"Animism" Revisited

Personhood, Environment, and Relational Epistemology[1]

by Nurit Bird-David

"Animism" is projected in the literature as simple religion and a failed epistemology, to a large extent because it has hitherto been viewed from modernist perspectives. In this paper previous theories, from classical to recent, are critiqued. An ethnographic example of a hunter-gatherer people is given to explore how animistic ideas operate within the context of social practices, with attention to local constructions of a relational personhood and to its relationship with ecological perceptions of the environment. A reformulation of their animism as a relational epistemology is offered.

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Wherever there are Nayaka, there are also devaru, for Nayaka want to have them and always find them.

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The concept of animism, which E. B. Tylor developed in his 1871 masterwork *Primitive Culture,* is one of anthropology's earliest concepts, if not the first.[2] The intellectual genealogy of central debates in the field goes back to it. Anthropology textbooks continue to introduce it as a basic notion, for example, as "the belief that inside ordinary visible, tangible bodies there is normally invisible, normally intangible being: the soul . . . each culture [having] its own distinctive animistic beings and its own specific elaboration of the soul concept" (Harris 1983:186). Encyclopedias of anthropology commonly present it, for instance, as "religious beliefs involving the attribution of life or divinity to such natural phenomena as trees, thunder, or celestial bodies" (Hunter and Whitten 1976:12). The notion is widely employed within the general language of ethnology (e.g., Sahlins 1972:166, 180; Gudeman 1986:44; Descola 1996:88) and has become important in other academic disciplines as well, especially in studies of religion (as belief in spirit-beings) and in developmental psychology (referring to children's tendency to consider things as living and conscious). Moreover, the word has become a part of the general English vocabulary and is used in everyday conversations and in the popular media. It appears in many dictionaries, including such elementary ones as the compact school and office edition of *Webster's New World Dictionary* (1989), which defines it as "the belief that all life is produced by a spiritual force, or that all natural phenomena have souls." It is found in mainstream compendia such as the *Dictionary of the Social Sciences* (Gould and Kolb 1965), which sums it up as "the belief in the existence of a separable soul-entity, potentially distinct and apart from any concrete embodiment in a living individual or material organism." The term is presented in dictionaries of the occult: the *Encyclopedia of Ghosts and Spirits* (Guilei 1992), for example, defines it as "the system of beliefs about souls and spirits typically found in tribal societies," and the *Dictionary of Mysticism and the Occult* (Drury 1985) defines it as "the belief, common among many pre-literate societies, that trees, mountains, rivers and other natural formations possess an animating power or spirit."

Amazingly, the century-old Tylorian concept appears in all these diverse sources (popular and academic, general and specific) revised little if at all. Animism, a 19th-century representation of an ethnographically researchable practice particularly conspicuous among indigenous peoples but by no means limited to them, is depicted by them all as an "object" in-the-world. The survival of the Tylorian representation is enigmatic be-

cause the logic underlying it is today questionable. Tylor was not as rigid a positivist as he is often made out to be (see Ingold 1986:94–96; Leopold 1980). However, he developed this representation within a positivistic spiritual/materialist dichotomy of 19th-century design in direct opposition to materialist science, in the belief (and as part of an effort to prove this belief) that only science yielded "true" knowledge of the world. Furthermore, the moral implications of this representation are unacceptable now. Tylor posited that "animists" understood the world childishly and erroneously, and under the influence of 19th-century evolutionism he read into this cognitive underdevelopment. Yet the concept still pervasively persists.

Equally surprisingly, the ethnographic referent—the researchable cultural practices which Tylor denoted by the signifier/signified of "animism"—has remained a puzzle[3] despite the great interest which the subject has attracted. Ethnographers continue to cast fresh ethnographic material far richer than Tylor had (or could have imagined possible) into one or more of the Tylorian categories "religion," "spirits," and "supernatural beings" (e.g., Endicott 1979, Howell 1984, Morris 1981, Bird-David 1990, Gardner 1991, Feit 1994, Povinelli 1993, Riches 1994). At the same time, they have commonly avoided the issue of animism and even the term itself rather than revisit this prevalent notion in light of their new and rich ethnographies.[4]

A twofold vicious cycle has ensued. The more the term is used in its old Tylorian sense, without benefit of critical revision, the more Tylor's historically situated perspective is taken as "real," as the phenomenon which it only glosses, and as a "symbol that stands for itself" (Wagner 1981). In turn, anthropology's success in universalizing the use of the term itself reinforces derogatory images of indigenous people whose rehabilitation from them is one of its popular roles.

This paper attempts a solution generally drawing on a synthesis of current environment theory (insisting that the environment does not necessarily consist dichotomously of a physical world and humans) and current personhood theory (asserting that personhood does not necessarily consist dualistically of body and spirit). These dualistic conceptions are historical constructs of a specific culture which, for want of a better term, will henceforth be referred to by the circumlocution "modernist." ("Modernist" signals neither the dichotomous opposite of "primitive" nor the equivalent of "scientific" but ideas and practices that dominated the Euro-American cultural landscape from the 17th to the 20th century. Furthermore, "modernist self-concepts" will be used as an objectification of what is often only a fragment of peoples' composite identity, a part of their consciousness, while "local person-concepts" will be used as an objectification of fragments of today's complex in-

digenous identities and, in partial ways, of parts of Western identities, too.) The argument will develop through three subsequent sections to its twofold conclusion: a fresh visit to the animism concept and to the indigenous phenomena themselves. It will posit a plurality of epistemologies by refiguring so-called primitive animism as a relational epistemology. The perspective to be employed is presented not as more valid than any other but as one now needed in studies of the complex phenomena which Tylor denoted as "animism."

The first part offers a critical perspective on the "textual conversation" (to use Gudeman and Rivera's [1990] term) relevant to animism to date, singling out for close attention the theories of Tylor (1958 [1871]), Durkheim (1960[1914], 1915), Lévi-Strauss (1962, 1966 [1962]), and Guthrie (1993). It is argued that positivistic ideas about the meaning of "nature," "life," and "personhood" misdirected these previous attempts to understand the local concepts. Classical theoreticians (it is argued) attributed their own modernist ideas of self to "primitive peoples" while asserting that the "primitive peoples" read their idea of self into others! This led the theoreticians to prejudge the attribution of "personhood" to natural objects as empirically unfounded and consequently to direct analytical effort to explaining why people did it and why and how (against all appearances) their "belief" was not a part of their practical knowledge but at best a part of their symbolic representations or a mistaken strategic guess.

The second part of the paper offers an ethnographic analysis of the phenomenon which Tylor termed "animism" largely drawn from my work with hunter-gatherer Nayaka in South India.[5] A case is developed through the ethnographic material, starting from Hallowell's remarkable 1960 "Ojibwa Ontology, Behavior, and World View" and circumventing the "spirit/body" and "natural/supernatural" modernist dichotomies that have often landed other ethnographers in "spirit," "supernatural," and "religion" descriptions. Nayaka *devaru* (superpersons) are tackled as a concept and a phenomenon, both composite and complex, in a threefold manner. First, using Strathern's (1988) notion of the "dividual" (a person constitutive of relationships), after Marriott's (1976) "dividual" (a person constitutive of transferable particles that form his or her personal substance), I argue that devaru are dividual persons. They are constitutive of sharing relationships reproduced by Nayaka with aspects of their environment. The devaru are objectifications of these relationships and make them known. Second, drawing on Gibson (1979) and Ingold (1992), I posit that in another sense devaru are a constitutive part of Nayaka's environment, born of the "affordances" of events in-the-world. Nayaka's "attention" ecologically perceives mutually responsive

changes in things in-the-world and at the same time in themselves. These relatednesses are devaru in-the-world, met by Nayaka as they act in, rather than think about, the world. Lastly, I argue that devaru performances—in which performers in trance "bring to life" devaru characters, with whom the participants socialize (talking, joking, arguing, singing, sharing or just demand-sharing, and asking for advice and help)—are social experiences which are nested within (not dichotomized from) social-economic practice. These performances are pivotal in both "educating the attention" to devaru in-the-world (Gibson 1979) and reproducing devaru as dividual persons.

The third part of the paper theorizes animism as animisms, arguing that hunter-gatherer animism constitutes a relational (not a failed) epistemology. This epistemology is about knowing the world by focusing primarily on relatednesses, from a related point of view, within the shifting horizons of the related viewer. The knowing grows from and *is* the knower's skills of maintaining relatedness with the known. This epistemology is regarded by Nayaka (and probably other indigenous peoples we call hunter-gatherers) as authoritative against other ways of knowing the world. It functions in other contexts (including Western) with, against, and sometimes despite other local authoritative epistemologies. Diversifying along with person-concepts and environmental praxis, animisms are engendered neither by confusion nor by wrong guesses but by the employment of human socially biased cognitive skills.

Animism in the Modernist Mirror

Sir Edward Burnett Tylor (1831–1917), the founding father of anthropology, took his notion of animism from the 17th-century alchemist Stahl, who had himself revived the term from classical theory (Tylor 1958 [1871]: 9). Drawing on secondhand accounts of "primitive" peoples (to use the period's term), Tylor observed that many of them attributed life and personality to animal, vegetable, and mineral alike. He developed a theory of this phenomenon in a series of papers written between 1866 and 1870 that culminated in *Primitive Culture.* Tylor offered a situated perspective, limited by the time's ethnography and theory, and it should be studied in its context.

As he developed his theory of animism, Tylor took an interest in the modern spiritualist movement, fashionable at the time. He even went to London from Somerset for a month to investigate spiritualist séances (Stocking 1971). In 1869 he argued that "modern spiritualism is a survival and a revival of savage thought" (quoted in Stocking 1971:90). This argument probably influenced his view of "savage thought," which he had acquired only from reading. In an odd reversal, he constructed the origin of "savage thought" from his firsthand knowledge of what he presumed was its remnant—modern spiritualism. He even considered using the term "spiritualism" rather than "animism" but decided against it because it had "become the designation

of a particular modern sect" (1958 [1871]:10). Under the probable influence of his knowledge of modern spiritualism, Tylor argued that in the savage view every man had, in addition to his body, a "ghost-soul," a "thin unsubstantial human image," the "cause of life or thought in the individual it animates," capable "of leaving the body far behind" and "continuing to exist and appear to men after the death of that body" (quoted in Stocking 1987:192). Being "a confirmed scientific rationalist" (p. 191), Tylor suggested that this view was a delusion, in the same way that he regarded the spiritual séances of his time as a delusion.

Tylor's work was probably also influenced by observations of children (see Stocking 1971:90). He argued that the "savages" were doubly mistaken, believing in their own "ghost-souls" but like children attributing the same to things around them. Durkheim (1915:53) neatly made the point as follows:

> For Tylor, this extension of animism was due to the particular mentality of the primitive, who, like an infant, cannot distinguish the animate and the inanimate. Since the first beings of which the child commences to have an idea are men, that is, himself and those around him, it is upon this model of human nature that he tends to think of everything. . . . Now the primitive thinks like a child. Consequently, he also is inclined to endow all things, even inanimate ones, with a nature analogous to his own.

Tylor's view conformed with the contemporaneous identification of early people with the child state of society (animating society!) and with the identification of contemporaneous "primitives" with early people and so with the child state too. However, while arguing that in thinking like a child the primitive "endow[s] all things, even inanimate ones, with a nature analogous to his own," Tylor read into the primitive view the modernist spiritualist understanding of "one's own nature," not the primitive's or the child's sense of "his own nature."

At issue at the time was how religion had evolved and how it ought to be related to science. This evolutionary question engaged Tylor, who suggested that modern religion had evolved in stages from animistic beliefs. By them early peoples had tried to explain the world to themselves, and these beliefs had "survived" into the present and (re)appeared universally among children and "primitive" people and in certain modern cults. In Tylor's view, as one of his commentators put it, "it was as though primitive man, in an attempt to create science, had accidentally created religion instead, and mankind had spent the rest of evolutionary time trying to rectify the error" (Stocking 1987:192).

In Tylor's view, animism and science (in a "long-waged contest" [1886], quoted by Stocking 1987:192) were fundamentally antithetical. Consequently, animistic beliefs featured as "wrong" ideas according to Tylor, who clinched the case by explaining in evolutionary terms (as was the custom at the time) how the primitive came to have this spiritualist sense of his "own nature." Tylor suggested that dreams of dead rela-

tives and of the primitive himself in distant places had led him to form this self idea. The thesis projected the primitive as delirious as well as perceiving the world like a child.

Tylor's theory has had deep and lasting influence on anthropological theory. It was pivotal in its time, and subsequent theories developed in dialectical relations with it in turn became themselves influential theories in dialectical relations with which further theories were formulated. I point to one critical theoretical trend pertinent to my study by means of several examples (selected for temporal diversity, not necessarily centrality in the field) from classic theories to recent ones. My examples chronologically advance from Emile Durkheim's work on religion (1960 [1914], 1915) through Claude Lévi-Strauss's work on totemism and the "savage mind" (1962, 1966 [1962]) to a recent work on anthropomorphism by Stewart Guthrie (1993).

Durkheim rescued the primitive from the Tylorian image of a delirious human, but in doing so he embroiled himself further in the modernist self model(s). In an article significantly entitled "The Dualism of Human Nature and Its Social Conditions" (1960 [1914]), he argued that the primitive self model is "not a vain mythological concept that is without foundations in reality" (p. 329)—that "in every age" man had had a dualistic model originating from a basic and universal social experience, the simultaneous sense of bodily sensations and being part of society. The primitive self model, in his view, was a specific case of this (modernist) universal model. He argued that the primitive makes abstract society tangible to himself by a totem and so views his own self as dualistically consisting of body/totemic parts (rather than body/mind in the modernist view). Durkheim restored credence in the primitive self model but remained critical, along with Tylor, of its attribution to other than human entities. He still cast this attribution (again, with Tylor) as the erroneous mental operation of a child.

Durkheim also read his own modernist (biologistic) kinship into accounts suggesting that "primitive peoples" regarded as kin and friends some entities that were animated by them. Drawing on richer ethnographic sources than Tylor's, he noted that "primitives" believed that the bonds between them and these natural entities were "like those which unite the members of a single family" (1915:139): bonds of friendship, interdependence, and shared characteristics and fortunes (pp. 158–60).[6] To explain this, he argued that they mistook the spiritual unity of the totemic force, which "really" existed, for a bodily unity of flesh, which did not. He himself obviously mistook their kinship for his modernist construction of it as shared biological matter (flesh, blood, DNA, or whatever other finer biological connection will be discovered by scientists [Schneider 1968, 1984]).

Claude Lévi-Strauss addressed the anthropological category "totemism," which encompasses aspects of the phenomenon which Tylor termed "animism." His work provided the first modern explanation that accepted indigenous knowledge of the world. However, the explanation rested on dissociating that knowledge from totemic notions, reducing the latter to symbolic representations. Lévi-Strauss did not question the authority of the Western objectivist view of reality, which accepted a priori the nature/society dualism. To rehabilitate the Durkheimian primitives he argued that indigenous peoples perceived the world in this way, too. They perceived the discontinuity between nature and society and viewed nature itself as a world of discrete objects; then they used nature as "something good to think with" about societal divisions. They drew analogies between things in nature and groups in society (1962). They concerned themselves with the same representations of things in the world as Westerners did, but their "totemic thought" fancifully intermingled these representations with mystical tales, like the *bricoleur*, whereas our "scientific thought" logically sorted them out, like the engineer (1966 [1962]). The indigenous accounts of kinship relationships with natural entities, Lévi-Strauss argued, only evinced the analogical and totemic nature of their thought—neither an erroneous epistemology nor an adequate alternative to our own. He criticized earlier theory for placing indigenous peoples on the "nature" side of the dualistic nature/culture split. However, while he correctively placed them on the "culture" side, he placed the dualistic split itself inside their "savage mind" (1966 [1962]). He did not explain animism but explained it away. Animists by his theory did not perceive the natural world differently from others.

A recent attempt at a solution to the century-old problem why people animate what we regard as inanimate objects is that of Stewart Guthrie (1993), who defines animating things in these words: "Scanning the world for what most concerns us—living things and especially humans—we find many apparent cases. Some of these prove illusory. When they do, we are animating (attributing life to the nonliving) or anthropomorphizing (attributing human characteristics to the nonhuman)" (1993:62). The expression "attributing life to the nonliving" at a stroke relegates animistic beliefs to the category of "mistake," regressing from the earlier advance made by Lévi-Strauss. Guthrie regards modernist meanings of such notions as "life," "nonliving," and "human" as naturally given.[7]

Guthrie reduces what Tylor offered as a universal cultural category (Preus 1987) to a universal biological one. He views animistic thinking as a natural "perceptual strategy" for the survival of any animal (pp. 38, 41, 47, 54, 61):

6. Durkheim distinguished between natural entities, or "individual totems," regarded as friends and kin, and "group totems," the artifactual representations of natural entities, worshipped in celebrations.

7. Guthrie perceptively discusses the boundaries "life"/"nonliving" and "human"/"animal" as they are diversely drawn across cultures (e.g., 1993: 86–89, 112–13), but he makes this observation in support of his argument that it is difficult to differentiate between these entities.

We not infrequently are in doubt as to whether something is alive. When we are in doubt, the best strategy is to assume that it is . . . risking over-interpretation by betting on the most significant possibility . . . because if we are wrong we lose little and if we are right we gain much. . . . Animism, then, results from a simple form of game theory employed by animals ranging at least from frogs to people. . . . [it] is an inevitable result of normal perceptual uncertainty and of good perceptual strategy. . . . The mistake embodied in animism—a mistake we can discover only after the fact—is the price of our need to discover living organisms. It is a cost occasionally incurred by any animal that perceives.

This cognitive evolutionist explanation of animism seems ingeniously simple. Assuming, with Tylor, that animistic interpretations are erroneous, Guthrie argues that the *making* of animistic interpretations itself is part of "a good perceptual strategy." Animistic interpretations are "reasonable" errors that "we can discover only after the fact."

But Guthrie's thesis is weak in its own terms.[8] We lapse into animistic expressions under uncertainty, but we use such expressions more, and more consistently, when we regularly and closely engage with things we are not doubtful about: plants we grow, cars we love, computers we use. (Guthrie himself mentions these examples.) Even professional ethologists, who are trained to regard their study animals as objects, regard them as persons the more they interact with them (see Kennedy 1992:27). The theory in any case does not resolve the classic enigma of so-called primitive people's maintenance of animistic beliefs. At best, the question remains why (if they retrospectively recognize their animistic interpretations as mistakes) they culturally endorse and elaborate these "mistakes." At worst, the theory further downgrades indigenous cognitive ability, for now they cannot do even what frogs can do, namely, "after the fact" recognize their "mistakes." In this case, the theory even regresses from the advances made by Tylor.

Local Senses of Devaru

Personhood concepts and ecological perception are two fruitful areas from which to reevaluate our theories of animist practices and beliefs. Irving Hallowell's ethnography of the Ojibwa (from fieldwork conducted in the Lake Winnipeg area of northern Canada during the 1930s) and especially his paper "Ojibwa Ontology, Behavior, and World View" (1960) are provocative starting points for our reassessment of theories of animism. Hallowell observed that the Ojibwa sense of personhood, which they attribute to some natural entities, animals, winds, stones, etc., is fundamentally different from the modernist one. The latter takes the axiomatic split between "human" and "nonhuman" as essential, with "person" being a subcategory of "human." The Ojibwa conceives of "person" as an overarching category within which "human person," "animal person," "wind person," etc., are subcategories. Echoing Evans-Pritchard's account of Azande magic (1937), Hallowell furthermore argues that, contrary to received wisdom and in the absence of objectivist dogma, experience itself does not rule out Ojibwa animistic ideas. On the contrary, he argues (a point reiterated by later ethnographers [see Scott 1989, Feit 1994]), experience is consistent with their reading of things, given an animistic dogma.

Hallowell's contribution is to free the study of animistic beliefs and practices first from modernist person-concepts and second from the presumption that these notions and practices are erroneous. However, the case needs to be further pursued. He states that the Ojibwa sense of personhood is different without exploring its sense far enough, perhaps because, although the concept goes back to Marcel Mauss's work of 1938,[9] before the 1960s research into the "person" as a cross-cultural category hardly existed. He argues that Ojibwa engagement in the world does not rebuff their animistic views but does not explain how the beliefs are engendered and perpetuated. I shall pursue his insight through ethnographic material largely drawn from my work with Nayaka, a hunter-gatherer community of the forested Gir Valley in the Nilgiri region of South India.[10] My objective will be to understand the senses of what they call devaru, a concept which is not just a foreign word requiring translation but enigmatic to positivistic thought. Neither "spirits" (deriving from the spirit/body dualism of the modernist person-concept) nor "supernatural beings" (mirroring the Western idea of nature)[11] is an appropriate English equivalent, though these are the common translations of corresponding notions in other studies.[12] Hallowell's alternative "other-than-human persons" escapes these biased notions but still conserves the primary objectivist concern with classes (human and other-than-human). I use "superpersons" (persons with extra powers) as a general reference

8. Guthrie focuses on what he calls "the West" because "animism is usually attributed to simple societies." His examples, taken out of their contexts, range from French and Spanish cave art through Greek, Roman, and medieval philosophy and the arts to modern science, social science, literature and advertisement, and "daily life in the contemporary United States." His scant references to "simple societies" draw not on the richer new ethnography but on outdated secondary sources such as Thompson (1955) and Ehnmark (1939).

9. Mauss's work was first translated into English only in 1979 (and see 1985). For some recent works on the "self" see Morris (1994), Carrithers, Collins, and Lukes (1985), and Shweder and LeVine (1984).
10. The Gir Valley is a fictive name for one of the Nilgiri-Wynaad's valleys.
11. See Durkheim (1915), Lovejoy (1948), Saler (1977), Descola (1996).
12. See Endicott (1979), Howell (1984), Morris (1981), Bird-David (1990), Gardner (1991), Feit (1994), Povinelli (1993), and, for a comparison, Mageo and Howard (1996).

and let the local composite meanings grow from the context.

DEVARU AS OBJECTIFICATIONS OF SHARING RELATIONSHIPS

In her critically oriented comparison of the Melanesian and the Euro-American "person," Strathern (1988) argues that the irreducibility of the individual is a peculiarly modernist notion.[13] It is not everywhere that the individual is regarded as "a single entity," "bounded and integrated, and set contrastingly against other such wholes and against a natural and social backgrounds" (Clifford Geertz, quoted in Strathern 1988:57). The Melanesian "person" is a composite of relationships, a microcosm homologous to society at large (1988:13, 131). This person objectifies relationships and makes them known. She calls it a "dividual," in contrast with the (Euro-American) "*in*dividual."[14] This is a notion well known in South Asian scholarship from the work of McKim Marriott and Ronald Inden (Marriott 1976, Marriott and Inden 1977; see Daniel 1984, Raheja 1988*a, b,* and Barnett 1976 for ethnographic explorations), who agree with Dumont (1966) that "the Indian is misrepresented if depicted as an individual, but less because the person has a holistic-collectivist identity than because, according to Indian ways of thinking and explaining, each person is a composite of transferable particles that form his or her personal substance" (Mines 1994:6).

I derive from Strathern's "dividual" (a person constitutive of relationships) the verb "to dividuate," which is crucial to my analysis. When I individuate a human being I am conscious of her "in herself" (as a single separate entity); when I dividuate her I am conscious of how she relates with me. This is not to say that I am conscious of the relationship with her "in itself," as a thing. Rather, I am conscious of the *relatedness with* my interlocutor *as I engage with her,* attentive to what she does in relation to what I do, to how she talks and listens to me as I talk and listen to her, to what happens simultaneously and mutually to me, to her, to *us.*

Nayaka, I argue, lived in a social environment which facilitated and was reproduced by dividuating fellow Nayaka.[15] Numbering in 1978–79 fewer than 70 persons, they occupied five sites at a distance of 2–10 km from each other. The largest was made up of five dwellings, the others of between one and three. The dwellings (thatched huts with walls made of interwoven strips of bamboo) stood close to each other, though the

terrain would have allowed their dispersal. They contained one, two, or sometimes even three living spaces, barely separated from each other, each occupied by a nuclear family. Weather permitting, families rested, ate, and slept in the open beside outdoor fireplaces only a few meters apart. They led their domestic lives together, sharing space, things, and actions. They experienced simultaneously what happened to them and to their fellow Nayaka. This was the case with respect to most Nayaka in the Gir area, not just the residents of one's own place, because there was much movement between sites and people stayed at each other's places for days, weeks, and even months at a time.

The idea that one shared space, things, and actions with others was central to the Nayaka view of social life. A Nayaka was normatively expected to share with everybody *as and when present,* especially (but not only) large game, irrespective of preexisting social ties, criteria, and entitlement. Sharing with anyone present was as important as if not more important than effecting a distribution of things among people. A Nayaka was, furthermore, expected to give others what they asked for, whatever this might be, to preempt refusals and hence challenges to the felt sense that "all of us here share with each other." The idea and practice of sharing constituted a habitus within which agentive negotiation, manipulation, and nonconformity took place (see Bird-David 1990). For example, normally people shared things requested of them, but when exceptionally they did not want to part with something, rather than disrupt the ongoing sense of sharing—the rhythm of everyday social life—they hid that thing or avoided people. This way, they preempted chances of sharing requests and refusals. Equally, people excessively requested things from people they wanted to embarrass or manipulate into persistent giving.

As I understand it, this common experience of sharing space, things, and actions contextualized Nayaka's knowledge of each other: they dividuated each other. They gradually got to know not how each talked but how each *talked with* fellows, not how each worked but how each *worked with* fellows, not how each shared but how each *shared with* fellows, etc. They got to know not other Nayaka in themselves but Nayaka *as they interrelated with* each other, Nayaka-in-relatedness with fellow Nayaka. Through cumulative experiences, they sensed each other as dividuated personalities, each with a relatively persisting way of engaging with others against the relative change involved in their mutual engagement. Nayaka speakers, for example, commonly described fellow Nayaka by the way they behaved vis-à-vis themselves, for instance, as "Mathen who laughs a lot," "Mathen who listens attentively," and so on (Mathen being one of a few personal names in circulation) (see Bird-David 1983).

Nayaka commonly objectified each other not as the Maussian "character"—"the locus [in everyday life] of different rights, duties, titles and kinship names within the clan" (Carrithers, Collins, and Lukes 1985:vii)—but as kin, relatives, "ones related with." In everyday social

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13. See also Dumont (1966).

14. Ingold (personal communication) points out that Strathern's use of the concept "dividual" is unsatisfactory. She argues for a relational personhood, but the concept assumes that the person is some kind of substantive entity, divisible or indivisible. Perhaps another term is called for.

15. Elsewhere I have examined other aspects of this social environment, calling it an "immediate social environment" (Bird-David 1994), absorbing Schutz and Luckmann's (1973) sense of "immediacy" and the earlier use of the word in hunter-gatherer scholarship (esp. Meillassoux 1973 and Woodburn 1980, 1982).

interaction they normally referred to and addressed each other by kinship terms ("my big-uncle," "my brother," "my sister-in-law," etc.). Anyone they persistently shared with (even a non-Nayaka person like the anthropologist) they regarded as kin.[16] They reckoned relationally which kinship term was appropriate at each moment (for example, calling "my paternal uncle" the relative "my father" called "my brother" [see Bird-David 1994:591–93]). They generally referred to people with whom they shared place, things, and actions as *sonta* ("relatives," a term usually used with the prefix *nama,* "our"), a notion that corresponds with other hunter-gatherer notions such as Pintupi *walytja* and Inuit *ila* (see Myers 1986, Guemple 1988). Their kinship was primarily made and remade by recurring social actions of sharing and relating with, not by blood or by descent, not by biology or by myth or genealogy.

Transcending idiosyncratic, processual, and multiple flows of meanings, the Nayaka sense of the person appears generally to engage not the modernist subject/object split or the objectivist concern with substances but the above-mentioned sense of kinship. The person is sensed as "one whom we share with." It is sensed as a relative and is normally objectified as kin, using a kinship term. The phrase *nama sonta* is used in the generalizing sense of the proverbial phrase "we, the people."[17] Its use extends beyond the Nayaka group (family, kindred, neighbors) to the aggregate of local people (Nayaka and others) with whom Nayaka closely engage. To return to Strathern's dividual (a person which objectifies relationships and makes them known), in the Nayaka context the dividual objectifies relationships of a certain kind, local kinship relationships which are objectifications of mutual sharing of space, things, and actions. Analytically referring to these relationships as "sharing relationships" (because the term "kinship relationships" inevitably invokes associations of biologistic or rights-and-duties kinship), we can say that the Nayaka dividual objectifies sharing relationships and makes them known. This dividual is *emergent,* constituted by relationships which in Fred Myers's words "are not totally 'given' [but] must be worked out in a variety of social processes" (1986:159).

We cannot say—as Tylor did—that Nayaka "think with" this idea of personhood about their environment, to arrive by projection at the idea of devaru. The idea of "person" as a "mental representation" applied to the world in pursuit of knowledge is modernist. I argue that Nayaka do not individuate but, in the sense specified above, dividuate other beings in their environment. They are attentive to, and work towards making, relatednesses. As they move and generally act in the environment, they are attentive to mutual behaviors and events. Periodically, they invite local devaru to visit

16. This is a common phenomenon among hunter-gatherers, who have what Alan Barnard called "a universal kinship system" (1981); Woodburn (1979) described this system as one in which everybody within the political community is regarded as kin.
17. The name Nayaka is mostly used and was probably introduced by surrounding people.

them and share with them. Their composite personhood is constitutive of sharing relationships not only with fellow Nayaka but with members of other species in the vicinity. They *make* their personhood by producing and reproducing sharing relationships with surrounding beings, humans and others. They do not dichotomize other beings vis-à-vis themselves (see Bird-David 1992*a*) but regard them, while differentiated, as nested within each other. They recognize that the other beings have their different "affordances" and are of diverse sorts, which is indicated among other things by the different words by which they refer to them (hills, elephants, etc.). However, Nayaka also appreciate that they share the local environment with some of these beings, which overrides these differences and absorbs their sorts into one "we-ness." Beings who are absorbed into this "we-ness" are devaru, and while differentiated from *avaru* (people), they and avaru, in some contexts, are absorbed into one "we-ness," which Nayaka also call *nama sonta.* The devaru are often objectified by kinship terms, especially *ette* and *etta(n)* (grandmother and grandfather) and occasionally *dodawa* and *dodappa* ("big" mother and father). The use of kinship terms for superpersons, especially "grandparents," is common also among other hunter-gatherers (e.g., see Hallowell 1960:27).

Maintaining relationships with fellow Nayaka but also with other local beings is critical to maintaining Nayaka identity because it is critical to maintaining personhood. They retain immediate engagement with the natural environment and hold devaru performances even when they make a living by different means such as casual labor. This is common among many other hunter-gatherers, even those well integrated into their respective states who live by such diverse means as state benefits or jobs in the state bureaucracy (see, e.g., Tanner 1979, Povinelli 1993, Bird-David 1992*b*). By maintaining relationships with other local beings to reproduce their personhood, Nayaka reproduce the devaru-ness of the other beings with whom they share. The other beings are drawn into interrelating and sharing with Nayaka and so into Nayaka kinship relationships. These relationships constitute the particular beings as devaru.

To summarize this point of the argument, the devaru objectify sharing relationships between Nayaka and other beings. A hill devaru, say, objectifies Nayaka relationships with the hill; it makes known the relationships between Nayaka and that hill. Nayaka maintain social relationships with other beings not because, as Tylor holds, they a priori consider them persons. *As and when* and *because* they engage in and maintain relationships with other beings, they constitute them as kinds of person: they make them "relatives" by sharing with them and thus make them persons. They do not regard them as persons and subsequently some of them as relatives, as Durkheim maintains. In one basic sense of this complex notion, devaru are relatives in the literal sense of being "that or whom one interrelates with" (not in the reduced modern English sense of "hu-

mans connected with others by blood or affinity").[18] They are superrelatives who both need and can help Nayaka in extraordinary ways.

DEVARU IN-THE-WORLD

Devaru *exist* in the world, according to Nayaka, and this view is comprehensible in terms of Gibson's (1979) ecological approach to visual perception (introduced and popularized among anthropologists by Ingold [e.g., 1992, 1996; see Croll and Parkin 1992]). Gibson concerns himself with "ambient vision," "obtained as the observer is turning his head and looking around," the vision by which people (like other animals) perceive their environment in everyday life. He reconceptualizes the environment in ecological terms. It is permanent in some respects and changing in others; "the 'permanent objects' of the world are actually only objects that persist for a very long time" (p. 13). It consists of "places, attached objects, objects and substances . . . together with events, which are changes of these things" (p. 240). People perceive these things by registering their "relative persistence" (or persistence-under-change, or "invariances") and "relative change" (or change-above-persistence, or "variances"). Things are perceived in terms of what they *afford the actor-perceiver because of what they are for him* (p. 138).[19] Their "affordance," as Gibson calls it, "cuts across the dichotomy of subjective-objective. . . . It is equally a fact of the environment as a fact of behavior. It is both physical and psychical, yet neither. An affordance points both ways, to the environment and to the observer" (p. 123).

"Meaning" is not "imposed" on things—it is not pregiven in consciousness—but "discovered" in the course of action; it is also "both physical and psychical, yet neither." There is endless "information" in the environment, by which Gibson means "the specification of the observer's environment, not . . . of the observer's receptors or sense organs" (p. 242). People continuously "pick up" information in acting within the environment, by means of "attention." Gibsonian "attention" is "a skill that can be educated" (p. 246) to pick up information that is more and more subtle, elaborate, and precise (p. 245). Knowing is developing this skill; knowing is continuous with perceiving, of which it is an extension.

According to Gibson, attention is "educated" through practice and also by means of "aids to perceiving" such as stories and models of things, words and pictures. These are "not in themselves knowledge, as we are tempted to think. All they can do is facilitate knowing" (p. 258). They can never "copy" or "represent" reality,

but they preserve some "information" (pictures more than words, motion pictures more than pictures). They "put the viewer into the scene" (p. 282) by inducing "not an illusion of reality but an awareness of being in the world" (p. 284). They "transmit to the next generation the tricks of the human trade. The labors of the first perceivers are spared their descendants. The extracting and abstracting of the invariants that specify the environment are made vastly easier with these aids to comprehension" (p. 284).

Events are ecologically perceivable as "any change of a substance, place, or object, chemical, mechanical, or biophysical. The change may be slower or fast, reversible or nonreversible, repeating or nonrepeating. Events include what happens to objects in general, plus what the animate objects *make* happen. Events are nested within superordinate events. . . . Events of different sorts are perceived as such . . ." (p. 242). While Gibson's analysis explicitly focuses on things (evincing Western biases), his thesis is concerned with things *and* events, and using his language my argument is that Nayaka focus on events. Their attention is educated to dwell on events. They are attentive to the changes of things in the world in relation to changes in themselves. As they move and act in the forest, they pick up information about the relative variances in the flux of the interrelatedness between themselves and other things against relative invariances. When they pick up a relatively changing thing with their relatively changing selves—and, all the more, when it happens in a relatively unusual manner—they regard as devaru *this* particular thing within *this* particular situation. This is another sense of the complex notion of devaru, and it arises from the stories which Nayaka tell.[20]

For example, one Nayaka woman, Devi (age 40), pointed to a particular stone—standing next to several other similar stones on a small mud platform among the huts—and said that she had been digging deep down for roots in the forest when suddenly "*this* devaru came towards her." Another man, Atti-Mathen (age 70), pointed to a stone standing next to the aforementioned one and said that his sister-in-law had been sitting under a tree, resting during a foray, when suddenly "*this* devaru jumped onto her lap." The two women had brought the stone devaru back to their places "to live" with them. The *particular* stones were devaru *as they* "came towards" and "jumped on" Nayaka. The many other stones in the area were not devaru but simply stones. Ojibwa approach stones in a similar way: Hallowell recounts how he once asked an old Ojibwa man whether "all the stones we see about us here are alive." Though stones are grammatically animate in Ojibwa, the man (Hallowell recalls) "reflected a long while and then replied, 'No! But *some* are'" (1960:24). From the stories which Hallowell provides, "alive" stones appear

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18. The *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary:* on historical principles (1973, emphasis added). Interestingly, in premodern English "relative" meant "a thing (or person) standing in some relation to another."

19. Gibson often lapses into essentializing language—as in this case, where he refers to "what things are" rather than to "what things are for the actor-perceiver." I have added the latter qualification.

20. See Pandya (1993) for a fascinating study of Andamanese focus on movements. Hunter-gatherers are generally known to be concerned not with taxonomies but with behavior (see, e.g., Blurton Jones and Konner 1976).

to be ones which "move" and "open a mouth" towards Ojibwa (p. 25).

The same underlying narrative recurs as Nayaka relate to animal devaru in-the-world. The following four anecdotes on elephants provide us with a clearer understanding of the complexity of Nayaka perceptions of devaru in-the-world. One man, Chathen (age 50), whose home stood next to the one in which I lived, said one morning that during the night he had seen an elephant devaru "walking harmlessly" between our homes, and this is how he knew, he explained, that it was a devaru, not just an elephant. Another man, Chellan (age 35), similarly related, by way of giving another example, how once an elephant devaru which passed by him as he was walking in the forest searching for honey "looked straight into his eyes." Like the stones, these particular elephants were devaru *as they* "walked harmlessly" and "looked straight into the eyes," that is, as and when they responsively related to Nayaka. In contrast, Kungan (age 50) once took me along on a gathering expedition, and on hearing an elephant and knowing by its sounds that it was alone and dangerous, he turned away and avoided it. He did not engage with this elephant and referred to it not as "elephant devaru" but simply as "elephant." The lack of mutual engagement prevented the kind of relatedness which would have constituted *this* elephant (at *this* moment) as devaru while it might be perceived as devaru on other occasions.

A more complex situation is exemplified in an account by Atti-Mathen of how an elephant trampled two huts in a neighboring Nayaka place, luckily not injuring Nayaka, who happened to be away that night. Atti-Mathen referred to the offending elephant simply as "elephant." Several months later, during a devaru performance, he asked the devaru involved if they had "had something to do" with the event in question. The devaru replied that they had "done it" in response to a Nayaka *aaita* (a fault, deviation from the customary). The devaru did not specify the nature of the fault on this occasion—though sometimes they did, mentioning, for instance, that Nayaka had offered less food during the last devaru performance than in previous times or had started the performance later. This particular elephant (in this particular situation) was neither avoided nor shared with. It was perceived as an instrument, an object, which devaru used in the course of interrelating with Nayaka. In this case, illustrating the Nayaka view at its limits, Nayaka still frame what happened in terms of mutually responsive events, but they are connected narratively in a more complex way.

These four stories show how elephants (as one example among others) may be regarded as persons or as objects, depending on what happens between them and Nayaka, which itself depends on the "affordances" of events involving elephants and people. An important feature of devaru in-the-world emerges. Devaru are not limited to certain *classes* of things. They are certain things-in-situations of whatever class or, better, certain situations. They are events involving mutual responsiveness and engagement between things, events, moreover, which prototypically involve the actor-perceiver. Discriminating devaru is contingent on "affordances" of environmental events and things and (as I shall next argue) on enhanced attention to them through particular traditions of practice.

DEVARU AS PERFORMANCE CHARACTERS

Devaru performances are pivotal in developing attention to devaru in-the-world and reproducing concepts of devaru as objectifications of relationships. These performances are complex affairs which, in the modernist sense, involve "spirit-possession" by devaru but also a great deal more, including a communal social gathering, healing, an altered state of consciousness, communication with predecessors, secondary burial for people who have died since the previous event, and music and dancing. Each affair spans two days and the intervening night. Nayaka hold them every year or so in each village, one place after the other, each attended by people from the whole area who participate in several events of this sort every year. Nayaka do not seem to refer to this event by any single name or mark it off from everyday experience. "Pandalu," the word I apply to the affair, is sometimes used for the purpose, referring to the hut which is specially built for the event as accommodation for the visiting devaru.[21]

In examining one pandalu event, limiting myself to devaru alone, I adopt a performance-centered approach influenced by, among others Tambiah (1970, 1985 [1979]). Unlike the Geertzian tradition, this approach focuses on what the pandalu does rather than what it means. It focuses on the pandalu as an event in-the-world itself, not a "text." It is concerned with the extent to which such events, instead of referring to or talking about, *do something* in-the-world. I go farther, as I cast the pandalu (following Nayaka) *right away* as an experience, a performance, a social event in-the-world, which is continuous and coherent with and even nested within other Nayaka experiences. (I do not cast it as "ritual," as opposed to "practice," and then correctively adopt a performance-centered approach to it.) The examination fills a lacuna in the work of Ingold (e.g., 1996), who, like Gibson, pays inadequate attention to interhuman "action" in-the-world in favor of "action" towards other species;[22] clearly, action towards fellow humans constitutes an important part of one's "environment."

June 9, 1979, Kungan's place[23] *(where I lived at the time with his family):* People arrive casually during the day, each family at its own time. They engage with the local residents in everyday activities, chatting, sharing food, going to the river, fetching firewood, etc. Late

21. "Pandalu" means "temple" to neighboring Hindu people.
22. Ingold (1997) questions the autonomy of social relations.
23. Nayaka have no fixed names for places and refer to them by mentioning a prominent landmark or the name of a central person living there.

in the afternoon, amidst the action, Kungan (age 50) stands in front of the devaru hut and bows in four directions, inviting the area's devaru to come. A few people shift the devaru stones—originally brought from the forest—from their regular place on a mud platform among the houses to the area in front of the hut. They put next to them various other devaru things (including knives, bells, bracelets, cups, and elephant- and human-shaped figurines of Hindu origin), taking these things out of a box in which they are kept for safety between these events. Food and betel-nuts are laid in front of all these devaru, as well as Hindu puja items purchased with money collected in advance from the participants.[24]

As night falls, several men start going on and off into trances, usually one at a time, which they will continue doing throughout the night and the following day. Each one wraps himself with a special cloth, lifts branches and waves them in the air in four directions, bows in four directions inviting devaru to come, and shakes himself into a trance. Intermittently, rhythmic drumming, flute-and-drum music, and dances help set the mood. As the performers fall into trance, they "bring to life" a variety of devaru.[25] The performers are evaluated in terms of how skillfully they "bring" the devaru "to life" at the same time as attendant people *engage with* the devaru which the performers evoke.

Devaru of all sorts can "come to life" during the devaru performance. Nayaka extend them an open invitation by the recurring bows in the four directions. Nayaka *engage* with the devaru characters who appear, who are devaru *as they* appear and engage with Nayaka. Nayaka identify each visiting devaru by its dividuated personality: by how it idiosyncratically interrelates with Nayaka (how it laughs with, talks with, gets angry at, responds to Nayaka, etc.). Sometimes, various devaru come together in a gang, evoked by the same performer, who then switches gestures, speech styles, dialects, and even languages (Nayaka, Malayalam, and Tamil) from one sentence to the next.[26] Some devaru are vivified by the performers with great finesse, and they are recognized by most or all Nayaka. Other devaru are so crudely specified that they are barely distinguishable, and they are identified by few Nayaka, and sometimes differently. The devaru are objectified by kinship terms;

occasionally by names; sometimes only by their dividuated characters (as "the one who always requests wild fowl for food" or "waves a knife," etc.) and sometimes just as devaru in general. The most vivid and generally known devaru are hill devaru, whose existence appears to go far back into the past. (Among neighboring hunter-gatherer Pandaram and Paliyan, hill chavu and hill devi are also singled out [Morris 1981, Gardner 1991].) Other vivid devaru are elephant devaru, minor Hindu deities worshiped locally, and a deity of the Kurumba people who lived in the locality several decades before. Generally, the more devaru appear year after year and are related with, the more vividly they are invoked, the more they are known, the more, in a sense, they "exist." Hardly anything is said *about* devaru in myth or other oral tradition either within the performance or outside it (Morris reports the same for Hill Pandaram [1981: 208]).

The devaru evoked often improvise on the same repetitive phrases. The saying, the voicing, the gesturing are important. These principal aspects of their behavior are, in Bateson's term (1979), meta-communication, namely, communicating that devaru are communicating, because the devaru are present *as* they move, talk, make gestures, etc. They are present *as* they communicate and socially interact with Nayaka. At peak times, everyone gathers around the visiting devaru, taking an active part in the conversation or just closely listening to it. At other times, only a few people do this while the others busy themselves with their own domestic affairs. The conversation has to be kept going at all times. When it slackens, the devaru complain and urge more people to join in. At the extreme, at dull moments in the heat of the day and deep in the night, this or that Nayaka grudgingly comes forward and engages the devaru in conversation. (I became helpful at various points in this event, letting Nayaka go about their business as I recorded and listened to the devaru by myself.) Keeping the conversation going is important because it keeps the Nayaka-devaru interaction and in a sense the devaru themselves "alive."

Conversation with the devaru is highly personal, informal, and friendly, including joking, teasing, bargaining, etc. In its idiomatic structure it resembles the demand-sharing discourse which is characteristic of Nayaka and hunter-gatherers generally (see Bird-David 1990). With numerous repetitions or minor variations on a theme, Nayaka and devaru nag and tease, praise and flatter, blame and cajole each other, expressing and demanding care and concern. For example, Nayaka stress that they are taking proper care of the devaru (or apologizing for not giving more or moaning about not being able to give more, etc.) and complain that the devaru, in turn, do not take care of them (or not enough or not as in previous years, etc.). The devaru stress how much they care for Nayaka and request better hospitality (more offerings, an earlier start for the event, more dancing, etc.). The Nayaka request cures from illnesses.

The ordinary round of everyday affairs continues during the two days of the pandalu. Domestic chores are

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24. See Bird-David (1996) for a detailed examination of how Nayaka incorporate Hindu influences into their pandalu tradition.

25. They also "bring to life" predecessors, who for lack of space are not discussed here.

26. Similarly, Brightman (1993:172) describes the Rock Cree's "shaking lodge ritual" as follows: "[It] features a recurring stock of characters, variable to some degree among different operators and different performances by the same operator. Many characters possess individuating speech characteristics, familiar to the audience from hearsay and from other performances. . . . Today, most spirits speak in Cree, and others use English, French, Saulteaux, and Chipewyan, or unknown human languages" (p. 172). "During the course of the performance, they [the spirits] conversed among themselves, with the operator, and with members of the audience outside, responding to questions either in known languages or in unintelligible speech requiring translation by other spirits or by the operator" (p. 171).

not marginalized on account of the occasion but constitute a significant part of its structure. Throughout the two days, Nayaka families go on with their domestic activities, frequently sharing with each other and, in some ways, with their devaru visitors, too. The devaru hut resembles ordinary Nayaka dwellings. Some men occasionally take naps there, sharing the hut with the devaru. In the morning, when people go to wash in the river and bring back water, they bow in the four directions, inviting local devaru to join them. Women on their way back sprinkle water from their vessels in the four directions, sharing the water with devaru around. In the course of conversation devaru request betel-nuts from their Nayaka interlocutor. One elderly Nayaka woman falls into a trance. She does not utter coherent words; in her frenzy she only sweeps the ground around the devaru hut and starts to undress (which bystanders stop her from doing). A joint meal of rice, cooked by Kungan's daughter and her husband, brings the event to a close. The food is shared equally among those present, and some food is spread in the four directions.

The pandalu makes known the Nayaka-devaru relatednesses and at the same time reproduces them. Objectified as kinship relationships, the relatednesses reconstitute all the participants as *sonta* and each of them as a person (Nayaka person, hill person, stone person, etc.). Furthermore, the pandalu constitutes (in the Gibsonian sense) "aids to perceiving" that "put the viewer into the scene" (Gibson 1979: 282, cited above). It "educates the attention" to perceive and specify the environment (while engaging with it) in a relational way. The pandalu "preserves information" (as effectively as books and even motion pictures); moreover, it encourages the learner to engage interactively with this information and so to experience it socially. The engagement with devaru characters "educates the attention" to notice devaru *as they interact with* oneself. It improves the skill of picking up information about the engagement itself, within its confines, from an engaged viewpoint.

If Nayaka only *subsisted* by hunting and gathering in their environment, they might perceive only its utilitarian affordances: an animal as something edible; a stone as something throwable; a rock as something one can shelter under. Within the practice of engaging with devaru characters in the pandalu they are educated to perceive that animals, stones, rocks, etc., are things one can relate with—that they have relational affordances, that is, what happens to them (or how they change) can affect and be affected by what happens to people (or how they change): an animal-avoiding-me in relation to me-upsetting-the-animal, a stone-coming-towards-me in relation to me-reaching-for-the-stone, a rock-securing-me in relation to me-seeking-a-shelter. Participants learn from conversing and sharing with devaru characters to discriminate mutually responsive changes in themselves and things they relate with; they become increasingly aware of the webs of relatedness between themselves and what is around them. From the bargaining and demand-sharing with devaru characters they learn

to pursue individual interests within the confines of a relatedness—to negotiate for what they need while simultaneously taking care to reproduce the framing relatedness within which they do so. From year upon year of conversations, which in part repeat themselves and in part change, participants are increasingly sensitized to pick up information on the emergent, processive, historical, and reciprocal qualities of relatednesses. In sum, we can say that the pandalu involves "*making* [devaru] alive," that is, raising people's awareness of their existence in-the-world and, dialectically, producing and being produced by this, socializing with them.

Animism as Relational 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 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—the kind of forest in which Nayaka live and with which they "talk"—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 Richards 1952). Compared with their method, "talking with" trees seems a ritual with no possible connection to the serious business of acquiring knowledge of trees.

If "cutting trees into parts" epitomizes the modernist epistemology, "talking with trees," I argue, epitomizes Nayaka animistic epistemology. "Talking" is shorthand for a two-way responsive relatedness with a tree—rather than "speaking" one-way to it, as if it could listen and understand. "Talking with" stands for attentiveness to variances and invariances in behavior and response of things in states of relatedness and for getting to know such things as they change through the vicissitudes over time of the engagement with them. To "talk with a tree"—rather than "cut it down"—is to perceive what *it* does as one acts towards it, being aware concurrently of changes in oneself and the tree. It is expecting response and responding, growing into mutual responsiveness and, furthermore, possibly into mutual responsibility.

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 environment and one's self finer, broader, deeper, richer, etc. Knowing, in the second case, grows from and *is* maintaining relatedness with neighboring others. It involves dividuating the environment rather than dichotomizing it and turning attention to "we-ness," which absorbs differences, rather than to "otherness," which highlights differences and eclipses commonalities. Against "I think, therefore I am" stand "I relate, therefore I am" and "I know as I relate." Against materialistic framing of the environment as discrete things stands relationally framing the environment as nested relatednesses. Both ways are real and valid. Each has its limits and its strengths.

Framing the environment relationally does not constitute Nayaka's only way of knowing their environment, though in my understanding they regard it as authoritative among their other ways. Nor is it unique to Nayaka. I would hypothesize that relational epistemologies of this kind enjoy authoritative status in cultures of peoples we call hunter-gatherers. These peoples normalize sharing with fellow persons. They engage intimately with their environment (if only periodically while on a break from other economic pursuits [Bird-David 1992b]). They celebrate animistic performances. Their performance traditions—for example, the Cree "shaking tent ritual" (e.g., Hallowell 1960, Feit 1994, Brightman 1993), the !Kung "medicine dance" (e.g., Marshall 1962, Katz 1982), the Hadza "sacred *epeme* dance" (see Woodburn 1982), the Batek "fruit-season's singing session" (see Endicott 1979), and Paliyan and Pandaram "spirit possession" (see Gardner 1991, Morris 1981)—are functionally similar to the Nayaka pandalu. These performances involve the visiting of superpersons who appear through trance and dance or make their voices heard.[27] The people regard these superpersons as friends and relatives and often address and refer to them by kinship terms. They approach them in a personal, friendly, and immediate way. These events are the central communal affairs of these communities and often the main celebrational means by which they sustain their senses of identity.[28] Each event constitutes a "participation frame" (Lave and Wenger 1991) which, together with the participation frame of hunting-gathering practice itself, nurtures a complex articulation of skills, a double-bind engagement which co-privileges

utilizing *and* respecting animated "things," self-interest *and* the cooperation within which that self-interest can be achieved.[29]

Furthermore, relational epistemologies function in diverse contexts where other epistemologies enjoy authority, including Western contexts (to a much greater extent than the authoritative status of science permits). When (going back to Guthrie's examples) we animate the computers we use, the plants we grow, and the cars we drive, we relationally frame them. We learn what they do in relation to what we do, how they respond to our behavior, how they act towards us, what their situational and emergent behavior (rather than their constitutive matter) is. As Nayaka get to know animated aspects of their environment, so we get to know these animated things by focusing on our relatedness with them within the confines of that relatedness from a relational viewpoint. This sort of relational framing is articulated with other epistemologies in complex, variable, and shifting ways that deserve study. (The example of ethologists mentioned earlier is a case in point: in regarding as persons the study animals with which they live, they frame them relationally in addition to making them the objects of their scientific study.)

As a hypothesis, furthermore, I am willing to agree with Tylor, not least because Guthrie goes some way towards substantiating the point, that the tendency to animate things is shared by humans. However, this common tendency, I suggest, is engendered by human socially biased cognitive skills, not by "survival" of mental confusion (Tylor) or by wrong perceptual guesses (Guthrie). Recent work relates the evolution of human cognition to social interaction with fellow humans. Its underlying argument is that interpersonal dealings, requiring strategic planning and anticipation of action-response-reaction, are more demanding and challenging than problems of physical survival (Humphrey 1976). Cognitive skills have accordingly evolved within and for a social kind of engagement and are "socially biased" (Goody 1995). We spontaneously employ these skills in situations when we cannot control or totally predict our interlocutor's behavior, when its behavior is not predetermined but in "conversation" with our own. We employ these skills in these situations, irrespective of whether they involve humans or other beings (the respective classification of which is sometimes part of reflective knowing, following rather than preceding the engagement situation). We do not first personify other entities and then socialize with them but personify them *as, when,* and *because* we socialize with them. Recognizing a "conversation" with a counter-being—which amounts to accepting it into fellowship rather than recognizing a common essence—makes that being a self in relation with ourselves.

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27. In some cases devaru are additionally invoked by objects, with which one talks, eats, sings, dances, etc. This is less common than their invocation by performance but of considerable theoretical importance.

28. At their respective times of study, these events were frequently held, for example, weekly among !Kung, monthly among Hadza, and "whenever need arises" among Pandaram. They spanned a significant stretch of time, for example, "the whole night" among !Kung, "two to three nights in succession" among Hadza, and "from evening into the night" among Paliyan. The events involved the entire community as active spectators and a considerable proportion as performers, for example, "one-third of the men" among !Kung, "one-eighth of the men" among Pandaram, and "28% of the adults" among Paliyan. In the case of Nayaka, about one-fifth of the men acted as performers.

29. Compare Briggs (1982) and Guemple (1988) on the teaching of Inuit children to relate with other people in a double-binding way and Myers's study (1986) of tenuous articulation of personal autonomy and relatedness among the Australian Pintupi.

Finally, the common human disposition to frame things relationally in these situations is culturally mediated and contextualized in historically specific ways (not least in relation with cultural concepts of the person). A diversity of animisms exists, each animistic project with its local status, history, and structure (in Sahlins's [1985] sense). There follow intriguing questions deserving study, for example: How does hunter-gatherer animism compare with the current radical environmental discourses (e.g., Kovel 1988, Leahy 1991, Regan 1983, Tester 1991) that some scholars have described as the "new animism" (Bouissac 1989; see also Kennedy's "new anthropomorphism" [1992])? What other forms of animism are there?[30] How do they articulate in each case with other cosmologies and epistemologies?[31] How do animistic projects relate to fetish practices? Surely, however, the most intriguing question is why and how the modernist project estranged itself from the tendency to animate things, if it is indeed universal. How and why did it stigmatize "animistic language" as a child's practice, against massive evidence (see Guthrie 1993) to the contrary? How did it succeed in delegitimating animism as a valid means to knowledge, constantly fending off the impulse to deploy it and regarding it as an "incurable disease" (see Kennedy 1992 and Masson and McCarthy 1995)? The answers are bound to be complex. Ernest Gellner (1988) argued that nothing less than "a near-miraculous concatenation of circumstances" can explain the cognitive shift that occurred in Western Europe around the 17th century. Ironically, history has it that Descartes—a reclusive man—was once accidentally locked in a steam room, where under hallucination he had the dualist vision on which the modern project is founded (see Morris 1991: 6). Can it be that a Tylorian kind of "dream thesis" helps explain not the emergence of primitive animism but, to the contrary, the modernist break from it?

Conclusions

How we get to know things is nested within culture and practice and takes multiple forms. Nayaka relationally frame what they are concerned about as their authoritative (but not only) way of getting to know things. They seek to understand relatednesses 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 which Tylor christened "primitive animism," articulated with a relational personhood concept and a relational perception of the environment. Previous 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.

30. For example, compare hunter-gatherer animism with premodern Western "animism" as described in Merchant (1980) and Burke (1972).
31. I owe the formulation of this question to Ingrid Jordt's forthcoming work on the articulation of Buddhist and animist epistemologies in Burma.

Comments

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Bird-David rejects modernist understandings but holds fast to the quintessentially modernist concern with epistemology. The massive conversion of ontological questions into epistemological ones is the hallmark of modernist philosophy. She does not accept the modernist answers, but the question how we come to know things is taken as a natural one to be put with reference to the Nayaka, who are thus encompassed by this ambiguous "we" and expected to provide an answer for "us." The answer is that knowing is relating and the *cogito* is relational. The problem remains framed in terms of knowledge even though the answer could be taken to imply that knowledge, let alone the *cogito*, has little to do with it. Anthropologists persist in thinking that in order to explain a non-Western *ontology* we must derive it from (or reduce it to) an epistemology. Animism is surely an ontology, concerned with being and not with how we come to know it. Bird-David falls into the Tylorian trap and feels compelled to assess the validity of this epistemology and to justify it on the basis of its cognitive naturalness.

The author has a fondness for scare quotes, but I am afraid this sort of pocket deconstruction is hardly enough to keep one safe from essentialization and modernist projection. The notion of "hunter-gatherers" is a case in point. Bird-David finds the concept suspicious, but all the same she attributes to hunter-gatherers a number of characteristics also to be found in many horticultural societies. There is then a suggestion that the prevalence of epistemologies of the kind described for the Nayaka is somehow (causally?) derived from the fact that "[hunter-gatherers] normalize sharing with fellow persons"; in other words, sharing is taken as the essence of hunter-gatherers' social life. This seems close to the traditional notion of a metaphoric projection of human relations onto the environment—an idea which has been cogently criticized by Ingold. Also, she dislikes dualisms and dichotomies, but this does not prevent her from posing a dichotomy between a dichotomous modernist epistemology and a non-dichotomous relational one. She objects, in particular, to the concepts of subject and object—but whence comes the notion of "objectification"?

I find the attempt to combine Strathern's and Ingold's theories very problematic. The "dividual" of the former shares only its name with Bird-David's, among other things because Strathern's notion of relation, as I understand it, has little in common with Bird-David's notion

of relatedness. Strathernian relations *separate,* while Bird-David's relatednesses are predicated on the *absorption* of difference by commonalities and togethernesses. There is here, then, in contrast to Strathern's usage, an implicit assumption that the fundamental or prototypical mode of relation is "we-ness" as sameness.

Bird-David's is yet another voicing of the recent widespread sentiment against difference which sees it as inimical to immanence, as if difference were a stigma of transcendence and alterity a harbinger of oppression. Is not this sentiment being here projected onto what hunter-gatherers are supposed to experience? All difference is read as opposition and all opposition as the *absence* of a relation: "to oppose" is taken as synonymous with "to exclude"—a strange idea which I can only attribute to the guilty supposition that others conceive otherness as we do. Well, they don't: others are "other" precisely because they have other "others."

I find Bird-David's idea that devaru are situational and event-determined appearances inspiring, and the point that devaru are persons insofar as they engage in relationships with people rather than the other way around is extremely well taken. But I also have several questions here.

Bird-David objects to Hallowell's usage of "other-than-human persons" on the ground that it betrays a concern with classes (human/non-human), and she prefers to call devaru "superpersons." But what is the "person" that makes devaru "super"persons—the *human* person? By the same token, the idea that devaruhood is a context-bound, situational ascription seems to rely on an implicit contrast with context-free *avaru*hood.

The idea that devaru are objectifications of sharing relationships seems to fly in the face of the "more complex situation" (more complex for whom?) of the elephant devaru related to the animal which trampled the huts. Bird-David says that this case illustrates "the Nayaka view at its limits," but this sounds like blaming the Nayaka for the limits of her own theoretical view.

Bird-David emphasizes the particularistic, event-derived nature of the devaru but also says that many of those who appear in the performance are very crudely specified and that some are recognized only as " 'devaru' in general." But what is a devaru in general? And if interaction with devaru is a way of "educating attention" to discriminate changes in the relationships between humans and the environment, then the sketchy specification of some devaru would make them quite useless.

In her conclusion, Bird-David says that our human socially biased cognitive skills would be spontaneously (naturally) applied in situations "when we cannot control or totally predict our interlocutor's behavior." Applied to non-human beings, however, these skills would give us something quite similar to the theory of magic as a counter-anxiety device. In like manner, the mention of the devaru-ization of unusual relatednesses strikes me as similar to the old idea that "primitives" attribute a spirit to anything out of the ordinary. We might also inquire about the respective limits and strengths of the materialistic and the relational views. What *are* the limits of a relational epistemology?

In order to prove that animism is not a (mistaken) cultural epistemology, Bird-David must argue that it is a natural human attitude. In so doing, she manages to culturalize and particularize the "modernist project" but only at the price of a prior naturalization and universalization of the animist stance. Thus the relational epistemology is ontologized but in terms of a concept of human nature which is firmly situated within the modernist privileging of epistemology.

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This is a welcome contribution in several respects: it readdresses the difference between the "pre-modern" and the "modern" in an age when such polarities are increasingly brushed aside as modern constructions; it argues for a connection between studies of human-environmental relations and the more recently constituted anthropological discourse on personhood; finally, in seriously considering the validity of pre-Cartesian epistemologies it shows how anthropology might resuscitate its now foundering critique of modernity. In all these respects I am fundamentally in agreement with the author (see Hornborg 1994, 1996, 1998). My remarks will rather focus on some points which she might have carried further.

To begin with, I would have liked to see a distinction between "relatedness" or "relational epistemology," on the one hand, and ritualized animism such as pandalu, on the other. Bird-David conflates the two rather than problematizing their relationship. The former evokes a very general human experience that has inspired, for instance, the long-standing phenomenological critique of Cartesian objectivism from within modern Western society itself; the latter is a specific cultural expression in certain pre-modern societies that may tell us something about "relatedness" but cannot qualify as simply an index of it. A relevant question would have been under what conditions "relatedness" must be objectified in ritual. Bird-David's own datum that the Nayaka engage intimately with their environment "only periodically while on a break from other economic pursuits" suggests that pandalu may be an attempt to revitalize an everyday relatedness that is threatening to dissolve or slip away.

If the presence or absence of "relatedness" is a general existential problem, Bird-David has addressed nothing less than the problem of modernity itself. Yet there are few indications that the argument belongs within a wider tradition than a rather parochial, anthropological concern with animism. There is no mention, for instance, of Weber's "disenchantment," Merleau-Ponty's "being-in-the-world," or Buber's "I-Thou" relationships. These are connections which deserve to be elaborated. It is curious how the phenomenological jargon on

being "in-the-world" has infiltrated ecological anthropology (see also Ingold 1996) without any mention of the sources of these concepts (see Gooch 1998).

The example of the ethologists' coming to view their animal objects as subjects illustrates how "relatedness" is something that people are capable of *achieving* in particular experiential contexts of some minimal duration. It is undoubtedly *everywhere* fundamental to the local and embedded dimensions of human life. Why exoticize it into something that "they"—"the Nayaka"—have? Once again, the anthropological gaze risks reducing itself to the class perspective of urban cosmopolitans making careers out of objectifying the rural and the local.

There is a contradiction between Bird-David's concluding assumption that "the modernist project estranged itself from the tendency to animate things" and her earlier observation that we may animate our computers and cars. "Animation" is one of Ellen's (1988) criteria of fetishism, and fetishism to Marx was central to modern capitalism. It is indeed relevant to ask how animism relates to fetishism. There is a 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 (animation). The former is a cognitive/ideological illusion, the latter a condition of phenomenological/experiential resonance. I have suggested (Hornborg 1992) that "machine fetishism," at the ideological level, is as crucial to capitalism as money or commodity fetishism. Machines can undoubtedly also be animated in a phenomenological sense, as Bird-David suggests. We probably need to distinguish between the animation of living things such as trees (animism, more narrowly defined) and that of nonliving things such as stones or machines (fetishism). Cartesian objectivism and fetishism here emerge as structural inversions of one another: the former denies agency and subjectivity in living beings, whereas the latter attributes such qualities to dead 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.

The epistemological predicament codified 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. Rather than a cerebral innovation that has since diffused, it is a reflection of a set of social circumstances that is continually being reproduced and expanded. Bird-David's programmatic ambition to articulate environmental relations and personhood is supremely worthwhile, but where in this text are the insights on personhood that she wishes to employ? A highly relevant aspect of personhood which might have illuminated the relationist/objectivist contrast is the tendency of "non-Western" (local?) people to anchor their selves in concrete rather than abstract reference-points (see Shweder and Bourne 1984, Hornborg 1994). It is the long immersion in the concrete and experien-

tial *specifics of place* that yields conditions conducive to "relatedness." If this has been stigmatized as "a child's practice," as does indeed Piaget's bourgeois concept of maturity, is this not because we are all born premodern? Abstraction, detachment, and objectification are products of modern, disembedding middle- and upper-class biographies.

Bird-David observes that relational epistemologies are performative, as their significance hinges on what they *do* rather than on what they represent. Ironically, at another logical level, so is objectivist knowledge, but precisely *by not admitting it.* By posing as mere representation, it performs an act of alienation, a relinquishment of responsibility, through which a disembodied, instrumental rationality is set free to go about its business in the world.

Finally, it may restrict our field of vision to conclude that the human tendency to animate things is engendered by "socially biased cognitive skills." If human cognition has evolved to equip us for "interpersonal dealings" with unpredictable interlocutors, it may just as well have been because ecological relationships are fundamentally communicative (von Uexküll 1982 [1940]). Ingold (1996) argues that social relations are a subset of ecological relations and that there is a sense in which non-human creatures are also "persons." We could thus turn the evolutionary argument around and suggest that human sociability was engendered by cognitive skills that were *ecologically* biased. This would provide an even stronger case for the essential validity of animism.

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I am in broad sympathy with the argument of this admirable paper and confine my comment to the one point on which I have a substantive disagreement. The point is relatively tangential to the argument as a whole but has important implications for the directions in which it might be further pursued. Bird-David is right, I think, to point out that the difference between hunter-gatherers and citizens of modern Western nations is not that the former have a relational epistemology while the latter have signed up for the modernist project. After all, a great many contemporary hunter-gatherers *are* citizens of Western nation-states. The difference is rather that within the context of the modern state and its political, economic, and educational institutions, relational ways of knowing have lost much of their authority. But they continue to operate nonetheless and remain deeply embedded in the experience of everyday life. As a speculative hypothesis, Bird-David suggests that such ways of knowing are, indeed, common to human beings everywhere. I am inclined to agree. I do not believe, however, that the explanation for this is to be found in theories of the evolution of social intelligence

of the kind originally propounded by Humphrey (1976) and subsequently developed by, *inter alia*, Goody (1985). These theories rest fair and square on a modernist conception of mind and behavior which flies in the face of the relational view of personal being and environmental perception to which Bird-David and I subscribe. To follow the explanatory route along which they beckon would lead us inevitably to the very fallacies that she correctly identifies in the work of scholars such as Guthrie (1993).

What Humphrey argued, in essence, was that the cognitive demands for an individual of strategically managing interactions with conspecifics far outweighed those of dealing with other components of the environment in the procurement of subsistence, and therefore the selective pressures that drove the evolution of human intelligence were above all social rather than technical. This distinction between the social and technical functions of intellect is based, however, on a more fundamental division between the domains of society and nature. Social partners are beings *with* whom an individual interacts, whereas in nature there are only things that one can act *upon.* Yet precisely because their intelligence has been designed by natural selection specifically for handling social interaction, human beings are predisposed to treat objects of nature, too, as if they were social partners. And in doing so, says Humphrey, "they are sure to make mistakes." One of the most obvious of these mistakes, typical of "primitive— and not so primitive—peoples," is the "resort to animistic thinking about natural phenomena." People who think in this way attempt to interact with nature as they would with one another. Such attempts are quite understandable but nonetheless fallacious. "Nature will not transact with men; she goes her own way regardless" (Humphrey 1976:313).

Thus for Humphrey, just as for Guthrie, animism is founded in error: the attribution of social characteristics to objects of the natural world. And for both authors the prevalence of the error is put down to evolved predispositions that have a rational foundation in the calculus of selective costs and benefits. However, as Bird-David convincingly shows, a relational epistemology turns the tables on such arguments. The error, it seems, lies with their originators, in their assumption that the world is divided, a priori, between the inanimate and the animate, between the non-human and the human, and between the natural and the social. But above all, they make the mistake of assuming that life and mind are interior properties of individuals that are given, independently and in advance of their involvement in the world. Perception, then, is understood to be a matter of constructing internal representations of what the world might be like on the basis of the limited information available through the senses, while action is regarded as the execution of plans arrived at through the strategic manipulation of such representations. In social interaction, it is supposed, each party has to be able to represent the likely response of the other to his or her own intended actions: this is what Goody (1995) calls "anticipatory interactive planning" (AIP).

The kind of responsiveness envisaged in anticipatory interactive planning, however, is fundamentally different from what Bird-David has in mind when she speaks of the "two-way responsive relatedness" to components of the environment such as trees that comes from a history of intimate engagement with them. To "talk with a tree," as she points out, is a question not of (mistakenly) attributing to it an inner intelligence and then configuring how it might decide to react to what one does but of perceiving "what *it* does as one acts towards it, being aware concurrently of changes in oneself and the tree." Responsiveness, in this view, amounts to a kind of sensory participation, a coupling of the movement of one's attention to the movement of aspects of the world. If there is intelligence at work here, it does not lie inside the head of the human actor, let alone inside the fabric of the tree. Rather, it is immanent in the total system of perception and action constituted by the co-presence of the human and the tree within a wider environment. To develop this idea further, the first thing we shall have to jettison is the cognitivist conception of intelligence as a mental computational device responsible for processing the data of perception and pulling the strings of action (see Ingold 1993:431). Human beings everywhere perceive their environments in the responsive mode not because of innate cognitive predisposition but because to perceive at all they must already be situated in a world and committed to the relationships this entails.

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I have read Bird-David's lucid and valuable paper with great interest and offer the following critical reflections in the spirit of friendship:

"Modernism," as Bird-David defines it, implies a conception of the human person as involving a radical body/spirit (soul, mind?) split, a radical dualism between humans and nature, and the notion that the human person is an individual thing, a bounded asocial entity (organism). These conceptions, of course, largely came out of Cartesian metaphysics and the bourgeois liberal theory of the 17th century and were intrinsic as ideologies to the rise of capitalism. A critique of these conceptions—which Bird-David links to "current" theory in ecology and personhood—goes back two centuries to the time of Goethe, Hegel, and Marx. Philosophers, historians, sociologists, anthropologists, socialists, romantic poets, evolutionary biologists, and naturalists have long since concluded that humans are a part of nature and that people everywhere are neither disembodied egos (Descartes) nor abstract individuals (the asocial organisms of bourgeois liberalism) nor simply a reflection of the commodity metaphor (Strathern)

but intrinsically social, that is, relational, beings. The notion that human persons are dividuals has thus long been established. But, of course, people are also individuals, actual entities or unities, and must be so logically and dialectically in order to be dividual. Setting up the individual and the dividual as if they were opposed categories, as Bird-David seems to do(?), is quite misleading. Indeed, as Fitz Poole and myself have both stressed, individuality is a defining feature of personhood and ought not to be conflated with individualism (the cultural notion that we are asocial organisms bounded by the skin). People in Western cultures, like the Nayaka and people everywhere, are dividual persons and recognize themselves as such. Even the much-abused Descartes acknowledged this in his letters, but the best account of the dividual person was given long ago by another much-maligned scholar, Radcliffe-Brown (1952: 194): "The human being as a person is a complex of social relationships. He is a citizen of England, a husband and a father, a bricklayer, a member of a particular Methodist congregation, a voter in a certain constituency, a member of his trade union, an adherent of the Labour Party, and so on. Note that each of these descriptions refers to a social relationship." Thus "dividual" seems to be just a fashionable and rather scholastic synonym for the person?

Bird-David seems to convey the idea that certain concepts, such as spirit, thing, religion, possession, imply a dualistic metaphysic. She thus overlooks the simple fact that all concepts are relational and that any distinction—male/female, humans/nature, body/mind, spirit/world, us/them—can be interpreted in various ways. For example, the distinction many people make between god (spirit) and the finite world can either be interpreted in dualistic fashion (as in Platonism, gnosticism, deism, and the more strident forms of theism) or viewed as a relational discontinuity (as in the Christian Neoplatonism of Eriugena and Eckhart, Hegel's philosophy, esotericism, hermeticism, and the Creation-based spirituality of Matthew Fox) or by completely repudiating dualism (as in the pantheism of Bruno, Spinoza, and Heine, the identity philosophy of Schelling, and the spiritual monism of Parmenides and Advaita Vedanta). It is the same with every other concept. To suggest as many postmodernists do—and Bird-David seems to be following this trail—that certain concepts (reason, culture, mind, religion, spirit, nature, or what have you) imply a "modernist" perspective and a dualistic metaphysic is rather simplistic. It all depends on how they are interpreted and used in analysis. Read in his seminal article (1955) on the Gahuku-Gama sees the concept of person as "modernist," implying an individuated subject, and thus rejects it.

Bird-David herself seems to be locked into a dualistic perspective, for we have not only a dichotomy between individual and dividual but also one between thing and relation. The notion that "thing" is a "modernist" concept is also rather misleading, and setting up a dichotomy between "thing" and "relation" as if they were op-posing concepts or theories is not only undialectical but obfuscating. All relations (whether causal or social) imply things, actual entities that are constituted through relations; all affordances in the environment imply something—person, observer, or frog—that is environed; all difference entails at the same time a unity, just as all unities (individuals) are at the same time dividual. Bird-David's paper conveys the impression that talking about "things" implies a negative, instrumental, objectivist attitude to the world. This is not only contrasted with but opposed to "relations," identified with the personal and the social, which are positive and good, and reflected in Nayaka religious beliefs, which in turn reflect the "relational epistemology" that Bird-David herself embraces. The paper is thus pervaded by Martin Buber's distinction between I-thou (relation) and I-it (thing). But just as social relations can be hierarchic and exploitative, so our relationship to things (independent of religion) can be what Heidegger described as primordial and poetic. The close relationship that the Nayaka have with the forest is surely not dependent upon the fact that they perceive the devaru as immanent in the world and as persons. All people recognize things in the world, and this is expressed in language; the people I know well—the Hill Pandaram and the peasant communities of Malawi—not only assert but celebrate the singularity of things, recognizing that individual things as genera have their own unique powers and value.

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The thesis under discussion is an intriguing one. The realities of the phenomena classically described by anthropologists by means of the concept of animism may, after all, have been seriously misconstrued. Bird-David's attempt to "solve" the problem of animism by combining environment theory and personhood theory is, in my view, a promising one. Such an approach resonates with powerful themes in social theory—including the pragmatism of John Dewey, the Marxian constitutive view of the individual as an "ensemble" of social relations, and the Bakhtinian notion of dialogue. One of Bird-David's important achievements is to show that once we abandon the dualism of nature and society, animism acquires a new meaning which seems more fundamental and more ethnographically authentic than earlier, intellectualist perspectives implied. Extending to the nonhuman domain the perspective of socially biased cognition (a perspective usually restricted to the world of conspecifics), she is able to rethink animism as a "conversation" with the environment—as a kind of phatic communion in the Malinowskian sense. Animism, then, is just one more manifestation of a basic human capacity, here extended to the totality of human experience.

Bird-David suggests that her perspective is "one now needed in studies of the complex phenomena which Tylor denoted as 'animism.'" She does not elaborate on the "now," although she does indicate a connection with "current radical environmental discourses." Similar themes have, indeed, been developed within current environmental thought. Plumwood, for instance, argues for a "relational account" (1991:14) of humans and the environment, pointing out that such an approach applies "to caring for other species and for the natural world as much as . . . to caring for our own species." The practical implications of the relational perspective, however, are a matter of some debate. For some scholars the notion of unbroken wholeness—the Nayakan notion of "we-ness"—is antithetical to the idea of caring for the environment. One cannot care for something, it is argued, unless it is separated from oneself. On the other hand, the extended notion of the embodied self—of being a body and not simply having it—does not seem to preclude the idea of bodily concern. And if for many people the incorporation of the body into their notion of self signifies intensive bodily care, why should they neglect the environment once they reject the dualism of nature and society? I wonder if Bird-David's thesis of animism suggests a particular stance on this question.

Bird-David rightly argues in her discussion of the modernist perspective that "the most intriguing question is why and how the modernist project estranged itself from the tendency to animate things." She does not pursue the issue but concludes with an ironic fable about Descartes. It is important, however, to situate (to "dividuate," if you like) the theorists who have passed on to us the conversations of the past. Apparently, the fragmenting of the medieval world and the othering of nature it entailed took shape in the Renaissance period, during which the Western attitude to knowledge and the environment was transformed. There already exists a massive literature on this history. It seems that the "anthropocracy" (to borrow I. Panofsky's term) central to the dualist, modernist project was the cumulative result of a series of economic and cognitive developments (see Pálsson 1995:3–5). In the process, the phenomena labeled "animism" were suppressed, relegated to the wild.

While Bird-David's characterization of earlier writings is generally correct, I wonder if it assumes more uniformity in the literature than there actually is. In 1930, for instance, Luria and Vygotsky attacked the Tylorian notion of animism. "This naïve view," they said, "has been abandoned long ago by psychology" (1992: 43). Instead they suggested an emphasis on the "material" constraints and emotional reactions of "primitive man," an emphasis which to some degree resonates with Bird-David's concerns. Also, I have problems with the term "dividual" which Bird-David adopts to challenge modern individualism and the intellectualist thesis of animism. The meaning of the now-suspect English term "individual" has undergone fundamental changes in the course of history. In the Middle Ages it referred to an "indivisible" relational whole—something that cannot be divided, like the unity of the Trinity. As Gurevich argues (1992:297), in medieval times "man thought of himself as an integral part of the world. . . . His interrelation with nature was so intensive and thorough that he could not look at it from without." Nowadays, in contrast, the concept of the individual suggests the very opposite, namely, distinctions and discontinuities. The change in the meaning of the concept, Williams points out, "is a record in language of an extraordinary social and political history" (1976:133). Given this history, references to the "dividual" person are not particularly illuminating. If "dividualism" existed in medieval Europe, it probably was an inversion of the relational view which Bird-David is suggesting.

It would be wrong, however, to reduce the issue to etymology. Bird-David, in my view, has not only constructed an eclectic and highly useful theoretical framework but also skilfully applied it to both the general phenomenon of animism and her Nayakan ethnography.

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Bird-David's call for revisiting animism is timely. While challenging Tylor's embrace of the Western objectivist view of reality, she rightly points to the contemporary relevance of his seminal study of "the belief that life is produced by a spiritual force." She opposes Durkheimian, structuralist (Lévi-Strauss and Descola), and cognitive evolutionist (Guthrie) explanations of animism and offers an original contribution to the debate by focusing on the sociality, religious ideas, and ritual practices of egalitarian hunter-gatherers whose tendency to attribute life to inanimate objects or mental states to non-humans stems, she asserts, from a distinctive "relational epistemology."

One of the greatest problems with Tylor's view of animism, according to Bird-David, is its monolithic character. She argues instead for a plurality of animisms, on the ground that different belief systems conceptualise "life," "non-living," and "human" in fundamentally different ways. She goes on to show that Nayaka nature spirits (devaru) and spirit possession rites have much in common with those of the Hadza, Hill Pandaram, and !Kung. Hunting-and-gathering populations seem to attribute similar meanings to nature, life, and personhood. They do not dichotomise the person into spirit and body or the environment into the physical and the social but envisage instead a social environment based on the immediate, intimate, and engaged experience of relatedness between "dividual" persons. People like the Nayaka define a person as someone with whom one shares. Spiritual forces are treated as persons

brought to life with whom space, things, actions, experience, and conversations can be shared.

I find Bird-David's thesis that the animistic beliefs of egalitarian hunter-gatherers objectify relations of sharing insightful. In the same way as she was able to recognise something unique in the economic activities of nomadic hunters, gatherers, and some swidden horticulturists who "procure" rather than produce, as well as in their social organisation (they "demand-share" rather than exchange), she has now identified something distinctive in their cultures: the principle that to relate is to know and that to bring to life is to impersonate. Following this principle, and depending on the context, animals may be turned into mere objects, into people, or into divinities. And when natural kinds or natural forces are "made alive" as persons, people relate to them and communicate and socialise with them exactly as if they were fellow human beings.

Unfortunately, the ethnographic material she cites in support of her thesis is not sufficiently developed or clear (I found the examples of elephant devaru particularly obscure and ambiguous). Moreover, too little is said about local perceptions and experiences of trances and possession by animal spirits for the reader to decide whether to agree or not with the author about the distinctiveness of hunter-gatherer animistic performances. I found even more problematic the theoretical ground on which Bird-David bases some of her most perceptive ideas, for example, the idea that stones are given life and personified as, when, and because of the desire to socialise with them. To reject Kennedy's distinction between animation and anthropomorphisation on the ground that Gibson's ecological psychology better explains why the affordances of natural objects are not essential properties but context-dependent is not, in my view, satisfactory. Far from saying that ethologists feel empathy for, hence relate to, the animals they are experimenting upon, Kennedy points to the intrinsically anthropomorphic nature not only of everyday language (which could simply be brushed aside as a metaphoric property) but also of scientific thought. Scientists, like all of us, and like the "primitives" Tylor was trying to understand, tend to ascribe feelings and cognitive processes to living organisms, especially higher ones. What concerns Kennedy (1992:93–94) is that by thinking about animals as if they had minds like ours—that is, as if they were conscious and self-aware, as if they thought, and as if they had purposes and used mental images—we confuse functions and causes and wrongly project the exclusively human mind-body problem onto other species (Kennedy 1992:168).

The question why humans tend to use human experience to interpret biological processes, in particular animal behaviour, is so fundamental that anthropologists cannot answer it without entering into dialogue with other disciplines, including cognitive psychology. I agree with Bird-David that the main issue at stake is the attribution of life to the non-living and how such attribution relates to the conferrring of human traits on non-human entities (see Rival 1998: 20–27). But the matter cannot be adequately settled without paying serious attention to the mechanisms that connect the intuitive assumptions of everyday cognition or "common sense" (as used by Atran 1990) and the counterintuitive representations that make up the core of complex religious beliefs such as those informing Nayaka ritual performances (Boyer 1994).

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Bird-David is to be congratulated for writing on an interesting topic, a reevaluation of Tylor's concept of animism. Unfortunately, in my view her postmodernist stance robs the article of much of its potential value not only in clarifying animism as an analytical concept but also in evaluating anthropological contributions to an understanding of animistic thought. Although careful to avoid complete dismissal of science, she apparently rejects its uniqueness as a way of knowing.

Bird-David discusses the work of Tylor, Durkheim, and Lévi-Strauss as scientific or modernist but can offer nothing to replace it but an antiobjectivist, relational epistemology supposedly practiced by the Nayaka of southern India. She seems to propose a radical relativism in which each group's conceptions of personhood replace or at least stand beside scientific attempts to understand this difficult aspect of culture. Bird-David uses Tylor's 19th-century work as an example of how science can lead researchers astray, but no contemporary anthropologist follows Tylor's program of cultural evolution. It has been made obsolete by the very science Bird-David discounts. Moreover, she is forced to admit that as empirical scientific research has increased knowledge of the world's cultures the concept of animism itself has fallen into disuse among ethnographers.

She attempts to explain animistic thinking simply by placing it in the context of the Nayaka worldview, in which, not surprisingly, it makes complete sense. The Nayaka "talk" with superpersons because they have an animistic worldview. But the question of what leads people to develop such a worldview in the first place is not addressed, and so no real explanation of animism is offered and no advance is made over the work of Hallowell. Is Bird-David implying that Nayaka animism is somehow natural and therefore not in need of explanation?

She suggests that relational epistemologies characterize hunting and gathering peoples everywhere but shies away from further exploration of this intriguing proposition—undoubtedly because it suggests techno-environmental causation, a concept from cultural ecology derived from the scientific tradition within anthropology. The interesting hypothesis that animism may be an extension of human cognitive skills to nonhuman "persons" remains largely unexplored. Nowhere is it

made clear how anthropologists could use the notion of a relational epistemology to generate new or better knowledge.

According to Bird-David, the Nayaka both do and do not distinguish the body from the spirit, the subjective from the objective, environment from behavior, the physical from the psychical, ritual from practice, and humans from the physical world as well as animals, but these distinctions and other modernist assumptions have been unthinkingly imposed on them by purveyors of science. Somehow the Nayaka do not dichotomize like modernists but instead view apparent opposites as nested within each other, part of an overall "we-ness" that at the same time retains internal differentiation. What can this mean? If, as stated throughout the article, the Nayaka concept of devaru serves primarily to convey information about the social and natural worlds, Bird-David should be able to specify what information is being conveyed. The implication is that belief in devaru underscores human beings' meaningful interaction with objects, animals, and other humans. I do not see how this analysis represents an advance over scientific anthropology.

The four stories discussed by Bird-David present precious little ethnographic evidence for the interpretations of Nayaka personhood, and the analysis demonstrates no clear improvement over the work of Lévi-Strauss and Durkheim. In addition, she speaks for the Nayaka as if they were of one mind on this complex issue. Does no one among them contest the accepted view? That Nayaka conceptions of the person are different from Western conceptions poses no threat to scientific anthropology. In fact, the differences are to be expected. Furthermore, scientific anthropology need not be blind to such other perspectives. To identify unconscious assumptions that obstruct analysis is to practice good science and does not justify the call for its equation with alternative ways of knowing. What Bird-David demonstrates in discussing earlier approaches to animism is the continuous subversion of orthodoxy that is a primary strength of the scientific approach to the problem of knowledge. Animism is essentially a religious perspective, and the attempt here to blur the difference between religious and scientific knowledge is not only shortsighted but dangerous. Is Bird-David willing to admit creationist assertions (or other faith-based beliefs) on an equal footing with scientific knowledge?

Few contemporary anthropologists would deny that differing cultural systems produce equally authentic ways of being human and many different ways of knowing. This is a fundamental insight deriving from scientific anthropology early in this century. The Nayaka, for example, appear to have a complex epistemology based on interaction and transaction. However, it would be foolish to deny the power of science to produce intersubjective knowledge of high validity and reliability by placing it on an equal footing with all other approaches to the problem of knowledge. Etic formulations do not invalidate emic systems of knowledge for the simple reason that they are evaluated by distinct criteria. Science is a way of publicly presenting and evaluating evidence and contains within its practice a self-correcting mechanism that addresses the critiques leveled at it by postmodernists like Bird-David. The spectacular successes of scientific anthropology in expanding our knowledge of the human condition, of "making one's awareness of one's environment and one's self finer, broader, deeper, [and] richer," since the days of Tylor should be acknowledged before being replaced by the relativistic, antiobjectivist approach suggested in this article.

Reply

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Critical or supportive, the commentators have taken a close interest in this paper's thesis, and I appreciate their reciprocity for the work I put into writing it. I shall first address critiques and misunderstandings and then the suggestions offered by commentators for pursuing the argument further.

"Science" is needlessly defended by Sandstrom. The spectacular achievements of science are not undermined at all. A graduate in economics and mathematics, I have myself worked with "hard" data in the objectivist tradition and continue to do so whenever it is possible and advantageous. Yet, powerful as it is, the scientific way is neither good for studying everything nor the only way of studying everything. This—no more, no less—is the broadest frame within which the argument can be situated. The paper does not "reject [science's] uniqueness as a way of knowing" but on the contrary stresses its being unique among other ways, which makes it more—not less—intriguing for study (comparative, sociological, and historical) and precious as a study tool. Presenting Nayaka animistic practices as a way of knowing is not to "blur the difference between religious and scientific knowledge" but rather to rescue these practices from our pigeon-hole "religion," in which they were formerly placed.

The analytic use of dualisms and dichotomies is forcefully defended by Viveiros de Castro. I argue that in animistic perceptions of the environment oppositions are of secondary importance. Therefore, in order to interpret, to try to get closer to, and to make sense of their perspectives, the language of dualisms and dichotomies is an obstacle. In no way does this imply "dislike for dualisms and dichotomies" in general. Indeed, to view this culture within a broader frame and try to compare it with other cultures—which is equally part of the anthropologist's work—I myself use dichotomies, including the one between "a dichotomous modernist epistemology and a non-dichotomous relational

one." The latter dichotomy is made within our own knowledge-producing practices, which favor knowing through dichotomies. Vivieros de Castro confuses local and students' perspectives, while a plurality of perspectives and ways of knowing demands keeping them separate in mind and carefully shifting between them to suit context and purpose.

Similarly, Viveiros de Castro rises to the defense of "modernist understandings" against an imaginary "enemy." I do not "reject modernist understandings" totally, only previous modernist understandings of animistic practices that involve implicit a priori attribution of modernist ideas of "nature" and "person" to animistic people. He argues that while rejecting "modernist understandings" I address "quintessentially modernist" questions of epistemology, but modernity has no monopoly over such questions. Other peoples concern themselves with ways of knowing, albeit with (and in) other ways. John Dewey and Arthur Bentley (1949:50) argued that "knowings are always and everywhere inseparable from the knowns." If we accept this, we cannot separate ontology from epistemology in any successful way at all. Viveiros de Castro rightly emphasizes that for hunter-gatherers animism is an ontology. Yet it is not ontology alone, and, moreover, we cannot describe it as just an ontology. To describe, say, kinds of devaru, where they live, and what they are like without describing how Nayaka get to know them is not to describe their ontology freed from modernist concerns with epistemology. Rather, it is to describe their ontology crossed with our favored epistemology, which claims disengagement of known, knower, and knowing.

My intention was to present Nayaka animistic practices as a specific cultural expression of a relational epistemology, itself a general human experience. If the point is not made clearly enough, Hornborg stresses it further. Relational epistemology has of course been expressed in many other specific cultural-historical ways, notably in scholarly critiques of Cartesian objectivism going back two centuries. In their comments, Morris and Hornborg effectively give these traditions more space than I could in a paper focusing on animism. However, far from ignoring these traditions, I could not have written the paper without them. To some degree, nothing but sensitivities cultivated by these traditions of thought could have enabled me to take a fresh view of Nayaka animistic practices by providing an alternative starting point for the analysis. I found Martin Buber's "I-Thou" concept particularly insightful, a concept which his student Friedman (1995:57) summed up in these words:

> I-Thou is the primary word of relation. It is characterised by mutuality, directness, presentness, intensity, and ineffability. Although it is only within this relation that personality and the personal really exist, the Thou of the I-Thou is not limited to men but may include animals, trees, objects of nature and God. . . . I-Thou . . . cut[s] across the lines of

our ordinary distinctions to focus our attention not upon individual objects and their casual connections but upon the relations between things, the *dazwischen* (there-in-between).

I started an early draft with this excerpt as the epigraph but later decided to give Nayaka words this honor.

I do not share Hornborg's view that to situate the argument within the anthropological discussion of animism is parochial. The mission and power of anthropology, in my view, lie in exploring "wide traditions" in their multiple local embeddednesses, avoiding grand reifications. This includes, in this case, studying how anthropologists as modernist agents try to understand animism. Hornborg concludes from the argument as it stands that it addresses "nothing less than the problem of modernity itself," which surely speaks for sufficient effectiveness.

The paper focuses on Nayaka while expanding its horizons to hunter-gatherers (or egalitarian hunter-gatherers, according to Rival). "Hunter-gatherers" as a category has its roots in cultural ecology, where it was originally conceptualized in opposition to horticulturalists, pastoralists, and peasants. However, the expression is used nowadays in softer ways. We know that there are no society-things spread across the world falling neatly into this or that kind of society, each with its own exclusive attributes. There are diverse particular communities (Nayaka, !Kung, Hill Pandaram, Pintupi, Hadza) among which we ethnographers, by comparing our studies, perceive common features. "Hunter-gatherers" is a name, our name, by which for multiple reasons (historical, ideological, phenomenological) we refer to the plurality of these specific groups. To say that "hunter-gatherers normalize sharing with fellow persons" is not to say that sharing is absent in other societies, as Viveiros de Castro would have it, but only that the plurality of specific communities we know as hunter-gatherers normalizes sharing.

Enough of the theoretical and ethnographic setting of the argument; the argument itself is twofold, a point lost on some commentators. Relational epistemology enjoys authority in Nayaka culture. Concurrently (as Ingold clearly sums it up), "within the context of modern state and its political, economic, and educational institutions, relational ways of knowing have lost much of their authority. But they continue to operate nonetheless and remain deeply embedded in the experience of everyday life." Hornborg sees a contradiction where there is none (between the concluding assumption that the modernist project estranged itself from the tendency to animate things and the earlier observation that we do animate, for example, computers and cars). The issue is one of authority—whether authority is given to relational ways of knowing (how, where, when, how much, by whom, etc.) in particular cultures/times/places. The paper suggests that these ways rank very high in certain hunter-gatherers' cultures, where they constitute the mainstream dogma, lying at the core-

junction of religious, economic, and social life. This cannot be said for modern societies, although people in them do animate. At the same time, hunter-gatherers are not exoticized by this argument, which rather draws a complex pattern of common features and differences between them and us.

Connected with the argument that Nayaka give authority to relational ways of knowing, another has been made concerning "otherness." I could not agree more with Viveiros de Castro's point that "others are 'other' precisely because they have other 'others.' " However, I think he is unwilling to pursue the point far enough and accept the Nayaka "other" for an other "other," perhaps because, limited by space, I did not sufficiently develop the point. Anthropologists usually concern themselves with "other" as different and separate and in some cases to define "Us" as "not Them." Nayaka give authority to another "other," an "other" also deeply embedded in our experience of everyday life (though enjoying little authority), an "other" as in "each other" and "this hand, and the other"—a part of a pair, existing beside, in proximity, in interaction, and in interexchange with one. "Other" is in the first case a mental construct, an object of reflection, and in the second case a fellow-member with whom one lives. "To other" is in the first case to construct someone as socially separate, something else, and in the second case to draw him or her into mutuality. The Nayaka's principal way of "othering" makes the former kind of "other" scarce in their culture. Piccacio constitute the main exception I can think of. These are the souls of people who died alone in the forest by accident and have not yet been helped by ritual to coalesce with others (predecessors, ancestors, and devaru). It is believed that they roam the forest and are dangerous. In the pandalu they are played by two male actors, dressed up grotesquely as male and female, who in their acts reverse normal socializing—grabbing food from each other, charging bystanders with sticks, etc., to the delight and laughter of the spectators. The contrast between such an "other" and the devaru-other, who is drawn into conversations and sharing, is telling.

The use of the "dividual" notion attracted various comments. Interesting is Pálsson's on the fundamental change of the term "individual" from the Middle Ages (indivisible from the world) to the present (indivisible part of a divisible world). Had the former been the current meaning, there would have been no need to introduce the notion of the "dividual," which I use—as, I believe, Marriott and Inden and Strathern did—simply to reduce the labor of getting to understand another sense of person in the shadow of the contemporary "individual." Morris misreads the argument for a claim of "discovery" of a phenomenological "dividual" when it is an inquiry into the attention structure that causes a Nayaka to pick up this and not another aspect of the phenomenological human being. Of course, as Morris says, human beings are both relational and "actual entities or unities"; there is no refuting this or that it has long been established. (Human beings are also many other things.)

The question is what a people becomes attentive to and elaborates on and through what cultural practices.

We must not muddle (1) general claims ("this is how human beings are"), claims which reinforce or change our structure of attention, (2) ethnographic claims ("this is how for the X-people human beings are"), claims about others' structures of attention, and (3) reflexive claims ("this is how human beings are for us, only by knowing and compensating for which can we start perceiving what they are for the X-people"), claims which expose alternative views without predicating the truth of one and the falsity of the other. Radcliffe-Brown's statement (cited by Morris as an example of early concern with the "dividual") is of the first kind, arguing that human beings are constitutive of relationships to which we anthropologists should be attentive. (Note, however, that a "relationship," reified and constructed as an entity itself, is different from "relatedness," meaning two beings/things mutually responsive to each other.) Ingold (e.g., 1996) interestingly makes all three claims together in exposing the modernists' attention structure and that of the hunter-gatherers and arguing that we ourselves should shift to the latter, which is how human beings really are. Marriott and Inden, Strathern, and I make claims of the third kind. Assuming predominant contemporary Western attentiveness to humans as individualistic individuals ("bounded by the skin"), we depict other attention structures (Indian, Melanesian, and hunter-gatherers') by the compensatory use of the "dividual" notion. We show different dividuals—this is not a fault, as Viveiros de Castro intimates, but precisely the object—each associated with a different type of social relations: the Melanesians separating-while-connecting and the Nayaka absorbing, as Viveiros de Castro nicely contrasts them. In harmony with Hornborg's comment that objectivist epistemology is itself performative at another logical level, it may be said that in a sense the Western "individual" is another, fourth, "dividual" associated with social relations centered on alienation.

Counterintuitive to our own perception, the argument (neatly summed up by Viveiros de Castro) that "devaru are persons insofar as they engage in relationships with people, rather than the other way around," has been well accepted, but occasional slips back into our intuitions have generated unnecessary concerns. For example, Rival has several times got the argument reversed (e.g., "when natural kinds or natural forces are 'made alive' as persons, people relate to them," or "stones are given life and personified as, when, and because of the desire to socialize with them"), and it is this reversal that has generated her dissatisfaction with the way I read Kennedy's work. Similarly, Hornborg forgets this point when he discusses fetishism versus animism. The distinction he suggests between the animation of living things (animism) and that of non-living things (fetishism) is, all over again, a distinction between things in terms of what each inherently is rather than in terms of relatednesses (or *dazwischen*). Fetishism, rather, involves constructing concepts and rela-

tions as things, then (with anthropomorphism) attributing human qualities to them, then engaging with them as with persons. Animism (as I conceptualize it) involves responsively engaging with beings/things, then perceiving them as persons.

Several ethnographic queries have been raised by Viveiros de Castro, in support of his general critique, of which for lack of space I respond to only two. He reads into Nayaka culture an opposition he sees as unavoidable between "superpersons" and human persons, while Nayaka, I suggest, primarily perceive both as persons and the superperson as a person-plus, a person like the human but with something added. He sees a contradiction between the description of some devaru as "devaru in general" and the argument for their particularistic, event-derived nature, which may be due to the awkwardness of my expression "devaru in general." Appearances in the pandalu are always particular: each is enacted by a particular performer at a particular time/place. As they come and engage with Nayaka in the pandalu, they are devaru, though in some cases (the ones I call "devaru in general") the particular appearances are not immediately recognized as this or that particular devaru by habitual ways of engaging with Nayaka (e.g., gestures and sayings) remembered from previous engagements. Rather, by engaging with them, Nayaka gradually learn their ways of engagement and learn to learn about the other within the engagement.

Let me move now to suggestions for pursuing the argument further: I agree with Rival that the thesis needs to be ethnographically expanded with Nayaka material and, ideally, material provided by other students such as Rival herself. I agree with Pálsson that it would be interesting to compare hunter-gatherers' animism with some current environmental thought. Schools such as deep ecology, social ecology, and eco-feminism envisage an all-encompassing moral community constitutive of humans and nonhumans. Some radical environmentalists even call for a paradigmatic shift in not only our view of nature but our view of the self, for example, from "ego" to "spirit," understood as a self not split but differentiated from others within relationships (Koval 1988:esp. 300–305).

The issue of modernity's emergence was introduced briefly precisely in order to indicate that, far from being parochial, a discussion of animism has far-reaching implications. Research on shifts occurring during the Renaissance period, would, as Pálsson and Hornborg suggest, be a natural path for further work. Perhaps, as Hornborg hypothesizes, objectivism emerged and expanded in connection with social relations of alienation. However, seeds of this seem to pre-appear in the period's particular brand of animism. Nature generally and earth particularly were personified as a woman and, furthermore, a mother, but "mother" was used as a symbol, dissociated from interactive, dynamic social relationships. "Mother" was associated with attributes such as giving life and nurturing, which themselves were thought of in a social and historical vacuum, as

consistent qualities transcending time, space, and the dynamics of actual relationships. In the Nayaka case, hills were personified as grandparents. But "grandparents" were beings one socially interacted with, arguing, negotiating, etc. In the first case, "mother" was used as a metaphor, and the animistic project involved "a system of correspondences" (Burke 1972:172), parallels between humans and nonhumans, and therefore a heightened awareness of their separation. In the second case, "grandparent" was used as a synecdoche; the animistic project involved—and heightened—interconnectedness between humans and their environment.

Last but not least is the issue of animism's universality: Ingold convinces me that theories of the evolution of social intelligence are inadequate for exploring this question. I welcome his theory as one to work with further: "Human beings everywhere perceive their environment in the responsive mode, not because of innate cognitive predisposition but because to perceive at all they must already be situated in a world and committed to the relationships this entails."

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