live in a completely disenchanted way. So how do I read this riddle of simultaneous enchantment *and* disenchantment?

In two ways. One, very simply, is that enchantment will survive. Like the earth – the ultimate source of enchantment, I believe – it does not need us but we need it; so it will continue to animate, unpredictably and uncontrollably, our relationships with each other, with other animals, with non-human nature, with places, with art and artefacts, with food, and so on. However, inasmuch as enchantment is unbiddable, it cannot be used or exploited for any purpose or programme; so we need another term for the phenomenon, superficially very like enchantment but actually distinguishable as its wraithlike

simulacrum, which is at the heart of the billion-pound hypermodern industries of advertising, PR, entertainment, political spin, fashion and so on. I have already suggested "glamour" (Curry 1999). Glamour is one of the chief tools in the armoury of magic, in Tolkien's sense of power-knowledge.[21] It bears the same relationship to enchantment as the Ringwraiths of Tolkien's world, who merely continue forever because they cannot die – what he called "endless serial living" ([1964] 1988: 62) – do to genuine immortality as defined by Wittgenstein (1961: 72): "If we take eternity to mean not infinite temporal duration but timelessness, then eternal life belongs to those who live in the present."

So my final conclusion is that given our susceptibility to promises, and systems of promises, to completely satisfy our endless desires (especially for security and control), disenchantment too, especially in the form of glamour, will continue. Both in weird tandem, and not only one or the other: that is our fate.

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NOTES

1. Tolkien ([1964] 1988: 9, 14). The original essay was first delivered as a lecture in 1939, and first published, somewhat enlarged, in 1947. See the recent definitive edition by Flieger & Anderson (2008).
2. Curry (2007a,b, 2008, 2012). My interest in this topic was rekindled by the discussion in L. Miller (2008: 276).
3. Quoted in L. Miller (2008: 272). Cf. Flint (1991) for a study of the process of "sorting" that the medieval Church engaged in, a process begun by the early Church fathers.
4. A term I borrow, with thanks, from Anthony Thorley.
5. Tolkien's description of the Fourth Age, after the events chronicled in *The Lord of the Rings*, in Appendix B of *The Lord of the Rings*.
6. See Tolkien (2005: 143).
7. Such as the stones discussed by the Ojibwe elder and Irving Hallowell; see Graham Harvey (2006a: 33–4 & ff).
8. I am of course aware of the doctrine of the Trinity, and it is an important qualification. Islam, in comparison, in uncompromisingly monist.
9. In Saruman's seductive words (Tolkien [1954–5] 1991: 277).
10. In Curry (2008), I have explored the interdependence of power (as symbolized by the One Ring) and enchantment (as symbolized by the three Elven rings).
11. See the discussion in Curry (2004: 94–109).
12. I am grateful to Nigel Cooper for raising this point in a very helpful discussion.
13. See Hepburn (1984: 140), where he argues convincingly that aesthetic wonder does not necessarily entail theism.
14. With thanks to Ursula Le Guin for pointing this out.
15. Cf. Tolkien ([1964] 1988: 56).
16. *Guardian* (3 April 2010). See Curry (2005, 2013).
17. A headline at the time of writing from the BBC reads, "The lover of one of Europe's most influential bankers breaks down in court and admits killing him after kinky sex." It is not difficult to think of equivalent incidents of various kinds involving high-level religious figures.
18. Quoted by Miller (2005).

19. Quoted in *The Irish Times* (11 January 1992).
20. Lewis Mumford's (1967) term.
21. The echo of Foucault is deliberate and, I believe, appropriate.

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Objects of *otaku* affection: animism, *anime* fandom, and the gods of … consumerism?

Casey Brienza

Japan, to modify slightly a title of a book by Bruno Latour (1993), has never been modern. The indigenous folk beliefs and practices of Shintoism, or *kami no michi* (way of spirits), continue to permeate the fabric of everyday life, and although most Japanese profess neither to personal religion nor to belief in the spiritual, this cultural legacy provides a rich creative resource fuelling the country's cultural industries. Indeed, Japanese animism is everywhere in the textual contents of *anime* (animation) and *manga* (comic books), so it perhaps comes as no surprise that Japan is also the country which gave the world the *otaku*. The definition of *otaku* varies but is typically understood as a hardcore fan of popular culture, especially *anime* and *manga*. He (and yes, the stereotypical *otaku* is male) is characterized by his passionate devotion to the objects of his fandom affection and proportionate absence of social grace. The *otaku*, in short, is a suspicious, socially awkward character who is more comfortable around two-dimensional cartoons than real, three-dimensional people.

But is that *all* he is? Simply by adjusting slightly one's perspective on this commonplace understanding of the word, it is quite easy to argue that the *otaku* is in fact an animist, investing a devotion of genuinely spiritual proportions to the objects of popular culture fandom. Thus, instead of revering the moon which waxes and wanes in the sky, he reveres Sailor Moon whom he watches in perpetual rerun. Instead of placing sacred totems around his home, he collects and displays his favourite action figures. Instead of listening to sermons about the sanctity of nature, he watches Hayao Miyazaki films. Yet to take such an equivalency to be true is to beg a number of new questions: How precisely do the *otaku* relate to these non-human objects? Do they re-enact the worldviews expressed in popular *anime* series, or have they taken to heart entirely different forms of interaction? Finally, is there any transformative potential in *anime* fandom?

This chapter will attempt to answer these questions. I will begin with a brief overview of religion in contemporary Japan and a discussion of some of the theories of *otaku* media consumption, focusing on the work of Japanese theorists Kaichirou Morikawa and

Hiroki Azuma. I will then explore selected *anime* genres and specific texts, including *Shoujo Kakumei Utena*, *Gundam* and *Spirited Away*, discussing how they represent the relationship between the human and the non-human. Finally, I will argue that because these titles are cross-platform properties originating from and orientated toward market logic, the *otaku*'s primary allegiance can never be to the message but rather must be to the animated object itself. Therefore, I will conclude, while a new brand of animism is alive and well in Japan, because they are gods of consumerism they will not be particularly effective resources of social or political change.

RELIGION IN JAPAN

Shintoism is Japan's indigenous religion and is best understood as a loose and diverse set of practices venerating "the personified forces of nature" and "heroes and benefactors of every age, legendary and historical, ancient and more recent" (Cobbold 1894: 20). In fact, the term *Shinto* was not invented until the introduction of Buddhism from the Korean peninsula in the sixth century, and it, along with Buddhism, forms the spiritual core of Japanese religious tradition. This amalgamation came to be officially known as *Shinbutsu Shuugou*, and it continues to be informally practised today (Kazumori 1998). The more recent introduction of Christianity by missionaries in the sixteenth century and following the Meiji Restoration has further added to Japan's religious mix and iconography. Christian holidays such as Christmas and St Valentine's Day have become very popular in Japan as secular celebrations.

Despite this rich fabric of religious tradition, Japan is today among the most secular societies in the world. In the 2000 census, less than 15 per cent of Japanese people reported any personal religious affiliation (Lockard 2010). Less than half believe in either God or the Buddha (Demerath 2001). Nevertheless, many Japanese people dabble in multiple religions as inclination and/or life stage seem to necessitate: it is common to celebrate births at a *Shinto* shrine, weddings in a Christian church, and funerals at a Buddhist temple, for example. New Year's celebrations, *matsuri* (festivals), and other local traditions are also likewise grounded in religious practice, even when their spiritual dimension is no longer popularly recognized. The reasons for this ambivalence are twofold: on the one hand, the Japanese have not usually been particularly obsessed with doctrinal purity, and on the other, religion has been bound up with the political authority of elites for so much of Japan's history that personally identifying with the traditional options feels diametrically at odds with today's democratic citizenship (McQuaid 2001).

However, it is this very ambivalence, some scholars acknowledge, which opens up a significant spiritual vacuum in people's lives, particularly in the lives of the young. Nobutaka Inoue, a professor of religion at Kokogakuin University, opines, "Traditional religions don't function anymore in Japan ... so they look around. Invent a product" (quoted in McQuaid 2001). A reverence for special objects, it seems, is a pre-existing cultural inclination going back all the way to the origins of Japanese religious history, but the "product", the object rather, is best if it is new and not associated with the political baggage which has come before it. And yet "it" could be anything. It might as well be a cartoon, as a matter of fact, and sometimes "it" is. This is precisely the space, I would suggest, in which the *otaku* is born.

OTAKU THEORY

Well then, what manner of man, precisely, is this *otaku*? As defined earlier in this chapter, the stereotypical *otaku* is a suspicious, socially awkward male who is more comfortable around two-dimensional cartoons than real, three-dimensional people – somewhere between the English-language "nerd" and "geek". Furthermore, the *otaku* in popular Japanese imagination is undoubtedly forever inflected by the crimes of Tsutomu Miyazaki, the so-called "*Otaku* Murderer". Miyazaki was ultimately sentenced to death in 1997 for the murder and mutilation of four girls aged between four and seven between 1988 and 1989 (Anon 2008). The details of his treatment of their corpses were especially gruesome, and the discovery of a large number of *anime* on VHS in his home, some of it of the pornographic genre *rorikon* (lolicon), which fetishizes the sexuality of underage girls, cemented an assumed causative relationship in the minds of many Japanese between *anime* fandom and his heinous crimes (Otsuka 2004).

Implicit in the popular judgement against Miyazaki is a theory of media consumption which ought to be summarized in layperson's terms as, "You are what you eat." Broadly filed under studies of "media effects", this primarily US-based research agenda emphasizes the ways in which individuals can be inadvertently altered by their exposure to the media – usually not for the better (Perse 2001; Bryant & Zillmann 2002). One particularly important strand of media effects research is that of cultivation theory, which explores the effects of television programming, and especially violent content, upon the American public. Furthermore, Gerbner *et al.* (1986, 2002) argue that television has replaced religion and education as the most common and pervasive source of "cultivation" of particular social realities.

Naturally, other researchers resist such unidirectional, non-agentive theories of media effects. Influenced by key figures of British cultural studies such as Raymond Williams (1958) and Stuart Hall (1980), other media theorists have written extensively about "active audiences" and "textual poaching" (Jenkins 1992; Hayward 1997). Audiences and fans, they argue, have discovered ways of acquiring agency over their consumption of media and finding ways to intervene personally in the production of textual meaning. Instead of assuming that consumers are merely the passive subjects of an all-powerful mass media empire, these theorists look at what individuals actually *do* with media and discover evidence of resourcefulness and a diversity of interpretations.

Although these two competing traditions in media theory are Western (and primarily Anglo-American) in origin, they represent two opposite philosophical extremes which have also been produced in the Japanese theoretical discourse about the *otaku*. The earliest work on *otaku* was written as a reaction against the association of *otaku* with criminality in the wake of Miyazaki's arrest and thus, unsurprisingly, is an anthem to the virtue of the *otaku* and his unique set of dispositions. Otsuka (2004) is perhaps the most overt in his celebration of the *otaku*'s creation of new taste communities and rejection of American cultural hegemony, but it is Morikawa (2003) who argues most astutely for the *otaku*'s positive effect upon social and geographic space, describing the transformation of Akihabara in the 1990s into a geek mecca and arguing that the *otaku* has provided an important domestic stimulus to Japan's otherwise flailing consumer economy. Azuma (2009), conversely, in reaction to the reaction, criticizes the *otaku* by labelling him a "database animal" who has abandoned any interest in deep meaning and who satisfies

himself instead with superficial aesthetic categories. This, in Azuma's view, constitutes a post-modern regression of the human into the subhuman, and it is a scathing criticism of popular media consumption.

THREE TROPES

So, who is right? Has the *otaku* carved out a space of personal and/or collective emancipation premised upon new sets of cultural objects? Or has he become, rather, a near-mindless consumer of meaningless stylistic categories? To interrogate these questions, I will explore prominent examples of three of *anime*'s most popular tropes: (a) embodied spirits of nature, (b) giant robots, and (c) magical girls. All three of these tropes both represent the textual tradition of animism to be found in Japanese *anime* and, owing to their ubiquity throughout the medium as a whole, are in my view most likely to be the "products" recruited in an *otaku*-orientated spiritual project. I will begin first with depictions of the embodied spirits of nature in *anime*, focusing upon the Studio Ghibli films of Hayao Miyazaki.

Miyazaki and the spirits of nature

Although many Western fans have dubbed him the "Disney of Japan", McCarthy (1999: 10) prefers to refer to Hayao Miyazaki (b. 1941) as the "the Kurosawa of animation". Both appellations have some merit; like Disney, he is known for directing animated films which are nominally suitable for all audiences, but on the other hand he directs animated films of a quality and creative subtlety which today simply have no popularly or critically acknowledged equal in Japan. Either way, the *anime* he has produced under the auspices of Studio Ghibli are the most appropriate place to begin a textual analysis of animism in *anime*, since his work is beloved equally by both the Japanese populace at large and by the so-called *otaku-zoku* (*otaku* tribe). Interestingly, Miyazaki himself has gone to some length to distance himself from the *otaku*, but some theorists suggest that this is because he recognizes aspects of himself in them (Saito 2011).

Miyazaki began his career with Toei Animation and worked his way up the ranks there for over a decade. In 1985, along with director Isao Takahata and producer Toshio Suzuki, he founded the independent animation studio Studio Ghibli. By the end of 2010, Ghibli had produced seventeen feature-length animated films, eight of which had been directed by Miyazaki. Most of these films distance themselves from the humdrum of the audience's everyday experience with either Western or fantasy settings. *Princess Mononoke* (1997), while technically local and certainly addressing issues salient to contemporary Japan, is set so far in Japan's distant, prehistoric past that it nearly could have been another world. Only *My Neighbor Totoro* (1988), *Spirited Away* (2001) and *Ponyo* (2008) are set in landscapes that anyone alive today might reasonably say look like Japan (and even then with some nostalgia). Since all three of these films also prominently feature depictions of the embodied spirits of nature, I will focus on them in this chapter.

My Neighbor Totoro is hands down the most popular of Miyazaki's films, period. Whether or not this is due to its intrinsic quality, that it is among the oldest of Ghibli's productions, or some combination of the two, *Totoro* is the Miyazaki *anime* that is most likely to come

to mind first. Its magical forest god, also dubbed Totoro, has even become Ghibli's official mascot. The movie takes place in postwar Japan, and opens with a university professor moving his two daughters, Satsuki and Mei, out to a house in the countryside in order to be closer to their mother, who is convalescing in a nearby hospital, recovering from some unnamed illness. The children delight in their natural surroundings and soon meet a large, mysterious creature that Mei, the younger of the sisters, names "Totoro". What, precisely, this creature is is never made entirely clear, but their ceremonial dance around some seeds that the girls have planted would lead viewers to conclude that it must be some sort of nature spirit. When Mei runs off and gets lost, the Totoro helps Satsuki find her and then takes them both to see their mother at the hospital, where it is clear that she is finally on the mend. The film concludes with the girls' mother returning home and the girls playing with other children, the Totoro and other minor spirits watching over them unseen.

Spirited Away also features a pre-adolescent girl, her parents, and a world chock-full of nature magic, but unlike Satsuki and Mei, who would give anything to get their mother back, at first Chihiro would rather not hew so close to *her* parents. But when the family stumbles onto an abandoned amusement park, her parents become ensnared by a magical trap there and are transformed into pigs. Chihiro, in order to rescue her parents, signs a contract of employment at an otherworldly bathhouse establishment with the witch Yubaba, who takes her name from her. Now called Sen, she helps to rescue nature gods from environmental pollution and from the human sins of excessive greed and avarice. A particularly memorable sequence involves the unwelcome appearance of a "stink god", which turns out to be a river god whose body has been so thoroughly corrupted by pollution that it is beyond recognition. Chihiro, as Sen, by realizing that not all is as it seems, is able to purify it. After many adventures, she is able to rescue herself, her parents, and the river god Haku from Yubaba's clutches, and Haku, into whose river she had once fallen when she was younger, delivers her back to the human world.

Ponyo, unlike *Spirited Away* and *My Neighbor Totoro*, is loosely but explicitly based upon a Western textual source, namely Hans Christian Andersen's *The Little Mermaid*. However, like the others it is set in Japan. Ponyo is a little fish-girl who, on an outing with her family, wanders astray and ends up stranded on the shore of a small coastal town. A boy named Sosuke rescues her and names her Ponyo. In her gratitude, she heals his wounded finger by licking it. Thus, although her father soon has Ponyo brought forcibly back to him, the blood that she licked from Sosuke's finger has started to make her human. She is able to break free of her father's magic and return to land, thereby upsetting nature's delicate balance and triggering a huge tsunami. In order to restore the order of things, Ponyo's mother Granmamare – a goddess of the sea, since her name is actually "Grandma Ocean" (*mare* is "ocean" in Latin) – arrives to test Sosuke. If he succeeds, Ponyo can remain a human and everything will go back to normal. If he fails, Ponyo will turn into sea foam, and he will lose her forever. He and Ponyo endure a long series of challenges, but in the end, the test boils down to a simple question put to him by Granmamare: can he love Ponyo regardless of whether she is human or fish? Sosuke replies in the affirmative, saying that he "loves all the Ponyos". This satisfies her mother; Ponyo and Sosuke will live happily ever after – as human beings.

Clearly, these three *anime* have in common the interaction of mundane humanity with the embodied spirits of nature. However, this is a very specific sort of interaction

– through a hard-won connection with nature spirits comes a new-found appreciation and connection with other people. In the world of Miyazaki's films, becoming one with nature does not make a person less human but rather completes them in the context of both their selfhood *and* social world. So in *Ponyo*, the human boy definitely does not become a fish-boy; instead, he ultimately gets hitched with the fish-girl who becomes a human girl just to be with him. And in both *Totoro* and *Spirited Away*, the girls do not get to cavort with those wondrous, mysterious creatures for ever. Instead, after an appropriate interval in which they come of age, they are reunited with their ordinary nuclear families – Chihiro with her no-longer porcine parents, Satsuki and Mei with their fully recovered mother – and what heretofore has gone unseen becomes functionally unseen again ... albeit perhaps watching benevolently over the unaware humans from afar.

This highly determined – perhaps even overdetermined, one might legitimately argue – relationship between nature and culture in Miyazaki's movies is arguably most transparent in *Spirited Away*. The original Japanese for *Spirited Away* is *kamikakushi*, being hidden away by the spirits, and in the view of Reider (2005: 9) it constitutes a "verdict of 'social death' in this world". Coming back into the world, meanwhile, is a form of "social resurrection" (*ibid.*), with the once spirited away person now ready to re-emerge and begin anew a fully realized life alongside other people. Spirits are always necessary for humanity across generations but emphatically *not* always and forever necessary throughout the life course of each individual. Indeed, one must not cling too long or obsess over them because to do that is to remain immature and unfinished. To believe in the gods of nature in Miyazaki's animated mythos, in short, is to eventually grow up and to not need them any more.

Mecha and mobile suits

To view a specific sort of connection to nature as a life stage and prerequisite for an individual's full realization as an adult social being does not, however, imply a dichotomy between nature and culture, or the wild gods of the forest and the technocracy of the urban built metropolis. Such binaries are characteristically Western, and one of Japanese Zen Buddhism's greatest philosophical interventions is to understand that all human production is "natural" because humans themselves are a part of nature. Take, for example, the following declaration by the eighth-century Buddhist Layman Pang, quoted in *Zen and Japanese Culture* as an example of Zen epistemology (Suzuki 1970: 16):

> How wondrous this, how mysterious!
> I carry fuel, I draw water.

However mundane these activities may seem today, human technology is required to use fuel to produce energy and to draw water from a well. Thus, instead of seeing nature and culture as binary opposites, where one is sacred and the other profane, Japanese animist tradition recognizes that the products of our technical expertise might too be spiritually potent. This potentiality, I would argue, is most fully realized in the giant robot, or *mecha*, *anime* genre, and in this section I will explore the animist relationships human characters have with their *mecha* in some of the most popular Japanese animated television series of all time.

Against the above backcloth, it comes as no surprise that the first unequivocal entry to the *mecha anime* genre is Go Nagai's aptly titled *Mazinger Z* (1972–4). The story features an ordinary Japanese high school boy who in a twist of fate becomes the pilot of a giant robot to fight a legacy of evil left behind by his forebears. This is an ordinary enough *shounen* (for boys) *manga* and *anime* plot nowadays, but in this early show Nagai made the connection between the traditional Japanese animist gods of nature and the importance of the giant robot quite explicit; the name of the protagonist Koji Kabuto's robot, Mazinger, is meant to evoke the kanji compound 魔神 (*mashin*), which means "demon god" and conveniently sounds similar to the English "machine". Koji, furthermore, pilots the robot from a cockpit within its head – his surname means "headpiece" – and *Mazinger Z* was the first to depict such an arrangement, now more or less standard in *mecha anime*, because it allowed cartoonists to draw convincing human stories about robots (Schodt 1988). In other words, the giant robots of this genre, although either literally or figuratively magical on their own terms, require a human component in order to become complete. Tellingly, the Mechanical Beast antagonists with whom Koji duels, conversely, are usually piloted by remote control. This distinction between human- and remote-controlled *mecha* is an issue to which I will return in some detail later.

The television series which was to become synonymous with the giant robot *anime* genre in Japan appeared only a few years after *Mazinger Z*. That *anime* was Yoshiyuki Tomino's *Mobile Suit Gundam* (1979–80). In addition to numerous sequel television series, straight-to-video features, and feature films, the original series has since spun off numerous new worlds in the *Gundam* franchise, including *G Gundam* (1994–5), *Gundam Wing* (1995–6), *Gundam X* (1996), *Gundam SEED* (2002–3) and *Gundam 00* (2007–9). Broadly speaking, they are united by plots involving the rebellion of outer space colonies against a despotic planet Earth and lean thematically toward realistic scientific and socio-political themes. Yet even though the *Gundam* franchise specializes in the technologically plausible, traditionally animist undertones still remain, particularly with regards to how it represents its giant robots, called "mobile suits".

Japan, as a country which has committed itself (or been forced to commit by the United States, depending upon your view) constitutionally to pacifism after the Second World War, is careful not to glorify war too much in its popular media, particularly in stories such as *Gundam* which cannot excuse themselves purely as escapist fantasy. Thus, even though the combat sequences in these *anime* can be visually dynamic and exciting, the broader context of war in which they take place is never valourized, and in particular war that is not fought face-to-face is deplorable. The implication is, of course, that if you are going to do something bad, then at least you ought to be around to experience the consequences of your wrongdoing first-hand. Even people who are enemies, in those circumstances, form a sort of bond to each other on the battlefield, and this, it is implied, might leave some space open for future reconciliation. This is why all of the heroes of the *Gundam* universe are mobile suit pilots, while their enemies often resort to giant robots and other weapons controlled either remotely or by artificial intelligence. In *Gundam Wing*, for example, the antagonist group OZ develops the Mobile Doll system, which allows OZ to send mobile suits into battle without pilots. These completely automated weapons, which have faster reaction times than ordinary human pilots can match, are then produced *en masse* to quash the rebellious colonies. Without a human inside, they are as close to pure and existential evil as *Gundam* ever gets.

To take on the Mobile Dolls, one of the Gundam pilots, Heero Yuy, is able to master the ZERO System, an interface between pilot and mobile suit that computationally predicts all possible outcomes of a battle. Crucial is the exponentially increased reaction time; using this system is the only way a human pilot can ever hope to emerge victorious in a battle with Mobile Dolls. Thus, it is practically supernatural – superhuman, certainly – and like any absolute power it comes with a dire price: most pilots are driven insane by their information overload, and if that happens they may end up killing everybody, both friend and foe, combatant and civilian. Of course, the ZERO System can also be used to win a battle with a minimum of unnecessary destruction, and when Heero finally learns how use it effectively, he does just that. It is up to the pilot which one of the infinite menu of possible routes to victory to take. In a figurative sense, just like Mazinger in *Mazinger Z*, the technology of *Gundam Wing* requires a human head. Without the human element, it is just another tool at best and a soulless monstrosity at worst, either way not worthy of regard.

While *mecha* are not always "nothing" without their human pilots, as they are in *Gundam*, even the explicitly magical ones still demand a connection with humans in order to reach their full potential. In the *Magic Knight Rayearth* (1994–5) *anime*, based upon a *shoujo* (for girls) *manga* of the same name by CLAMP, the giant robots *are* literally gods. In this show, three ordinary Japanese girls, Hikaru, Umi and Fuu, are brought to a magical land called Cephiro and tasked with rescuing its princess. To do this, they must first revive three powerful spirits. The accepted English translation for what these spirits are is "Rune-Gods", but the original Japanese is 魔神 (*mashin*). As in the case of *Mazinger Z*, the word is a pun, meaning both "demon god" in Japanese and "machine" in English, and they take multiple animate and inanimate forms. Rayearth represents the element fire and appears as a wolf of flame. He can also assume the shape of a giant robot for Hikaru to pilot. The other two *mashin* are Celece, a dragon of water, and Windam, a bird of wind. They, too, transform into giant robots for Umi and Fuu respectively. Furthermore, all three giant robots can merge *Transformers*-style into a single super robot for the series' final, climatic battle. Again, there is the implication in this *mecha anime* that while the giant robot can be mighty in its own right, it needs human intervention to activate its fullest potential.

Magical girls

Despite such notable exceptions as *Magic Knight Rayearth* and the occasional supporting character elsewhere in other franchises, the human element of the *mecha anime* genre is predominantly male. However, this does not mean that girls and women in Japanese *anime* have no recourse to the animist power of special objects. Theirs, though, tend not to be humanoid giant robots; instead, female *anime* characters wield the power of somewhat smaller objects such as wands and cosmetics cases. And despite the much smaller material size of these special objects, these girls and women are arguably as, if not more, powerful than their male counterparts in the cockpits of giant robots – for they are the magical girls.

As with many things related to Japanese *anime* and *manga*, the origin of the magical girl genre is attributed to the so-called *manga no kamisama* (god of *manga*) Osamu Tezuka (Gravett 2004). The *manga Ribon no Kishi* (Princess of Ribbons), commonly known in English as *Princess Knight*, first began serialization in the Kodansha magazine *Shoujo Club* in 1953

and in later incarnations inspired an animated adaptation in the 1960s. The story is about Sapphire, a fairytale princess who must disguise herself as a boy, and it has subsequently inspired a legion of Japanese pop cultural products which feature cross-dressing and other sorts of gender-bending characters and behaviours (Schodt 1983). It also, I would argue, inaugurated a thematic obsession with the use of particular styles of dress, costume, and the very act itself of donning a new guise as potent signifiers, and of the importance of the magical girl's own body.

The first magical girl *anime*, however, to link the powers of the magical girl explicitly to a special object is *Himitsu no Akko-chan* (Akko of the Secret), a 1969 *anime* based upon a *manga* of the same title published in the *shoujo manga* magazine *Ribon* by Fujio Akazuka from 1962 to 1965. The story's protagonist is the young girl Atsuko Kagami, "Akko" for short. One day, Akko breaks her cherished hand mirror, but instead of just tossing it into the rubbish bin, she buries it reverently. To her surprise, a *kagami no sei* (mirror spirit) appears before her and thanks her for caring for the mirror. The mirror spirit then gifts Akko with a new mirror in a cosmetic compact case which allows her to magically transform herself into anything she wishes. Granted, there is much to complain from a feminist perspective about the implication that makeup is empowering, and it surely comes as no surprise that the creative talent behind this early magical girl *anime* was near-exclusively male, but what is interesting in this context is that the power of the object comes not from, say, the girl's skill with an eyeliner brush *per se*. Rather, the power emanates from the object itself – the spirit of the mirror, in the case of *Himitsu no Akko-chan* – and the blessings it grants upon worthy individuals. (The relationship to Shintoism is obvious; sacred sites associated with the Japanese Imperial Family typically enshrine a mirror, along with a sword and a jewel. The *shinkyou* [god mirror] is also a symbol of Amaterasu, the goddess of the sun, and one of the most popular myths about her also involves a mirror which is used to lure her out of self-imposed seclusion.) In other words, humans are granted particular boons by currying favour with particular spirits by treating those spirits' sacred objects with respect.

It is only another small logical leap to turn the magical girl herself into a form of animated sacred object. The animated television series *Majou no Tenshi Kurimii Mami* (Magical Angel Creamy Mami) (1983–4) is an excellent example of the way in which the story of a sacred object and its chosen user can so easily lead to the magical girl becoming a sacred object in her own right to her *otaku* audience. The heroine this time around is Yuu Morisawa, a ten-year-old who, with the help of a magic wand, is able to transform into a teenager. In a confluence of fate, she ends up on television while in teenager form and becomes an overnight singing sensation. Yuu takes the stage name Creamy Mami, and her career as Japan's next pop idol – and object of *otaku* affection – begins. Clearly, idol worship of a particular *anime* character can occur while she is an idol within and without the story simultaneously. If anything, these two forms of reverence are mutually reinforcing, as the character's rising stardom as the plot develops invites viewers to think of her as an object worth revering. It is a potent formula, indeed; very similar stories have been repeated over the years, such as in *Full Moon O Sagashite*. These variations are so ubiquitous, in fact, that some three decades after Creamy Mami's splendid debut, the *anime* girl idol type does not even need a narrative framework any more. Witness, for example, the success of the singing synthesizer application *Hatsune Miku*, which is personified by a pigtailed *bishoujo* (beautiful girl).

Even so, it would be impossible to write anything about magical girls and fail to mention *Bishoujo Senshi Seeraa Moon* (Pretty Soldier Sailor Moon), without question the most popular and enduring example of the magical girl *anime* genre worldwide. The *anime*'s five seasons, which ran five years from 1992 to 1997, and large cast of characters makes it unprecedented in the genre for its narrative and mythological complexity. But at its heart is a cohort of sailor-suited warriors who draw their supernatural might from the natural magic of celestial bodies such as the moon and the planets of the solar system to protect humanity and fight evil. They do not just use the power of Mercury, Venus, Mars and Jupiter, however; they are their respective planets' embodied representatives and guardians. The heroine, Sailor Moon, like many magical girls before her, channels her power through a cosmetics compact. Later on in the series, it is channelled through the *ginzuishou* (silver crystal), which is then set in the compact. The other *senshi* use wands decorated with their planet's zodiac symbol. Furthermore, when they activate their powers, their everyday clothing changes into their combat outfits. *Bishoujo Senshi Seeraa Moon*, besides incorporating a *sentai* (fighting team) formula, manages to combine all of the animist tropes of the magical girl *anime* properties which came before it: sacred items, the embodied power of nature and natural phenomena, and the transformation of the girl herself into an idol worthy of reverence.

Yet if this *anime* has an overarching theme, it is not that of natural power or of human connection to nature; rather, it focuses on the power of love and human friendship in the triumph over adversity. Therefore, one of the most interesting ways of understanding *Bishoujo Senshi Seeraa Moon* is to consider it in the context of another magical girl *anime* which debuted only a couple of months after the final *Sailor Stars* season had finished, *Shoujo Kakumei Utena* (1997). This *anime* was directed by Kunihiko Ikuhara, who had been instrumental in the development of the first four seasons of *Sailor Moon*. He eventually left the animation company Toei, frustrated over what he felt to be restrictions upon his creative freedom there, and formed Be-Papas, the studio which would go on to produce *Utena*, which in my view is directly in dialogue with *Sailor Moon*'s idealistic themes of love and friendship.

Although the accepted English translation of this title is "Revolutionary Girl Utena", and this is how it is officially sold in English-language markets, I prefer the more literal translation "Girl Revolution Utena" because I would argue ultimately that this *anime* makes a bold argument about what precisely spiritual emancipation for girls is. The story starts out in an ordinary way, by *anime* standards. A high school girl, Utena Tenjou, transfers to an elite private academy and ends up embroiled in an ongoing Student Council-run series of swordfights for the Rose Bride, possession of whom grants mysterious powers. Among other things, the Bride's body houses a sword inside of it. But the Rose Bride also happens to be another student at the school named Anthy, who doesn't necessarily seem thrilled with her status as prize to be won, and Utena is quickly repelled by the way in which the other students treat her as less than human. Utena, wearing a boy's uniform and fancying herself a hero, decides to save Anthy. However, things turn out to be much more complicated than they seem, and the tournament for Anthy is actually a nihilistic game masterminded by Anthy's elder brother and chairman of the academy, Akio Ohtori, with whom Anthy is complicit.

This is not the place to delve into the complicated symbolism of *Shoujo Kakumei Utena*, but suffice it here to say that the fantasy world of princes and princesses, of swordfights

and magical prizes, of rose gardens and castles in the sky is merely that – a fantasy world. The opening theme shows the two girls laying siege to a castle in the sky on flying horses, and though this never happens in the course of the series itself, to tear such edifices of the mind down is precisely the point. Utena is only victorious after she is able to shed her illusions about heroism and eternal friendship, see the world for the way that it really is, and leave the stifling hothouse of Ohtori Academy behind. She wins as well by showing Anthy that she need not put up with her brother's machinations any more; the series ends with Anthy leaving the academy behind in pursuit of Utena. Leaving their fantasies behind, therefore, is a prerequisite of growing up for girls, and living life for oneself without expecting some prince to ride in to the rescue is truly, in *Utena*'s view, a "girl revolution". In other words, the whole message of this apotheosis of the magical girl *anime* genre is that one ought to reject the idolization of the magical girl and all she represents.

ANIMISTS OF CONSUMER SOCIETY

Although animated icons such as Totoro, Gundam and Sailor Moon have become objects of *otaku* affection over the years, the messages of the *anime* texts from which they originate are in themselves definitely not univocal in their advocacy of the reverence of these icons. Human beings might have close relationships to the power of mobile suits, the planets, or mysterious wild creatures, and it is through their bodies that their power is fully realized. But as the messages of the three *anime* tropes explored previously show, close, personal relationships with objects are not of uppermost importance. Far more important, rather, is the relationships people have with other people. Thus do magical girl *anime* emphasize romance and friendship, Miyazaki *anime* the child coming of age, and *mecha anime* the importance of the human element in the operation of machines. The object may be an intermediary, yes, but it is a temporary, second-best one, and should never, *ever* acquire a status of permanence either in the life of the individual or in the socio-political sphere.

However, it would be naïve to assume that the textual messages of particular examples of *anime* are the only messages to be extracted. It must not be forgotten that *anime*, like all objects of popular consumer culture in contemporary society, are orientated toward the market. They are meant to be bought and sold, their branded icons to be made into toys and other merchandise (Allison 2006). In fact, even when particular *anime* spark social movements, as was the case of *My Neighbor Totoro* and subsequent interest in conserving forest habitat in the Saitama hill region of the Tokyo metropolitan area, people are reported to have been motivated as much by spirituality as by recreation, that is, the consumption of space (Kikuchi & Obara 2005). *Anime*, therefore, must also be understood as a product of capitalism.

So, this is the "product", to return to the word used by Inoue (quoted in McQuaid 2001), around which the *otaku* builds a spiritual life. Is the main focus upon the message or upon the capitalist consumer item itself? The answer, in my view, appears to be the latter. The *otaku* is not an intermediate life stage through which a person passes on the way to adulthood, and he certainly does not take to heart the message of *Shoujo Kakumei Utena*, which argues that relying upon an escapist fantasy world for satisfaction and self-actualization is akin to being dead. He does not pay attention to *anime* series which tell him, for all intents and purposes, that he must not be an *otaku*. Instead, he grants the

fandom object permanent space in his own imagination (Saito 2011). Even those advocates of the *otaku* seem either to ignore or take for granted the close relationship between *otaku* and consumption: the revitalized *otaku* mecca described by Morikawa (2003) is actually a shopping and entertainment hub specializing in goods and services catering to *otaku*. And when Otsuka (2004) celebrates the *otaku* for finding an alternative to Western cultural hegemony, he understands culture at the level of the sign and rather neglects the indisputable fact that the *otaku* has become an avid consumer in a capitalist society who looks, in this respect, quite a lot like his Western counterparts.

In fact, the "cultivation" produced by the *anime* medium is not the sort aiming to change one's views about the world at all, even though it is clear that important creators such as Miyazaki, Tomino and Ikuhara themselves have strong humanist, pacifist and even anti-capitalist views which are expressed through their animated creations. Instead, the consumption of *anime* simply predisposes one to consume more *anime*, in line with the capitalist's objective to create more and ever more consumer desire, and therefore the *otaku*'s primary allegiance can never be to any message of conservation or of material rejection. He need not have any moral centre of code of ethics. In the most extreme of cases, he may well be just another database animal (Azuma 2009). Since a consumer orientation is the only *necessary* prerequisite to becoming an *otaku*, the ability to act collectively outside of the market will be constrained by a diversity of subjectivities and interests apart from their fandom objects, implying that there is at best limited space for other sorts of change. Therefore, animism may be alive and well in Japan in this new form, but if the *otaku* is the new animist, then his is the banal god of consumerism, and his shrine is the video store.

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The Dance of the Return Beat: performing the animate universe

Olu Taiwo

OBSERVATION IN ACTION

The material existence of the universe can be seen as an improvised performance: an event that has not yet finished. When we episodically exercise our free will to improvise, reflect, organize and perform with expressive insight, we are partaking in the improvised performance that is the universe. Philosophically speaking, being, becoming and performance are the norms. By this I mean that just being alive, existing, living, playing, working, and so on, already constitute the universe's dance. This dance continues manifesting a flow of change or living flux that facilitates life itself. Being born, existing and dying are all part of a performed event, which started with the Big Bang, evolved into stars, the incubators for the more complex elements, and ultimately resulting in our existence and becoming. These are my initial assumptions when conceptualizing the significance of expressive movement when we work, play, dance and act.

We may be uncertain of the ultimate truths of the universe but we desire to find meaning through research, worship and improvisation as ways to find repeating patterns in the unknown. We reflect on our observations and understandings of the material universe by telling stories that explain the meaning of our present state regarding being, becoming and performance. However, how we understand our observations depends on collective models of perception that are constantly, in a transcultural sense, changing. These collective models reflect an approximate understanding of patterns in our perceived out-there-ness.

When we collectively observe repeated cycles in temporal space, are we in actuality performing a perceptual dance in the act of seeing, conceptualizing and reflecting the rhythmic patterns in the universe's material performance? Are we looking for ways to increase our awareness or to remember the fact that we already partake in, and commune and engage with a moving material universe? Also, are we constructing new models using existing principles regarding this dance of observation in order to understand nature,

that is, what we are essentially wondrously awestruck by? These questions are made problematic by the fact that all observations are underpinned by a symbiotic relationship between our biological apparatus that facilitates our senses and our cultural models of interpretation, which is also part of the performance.

The flow of change is really the only constant in the universe! So observing static concepts and moving form with only four artistic dimensions can only take us so far. As a performance artist involved in practice as research, my interest lies in observing patterns of change in creative movement. Specifically, I am most interested in the flow of change during motion, or the flux of embodied progression, which Laban called choreutic forms (Laban 1966). Observation in action in this context does not only focus on the spectator/observer's eyes for pattern recognition, it also includes the practitioner's whole body – their reflective and reflexive observations regarding the process of skill acquisition, self-knowledge and devised performance by what I call their "physical journals". This I define as the person's embodied knowledge and memory: a kind of neuro-psycho-physical causal projection that foreshadows our living bodies (Taiwo 2009).

The significance of practice in skill acquisition, transculturally, is evident when we learn to embody a set of harmonious postures, often culturally specific for devised performance. In the process of embodiment, we simultaneously aid internal well-being by methods that can restructure the relationship between our psyche, our body and our engrams (learnt muscle memory). Through practice we can gain knowledge concerning how to work with living flux in order to find balance through mundane activities. Through a methodology of practice as research, whose ultimate aims are self- and group-knowledge, we have the possibility to connect more fully to, while finding meaning with, the great performance that is the universe and its impulse to evolve and unfold.

The value of having myself and other performers reflect on and theorize practice through performance is to give the reader a literary sense of what it is like to explore creative movement, while we explicate how we move with the rhythms of an animate universe. What is crucial to point out here is that critical reflection regarding performance affirms that practice is the real logical business of understanding cognitive and existential concepts, not a mere precursor to rationalizing them.

ARTAUD FORUM 1: DANCE OF THE RETURN BEAT

The nature of flux, being experienced in various ways through performance, necessitated the question, how can I engage with current concepts surrounding "substance", "being" and "becoming" regarding our contemporary understanding of an animate world where nothing is in stasis? The creative practice that contextualizes an answer for me was provided by an analysis of my concept of "the Dance of the Return Beat". This concept was the final culmination of a workshop underpinned by a postural experience of dancing to a curved rhythmic pattern played live on a Gambian drum called a djembe. The techniques this dance facilitates emerge from non-verbal acts that can trigger a language of movement underpinned by structured improvisation. These are rhythmic and postural stances augmented by agency and choice. The structure of these "triggers" and "acts", in the form of devised movement, enables individuals to improvise with agreed prearranged rules while using their hyper-sensual awareness developed through their physical

journal's expanded holographic perception. (These agreed rules were developed earlier to increase the practitioner's somatic sensitivity.)

As part of the first Artaud Forum and in memory of Kazuo Ohno, one of the founders of Butoh, I presented my latest version of the Dance of the Return Beat, a workshop that engages all the concepts and practices above. (For more information and video examples, see Centre for Contemporary and Digital Performance 2011.) It gave me the opportunity to share the real essence of my workshop in an appropriate academic forum. What has been exciting and valuable for me when understanding the nature of this flow of change or living flux was studying an Artaudian methodology (which seeks new ways to viscerally connect with an audience) in conjunction with my developing concept of the physical journal. I wanted to see if it was possible, in an academic context, to systematically open a participant's physical journal, introducing them to a mobile studio practice (i.e. body moving mindfully in space) that facilitates observation in action (Taiwo 2009: 113). The workshop seduces the participant's subconscious to dress their intuition with an appropriate animal guise, which stealthily aids, through a reflective and reflexive process, self-understanding. This meant that the participant had to unconsciously and obliquely access subterranean currents within their own subconscious, operating in a liminal space somewhere between imaginative construction and passive dreaming. The purpose was to affect the process of understanding by stealth: to provide internal imagery that would be an aid to critical reflection. I had successfully delivered the workshop in three hours at the annual "Tribe of Doris" festival for many years but had never delivered it completely in an academic context before. For the first Artaud Forum, I reduced the workshop to two hours in an attempt to focus the delegates' experience and draw them into a practice as research method; a process in which participants reflected while performing actions related to their imaginary journey. The aim of this physical journey was to express emotional content through creative embodied motion which, after reflection, facilitates increased self-knowledge.

There are two parts to the experience, which starts with us all sat around in a circle. The first part is designed to reconnect the participant's awareness of the moment to their physical journal (defined earlier as their embodied memory and knowledge). This concept is similar to the French phenomenologist Merleau-Ponty's concept of the lived body (1962), which can be seen as the knowledge of our body experienced as us. I sense, I feel and I move, therefore I am. However, the physical journal also focuses on the neurological and metabolic potential for writing lasting effort forms or engrams into the body. This is crucial in practice-based observations, as objects are not scrutinized through the eyes exclusively, but are engaged with by the whole lived body underpinned by the practitioner's centre of perception, their sensorium. Over the years I have devised a number of exercises that facilitate the participant to holographically expand their physical awareness – to get the participant to be in touch with themselves as human animals.

The second part has three stages:

- moving the imagination physically through the elemental states of Air, Fire, Water and Earth;
- guided visualization: meeting the guise by dreaming up an animal in a specific environment;
- embodying the animal's behaviours through movement and neuropsychological explorations.

After the journey we end as we started, sitting together in a large circle to close and reflect on the experience. At this point, I invite some people to share a narrative of their journey. Over the years I have been offered many anecdotes that describe the immediate impact of the work on people's sense of their living flux. One such example, from the early period when I first started to develop the work, was the story of an older woman. After the journey, her account of the story (as recorded in my notes) went something like this:

> Following a brief look around in the preliminary space, a room in her imagination, she noticed a wooden door to a potential outside where she was to meet her animal. She proceeded, with some trepidation, to venture outside by opening the door.

As part of the journey through the guided visualization, I stress the importance of not pre-empting what will emerge in the mind's eye. So in the process the inner room, an external environment and an animal will have to be met and constructed (spontaneously) by the subconscious, not by (premeditated) wishful thinking. The first part of the workshop was designed to temper the participants' desire to wilfully suspend conscious control during this period. This is in order that they should accept the first image that comes to mind and run with it.

> When she opened the door, she was initially disappointed as what greeted her was a cold deserted polar landscape, which appeared barren. "What animal of any interest would come and be of any relevance to me now?" she thought – at which point a large polar bear came bounding up. They greeted, in her imagination, and she proceeded with her dream-body to become the animal and go for a ride. What followed was a journey into the secret recesses of ice in the polar region. She was amazed at the diversity and beauty in a space that at first she thought was barren. She proceeded, mimetically and verbally, to describe the amazing architecture of the ice both above and below the icy water which was teaming with life.

After describing her encounter, she remarked in a confident and resolute way that when she came out of the visualization the metaphor for her then current situation was clear. She was coming up to retirement in a few weeks' time and she had felt a lot of fear surrounding what was to happen after she retired, as many people experience during this period in their lives. She experienced a change in attitude concerning the flux of her situation as a result of this physical and neuropsychological journey that suggested that she could start to explore new and wonderful things in what looked to be a barren landscape. The sentiments of this journey have been experienced by many people; however, this is striking as it was after this sharing that I truly began to understand the nature of this "Dance of the Return Beat" or "Animal Spirit Dance" (as it was initially called). Not all experiences are quite so clear, and some participants come to me with the hope of instant interpretations. I usually reply by saying that only they can truly decode the metaphors and that they should wait to see what emerges as a revelation. I do offer ways to decode metaphors in the way that is generally done with reference to poetry – as a way to free people from any tendency towards literal interpretation. However, this is not expressed as magical insight coming from myself but more by the way of decoding symbols as in dreams.

PHILOSOPHICAL CONCEPTS CONCERNING ANIMATION AND ANIMA

The metaphysical subtext to these workshops was based on particular concepts surrounding animism. These bring together animation (regarding all forms of movement) with the concept of *anima* or the soul (an experience of an interiority) to reveal a new animism that concentrates on relationality (partaking with others in world making) in order to appreciate that there are a host of ways of observing changing phenomena. There are three broad concepts that contextualize the metaphysical framework the Return Beat:

- *Substance is being, becoming and performance*: the ground state of the universe is movement.
- *Movement and substance occur, manifest and flow in cycles*: because the ground state of the universe is movement, we should attune ourselves to the rhythms, patterns and cycles of unfolding temporal space.
- *Participation in the flux and flow of universal becoming*: there are various ways of learning to be attentive by developing ways to increase participation in the flows of change.

These are unpacked in the following sections.

Substance is being, becoming and performance

The ground state of the universe is movement. It is a verb, an animatedness, a becoming that is an unfinished performance and although we are mere fragments of fragments, we are all making reality as we live and become. This means that as well as representing an experience of a curved rhythmic flux within a performative and transcultural perception of rhythm, the concept of the Return Beat is also, paradoxically, a liminal point of dynamic stillness centred within a living self-moving physical journal. Although liminality is normally associated with edges and boundaries, in the experience and performance of the Return Beat the centre is also liminal as a moving, relational and unfolding temporal space. How I dance and organize my physical journal around this point of dynamic stillness as an integrated whole provides an efficient context for negotiating the gravitational influences in temporal space (Laban 1966). The current Return Beat as a framework is expressed as follows:

- the Return Beat as "*being*" the liminal point at the centre of my physical journal;
- the Return Beat as "*becoming*" within my experience of a curved rhythmic flux;
- the Return Beat as a "*performative*" nexus between the perceptual structure of my mobile studio and the complex transcultural experience of my physical journal.

The Dance of the Return Beat, then, is the dance of the whole framework. This is when we dance with improvised and choreographed movement phrases moving around a point of dynamic stillness at the centre of our physical journals with an embodied awareness of the curved rhythmic sensual flux associated with the Return Beat's perceptual framework. With this embodied consciousness we can express our transcultural becoming as we move through the perceptual flux of general space (De Quincey 2002). From the performer's point of view, the Dance of the Return Beat starts with the front of the body, which is the performer's physical front, as distinct from down stage (Laban 1966). So from this

perspective, as my physical journal moves towards a particular point of the compass, my perception of temporal space moves in the opposite direction. Owing to this perceptual paradox, my perception can push and pull my experience of temporal space to the left and right, towards and away, up and down from me, or clockwise or anti-clockwise around me. In this way, by focusing on what temporal space is doing in relation to my subjective experience, I can become increasingly aware of my presence of *being* and the presence of others in the shared moment. This perception was developed from my practice of drumming, basketball, T'ai Chi Ch'uan and Capoeira. The Return Beat as *becoming*, in this framework, focuses on the experience of a curved rhythmic flux, which unfolds in cycles. This was expressed in the workshop as a constant rhythmic presence, which I play on the djembe mentioned earlier using a combination of 3:4, 4:4, 7:8, 4:8 time signatures as a way to stimulate terrains of improvised *performance* and increase the awareness of a ground state in perpetual motion. Improvising in rhythmic cycles gives participants a chance to create complex expressive movements that contextualize the abstract narratives and emotional flows commencing from personal experience.

Movement and substance occur, manifest and flow in cycles

Assuming the ground state of the universe is movement and not stasis, it is sensible to attune to the rhythms, patterns and cycles concerning what we observe and reflect in the passage of unfolding temporal space. Modern physics suggests that animated vibrations lie at the heart of substance's nature. By employing the biological concept of the autopoietic or self-organizing entities I propose that everything must have a Return Beat: a perceptual centre of gravity as a cognitive reference point and visceral attractor for phase alignment (Van Nieuwenhuijze 1998). This attractor embodies a nexus of our physiological and psychological experience, emerging from our bodies' living centre (Laban 1966), which is an experience of information returning through rhythmic and cyclical pathways from the edges of our perceptual membrane or kinesphere, towards the centre of our physical journals. This arises from an idea that movement, cyclical oscillating movement, lies at the heart of substance and being enmeshed with temporal space. The definition of substance for the purpose of this chapter derives from the Aristotelian notion of the natural essence of something that is the material of its being. This definition of substance also includes Merleau-Ponty's concept that the perceived world always lies prior to, and is fundamental to, any rational value concerning existence. So from the perception of our physical journals as result of the lived body, what is given value rationally comes after an embodied encounter with what we perceptually construct and project.

I want to highlight my thinking concerning the concept surrounding animism with reference to Whitehead's notion that inherent in matter is an elementary proto-form of consciousness. This does not preclude the distinction between animate and inanimate objects, referring to Maturana and Varela's definition of living systems as being autopoietic – that is, as having the ability for self-creation and reproduction by being informationally open but organizationally closed. It is just that inanimate objects can be redefined as being spatial temporal events having an animating interiority or, according to Whitehead, having no "external adventures, but only the internal adventure of becoming; its birth is its end" (A. N. Whitehead [1929] 1979: 80). The idea that objects are oscillating events in a state of becoming provides a useful distinction between animating

events with an interiority that have no external adventure and autopoietic systems that do. This is explicated with Maturana and Varela's definition:

> An autopoietic machine is a machine organized (defined as a unity) as a network of processes of production (transformation and destruction) of components which: (i) through their interactions and transformations continuously regenerate and realize the network of processes (relations) that produced them; and (ii) constitute it (the machine) as a concrete unity in space in which they (the components) exist by specifying the topological domain of its realization as such a network.
>
> (Maturana & Varela 1980: 78)

This complex description is an attempt to outline a criterion for the creation of an artificial autopoietic system. The idea that an artificial system can self-regulate in such a way by regenerating itself (the component) with processes of feedback (relations) to a topological domain (defined as a unity) is what our cells, organs, lived bodies, extended family, community, extended community of animals, and plants in relation to the transforming processes between elements in the periodic table, do as a matter of natural evolution. This is outlined expertly in James Lovelock's Gaia theory (1979).

Edward Burnett Tylor (1871) is credited with defining the term animism, which is derived from the Latin for soul: *anima*. But like all definitions there are variations in meaning depending on the context. It could mean the self's in-here-ness, the individual's soul as distinct from the out-there-ness of the individual's different persona described in Jungian psychology. It could also mean the feminine aspect present in the deepest recesses of the male personality complex. Essentially, however, the term *anima* refers to the animating principle within human beings with the capacity for thought, emotion and action. Tylor defined the term animism as the belief in individual souls, or *anima*, which exist in all animate and inanimate matter, and this implies, by extension, that the life of this *anima* is caused by an essential force that is distinct from both these forms of matter. The assumption that all natural events have an animating principle, which substantiates and is different in form from their physical appearance, is a key concept in animism. Although Tylor saw this as the first phase, anthropologically, of human development, it is interesting to note how in the twenty-first century the new sciences of quantum mechanics, chaos theory and second-order cybernetics are changing the principles and models of how we understand what is fundamental about movement and, therefore, about the nature of the animating principle. I have always liked the Hopi concept of stone as "frozen memory". Maybe it appears frozen to us at this frequency, but to bigger cycles in temporal spaces, like the movement of molten lava, it too is a process of living flux.

When examining Western notions of substance, being and becoming, the Yoruba idea of *Ashe* provides an interesting precept. *Ashe* can be translated as "so be it". However, it also relates to the proto-animating principle of *becoming*, concerning the spatial and temporal existence of all things in the world. From this perspective, the world of the unborn (future) is constantly negotiating for its place to exist in the world of the living (present) while holding and carrying the world of ancestors (past) inside its current evolving form. In his essay, *The Fourth Stage*, Wole Soyinka expresses this clearly when he claims that "Continuity for the Yoruba operates both through the cyclic concept of time and the animist interfusion of all matter and consciousness" (Soyinka 1993: 30). The implication of

this precept is that temporal space is not seen as separate from matter and consciousness, but as a single substance that unfolds like an onion in concentric spheres and logarithmic spirals. Soyinka's ideas on continuity are consistent with the concept of *Ashe*, which underpins the Yoruba notion of spatial temporal existence, where the world of the living (present) is, in a metaphysical sense, seen as sharing the same spatial and temporal fabric or substance as the world of the ancestors (past) and the world of the unborn (future). The differences between these complex worlds are primarily concerned with dimensionality, phase and frequency, not with its base substance.

In his book *Sacred Geometry: Philosophy and Practice*, Robert Lawlor discusses a third perception of time that emerges when contemplating logarithmic spirals (1982: article 3.2). Traditional geometers named this geometric pattern *Spira mirabilis*, the miraculous spiral, because it was so rich in geometric and algebraic harmonies. Lawlor calls this third perception of time "Gnomonic time", which provides conceptual insights into Yoruba perspectives surrounding personal encounters with spatial/temporal reality. Lawlor is referring here to the phenomenon Greek mathematicians called *gnomon*, which is the basis of a type of growth called "gnomonic expansion". Lawlor says,

> Hero of Alexandria defines it as follows, "A gnomon is any figure which, when added to an original figure, leaves the resultant figure similar to the original." The contemplation of this figure leads to an understanding of one of nature's most common forms of growth, growth by accretion or accumulative increase, in which the old form is contained within the new. This is the way the more permanent tissues of the animal body, such as bones, teeth, horns and shells, develop, in contrast to the soft tissue which is discarded and replaced. (*Ibid.*: 65)

The visibility of the past within the present through the rhythmic pulsation of spiralling growth offers fascinating implications about the nature of time. Predominant in Western notions about time are two main ideas with many variations. First is the idea that the present moves, like an arrow, forward sequentially through time towards an unknown future, leaving behind a dissolving past that is immortalized by written records and memory. The second notion is of an all-embracing, absolute, universal and mystical time that is a direct result of a single creator. Lawlor continues,

> The gnomonic principle adds a third description of time. This is time as an expanding growth upon growth, an evolution, one might say, belonging to the conscious energies which transcend their transitory forms and substances. As Chinese wisdom says, "The whole body of spiritual consciousness progresses without pause; the whole body of material substance suffers decay without intermission." In such a model, past time remains present as form, and the formation grows through pulsating, rhythmic gnomonic expansion. (*Ibid.*: 71)

Ritual expression through music, art and movement acting together can bridge the differences between dimensionality, phase and frequency for the individual by inviting us to partake in the co-creation of *gnomonic* temporal expression within the context of the community. These ritual expressions manifest culturally through mythology, music, art and dance, by individuals actively participating in drumming, masquerading (using

masks) and dancing and, as a result, reaching liminal states in trance collectively through the constant momentum of rhythmic cycles. So each participant, with their inherent coexistent states (ancestors, living and unborn), combines to create a "we-ness" that is galvanized by an agreed or stated Return Beat (Soyinka 1993: 32).

Bliss is important in ritualized expression and participation, not just for our own creativity connected to a perceptive relationship with space-time, but for a whole community of witnesses. It is a chance to galvanize the group and opens vistas of experience for everyone, creating a shared point of reference. Bliss has a greater role than feeling good; it is about feeling divinity. The bliss factor is a term I use to describe that which generates an inner glow, which can be seen as a universal factor for giving us the motive force inspiring our endeavours. It is an expression of our transformative libido. Bliss opens playful energies, it mushrooms creative possibilities, it originates from developing personally what we really want to achieve, feeding our ability to "unfold" effort by unconsciously creating a positive feedback loop within individual consciousness. This articulates the nature of "becoming" in all competing waveforms, from events in the quantum world to the complex evolution of autopoiesis in living organisms. While waveforms or living organisms engage with the struggle to maintain the flux of life, preparations are required to leave and make new spaces for the emerging unborn to enter the world of the living (things in the present). By engaging and celebrating in the cosmological rhythmic flux of ancestors, unborn, birth, life, death and back to ancestor, we set an emotional context for this dance. The concept of an embodied place for the ancestor provides a corporeal Return Beat, as we all have the potential to contribute, by our actions, to the passing on of our genes, which have evolved as a result of our parents' interaction (nature) and our transcultural experience (nurture).

Participation in the flux and flow of universal becoming

There are various ways of learning to be attentive by developing behaviours to increase participation in and awareness of the flow of change in temporal space. Organized movement, driven internally to maintain an embodied presence in temporal space, also animates its spatial context. This idea is underpinned by Einstein's concept of space-time and is at the heart of my thinking concerning what happens when we move. If we are to accept the cosmological proposal that at the centre of any galaxy is a black hole, then as the fabric of space-time moves closer to this conceptual event-horizon, resulting from its intense gravitational pull, it spirals the folds of space-time and warps the very substance of temporal space itself. Bearing this in mind, it stands to reason that our lived bodies, enmeshed with the fabric of galactic space, are also essentially an integrating part of temporal space in general. This integration spirals and draws subtle fields in temporal space (Laban's concept of Choreutic trace-forms) towards the lived body's Return Beat. So, as we generate motion from our embodied centres, in a small way we are all materially altering the fabric of temporal space in which we are all a fundamental part.

Techniques for effectively engaging with temporal space physically in a performative context involve the use of rhythmic and postural stances in practice. As mentioned above, I use forms of animal guising, which can be further defined as inhabiting the character of an animal's behavioural properties to inspire movement. A possible point of personal transformation can come when the animal in question emerges from the practitioner's subconscious as a result of visualization techniques that I have developed through

practice. As well as animal stances from internal imaginative impulses, I use the somatic techniques, which include T'ai Chi Ch'uan, Capoeira, Yoga, Bata and Feng Shou as ways to access experiences of muscular-skeletal alignment in motion to facilitate the rewriting of inefficient habits in participants' physical journals by generating efficient ones.

Contemporary dance practice utilizes processes of embodied cognition and somatic awareness, which in performative situations can include work with interactive technology. Our work can incorporate the projected image, using devising techniques to create what Johannes Birringer calls a "post-choreographic" event (Birringer 2008). This is where gestures and physical processes can remotely trigger audio/visual digital content, using various means, which reveals something of our current human condition in real-time. In my case, I have used floating choreographic phrases within a general attitude of improvised movement, all performed coherently with an ensemble that includes the interactive temporal space, the installed interactive system and interaction between participants. The effect is of a coherent relationship of chance collisions where practitioners dance with each other as if in water informed by possible triggers within the installation. Heightened somatic awareness is crucial in the complicit interactive field that constitutes the group. This is at the heart of the structured improvisation, due to real-time devising decisions that are needed to trigger sound events with real-time interactive technology.

As a result of my practising drumming, basketball, T'ai Chi Ch'uan and Capoeira over several decades, the skills acquired have largely informed part of my movement practice and vocabulary. Primarily, I teach various stances in workshops to give participants a firm, efficient foundation for exploring movement safely. I am particularly interested in the development of *Chi* or *Qi* as a consequence of postural alignment in the different stances and how this is connected to the application of effort qualities and breath to affect our sinews in the muscular-skeletal system that we mobilized with our physical journals. The concept of *Chi* or *Qi* is hard, even now, for Western-based science to fully comprehend since it seeks evidence of an energy force that can be measured with Western methods. As mentioned above, in the culture of the Yoruba and its diaspora, we have the term *Ashe*, which is similar to the concept of *Chi*. This can be defined as an object's or subject's "existential force to be"; however, this is an oversimplification. We can expand this concept specifically to include "the power, current and tendency to makes things exist, become and happen", meaning that it is the sustaining force that keeps things in existence: *being, becoming and performing*. *Ashe* also shares things in common with the physical properties associated with the quantum world. The problem with the term "life force" is that the term has specific connections with biology related to the distinction between the animate (plants, invertebrates, vertebrates, mammals, etc.) and the inanimate (rock, water, metal, etc.). When we talk about *Chi* we are in fact addressing the metaphysical. There is an assumption, as in quantum mechanics, that all of existence is animate: that which exists moves and therefore generates flow and flux in different ways – not necessarily only in biological life, but in the forces and conditions for life to exist.

In conclusion, the workshops concerning the Dance of the Return Beat have given me a context to share some of my complex performative concepts with participants through a practice as research methodology. Over the years, the results have been quite startling. Many interventions have been facilitated where individuals have accessed internal terrains of their imagination and performed using the behaviours of animal guises. This, in turn, has reconnected participants to the truth of an animate universe.

40

Performance is currency in the deep world's gift economy: an incantatory riff for a global medicine show

Ronald Grimes

This script for oral performance (here disguised as argumentative prose) is preceded by showing a scene from the 1961 film The Music Man *in which Robert Preston, playing the huckster Professor Harold Hill, conjures up fear that the young men of River City, Iowa, are going to hell in a hand-basket unless they stop playing pool and join the big brass street band, which Dr Hill proposes to lead despite his abysmal musical ignorance.*

A young woman asks the poet, environmentalist and Buddhist Gary Snyder: "If we have made such good use of animals, eating them, singing about them, drawing them, riding them, and dreaming about them, what do they get back from us?"

"An excellent question", replies Snyder, "directly on the point of etiquette and propriety, and putting it from the animals' side. The Ainu say that the deer, salmon, and bear like our music and are fascinated by our languages. So", continues Snyder, "we sing to the fish or the game, speak words to them, say grace. Periodically, we dance for them. A song for your supper: performance is currency in the deep world's gift economy" (1990: 75).

This line is the torah fragment I fence, the plenary axis I circumambulate. When I first read it, I scribbled questions in the margin: What? Animals care about performances? What kind of performances? Currency? Performance has cash value? Deep world? What's that – a place below this one? And, what do you mean, gift economy? This is a dog-eat-dog, country-eat-country global economy.

Daily newspapers are riddled with eco-factoids:

- We are extinguishing 10,000 species each year (Paul Erlich quoted in Swimme & Berry 1992: 247).
- We are destroying the rainforests, earth's most luxuriant life system, at the rate of one acre per second (*ibid.*: 246).
- There are so few farmers now that the US Census Bureau has quit counting them as a category (Jackson 1997: 158).

- Humans have destroyed enough species that it will require a full ten million years for the planet to recover – twenty times as long as humans have already existed (Yoon 2000).

Chant a few eco-factoids a sufficient number of times and either you begin to pace, or you become strangely calm. Either you levitate into an apocalyptic frenzy, or you drop down into a surprising stillness.

A few centuries ago we graduated from homicide, patricide, matricide and suicide, to genocide. Now, we're on to bigger deeds: ecocide and biocide. To destroy a life, even a bevy of lives, is one thing; but to destroy entire species, the genetic templates, the utter seeds, of life is quite another. This life-on-earth arrangement is likely a rare, if not a one-shot deal, but we, our very selves, have become the gravest danger to this tumbling, swirling, teeming entanglement we call life.

Ecocide is slower than homicide but surer, because it is total and irrevocable. War between nations is dramatic and destructive, but industrial waste, lacking the drama, is as deadly. The game of eco-eightball may look benign (because there's always some warranty promising to repair any damage with a technocratic fix), but technofixes are patches on a crumbling dam. So we are in dire need of some foolish vision, some brassy, instrument-free band to keep the old boys' club occupied and away from the bays and nesting grounds.

The soiled state of the global nest is just as evident in the fate of ritual as it is in the blitz of eco-factoids. Our choreography, naturally, apes our cosmology. A few years ago my family and I were invited to an outdoor service. Ecology was in the air and the pastor smelled it. It was time this particular Christian tribe risked a little sunburn on the pale forehead. So the congregation moved all the chairs outdoors, leaving their sacred, suburban canopy empty for that particular Lord's Day.

It was an awkward spectacle, clerical robes blowing up thigh high, bulletins flying, chairs tipping this way and that on the uneven slope, adults squinting in the sun, and kids, invited into action by fresh-cut grass, romping and rolling ...

Despite the claims of the sermon, everything about that performance (except the oatmeal molasses brown bread from the hand of the pastor's mother) was a testimony to alienation from the environment, to the utter unsuitability of this liturgy to this place. The pastor held an ecologically respectable view of the universe, and she did distribute her mother's homemade oatmeal molasses brown bread instead of paper-thin wafers, but this liturgical celebration dishonoured the dirt upon which it was done.

The state of the world nest is reflected in the failure of the old "services" to service that nest. Liturgies around the world have been caught in the act of doing disservice to the planet. Ritual disservice to the planet – ponder that.

PERFORMANCE

You wouldn't expect it, would you, for performance to be anybody's answer to the question: how can we save River-City-Bay-Town- Mountain-Village from death by conspicuous overconsumption? Unless, of course, we are required to entrance the plants and animals with our song and dance.

The question of planetary survival is a conundrum, a koan. A koan is not just a cute riddle, a brain teaser for Buddhists. A koan is a bottleneck-in-being, a belly full to meditate upon for the duration. The incantation, "Performance is currency ... " implies a koan-like question: what action, rightly performed, can save the planet? This koan of planetary performance, let us call it, when it is properly contemplated, should burn like a jalapeno in the belly of the soul.

If you are among the quick-witted, you may think you already have the answer, and it is: "There is no such action." But if this is your reply, you are too quick for your own damned good. A koan, it's true, is an impossible question, but, as a dutiful disciple of the earth, you must answer it, not evade it. In fact, you not only must answer correctly (for your heartbeat and breath cycle depend upon it), you must embody your reply. The reply can't be evasive or merely verbal. If your reply is that there is no answer at all, or that there is no gesture performative, ritualistic or otherwise that could possibly save the planet, then the master, the lord of the beasts, sends you back to square one to meditate on the koan of planetary performance.

As long as performance is confined to performance halls, performance is no answer to the problem of saving the planet from toxicity and species evacuation. The best that aesthetic art can do is to mime the problem.

The same is true of religious religion and scientistic science. The problem lies in the sectoring and the scissoring. In the sectored and scissored-up world, performance is one thing, religion, another. Performance is entertaining and religion, serious; performance is pretend and religion, real. Performance is fictive and subjunctive, shot through with as-ifs, while religion is believed – absolutely and without question.

But Gary Snyder, our testy teacher whose aphorism I am shamelessly and publicly milking, assumes no such divisive dualism. He keeps performance together with religion; singing to the fish together with saying grace. In the deep world, ritual enactment and theatrical performance are not enemies; they are cousins, kissin' cousins.

So what kind of performance could possibly gain the attention of the creatures and thereby save the world? If you consider the world from the animals' point of view, the answer is obvious: performances in which the performers are animals, human and otherwise. Coyotes and baboons are as narcissistic as we are. Why, they'll trade their skins to witness good singing and dancing. Performances are currency only if they are deep-world performances, and they are deep-world performances only if their metaphors are embodied – radically, to the bone, to the quick.

To dance the peacock or play the snake, you must become the peacock, be the snake. A deep-world performance is one in which performers are so drastically identified with the objects of their performance that there is no difference, even though everybody knows animals and humans are different.

Such a world can be frightening. Why, when your very lawn or your beloved garden, object of costly love and chemical affection, rises up against you, subjecting you to tough, inquisitorial questions, well, what can you do but tremble?

Fearing the magic that always arrives on the heels of drastically embodied metaphors, people are tempted to resist the call to right ritualizing by setting performance and ritual in opposition.

Ritual is religious, traditional, unchanging and purged, by god, of magic. Accordingly, performance is ir-religious, experimental, theatrical and, shame upon its head, fad-driven.

But the congregation of earth creatures has no use for squeaky clean, safe religion and just as little use for aestheticized entertainment purged of harmony, humility and prayer. Neither earns the applause of butterflies and milkweed.

CURRENCY

Another surprise: ecology activists, especially poetic Buddhist ones, don't talk much about money. But consider this: currency is any medium of exchange, the stuff which, though worthless in itself, we work for, buy with, die for. Currency: paper that stands for gold or silver which in turn stands for food and shelter and air and water. Currency: the symbolic stuff with which we buy our way out (or in).

When sneaky Snyder teases us into believing that performance is currency, he isn't talking about box office revenues, or the sort of performance the governments have in mind when they declare that grants to universities will hereinafter be dependent upon multiple performance indicators. He's saying performances themselves are currency. The performances, not the money, are what earn the attention, the grace and the forgiveness of the animals and plants and spirits, the council of all beings.

The reigning view is that science and technology, allied with industry and commerce, can mint the currency with which to buy our way out of the ecological mess. But, of course, the ecological mess is bigger than science, because scientists (like the rest of us) are smaller than the universe. Earth contains science and scientists, not the other way around.

The world's planners and managers like to construe the state of the planet as a problem with a solution. But solutions are discrete and specific, whereas the eco-crisis is systemic and pervasive; it implicates the whole, not just some part such as the sludge in the Great Lakes, the air over Mexico City, or salmon who refuse to run west-coast streams in British Columbia. So a planet-saving performance requires the participation of the entire council of creatures, not just some special class like scientists or priests or band leaders or professors or artists or even humans.

There is no ecological problem – except earthly extinction, which is to say, problem-solving is the wrong model. We will never know enough in time to solve the earth's human "problem". To echo Yeats, we can embody truth but we cannot know it. A problem assumes a problem-solver who stands apart from the problem. A problem concerns some thing *in* or *on* the earth. A crisis concerns the fate of the earth.

The difficulty, then, is not with this trombone or that violin but with the whole concert, in fact, with the music that underscores it. There is only one concert playing on stage-earth, and we have no choice but to play together. So, by all means, let there be scientists and technicians in Mr Music Man's big brass save-the-planet band, but also call the bricklayers, boom operators, old cranks, young crickets and master tinkers.

Some scientists fret that so many non-scientists are showing up on an already overcrowded stage. Other scientists welcome the tinkers. On the one hand, the talk becomes fuzzier. On the other, the arrival of ritual-makers and musicians, parading fundies and be-caped witches, game animals and domestic vegetables makes the medicine show a lot more entertaining as the music, the squawking and the metaphors begin to flap and fly. The currency-confusion is gawdawful. What's the medium of exchange – formulas and equations? Or musical scores and incantations?

When religious people arrive at the ecological market where planetary salvation is up for auction, they usually arrive with a wallet full of moral currency. They typically tender ethics, statements about what ought to be, hoping to stem the tide of what is. The currency of religion, as well as religious studies, is not rules of scientific procedure or musical scales but canons of belief and codes of behaviour.

A series of conferences was held at Harvard. Out of them emerged the Forum on Religion and Ecology[1] and several volumes on the environmental contributions of the multinational religions. A remarkable feature is how much attention the volumes pay to beliefs, myths, ethics and worldviews and how little they attend to ritual and other kinds of performance. The Forum's brochure describes its mission as that of "highlighting the important roles religious traditions play in constructing moral frameworks and orienting narratives regarding human interactions with the environment". Even though the brochure mentions ritual practices, it rapidly drops the topic to return to the theme of a "distinctive ethics of respect for nature".[2]

The framers of the Earth Charter are ethically preoccupied too. They speak of their carefully hammered out ethical principles as "soft law". They hope nations and other human groups will give these principles teeth by transforming them into "hard law", the kind you are fined for violating.

I believe ethical reformulations and new laws are required to protect the planet. And we could do worse than subscribe to the sonorous principles of the Earth Charter:[3]

- Do not do to the environment of others what you do not want done to your environment.
- Respect Earth and all life. Earth, each life form, and all living beings possess intrinsic value ...
- Share equitably the benefits of natural resources ...
- Treat all creatures with compassion ...

The Earth Charter is a generically religious document. "Earth" is capitalized, and the principles echo those of several faith traditions. Charter principles are lofty and worthy, but can they create the realities they aspire to? Probably not. That's why the framers of the Charter hope to inspire legislation, "hard law".

I'm in concert with the aims of the Forum on Religion and Ecology and of the Earth Charter, but what strikes me about these and other examples of religiously attuned environmental activism is the recurrent, liberal-Protestant-sounding assumption that the obvious way to proceed is by formulating ethical principles and then putting them into action by challenging political institutions.

The strategy is necessary but insufficient, because moral principles and new legislation don't – by themselves, disembodied – change attitudes. Attitudes and worldviews are related; each conditions the other. Attitudes are not merely emotional, nor worldviews merely intellectual. Each conspires with the other in determining how we act, what we perform and, therefore, how we behave.

DEEP WORLD

Performance is currency in the deep world ... What is this "deep world"? Surely not some place below the ground, or some supernatural envelope surrounding ordinary reality, not even the human unconscious (which we in the psychologized West imagine as deep within the psyche).

We in the sectored-and-scissored West are habituated to dividing things into warring camps: shallow world/deep world, this world/the other world.

The philosophical label for this particular form of deviance is dualism. Our dualistic tendencies lure us into setting part against whole, part against part. Dualism is not the mere making of distinctions but about setting them in hierarchical and antagonistic relation to one another and assuming that one is not necessary while the other is.

Dualism lives in the marrow and blood; it has taken root in languages and brains. But Earth is declaring dualism taboo. Earth people are recognizing that the survival value of a scissored-and-sectored cosmology is diminishing at an ever-increasing rate. We have stumbled over the obvious: the ankle bone is connected to the shin bone is connected to the knee bone is connected to the thigh bone is connected to the planet Jupiter is connected to the crawling things beneath the sod is connected to the price of Canadian lake water exported to Japan.

So we're pausing to take stock. We're asking: what's the cost of stashing science in labs, art in galleries, education in universities, government in parliament buildings and religion in temples?

Answer: the cost is the rarification of religion, the preciousness of the arts, the bureaucratization of government, and the reign of technocratic scientism throughout the land.

If there is to be an enduring deep world, some super seamstress somewhere must find a needle capable of stitching together the swatches.

The deep world, then, is not the opposite of the shallow, or this, world. Rather, it is – now you may choose your metaphor – the centre of the six directions, the kingdom of God which is among you, nirvana which is no place other than samsara. In short, the deep world is the planet, whole cloth, earth's space and history as of a piece. The deep world is this very world on occasions performative, when creeping, crawling critters and tenacious, clinging weeds join things vegetative, hopping and contemplative to sing and talk and dance and eat together with the be-clothed, us humans. That's deep.

The deep world, because it is an imagined, performed cosmos, is momentary and occasional, but it is also metaphorically and utterly real, as real as anybody's smoke stack or weed whacker. The deep world is fed on things sprouting in the dark root cellar of the human animal's imagination.

Participants in international religion and ecology discussions sometimes recognize that more than ethical principles and just laws are needed, that deep-world transformation is necessary. One religious studies scholar declares, "As a Buddhist, I would emphasize that inner personal transformation is most basic" (Gross 1997: 54). For her, consciousness is the deepest, or most fundamental, layer. The logic seems to be: a change in consciousness eventuates in an explicit ethic, which in turn inspires ecologically sensitive laws, which in turn bring about collective and institutional compliance, thus transforming the planet into a just and sustainable environment.

But spiritual change alone makes no more sense than legal change alone. It is as profoundly counter-ecological to posit consciousness or spirit as basic as it is to claim that law or matter or production are basic. Neither survives for long without the other.

The urgent task, then, is not in deciding which is deepest, spirituality or politics, religion or theatre, but learning how to nurture such an attitude of interconnectedness that *we* are no longer the aliens on this planet. We human creatures have always tended to levitate off it. By thinking, emoting, imagining, calculating and inventing, we rarify ourselves into the ether, coming to fancy that we are not food. But if we cannot learn to be food, our species will become a dead-end branch on the evolutionary tree. So the question is how to ground ourselves, admit that we are food, and become the animals we are.

GIFT ECONOMY

Performance is currency in the ... gift economy. A gift economy is a ritual economy, a performative means of exchange in a stitched-together, bricolage world. A gift economy is related to *the* economy, but it's not identical with it. A gift economy has a certain holy foolishness to it. In *the* economy, gifting would seem an unlikely answer to the "problem" of ecological disaster. *The* economy is supposed to be sufficiently rational that, having conducted a calculation of risks and benefits, one can cash into it. The gift economy, however, originates with a give-away, a proffering of gratitude magnanimous, of play excessive and impractical.

To the council of all beings, bodied and disembodied, masked and unmasked, the gift economy makes a certain ridiculous-hilarious-utterly-essential sense, and it assumes the necessity of loss, even of deliberate and celebrated loss, of sacrifice, of giving up what you'd rather keep.

The economy would never countenance offering African beer to ancestors already in the ground, spilling the blood of perfectly edible Haitian chickens, yielding up only-begotten sons, giving away first fruits free, or promulgating a jubilee cancellation of third-world debt.

In a gift economy, the animals are willing to trade their very skins and feathers for a song and dance. So the people-dancers and the people-singers must condescend to trade *their* skins and *their* masks for those of animals or plants or water or clouds.

What the creatures have to lose in the gift economy is their lives. What the people have to lose is their false sense of themselves as superior.

Deep-world performance transpires any place where a gift economy, even temporarily, undermines – or better, suffuses – THE economy. But what kind of performance is appropriate to a gift economy? It's easy enough to say: Do the dog. Wiggle the worm. Howl the jackal. Admit to being fodder or cabbage or bran.

Ritually speaking, we are not only what we eat, but also what we sing, proclaim, dance, chant, drum. If I am what I sing, what will singing this song make of me? If I am what I dance, what will doing this make of me? These are gift-economy, ritual, questions.

The peanuts in the gallery only care if the dancing and eating and singing make of us, plants. The snaky creatures of the orchestra pit only care if the dancing and eating and singing make of us, animals. The earth only cares if the dancing and eating and singing make of us, earthlings.

If we can't earn either the respectful silence of carrots or the applause of vultures, we won't survive much longer. Like all performers, we are radically dependent upon our audience. So drastic is our dependence upon the council of creatures, that *they* are the real auditors of earth's books. *They* are the true congregation, the real tribe, the original extended family. And the kind of performance *they* require is ritualistic. The only kind of performance capable of saving the planet is the kind worms applaud with their peculiar sort of silence, the sort to which geese respond with bawdy squawking and clacking (silence and racket being earth's main gestures of approval).

Planetarily significant performances transpire in times and places where the deep-gift economy is actualized, because these are the only spaces where geese and worms and bears and bugs are welcome as congregants.

Snipes and turtles and other creatures rooted or bipedal care *only* for performances in which they themselves appear, and they can *only* appear when ritualizing humans sacrifice their sniveling little dignities in order to don skins that the creatures sacrifice.

Just as the pool-playing boys of River City, Iowa, need a big brass band to stem their lapse into delinquency, so we ought to dress in the plumage of deforested pines, make offerings of Erie water, and meditate beneath the bridges of the Don Valley Parkway.

Too grandiose, you say? Too full of bilgewater and balderdash? Well, okay, for the likes of us who've made it to the next millennium, it may be that ritual is possible only in a ludic-ironic-metaphoric, clowny-subjunctive-disjunctive fiddledeedee mode. But embraced-to-the-point-of-embodiment, metaphoric-ironic ritualizing, however perverse and silly, is a way in.

The deep world is stitched of metaphors, and if you cut them loose from one another and yourself, you skin the world, peel it like an apple. No net of metaphor, no earth. No earth, no place for an audience to stand. No place, no performance. No performance, no performers. No performers, no students of performances entertaining and efficacious.

We are engaged in a global conflict over metaphor. The mere-metaphor school is content, thank you, to leave metaphor a mere turn of phrase; these folks aren't about to chant their metaphors, much less inhabit them. The deep-and-drastic school, on the other hand, insists that metaphor is not empty talk, that world metaphors be practised, so convincingly embodied, that even alpha male apes can't be sure if those strutting on the stage are animals, or men, dressed up like animals, so convincingly performed that even the muses can't decide whether those are goddesses or women gussied up like birds.

Ritual is the predication of identities and differences (metaphors) so profoundly enacted that they suffuse bone and blood, thereby generating a cosmos (an oriented habitat). In rites we enact a momentary cosmos of metaphor. A cosmos is not merely an empty everywhere. It is everywhere as perceived from somewhere, a universe as construed from a locale. A cosmos is a topocosm, a universe in this place, an oriented, "cosmosized" place, a this-place which is also an every-where.

Each cosmos has its characteristic lilt: if your universe is a womb, your rites go rotund; they moan, slip and slide. If your universe is an orderly, law-abiding, clocklike place looked after by a kindly watchmaker who prefers really, really big grandfather clocks, your rites will run regular as clockwork, be performed as if ritual were, by definition, repetitive, orderly, stately, vertical and by the book.

Cosmologies are as important for what they tell ritualists *not* to perform as for what they tell them *to* perform. In the middle-of-the-road world many of us inhabit, we are

not ritually supposed to sweat, stay up all night, sleep in the sanctum, enter a trance, or let wild sounds escape the throat.

Otherwise, the critters might arrive in droves and mamma earth might heave her big buttocks right smack into the middle of our decorous assemblies. In the middle-of-the-road world, entranced, drum-driven bouncing and trembling buttocks are out. So is just sitting, eyes down as if quieted belly buttons and round cushions matter.

All rites, even the holiest of liturgies, express time-bound values and space-bound peculiarities. They are suffused by the same spiritual and intellectual pollution that we all breathe in order to stay alive. Even so, ritual systems are not free of the obligation to serve the ground we walk on, the water we drink, the air we breathe.

With rites we have served gods; now, with rites let us serve the ground, the air and water, the frogs and rutabaga, even our cranky ancestors buried book-in-hand in six feet of clay.

What might it look like to turn book-serving liturgies into earth-serving ones? In Thailand, where the rate of deforestation is exceptionally high, monks have begun ordaining trees. By ordaining these upstanding ones, the monks inspire bulldozer drivers to stop, chainsaw cutters to balk, and developers to reconsider. Thai "ecology monks" are crossing the line that has traditionally kept them from political involvement. Would you cut down a seventy-year-old, fifty-foot tree-priest in his prime?

Clearcutting in Thailand had become so extensive that monks began preaching about the suffering of trees and land. In order to sanctify forests so wildlife and plant life would be protected, the monks began hammering old Buddhist rites into new activist ceremonies.

In the 1970s, after his ordination, Phrakhru Pitak began to notice the deforestation around his home and the consequent damage to watersheds and local economies. He began to preach against the destruction, but found that the villagers, even those who believed him, went home from temple services only to continue clearing the land. Moral admonition was not enough. So in 1991 he ordained a tree, wrapping it in monk's robes. To down an ordained tree would be to kill a sentient being and incur religious demerit.

At first the monk led people in sprinkling holy water on the trees. Later he upped the ante by requiring village leaders to drink holy water in front of a statue of Buddha by a tree. This way, community leaders ritually enacted their identification with the tree, and thereby pledged themselves to its protection. Sometimes, posted on an ordained tree would be a sign saying, "To destroy the forest is to destroy life, one's rebirth, or the nation" (Darlington 1998: 10). Sincere Buddhists don't want to tamper with their rebirth.

This improvised ritualizing is now attracting upstanding citizens. As a result, the Thai debate is no longer purely political but also moral and religious. The metaphoric act of ordaining trees has made it so. If trees have Buddha nature, to saw one down is to slice yourself in half. Now, it costs moral and religious capital to lay low the ancestor-teacher trees.

The so-called world religions claim to have a repository of wisdom that can help save the planet from ecological destruction. But the large-scale, multinational faiths have been slow to mobilize, and they are typically saddled with environmentally hostile or indifferent myths, ethics and rites.

Religious leaders are now scouring the scriptures in search of images that might inspire ecologically responsible behaviour. The big religions are defending their traditions

against attacks that blame them for the sorry state of the environment. In self-defence, they launch criticisms of economic greed and human failure to exercise stewardship of the land.

The monotheistic traditions bear a large share of the blame, because of their entanglement in Western ideologies of natural domination and dualistic separation. The truth is that none of the large-scale religions has resources adequate to the crisis. None of the "world" religions is an earth religion. The non-local religions are in no better shape than the multinational corporations. Because so much pollutes the spiritual environment, cleaning it up is every bit as urgent and challenging as cleaning up the physical environment.

The ecological question can be posed politically, biologically, economically, legally. I have put it ritually by asking, what gesture can save the planet? You, of course, know this is a silly question, a trap. You're educated scholars to boot. You're smart enough to know that by calling the question a koan, I'm either sidestepping or teasing you. I am trading on what I surmise about scholars, that you are devotees of the well-posed questions. There is nothing finer in academic life than a final, very final exam question that requires a koanic response, that is, a disciplined and passionate identification with the question.

So again I put it to you: what gesture, rightly performed, might be so compelling that the creatures would be entertained and, thus, the planet saved?

We can put it in other, more local ways: What does the south shore of Lake Erie ask of men on Tuesdays? Women on Thursdays? Why is the Rio Grand weeping? Where on Highway Seven should the northbound tundra swans land during rush hour?

I'm sure you have your own environmental koans, conundrums in need of direct action but also of divination and contemplation. Just remember that the point is not to turn cute phrases or to moralize but to identify yourself bodily and attitudinally with the questions.

Otherwise, the grackles and sparrows won't give a rip about our celebrations, liturgies, meditations and performances.

A koanic attitude practised ritually helps participants divine a way of acting that resonates with the world. Ritually, people don't dance merely to exercise limbs, impress ticket-buying audiences, or even to illustrate sacredly held beliefs. People who dance in a sacred manner, do so to discover ways of inhabiting a place. This is what we call the noetic power of a rite.

So here's the pitch. Here's what I'm trying to sell you on instead of a brass band: just as there is an emerging global culture overtop local cultures, and civil religion alongside denominational religion, so there are emerging global ritual gestures boiling up under the liturgies of specific religious traditions. The Olympic Games are the grandest example. So a global earth rite parallel to a global ethic in the Earth Charter is not an impossibility (even though the notion is as ridiculous as that of a salvific street band whose leader is a musical ignoramus).

A few decades ago we'd have thought it ridiculous to consider drafting universal, ethical declarations. We'd read enough history and anthropology to know that different societies have different values and differing ways of doing things. We'd have said that only a powerful act of coercion could bring about a global ethic. But a global ethic is now on the horizon. Maybe it will require another millennium for every nation to sign on, and such an ethic will not be framed without compromise, but there is a surprising consensus in documents such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. So, why not an earth-embracing, earth-encircling rite?

If that's too grandiose and you worry about a globalized rite for the same reasons you've become suspicious about globalization and multinational corporations, then ritualize your own back yard. Literally. Physically. Bodily.

For now, just imagine a single gesture or posture that might become the seed of a rite. Make it one worth doing, or holding, over and over. This is ritual, so again, again, and again. Even when no one is watching: again.

What is its shape and duration? What is its basis? Sacred texts are too tendentious a basis, so what else might a gesture to the creatures be based on? In what posture would we not scare them away, would they not fear to creep up on us?

The universe is curved, they say, just closed enough to maintain cohesion, just open enough for transformation and creativity. So why not a curvaceous gesture based on the shape we imagine the universe to have?

Now, this brass-band-foolish gesture not only has to make the monkeys laugh loud enough that the hyenas and dingoes come to see what's up, it must be a practice that helps people root themselves in the planet like old trees worthy of ordination. It should be a gesture so simple and profound that, even if it doesn't attract the hordes or save the planet, you'd keep doing it anyway, hoping to hear cabbage heads chuckle and frogs titter, because performance is currency in the deep world's gift economy.

So ... what are you imagining? Bowing like a Muslim at prayer (but sneaking in a ground kiss)? Standing, Navajolike, thrusting your child high so the rising sun can see? Circumambulating a tree in your back yard until a circular path is worn deeply into the ground? Washing each of your neighbours' feet each time they enter your front door? Maybe you are curled up, your head in Big Mama's lap. Or maybe you are handing a clear glass of water, without spilling a drop, hand over hand over hand down the serpentine miles of a river's course. Perhaps you are prone, lying on the warm desert sand, your arms spreadeagled so that from on high, a god's eye or cloud would spy only a tiny swatch on the landscape.

A sustainable gesture to the creatures is possible only by a dialectical dance. So grab your partner, and all go round. Leap locally to the left. Leap globally to the right, all at the very same, very curvaceous time. This is a riprap romp, a locally global medicine show.

If exercising your imagination this way makes you feel foolish, a little like you're pretending to be the leader of the band when you never went to music school, a little suspicious that ritual gestures and postures are as useless as, what? a roll of – waxed – toilet paper, well, you can relieve yourself of this self-conscious foolishness by chanting.

By now, surely, you know the words ...

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NOTES

1. Forum on Religion and Ecology website: http://environment.harvard.edu/religion (no longer available).
2. Harvard's Center for the Study of Values in Public Life sponsors an environmental ethics and public

policy programme. Like the Forum, the Center places its emphasis almost exclusively on ethics, policy and justice issues. The Boston Research Center for the Twenty-First Century sponsors consultations on the Earth Charter and publishes a series of books on war, peace and the earth. In a presentation entitled "The Earth Charter and the Culture of Peace" sociologist Elise Boulding, one of the key participants, offers a formal definition of "peace culture", which she takes to be essential for generating a transformation of consciousness that will permit planetary survival. "Peace culture", she says, "is a mosaic of identities, attitudes, values, beliefs, and institutional patterns that lead people to live nurturantly with one another and with the earth itself without the aid of structured power differentials. That mosaic enables humans to deal creatively with their differences and to share their resources" (1997: 32).

3. Earth Charter website: www.earthcharter.org/ (accessed 29 March 2013).

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Chapter 40, "Performance is Currency in the Deep World's Gift Economy: An Incantatory Riff for a Global Medicine Show" by Ronald Grimes, was first published in *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment* 9(1) (2002): 149–64. It is reproduced with the kind permission of the author and of Oxford University Press. It is based on a presentation that has been performed several times: first at St Thomas University in Fredericton, New Brunswick, Canada; then at "Between Nature", a conference on ecology and performance at Lancaster University in England; and most recently at the 2001 annual meeting of the Eastern International Region of the American Academy of Religion, Ithaca College, Ithaca, New York. Financial support for this research was received from a grant partly funded by Wilfrid Laurier University operating funds and by an institutional grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

The part pages show Drombeg, Ireland, 31 October 2012 (© Pete Glastonbury).

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