Edward Burnett Tylor, Religion and Culture

Edited by
Paul-François Tremlett, Graham Harvey
and Liam T. Sutherland

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Introduction: Why Tylor, Why Now?

Paul-François Tremlett, Liam T. Sutherland and Graham Harvey

> Were scientific systems the oracular revelations they sometimes all but pretend to be, it might be justifiable to take no note of the condition of mere opinion and fancy that preceded them. But the investigator who turns from his modern text books to the antiquated dissertations of the great thinkers of the past, gains from the history of his own craft a truer view of the relation of theory to fact, learns from the course of growth in each current hypothesis to appreciate its raison d'être and full significance and even finds that a return to older starting-points may enable him to find new paths, where the modern tracks seem stopped by impassable barriers. (Tylor 1903 [1871] 2: 444)

It has been one hundred years since the death of the founder of social anthropology, Sir Edward Burnett Tylor (1832–1917). Tylor was born into a prosperous Quaker family in London, in 1832. At the age of 23, while working in the family's brass foundry, he contracted tuberculosis and was urged to travel to warmer climes. It was this decision that, in Eric Sharpe's memorable phrase, 'deprived industry of a brassfounder and gave the world an anthropologist' (1986: 53). While travelling, Tylor spent time in Mexico and became fascinated with indigenous cultures. He also met fellow English Quaker and archaeologist, Henry Christy. On returning to England, he published a book based on these travels: *Anahuac: or Mexico and the Mexicans, Ancient and Modern*, in 1861. Other major publications followed, including *Researches into the Early History of Mankind and the Development of Civilization* in 1865, and probably his most famous book, his two-volume magnum opus *Primitive Culture: Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Art and Custom* in 1871, in which he set out his general theory of religion, followed a decade later by *Anthropology: An Introduction to the Study of Man and Civilization* (for a complete list of Tylor's publications see Rivers, Marett and Thomas 1907). Tylor became the first ever reader in social anthropology in 1884 and its first ever

professor in 1896, which is an impressive achievement for a man who had received no higher education due to his Quaker background. He was knighted in 1912.

On the publication of *Primitive Culture* in 1871, Tylor and his work were at the centre of the cross-cultural, non-confessional and social scientific research on religion and culture. Today, although acknowledged as a founding figure, Tylor's position in the anthropological canon is an odd one, severely circumscribed, rarely acknowledged and yet, as the chapters in this volume make clear, still worth thinking with and thinking against. In 1907, to mark the occasion of his seventy-fifth birthday, some of the most famous names in British anthropology at the turn of the twentieth century including J. G. Frazer, A. C. Haddon, A. Lang, R. R. Marett, W. H. R. Rivers, C. G. Seligman and E. Westermarck, contributed to a volume of anthropological essays and 'to lay a gift before the greatest of English anthropologists' (Rivers, Marett and Thomas 1907: Preface). Their essays reflect up to a certain point Tylor's interests in kinship, antiquity, magic, totemism, taboo and religion but it is as if even then, the contributors did not quite know what to do with Tylor's legacy: the evolutionary lens that had framed Tylor's anthropology was already cracked. Anthropology had begun its move to the local and the particular. 'In anthropology', wrote Marett, 'it will not do to press a generalization overmuch', for 'human history cannot be shown … to be subject to hard-and-fast laws' (1907: 219). No prizes for guessing the target of that gentle rebuke. The contributors could not escape their debt to Tylor (hence the necessity of the gift), but nor were they clear as to how to write Tylor into an emergent anthropological canon. Yet, one of the key founding figures of modern sociology and the anthropology of religion, Emile Durkheim, in setting out his own approach to religion in *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (1915), self-consciously did so in contrast to the approach of Tylor although the importance of reading *Primitive Culture* alongside *The Elementary Forms* is rarely remarked upon today. To date, the only biography of Tylor was written by his student Ronald Ranulph Marett, who departed from his former teacher in numerous ways but wrote in the Preface to his biography that 'in venturing to write about Tylor I feel inclined to begin by exclaiming, with Socrates: Who am I that I should lay hands on my father Parmenides?' (Marett 1936: 7). This, of course, was as much a reflection of their personal relationship as their scholarly one. Yet, when Evans-Pritchard wrote that Tylor's theory of religion was '*a priori* speculation', 'specious' and 'a fine example of the introspectionist psychologist's or 'if I were a horse' fallacy, to which I shall have to make frequent reference' (1968: 24), the requirement for courtesy had clearly long since passed. Since

then, Tylor has largely served as an example of how not to do anthropology (Eriksen 1995).

Sustained engagement with Tylor's oeuvre, then, has been modest. Modern scholarship rightly rejects Tylor's ethnocentric and disparaging depictions of indigenous and non-Western peoples, and his evidently patrician and patriarchal attitudes to the working classes of his own hemisphere. Stressing the socio-historical context in which he wrote can help us understand Tylor, but given that such attitudes were contested even during Tylor's lifetime, we must remain critical. Today, the colonial complicity of early research on religion and culture is well known (Fabian 2014). To this we can add probably the most controversial element of Tylor's approach, his evolutionism. Tylor applied an evolutionary framework to culture and religion, which was surely ideological and certainly ethnocentric: Western societies were positioned at the top of this scheme, with the rest arranged below. This may strike modern readers as legitimating the racialized social Darwinism that developed in the nineteenth century and which proved tragically influential in the twentieth. But there are also some important distinctions to be made here: Tylor did not, as Herbert Spencer did, equate biological with social evolution (Peel 1972), while he stressed the common biological and cognitive characteristics of all human beings as the psychic unity of humankind (we might also point out that many other of anthropology's ancestors had very similar social evolutionary assumptions, notably Durkheim [2014] but also Marx [1983] and Freud [1950]). In itself, of course, this is hardly sufficient reason for modern scholars to pay closer attention to Tylor's work and perhaps, the biggest objection that modern scholars might make is that they simply do not find Tylor useful in their research. But, with McCorkle and Xygalatas, we reject the position that the 'classical theorists of the past' are 'intellectually spent, proverbial dead horses to be beaten and replaced in the historical narrative' (2013: 4) and, as all of the contributors to this volume demonstrate, there are sound reasons to challenge the received canonical image of Tylor.

This volume revisits and challenges what we think we know about Tylor and his work. On the one hand, there is the particular canonical Tylor that has emerged to become a staple of undergraduate curricula addressing the history of the discipline and the anthropology of religion. The canonical Tylor is relegated to a page or two in a text book and perhaps thirty-five minutes in the lecture theatre, covering his definition of religion in terms of belief (his focus on belief is sometimes glossed in terms of intellectualism), his theory of animism as the origin of religion and his theory of historical change and development that is usually glossed as evolutionism (Erickson and Murphy 2013). But on the other

hand, Tylor's interest in the species-specific cognitive processes and problem-solving dispositions that constrain and enable religious belief has remained a contested but constant strand of anthropological enquiry into religion. As such, given that we are arguably now in the midst of the cognitive turn, Tylor's work speaks at least to these contemporary, psycho-theoretical predilections more forcefully than at any time since the publication of *Primitive Culture* in 1871. Tylor's so-called intellectualism, and his definition of religion in terms of belief is not some redundant survival from some previous epoch of thinking about religion and culture. Rather, it is an active research field in anthropology and psychology which continues to generate important new research and infuse academic and popular debates about science and religion (see, for example, Boyer 2001 and Jones 2016, but also the chapter by Jong in this volume). According to Matthew Engelke (2012: 210–12), Tylor internalized the Protestant valorization of religion as an inner experience and belief, while disparaging its materializations in, for example, fetishism. As such, Tylor's thinking depended upon a Cartesian separation of subject from object, contributing to the shape of modernity's master narratives but its alter-narratives too (see Latour 1993), which brings us to Tylor's theory of animism. For Tylor, animism was the foundational form from which all religions originated, and was defined by 'belief in Spiritual Beings' (1903 [1871] 1: 424). Tylor's animism was a (false) theory of agency and causality that flatly denied the division of the world between inert matter and active minds. Today, Tylor's 'old' animism has been superseded by the 'new' animism, a field of research that explores the relational ontologies presupposed by the idea that it is not just humans that are animate (see Bird-David 1999 and the chapter by Harvey in this volume).

The idea for this volume then, grew not only from the sense that Tylor had been perhaps unfairly neglected by history and misrepresented in the anthropological canon. It also emerged from the feeling that there were spaces in Tylor's ambivalent reception that warranted exploration, and one framework for approaching Tylor that we discussed in the planning of this volume was a discernible contradiction between what we chose to call the 'micro' and 'macro' Tylor's, that is, the tension between Tylor the anthropologist (the micro Tylor) who presented ethnographic evidence, and Tylor the grand theorist (the macro Tylor) who tended to shoehorn the ethnography into a theoretical context of universal social evolution. We also debated over whether this introductory section of the volume needed a recapitulation of Tylor's key ideas on evolutionism, animism, belief, and so on. In the end, we opted for a flexible framework, grouping chapters together that engaged the debates and contexts extant during Tylor's

lifetime in Part 1 of the volume (Cox, Harvey, Jong, Segal and Sutherland) and chapters that explored a series of new Tylors in Part 2 (Astor-Aguilera, Kalvig, Soar, Stringer and Tremlett). No doubt the chapters could have been organized otherwise, and there are certainly intersections between and across them which suggest the validity of alternative arrangements. We do not claim to be writing a definitive new Tylor. The old Tylor – the canonical or received Tylor, the founder of British anthropology, the definer of religion, the intellectualist, the evolutionist, the liberal, the utilitarian, the avatar of white, Protestant rationalism – the Tylor of the canon remains. Yet, we can revisit the contexts and debates of the late nineteenth century and see in them new connections and insights that link Tylor and his work to present concerns in new and important ways. Moreover, these visitations reveal other Tylors and much more besides.

The chapters

The chapters in Part 1 all reference, in some way, the debates and contexts that were alive during Tylor's own lifetime. These chapters reveal new ways to think about Tylor's legacy, new ways of conceiving his historical relationship to the anthropology of religion and new ways in which his work relates to contemporary theory. The chapters are sequenced alphabetically by author, and they begin with James L. Cox's 'The Debate between E. B. Tylor and Andrew Lang over the Theory of Primitive Monotheism: Implications for Contemporary Studies of Indigenous Religions'. Cox uses the debate and Tylor's role in it – Tylor sought to disprove evidence for primitive monotheism in Australia – to highlight how Lang and Tylor were blind to indigenous agency or what Cox calls, following Bakhtin, 'intentional hybridity'. This is followed by Graham Harvey's 'Tylor, "Fetishes" and the Matter of Animism', in which he reflects on how Tylor's implication in colonial and Cartesian ontology contrasts with the work of Irving Hallowell, who was able to draw very different conclusions from a comparable ethnographic context of domination in his work among the Ojibwa. Both chapters use Tylor to demonstrate theoretical points, though unlike Evans-Pritchard their engagement with Tylor assumes the continuing importance of the conversations his work set in motion rather than their redundancy.

These chapters are followed by Jonathan Jong's '"Belief in Spiritual Beings": E. B. Tylor's (Primitive) Cognitive Theory of Religion'. Jong argues that Tylor's definition of religion shares some important features with contemporary cognitive scientific definitions but further, that the cognitive project

is, minimally, a neo-Tylorean one. Jong does not use Tylor to demonstrate a theoretical point: rather, his task lies in staking out the intellectual affinities between the cognitive science of religion and Tylor's theory of religion so that we might be in a position to re-evaluate our intellectual history. Robert A. Segal's 'From Nineteenth- to Twentieth-Century Theorizing about Myth in Britain and Germany: Tylor versus Blumenberg' likewise seeks to clarify Tylor's intellectual location, and engages closely with Tylor's main work, *Primitive Culture*. Segal contrasts Tylor's approach to myth with that taken by the German philosopher Hans Blumenberg (1920–1996), arguing that the divide between the nineteenth- and twentieth-century approaches to myth lie principally in how the relationship to science was drawn. As such, he selects Tylor and Blumenberg as representative theorists and carefully teases out their contrasting assumptions and approaches. The final chapter in Part 1 is Liam T. Sutherland's chapter 'Tylor and Debates about the Definition of "Religion": Then and Now'. Sutherland situates Tylor in a history of debates about the category 'religion' and its definition. In common with Jong and Segal, Sutherland is interested in locating Tylor in an intellectual history, specifically concerning debates about the definition of religion. However, he departs from them in seeking to mobilize a Tylorean, etic definition of religion in a manner that sees the distance between the etic and the emic as an important field of inquiry in its own right.

If the chapters in Part 1 seek to challenge the canonical representation of Tylor by re-visiting and re-examining certain key classical debates, in Part 2 a series of occluded Tylors are brought into view and explored. Miguel Astor-Aguilera's chapter 'Edward Burnett Tylor as Ethnographer' challenges the canonical representation of Tylor as an armchair anthropologist. Astor-Aguilera points out that Tylor accrued considerable fieldwork experience, carrying out research in London and Berlin at institutions for the deaf to study sign languages, pursuing fieldwork among Spiritualists in London and with Henry Moseley, in 1884, among the Ojibwa. But the chapter mainly focuses on Tylor's trip to Mexico and the importance of his research experiences there to his later work. This is appropriately followed by Anne Kalvig's '"Necromancy Is a Religion": Tylor's Discussion of Spiritualism in *Primitive Culture* and in his Diary'. Kalvig explores the importance of Spiritualism to Tylor's theory of animism and also sensitively teases out Tylor's own ambivalent experiences of the séance. In both of these chapters we encounter Tylor immersed in complex experiences of difference that seem to disturb him – Tylor the (halting) ethnographer and Tylor the (uncertain) Spiritualist – as much as they challenge our received image of Tylor.

Next comes Katy Soar's chapter 'Edward Tylor, Archaeologist? The Archaeological Foundations of "Mr Tylor's Science"'. Focusing on Tylor's relationship with Henry Christy and the intellectual contexts established by the works of John Evans, John Lubbock and Charles Lyell among others, Soar argues that it was intellectual developments in archaeology that proved pivotal to Tylor's theory of development and his interest in material culture. Soar's chapter is followed by Martin D. Stringer's 'Telling Tylorian Tales: Reflections on Language, Myth and Religion'. Stringer engages with the three chapters on myth in the first volume of *Primitive Culture*, arguing that for Tylor, myth is a mode of thought that is revealed through different types of language use, notably metaphor. Stringer builds on Tylor's interest in myth, language and metaphor to explore language and its performative power in relation to claims concerning 'other than human persons' and the situations in which they can be apprehended as true or real, thereby giving a provocative constructivist twist to Tylor's thought. Finally, Paul-François Tremlett's 'Deconstructing the Survival in E. B. Tylor's *Primitive Culture*: From Memes to Dreams and Bricolage', focuses first on Tylor's theory of diffusion, and second on the centrality of the dream to his theory of religion. If the first establishes some new affinities between Tylor and cognitive approaches to religion, the second demonstrates the constitutive role of anti-utilitarianism and irrationalism to Tylor's theory of religion.

If the anthropological canon has been content with a somewhat one-dimensional Tylor, then it is our hope that this volume will go some way to allowing a more complex Tylor to emerge.

Part One

Contexts and Debates

1

The Debate between E. B. Tylor and Andrew Lang over the Theory of Primitive Monotheism: Implications for Contemporary Studies of Indigenous Religions

James L. Cox

In his seminal contribution outlining the evolutionary development of human cultures, first published as two volumes in 1871 under the title *Primitive Culture: Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Art, and Custom*, E. B. Tylor maintained that the origin of religion can be traced to the tendency of early humans to imagine that life forms or souls inhabit all significant objects and natural phenomena. Such primitive psychic projections were derived from dreams, visions, human imagination and experiences of death. Although it is clear that Tylor's theory of animism as the source of religion contradicted what he regarded as largely theological speculations that originally humans were all monotheistic, he did not enter directly into the debate over primitive monotheism until the publication of his influential article, 'On the Limits of Savage Religion' (1892a) in the *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*. Tylor's position, which he clearly outlined in this article, prompted the Scottish novelist, classicist, translator and latter-day anthropologist, Andrew Lang, to accuse Tylor of having predetermined and largely biased views about the origin of human cultures. By the early twentieth century, Lang, who initially had been a follower of Tylor, had become committed to the theory of primitive monotheism, which he argued was based on logical and empirical evidence that pointed towards an ancient, primordial and universal concept of one Supreme Being.

In this chapter, I explore the role E. B. Tylor played in the primitive monotheism debate which towards the end of the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth pitted anthropologists in the British tradition, like J. G. Frazer in Britain and Baldwin Spencer in Australia, who were committed to the theory of

the evolutionary development of religion, against advocates of primitive monotheism, such as the German missionary in central Australia, Carl Strehlow, and the German–Austrian ethnologist Wilhelm Schmidt. Strehlow believed that the languages of the Arrernte peoples of central Australia, and thus their culture, had declined from a higher, more elevated stage into cruder expressions. Schmidt had maintained that primitive peoples around the globe were originally monotheistic but had degenerated into lower forms of religion expressed in polytheism, ancestor worship, animism and fetishism (Cox 2014: 11–34). This debate was brought most directly to scholarly and public attention at the beginning of the twentieth century through the arguments raised by Andrew Lang against E. B. Tylor.

I begin my discussion by outlining Tylor's position with respect to this pivotal academic controversy and then focus specifically on Tylor's attempt to disprove the widespread belief in a primordial High God called Baiame that allegedly had been discovered by missionaries and explorers in Australia. I follow this by presenting the opposing arguments advanced by Lang. In my concluding analysis, I suggest that both Tylor and Lang followed predetermined ideas about the origin of religion that made their respective conclusions inevitable. What was lacking in each case was a concern for the actual communities of believers that comprised the subject matter on which their debate proceeded. In the process of attempting to establish convincing arguments in support of their opposing conclusions, they ignored indigenous agency. By considering the case of the Rainbow Spirit Theology in Australia, I demonstrate how a local group of indigenous Christians employed an oblique strategy of resistance, a strategy, following the Russian literary critic Mikhail Bakhtin, I call 'intentional hybridity'.

Tylor on primitive monotheism

Tylor's evolutionary theory must be seen in the context of his doctrine of survivals. He described animism as characteristic of 'tribes very low in the scale of humanity', which then ascend, 'deeply modified in its transition, but from first to last preserving an unbroken continuity, into the midst of high modern culture' (Tylor 1903 [1871], 1: 426). In other words, although cultures develop over time, ancient remnants of primitive beliefs and practices can be found in the most advanced societies as cultural survivals. Tylor explains, 'Animism is in fact, the

groundwork of the Philosophy of Religion, from that of savages up to that of civilized men' (ibid.).

Although Tylor drew a line of continuity between early human religious experience typified by animistic beliefs and higher monotheistic faiths with their focus on one Supreme Being, he consistently argued against the idea that monotheism preceded animism. Rather, he insisted that over time humans generated more sophisticated belief systems which evolved through such practices as tree worship, reverence for a sky or rain god, belief in divine ancestors, the ideas of multiple deities, some of which were considered good and others evil, and eventually culminating in worship of a Supreme Deity. Even the belief in a Supreme Deity, however, was not in its earliest phases monotheistic. The idea of a High God implied the existence of lower deities with restricted powers over certain aspects of life. The survival of inferior spiritual beings among the monotheistic religions – like Christianity and Islam – can be seen in beliefs in angels and demons, in the Christian devotion to saints and through the devout Muslim's struggle between the opposing influences of good and evil *jinn* (spirits).

In *Primitive Culture*, Tylor argued that no peoples in the early stages of cultural development were monotheistic, although in some cases they constructed hierarchical orderings of the spiritual world, frequently as mirror images of the social hierarchy where the king was considered divine. True monotheism, he explained, must be defined by 'assigning the distinctive attributes of deity to none save the Almighty Creator' (Tylor 1903 [1871] 2: 332). In the course of the evolution of religious ideas, he admitted, 'there are to be discerned in barbaric theology shadowings, quaint or majestic, of the conception of a Supreme Deity, henceforth to be traced onward in expanding power and brightening glory along the history of religion' (ibid.). Among contemporary primitive peoples, who have come under the influence of Christian missionaries or Islamic governance, ideas of a Supreme Being have emerged not as evidence of an original concept of one God, but as a result of primitive peoples adopting the ideas of the outside religion. He explains that under 'this foreign influence, dim, uncouth ideas of divine supremacy have been developed into more cultured forms' (ibid.: 333). Tylor cites numerous examples of this including that of the 'native Canadians' who, under the influence of the Jesuit missionaries, conceived of 'the Great Manitu', or how in Brazil, again in response to the Jesuits, the indigenous deity of thunder, Tupan, was adapted 'to convey in Christian teaching the idea of God'. Among African groups that have been 'Islamized or semi-Islamized … the name of Allah is in all men's mouths' (ibid.). These circumstances force the critical ethnographer to 'be ever on the

look-out for traces of such foreign influence in the definition of the Supreme Deity acknowledged by any uncultured race, a divinity whose nature and even whose name may betray his adoption from abroad' (ibid.).

Tylor expanded these ideas in depth in 'On the Limits of Savage Religion' (1892a). His methodological starting point was explicitly outlined from the outset: 'In defining the religious systems of the lower races, so as to place them correctly in the history of culture, careful examination is necessary to separate the genuine developments of native theology from the effects of intercourse with civilized foreigners' (Tylor 1892a: 283). In order to discern what is genuine from what is imported, the anthropologist must be able to identify, in the accounts provided of indigenous religions, three types of material: (1) that which clearly is adopted directly from foreign teachers, such as missionaries; (2) signs that 'genuine native deities of a lower order' have been exaggerated by elevating them into 'a god or a devil'; and (3) the application of indigenous words in ways they were never intended by transforming names for 'minor spiritual beings' into the name 'of a supreme good or a rival evil deity' (ibid.: 284).

Tylor then proceeds to provide examples from around the world of precisely where these three categories have been applied, and how they have led to the false conclusion that primitive peoples originally possessed monotheistic beliefs. He begins with North America where, in more detail than he had done in *Primitive Culture*, he shows how the Jesuits in Canada between 1611 and 1684 had converted the animistic beliefs of the Ojibwas and the Algonquins into 'a kind of savage version of the philosophic deism of which the European mind was at that time full' (ibid.: 285). He outlines in particular how the Jesuit missionary Father Le Jeune transcribed the indigenous term *manitu* into upper case as Manitu, referring either to good Manitu or bad Manitu. This, Tylor claims, is the first mention of Manitu as possessing either the attributes of the Christian God or the Christian Satan. Later, this developed into the widespread notion, which has been disseminated widely across North America, that the native peoples believe universally in the Great Spirit (Kitch Manitu). This erroneous idea can be attributed directly to the teaching of the missionaries, to linguistic misunderstandings and to the magnification of animistic spirits into Christian concepts, all of which have led to a 'misrepresentation' of indigenous beliefs resulting in 'a transformation of the native religions' (ibid.: 286). Tylor then discusses similar occurrences in other parts of North America and South America and devotes considerable attention to the alleged primordial belief in a Supreme Being in Australia being promoted by advocates of the theory of primitive monotheism.

The special case of Baiame

From about 1840 onwards, accounts began to surface from early settlers and missionaries that many Aboriginal peoples in south-east Australia had believed in a male Supreme Being, called an 'All Father', prior to contact with Christianity. The name most associated with the 'All Father' was Baiame from the Wiradjuri peoples near Wellington, approximately 350 kilometres west of Sydney, but numerous other names were assigned to this Being from other peoples in New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia, including Nurrundere, Nurelli, Mar tumnere, Biamban, Bunjil, Daramulun, Mami-nga ta, Mungan-ngaua, each of which, according to Erich Kolig and Gisela Petri-Odermann, translates as 'father', 'our father', or simply as 'elder' (1992: 9). Kolig and Petri-Odermann go on to explain that these names became synonymous in subsequent anthropological literature with a Sky God, High God or Supreme Being and were regularly invested with qualities 'of (almost) monotheistic proportions' (ibid.).

One of the earliest references to an All Father figure in south-east Australia was reported in the writings of the Rev. James Günther, who worked under assignment of the Anglican Church Missionary Society in the Wellington Valley from 1837 until 1843, when the Mission was abandoned. Günther clearly applied the notion of primitive monotheism to beliefs he discovered among the Wiradjuri. He wrote that the name Baiame designated the Supreme Being and that 'the ideas held concerning Him by some of the more thoughtful Aborigines are a remnant of original traditions prevalent among the ancient of days' (cited by Swain 1993: 127). In his book, *The Native Tribes of South-East Australia*, the anthropologist A. W. Howitt (1904: 501) refers to the notes compiled in 1844–1845 by James Manning, who reported the conversations he had with Aboriginal informants at his home in the bush in New South Wales.[1] Howitt observes that Manning was convinced that the Aboriginals of his area held a firm belief in a Supreme Being before the missionaries had arrived in the area. He quotes Manning: 'They believe in a supreme Being called *Boyma* [Baiame] who dwells in the north-east, in a heaven of beautiful appearance. He is represented as seated on a throne of transparent crystal, with beautiful pillars of crystal on each side' (Howitt 1904: 501–02). Manning further refers to the son of *Boyma* as a figure called Grogorogally, who acts as a mediator between heaven and earth (Howitt 1904: 502; see also, Swain 1993: 127). Howitt observes that 'in these statements I easily recognize, although in a distorted form, the familiar features of *Baiame* and his son *Daramulun*' (1904: 502). These beliefs preceded Christian

influences, according to Manning, because 'for the first four or five years or more of that earliest time there was no church south of the little one at Bong-bong at Mittagong … No missionaries ever came to the southern districts at any time' (cited by Howitt 1904: 501).[2]

Howitt arrived in Australia from England in 1852 and worked as a bushman and a naturalist before turning to scientific studies of Aboriginal peoples. After some initial scepticism, he embraced the idea that the belief in Baiame had preceded Christian influence. Kolig and Petri-Odermann (1992: 12) argue that Howitt realized that if his anthropological work was to be taken seriously in the English-speaking world, he would need to relate the south-eastern Aboriginal belief in an All Father to the dominant British academic commitment to an evolutionary interpretation of human cultures. For that reason, Howitt explained that the belief in Baiame had resulted from the generally higher and more sophisticated social structure found among the indigenous groups of south-east Australia when compared to other Aboriginal societies. This is confirmed by Howitt's description of Baiame:

> I see, as the embodied idea, a venerable kindly Headman of a tribe, full of knowledge and tribal wisdom, and all-powerful magic, of which he is the source … It is most difficult for one of us to divest himself of the tendency to endow such a supernatural being with a … divine nature and character. (Howitt 1904: 500–01)

Kolig and Petri-Odermann conclude that for whatever reason, Howitt 'accepted the authenticity and antiquity of the concept' (1992: 12).

By the time Tylor published 'On the Limits of Savage Religion' (1892a), therefore, a consensus was developing among many scholars working in south and south-east Australia that empirical evidence pointed towards a primordial belief in a Supreme Being entirely independent of foreign influence. In addition to Howitt, other writers who advocated this view included R. H. Matthews, a surveyor and a largely self-taught anthropologist working in northern New South Wales, the Rev. George Taplin, a Congregational minister who wrote on the Narrinyeri people of South Australia, R. Brough Smyth, a civil servant and mining engineer whose book *The Aborigines of Victoria* (1878) arose from his efforts to preserve what he thought was a dying culture in Victoria and Mrs K. L. Parker, an enthusiastic but largely untrained student of the Aboriginal people in western New South Wales, whose book *The Euahlayi Tribe: A Study of Aboriginal Life in Australia* (1905) contains an introduction by Andrew Lang, Not all scholars believed that their findings based on Australian research confirmed that primitive peoples everywhere had some original notion of one supreme God, but it provided support to

those, like Andrew Lang and later Wilhelm Schmidt (see Schmidt 1931: 262–63), who argued that the Aboriginal belief in Baiame (and other 'All Father' deities) in Australia was not an isolated case but pointed towards a much more profound conclusion that ancient peoples everywhere were monotheistic.

Tylor's response to the alleged antiquity of the Baiame belief

In 'On the Limits of Savage Religion', Tylor devoted considerable attention to reviewing and critiquing the case in support of the argument that an indigenous Australian belief in Baiame, and other terms designating an 'All Father', such as Bunjil, had preceded Christian influences. Tylor begins by discussing the field notes of Horatio Hale, the American anthropologist who joined the surveying and charting expedition of Charles Wickes, which went around the world from 1838 to 1842, spending time in Australia in 1840 (see, Belton 2009: 138–52). Hale's notes refer in particular to the groups around Wellington, where James Günther had worked as a missionary. Tylor comments that Hale referred to the deity 'Baiami' as 'living on an island beyond the sea to the east' (1892a: 292). Tylor adds that according to Hale 'some natives consider him Creator, while others attribute the creation of the world to his son Burambin [Daramulun]' (ibid.). Tylor's documentation includes a reference in Hale's notes that mentions a 'February dance to Baiami' that 'was brought from a distance by the natives' (ibid.).

Tylor then cites another early reference to a belief in a Sky God as recorded by German Moravian missionaries, who communicated with Aboriginal peoples in Victoria near Mount Franklin with the aid of 'settlers who could interpret, and partly in the broken English of the natives' (ibid.). The missionaries describe a testimony of an Aboriginal man called Bonaparte, who pointed to the sky and, according to Tylor, 'explained to the missionaries that *Pei-a-mei* (God) dwelt up there' (ibid.). Tylor records that another indigenous name for God among the Aboriginals in Victoria was '*Mahman-mu-rok*, which the missionaries considered to mean "father of all"' (ibid.). Tylor concludes, 'Thus it appears that *Baiame* was already, about 1840, a being recognized among the natives, but endowed with very native attributes in their belief' (ibid.).

He refers to R. Brough Smyth's account in *The Aborigines of Victoria*,where a reference is made to a missionary, the Rev. W. Ridley, who is reported by Smyth to have declared that Baiame 'is the name by which the natives in the north-west and west of New South Wales designate the Supreme Being' (Tylor 1892a: 293). Tylor notes that when asked about Baiame, the indigenous respondents declared

'that he made earth, and water, and sky, animals and men' (ibid.). R. Brough Smyth then cites another missionary, the Rev. C. C. Greenaway, who argues that Baiame derives from the indigenous word, *baia*, 'which means to make, cut out, build' (cited by Tylor 1892a: 293). Tylor quotes from the appendix in the second volume of Smyth's book, which recounts the conclusion Greenaway reached: 'For ages unknown, this race has handed down the word signifying "Maker" as the name of the Supreme' (ibid.).

The fact that a relatively short time had passed between the arrival of white settlers and missionaries in various parts of south-east Australia in the early part of the nineteenth century and the widespread reporting by 1840 of a belief found all across the region in a High God or 'All Father' would seem to confirm that such a belief had existed among indigenous peoples prior to their contact with the outside world. Tylor suggests that this is just an apparent conclusion. He cites the narrative of James Backhouse, a missionary of the Society of Friends working in Victoria between 1832 and 1840, who declared that Aboriginal Australians 'have no distinct ideas of a Supreme Being' (ibid.: 294). Tylor also refers to the evidence given by William Buckley, the 'wild white man', who lived among the indigenous peoples for thirty years, and that of the first grammarian and lexicographer of New South Wales, the Rev. L. E. Threlkeld, both of whom testified that 'there was no being known to the natives whose name he could adopt as representing Deity' (ibid.). Tylor concludes that Baiame was 'unknown to well-informed observers till about 1840' but then suddenly appeared 'with markedly Biblical characteristics' (ibid.) The obvious conclusion from this is that belief in Baiame 'arose from the teaching of missionaries' (ibid.).

Tylor draws attention to a primer for new Christians prepared by the Rev. W. Ridley that begins with the teaching 'Baiame verily man made', and continues by instructing the catechists with the statement, 'Baiame verily heaven, earth, the great water, all, everything made' (ibid.). This, Tylor concludes, provides evidence that the missionaries chose Baiame as their name for God and began teaching the people that Baiame was the Creator of humanity and all things in the world. This would explain why, when the informant Bonaparte told the Moravian missionaries around 1850 that God dwelt in the sky and had made all things, 'he was merely repeating the very words he had been taught by other missionaries in his own part of the country' (ibid.).

Tylor follows this with a discussion of the Kamilaroi people who inhabited a wide area of New South Wales. On anthropological grounds, he suggests that this people, also known as the Gamilaroi, and who presently constitute the fourth largest indigenous group in Australia, would hardly have had a belief in an 'All Father' precisely because they 'reckon kinship on the mother's side' (ibid.: 296).

He adds: 'It would be remarkable and requiring explanation if the name of father were given to a native divine ancestor of all men' (ibid.). Citing the work of A. W. Howitt, he then examines linguistic evidence by looking at words that, under missionary influence, have developed into 'the dominant evil deity' among Kamilaroi groups. The word *murup* originally referred to 'the soul or ghost of a dead man' (ibid.). Tylor draws attention to Howitt's observation that it is typical for a Kamilaroi person to approach the grave of one of the deceased from the community and address the spirit *(murup)* of the dead with phrases such as, 'Hallo! There is my old "possum rug; there are my old bones"' (ibid.). According to Tylor, the word for the soul of a deceased person under missionary influence has been transformed into 'an individual name for the great bad spirit' (ibid.). Now, he argues, Murup refers to the Devil, who lives 'surrounded by a host of devils in a place called *Ummekulleen*, … where he punishes the wicked' (ibid.).

The explanation for the widely reported belief in Baiame thus becomes evident: the indigenous world view and belief systems by 1840 had been thoroughly christianized. The original animistic beliefs which depicted 'souls departing to some island … and being re-born' have been transformed by 'imported ideas of moral judgment and retribution after death' (ibid.). This transformation has clearly extended to the belief in Baiame who, as the Creator, 'takes the good into heaven … but sends the bad to another place to be punished' (ibid.). This provides evidence that the indigenous beliefs of the people in souls of the departed have been magnified to make singular and all-powerful forces: A Creator God, called Baiame, who is the judge of all, and Satan or the Devil, who is the prince of devils assisted by a multitude of evil spirits, which under Christian influences have been modified substantially from the original belief in the souls of the dead. The contention that Baiame provides evidence for an ancient, primordial Australian monotheism thus fails on all three of Tylor's criteria: (1) it clearly has resulted from missionary teaching; (2) it cannot be supported on linguistic grounds; and (3) it obviously represents an exaggeration or magnification of original beliefs into singular and powerful forces, one good and the other evil.

Andrew Lang's critique of Tylor: primitive monotheism and the doctrine of degeneration

The Scotsman, Andrew Lang (1844–1912), although perhaps best known as a collector of folk and fairy tales, was also a poet, novelist and literary critic. He began writing on religion in the 1880s with his books, *Custom and Myth*

(1884) and *Myth, Ritual and Religion* (1887), in which, as a follower of Tylor, he was highly critical of Max Müller's idea that myths represented anthropomorphic representations that had devolved from more abstract ideas. Lang's most substantial contribution to the study of religion was *The Making of Religion* (1898), in which he had changed his perspective on the origins of religion and had become decidedly opposed to Tylor's theories of animism as explaining the source of religion in human cultural development. By 1897, he had developed his own theory that the religions of primitive societies had degenerated from the original belief in one God into forms of polytheism and lower expressions of religious life. In 1908, Lang published *The Origins of Religion and Other Essays*, in which he included a chapter summarizing his position on the primitive monotheism debate, particularly in contrast to Tylor's theories. Specifically, Lang challenged Tylor's argument that a ubiquitous Australian belief in an All Father called Baiame had resulted directly from missionary teachings.

In his chapter entitled 'Theories of the Origins of Religion', Lang defines the 'All Father' as a 'potent being' who 'receives no gifts' and 'is asked for none' (1908: 108). In Australia, which he describes as a culture 'on the lowest level extant', Lang asserts that some groups possess a belief in the All Father but they 'do not pray to higher powers' (ibid.: 111). Lang then refers to the work of A. W. Howitt who, in Lang's interpretation, distinguished Baiame from ancestor spirits (called by Lang 'ghosts of the dead'). Baiame is conceived of in anthropomorphic terms, but 'he is not ghost Headman of a tribe of ghosts' (ibid.: 118). No ghost 'is said to have made all things on the earth', but this is precisely how Baiame, or Bunjil among other groups, is described by Howitt (ibid.). Lang concludes: 'For these reasons, the facts being taken from Mr Howitt's own collections, we cannot regard the All Father as an idealised ghost' (ibid.).

Lang was specifically alluding to how Tylor's 'doctrine of the soul' had developed directly from his 'animistic theory' (Tylor 1903 [1871] 1: 428). In *Primitive Culture*, Tylor had suggested that 'the ancient savage philosophers probably made their first step by the obvious inference that every man has two things belonging to him, namely, a life and a phantom' (ibid.). Both are so closely connected to one another that they were conceived as 'manifestations of one and the same soul' (ibid.: 429). The 'ghost-soul' over time attained numerous attributes: it came to be regarded as 'the cause of life and thought in the individual it animates'; it was 'capable of leaving the body far behind, to flash swiftly from place to place'; it continued 'to exist and appear to men after the death of that body'; and 'it was able to enter into, possess, and act in the bodies of other men, of animals, and even of things' (ibid.). For Tylor, these primordial religious

beliefs, although much modified over time, survive as 'heirlooms of primitive ages … in the existing psychology of the civilized world' (ibid.).

Lang reversed the order of Tylor's evolutionary programme by arguing that the widespread Australian belief in an All Father, the primordial being, has attributes far different from a 'ghost-soul': the All Father is deathless, in fact, he existed before death; he made the world and all things in it; he gave commandments, moral, ritual and social; he keeps his eyes on human conduct; in some cases, he rewards and punishes 'good men and evil in a future life'; and he 'can go anywhere and do anything' (Lang 1908: 119). In a stinging critique, undoubtedly aimed directly at Tylor, Lang asserted that the All Father found throughout south-eastern Australia presents 'us with a being certainly not unlike the Jahveh of early Israel, and certainly not evolved by the process of raising an ancestral ghost to a very high power. That opinion can no longer be logically maintained' (ibid., 120).

According to Lang, Tylor's flawed analysis became most apparent through his claim that knowledge of Baiame or other high gods in Australia must have been learned from the missionaries. In response to this contention, Lang asserted that Tylor could not answer 'two insuperable *prima facie* objections' (ibid.). First, if the indigenous peoples Howitt had discovered near Wellington had been influenced by missionaries, surely they would have prayed to him, in Lang's words, 'as the missionaries pray to their God' (ibid.). As we have seen, following Howitt, Lang maintained that the people made no offerings nor voiced any prayers to Baiame. Second, only initiated men have any knowledge of the All Father (ibid.: 121). Even his name 'is concealed from women, children, and, usually, from white men, except the few who have been initiated' (ibid.). If the idea of the All Father had been obtained from missionaries, 'it is inconceivable that … their women and children should have been left in the dark by these evangelists' (ibid.). Lang concludes that he has seen 'no reply to these two arguments' (ibid.).

In a volume commemorating E. B. Tylor's seventy-fifth birthday, Lang wrote two articles, one a summary of the contributions of Tylor to anthropology, which was entitled simply 'Edward Burnett Tylor' (1907a: 1–16) and a second entry called 'Australian Problems' (1907b: 203–18). The latter chapter deals largely with issues of totemism among the Aranda (Arrernte) with a particular focus on the problem of exogamy and the alleged ignorance of central desert peoples about the process of conception. In the opening chapter, in which he pays tribute to Tylor, Lang politely challenged Tylor's theory of animism as the source of religion by penning his now famous axiom: 'the more Animism the less "All Fatherism"' (Lang 1907a: 11). In other words, the two extremes

whereby indigenous people express their religious sentiments, the one seeing spirits or souls in all things, the other an elevated idea of a High God, operate at opposite ends of the pole and tend to cancel one another out. Lang explains that in the indigenous conception of the All Father, such as expressed in beliefs about Baiame, 'there is nothing animistic in the native conception of his nature' (ibid.). The issue separating Lang and Tylor thus revolved around which had occurred earlier, animism or belief in the All Father. Lang had already addressed this question in *The Making of Religion*, where he asserted that 'the crude idea of a "Universal Power" came *earliest*, and was superseded, in part, by a later propitiation of the dead and ghosts' (Lang 1898: 186, emphasis Lang's; see also, Swain 1985: 94). He reiterated this conclusion in *The Origins of Religion and Other Essays*, where he argued that evidence accrued from around the world suggests that

> many very backward tribes believe in an All Father, not animistic, not a ghost; not prayed to, not in receipt of sacrifice, but existent from the beginning, exempt from death, and (in his highest aspects) kindly, an ethical judge of men, and either a maker of men and most things, or a father of men and a maker of many things. (Lang 1908: 121–22)

In line with his theory that the earliest forms of religion had degenerated into animism, he concluded that 'it is not at all impossible that, while they were being matured in human minds, the simpler belief in the All Father was destroyed (if it existed), and among some tribes was wholly forgotten, while in others it was partially obliterated' (ibid.: 123).

The Tylor–Lang debate: an analysis

Who won in the argument between Tylor and Lang? This is a moot point because the conclusions of each were predetermined by the assumptions from which they began their analysis. Tylor made this perfectly clear when he asserted that where striking similarities occur between the Aboriginal belief in an All Father and the Christian teaching about 'Our Father', this can only be explained as a result of Christian influences. No other empirically based conclusion could be reached, since clearly there could have been no contact in regions as remote as Wellington with outside influences prior to the arrival of the white settlers in Sydney after 1788. The construction of a world view, which portrayed a supreme deity living in the sky, who acted as a judge, sending some to a place of eternal

reward and others to lasting punishment, could only reflect Christian teaching. That the High God was the maker of all things also can only be attributed to the biblical accounts found in the Book of Genesis. The traditional understanding of how the world came to be, as described by Spencer and Gillen and later T. G .H Strehlow, depicted the world as we know it as having resulted from the emergence of beings living beneath the earth, who appeared as totemic ancestors, such as kangaroos, emus, lizards, plum tree men and honey ants, whose movements over the landscape created the hills, mountains, rivers, streams and forests. These beings responsible for making the world then returned to the landscape creating sacred places only to be reincarnated in their totemic descendants (see, Spencer and Gillen 1899: 388–91; see also, Strehlow 1966: 8; 1978: 14–19). For Tylor, the contrast between what had been discovered by Spencer and Gillen about indigenous ideas of creation confirmed the animistic roots of religious life, whereas the alleged belief in Baiame could only be accounted for by Christian missionary teaching.

Lang's position was also based on a logical argument, which in his case questioned how it would have been possible in such a short time for the missionary teachings to have been absorbed so thoroughly by the indigenous population. He also asserted that the belief in Baiame had peculiarly non-Christian traits consistent with indigenous culture, such as the name 'Baiame' (or other terms for a High God) was known only to initiated males and that no sacrifices or even petitions were made to the All Father, which, of course, was directly contrary to the prayer of Jesus to 'Our Father'. It also appeared to Lang as unempirical to assume on ideological grounds that primitive peoples could never have possessed an idea of a High God simply because they reflected human development at its earliest stage.

We see from this brief analysis that both Tylor and Lang started with predetermined ideas that inevitably led to their conclusions. Beginning with the assumption that animism precedes all later religious developments, Tylor sifted the evidence to support this theory and any interpretations that followed needed to be fitted into a preconceived evolutionary scheme. Lang (1898: 185), who declared that God had never left himself without a witness, believed in a form of natural theology, whereby the divine imprint could be found in every human society, no matter how crude or backward. The doctrine of degeneration also fitted nicely into the biblical teaching of the fall of humanity, which depicted an ideal creation that had collapsed through the transgressions of the prototypical figures, Adam and Eve. In light of the doctrine of the fall of humanity, the biblical view of the world dictated that the remainder of history entailed a process of

redemption. For Lang, Tylor was correct in the sense that he saw humanity as involved in a process of a sometimes uneven development, but he was wrong in ruling out the possibility that the need for human progress had been determined by an initial fall from grace.

Implications for contemporary studies of indigenous religions

One rather simple observation derived from this discussion of the Tylor–Lang debate over primitive monotheism would be to conclude that every scholar begins with presuppositions that determine the direction of the ensuing argument. This point is reflected in a comment by Thomas Nagel in his discussion of the problem of objective knowledge: 'We can never abandon our own point of view, but can only alter it' (1986: 68). In other words, it would be unjustified to criticize either Tylor or Lang for beginning, in Tylor's case with assumptions derived from evolutionary theories, or in Lang's case from the opposing presupposition of an original monotheism rooted in a natural theology. The best we can do is make our presuppositions transparent and try to limit any distortions that result from them. To pursue this avenue of thought would lead us into a discussion of phenomenological perspectives on the study of religion and on the value of trying to bracket out one's most distorting predispositions (performing *epochē*) (Cox 2010: 49–52).

Although I have argued for the enduring value of the phenomenological method in the study of religion, as modified by the principles of reflexivity (Cox 2006: 233–43), I want to follow another line in my conclusion to this chapter. Even if we admit that both Tylor and Lang reflected the world view characteristic of their own period in intellectual history and that their conclusions inevitably followed from their predetermined theories, we cannot escape the fact that their arguments largely ignored the humans who comprised the actual subjects of their research. The indigenous people themselves in this sense were incidental to the theory each was expounding and defending. The controversy was not over Baiame, as such, but centred on the relative merits of either the evolutionary theory of social development or a theology of primitive monotheism.

In this sense, the Tylor–Lang debate is instructive for contemporary students of indigenous religions, who often enter into discussions about how localized, small-scale societies are being affected by globalizing forces as if those

living in local situations lack agency. Scholars in the study of religions, including Christian theologians, have analysed the interaction between global and indigenous religions by reference to such ideas as syncretism, development, contextualization, indigenization, human rights and a host of other concepts, but frequently the same error committed by Tylor and Lang that robs indigenous people of agency has been repeated. In my book *The Invention of God in Indigenous Societies* (2014: 144–47), I have sought to correct this by employing the concept 'intentional hybridity' as a mode of analysis that acknowledges that indigenous peoples themselves are active players in constructing their own responses to modernity, by framing subversive strategies to counter the hegemonic power of globalizing political, economic, social, cultural, educational and religious forces.

I derived the term 'intentional hybridity' from the work of the Russian literary critic, linguist and philosopher, Mikhail Bakhtin, who, when discussing the ways in which a language changes as it interacts and mixes with other languages, introduced the term 'hybridization', which he defined as a 'a mixture of two social languages' that have been separated by varying factors, such as temporal or social contexts (Bakhtin 1981: 358). He further distinguished between two types of hybridization: organic and intentional. Organic hybridity entails an 'unintentional' or 'unconscious' mixing of languages that occurs naturally. Intentional hybridity, on the other hand, is planned, deliberate and strategic (ibid.: 358–59). The best example of intentional hybridity in literary works, according to Bakhtin, can be seen in the novel where the author constructs 'two individual language-intentions' (ibid.: 359). One intention resides in the mind of the author, who possesses 'consciousness and will' and the other exists in the mind of the character, who takes on another, separate consciousness and will (ibid.). The result is a 'collision' of differing views of the world expressed in the conflicting wills of the author and the character to whom the author has given will or intention (ibid.: 360).

Bakhtin's distinction between 'organic' and 'intentional' hybridity has been applied to the interactions between cultures. For example, Andreas Ackermann, professor in the Institute of Cultural Studies in the University of Koblenz-Landau, Germany, has defined organic hybridity as 'the unintentional, unconscious everyday mixing and fusing of diverse cultural elements' (2012: 12). Intentional hybridity, by contrast, emphasizes deliberate acts that are constructed by various players in cultural interactions. In ways that scholars have often overlooked, local indigenous cultures have constructed their own, deliberate and intentional

responses to the perceived authoritative power of colonial invaders. Ackermann suggests that it is important to understand both organic and intentional hybridity in historical contexts, but he stresses that whereas organic hybridity 'tends towards fusion', intentional hybridity 'enables a contestatory activity' (ibid.: 13).

In *The Invention of God in Indigenous Societies*, I provide a particular example of intentional hybridity by focusing on the Rainbow Spirit Theology, which developed in Northern Queensland in Australia through a series of meetings held in 1994 and 1995 involving Aboriginal Elders from the Catholic, Lutheran, Uniting and Anglican Churches (Cox 2014: 89). The Rainbow Spirit Elders produced a book entitled *The Rainbow Spirit Theology: Towards an Australian Aboriginal Theology*, which was first published in 1997, with a revised version appearing ten years later. In this groundbreaking and at times controversial publication, the Rainbow Spirit is described as the 'life giving power of the Creator Spirit active in the world' (Rainbow Spirit Elders 2007 [1997]: 31). The Elders selected the term 'Rainbow Spirit' rather than 'Rainbow Serpent' largely because of biblical associations between the serpent and Satan (Cox 2014: 99; Rosendale 2004: 7). Nonetheless, it is clear from the context of the book and also from actual references in it that the Elders equated the Rainbow Spirit with the traditional figure of the rainbow serpent, which numerous anthropologists writing in the early to mid-twentieth century, like A. R. Radcliffe-Brown, regarded as a ubiquitous symbol throughout Australia (Radcliffe-Brown 1930: 342). At one point in the book, the Elders (Rainbow Spirit Elders 2007: 56) describe the Rainbow Spirit as being closely linked to the land and the sea and who 'as a powerful snake … gives life to the land and all living creatures'. Elsewhere, the Elders write: 'As the Creator, the Rainbow Spirit is often portrayed by our Aboriginal artists as a powerful snake who emerged from the land, travelled the landscape leaving trails of life, and returned to the land through caves, waterholes and other sacred sites' (ibid.: 13). Further evidence that the Rainbow Spirit was coterminous with the rainbow serpent described in traditional myths is found in a training guide for indigenous church leaders written by one of the Rainbow Spirit Elders, George Rosendale, who has been described by the Lutheran theologian Norman Habel (Rainbow Spirit Elders 2007: viii) 'as the true elder of the group'. In the training guide, Rosendale describes the Creator as the 'Rainbow Snake', and asserts that the Rainbow Snake 'remains watching and caring for the people and the land' (Rosendale 2004: 6). He then makes the connection between the Christian God and the indigenous belief in the rainbow serpent unequivocal when he declares: 'The rainbow snake made the world in creation' (ibid.) In these ways, the Rainbow Spirit Elders transformed the rainbow serpent into the Rainbow

Spirit, whom they equated with the Christian God or the All Father; they even refer to the Rainbow Spirit as an overarching word for the indigenous God, of which Baiame is included as one of his names (Rainbow Spirit Elders 2007: 31).

At first glance, the Rainbow Spirit Theology appears to capitulate to Christian missionary influences by replacing an indigenous symbol with the Christian idea of God. This could be conflated with the missionary theory of 'fulfilment', in which Jesus Christ is seen as completing the vague anticipations that people around the world possessed of a loving and powerful God. When the missionaries brought the message of Christ, according to this theory, indigenous peoples responded because God had already planted in them the seeds of the gospel, which then came to fruition when they heard the Christian message proclaimed. The highest and best aspects of their pre-Christian religious beliefs and practices, in this case the rainbow serpent, were fulfilled by Christ (Hedges 2014: 191–218; Sharpe 1965; Sharpe 1986: 144–71). Although it is possible to read the Rainbow Spirit Theology as a form of the fulfilment theory, on closer scrutiny, it becomes clear that this is not the case.

Aboriginal representations of the rainbow serpent depict the snake as a symbol of fertility, as evidenced in numerous myths and as reported by A. P. Elkin's descriptions and photographs of cave and rock paintings in which the rainbow serpent appears as a human-like figure called *wondjina* (also spelled *wandjina*) that is always drawn as a face with two eyes, a nose but no mouth (Elkin 1930: 262–63). The anthropologist L. R. Hiatt argues that this figure represents explicitly the erect penis entering the vagina, and thus symbolizes not just procreation but lineage, ancestor traditions and an authority that is passed on from generation to generation (Cox 2014: 97–99; Hiatt 1996: 114–15). The importance of the *wondjina* and its relation to the rainbow serpent has been acknowledged by George Rosendale, whose training guide for indigenous church leaders contains a drawing of the *wondjina* that exactly replicates the cave paintings described by Elkin of a face with two eyes, a nose but no mouth (Rosendale 2004: 5). In *The Rainbow Spirit Theology,* the Rainbow Spirit Elders even go so far as to insist that Jesus Christ is the incarnation of the Rainbow Spirit (read rainbow serpent) (Rainbow Spirit Elders 2007: 58).

I am convinced that the Elders were not ignorant of what they were doing. They were exercising an oblique strategy of resistance by intentionally using the language of the invading culture (God the Creator) and transforming this central doctrine of Christian faith into the principal symbol of ancestral traditions as depicted by the *wondjina*. Rather than calling this an example of fulfilment, as if the indigenous symbol remained somehow inauthentic outside its configuration

as a Christian representation, what actually is occurring is 'intentional hybridity', in which two living organisms, each with will and intention, have been fused to create a new, vibrant entity. By inserting 'intentional' in front of 'hybridity', I contend that the indigenous participants in the creation of this new organism were active, even subversive, agents rather than passive victims acquiescing to the influences of an outside dominating force.

If I relate the concept 'intentional hybridity' to the debate between E. B. Tylor and Andrew Lang over the origin of religion, it becomes clear that it is largely irrelevant whether belief in Baiame was a pre-Christian idea, or if it appeared after the interventions of missionaries. When seen in the light of the Rainbow Spirit Elders, Baiame becomes an indigenous God, which has been constructed through many examples of local agency, and thereby has been made thoroughly indigenous (rather than thoroughly Christian), even so far as to incorporate within it symbols of fertility, procreation, lineage and ancestral authority. This is not to say that the Rainbow Spirit Elders are not Christian; they clearly are, but the missionary form of Christian faith has been sabotaged by indigenous cultural symbols. This analysis shifts power away from the outside, invading culture to the original culture and makes apparent what often has been kept hidden in academic analyses, partly due to the predetermined interests of members of the scholarly community itself, that indigenous responses to globalizing processes and 'world' religions have been deliberate, intentional and at times revolutionary, but they always have involved the active participation of local agents of change.

Notes

1 Howitt's source for this is: James Manning. Royal Society of New South Wales. 'Notes on the Aborigines of New Holland', 1 November 1882.

2 Mittagong is located approximately 115 kilometres south-west of Sydney.

2

Tylor, 'Fetishes' and the Matter of Animism

Graham Harvey

Edward Tylor adopted the term 'fetishism' for what he considered to be a significant subset of animism. If animism is a 'doctrine of spirits in general', fetishism is 'the doctrine of spirits embodied in, or attached to, or conveying influence through, certain material objects' (Tylor 1871, 2: 132). I have previously contrasted the animism theorized by Tylor with that of Irving Hallowell in the mid-twentieth century (e.g. Harvey 2005a discussing Hallowell 1960). For Tylor, animism ('belief in spirits') is synonymous with religion. For Hallowell, animism is a relational ontology and epistemology which generates the rituals and narratives of non-supernaturalistic religion within wider cultural life. Material things play vital roles in both anthropologists' work and invite further attention. Whether fetishism is a useful word for some human relationships with material things, is a question to which this chapter returns towards the end.

The concluding cliffhanger of the first volume of Tylor's *Primitive Culture: Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Art, and Custom* asserts that the division between 'Animism and Materialism' is the 'deepest of all religious schisms' (Tylor 1871, 1: 453). Indeed, given the tenor of Tylor's work, the division is far more than a religious schism as it indicates what finally distinguishes religion from modern science. Thus, although what he called 'fetishism' may be a 'subordinate' form of the 'doctrine of spirits' (Tylor 1871, 2: 132), it is immensely important to understanding Tylor's animism, his anthropology of religion and his construction of rational modernity. A focus on material things in Hallowell's work is similarly indicative of his central concerns and his legacy. For example, a conversation between Hallowell and an elder about the animacy of rocks in Ojibwa grammar, ontology, behaviour and world view (Hallowell 1960: 24) is among the most quoted pieces of ethnography in the varied scholarly phenomena labelled as the 'new animism', the 'ontological turn'

and the 'new materialism'. These are already sufficient justifications for a discussion of the attention paid to material things in the work produced or provoked by Tylor and Hallowell. However, a nagging feeling that the words and worlds of putative animists and fetishists are being 'explained away' invites reflection on what possibilities might emerge from taking such matters as starting points for understanding how the world is in reality.

In this chapter, I explore the different results of an interest in things in the works of Tylor, Hallowell and more recent scholars. The chapter begins by comparing and contrasting the ways in which Tylor and Hallowell made use of particular things (rocks, kettles, chairs and tents) as they developed their arguments about animisms. This is followed by a summary of more recent 'thinking through things' (Henare, Holbraad and Wastell 2007) which contributes to understanding religion as this-worldly, material and performed relations. Thinking about Tylor is, I propose, not only instructive about the origins of the anthropology of religion but also provides fuel for continuing reflection on scholarly positions, approaches and relations. It might, of course, be entirely unremarkable that Tylor's work is so solidly fixed in his colonial world. Indeed, his magnum opus is a building block in the construction of colonial modernity. In contrast, however, Hallowell reveals that it is possible, even in the midst of colonialism, to learn from hosts about other ways in which to constitute the world and to perform scholarly acts. As colonialism is far from over – indeed, I have been told by more than a few Indigenous[1] people that 'most-colonialism' dominates – there are further lessons to be learnt from human engagements with things. The conclusion to this chapter, therefore, ponders the value of employing or abandoning terms and phrases like animism, fetishism and Hallowell's 'other-than-human persons' in a more concerted effort to escape the divided domains of European-derived ontology.

Rocks

Tylor's primitive, savage and barbarian animists did not understand or appreciate the more advanced, more rational separation between animate persons and inanimate objects. In a passage that captures much of the argument of his *Primitive Culture* Tylor wrote:

> Animism takes in several doctrines which so forcibly conduce to personification, that savages and barbarians, apparently without an effort, can give

> consistent individual life to phenomena that our utmost stretch of fancy only avails to personify in conscious metaphor. An idea of pervading life and will in nature far outside modern limits, a belief in personal souls animating even what we call inanimate bodies, a theory of transmigration of souls as well in life as after death, a sense of crowds of spiritual beings, sometimes flitting through the air, but sometimes also inhabiting trees and rocks and waterfalls, and so lending their own personality to such material objects – all these thoughts work in mythology with such manifold coincidence, as to make it hard indeed to unravel their separate action. (Tylor 1871, 1: 260)

A later passage offers a succinct evocation of Tylor's notion of fetishism:

> Certain high savage races distinctly hold, and a large proportion of other savage and barbarian races make a more or less close approach to, a theory of separable and surviving souls or spirits belonging to stocks and stones, weapons, boats, food, clothes, ornaments, and other objects which to us are not merely soulless but lifeless. (Tylor 1871, 1: 430)

In these two passages, Tylor distinguished levels of savagery or primitivism from one another and from modernity, his contemporary culture. He accepted ('apparently without effort' to turn his phrase back on himself) that 'what we call inanimate bodies' are indeed inanimate, and that material things are correctly distinguishable from living bodies. He attributed to primitives' beliefs in personal souls, transmigration, the inhabitation of material objects (waterfalls or weapons) by spiritual beings, and the theory of separable and death-surviving souls. He was clear that what he called 'animism' was not merely the attribution of life but, definitively, of soul and personality, where it was unwarranted.

However, Tylor did not think that these 'primitive' beliefs were entirely beyond modern experience or ability to fancy. He wanted his readers to understand that there is a rationality behind these interpretations of experiences:

> Everyone who has seen visions while light-headed in fever, everyone who has ever dreamt a dream, has seen the phantoms of objects as well as of persons. How then can we charge the savage with far-fetched absurdity for taking into his philosophy and religion an opinion which rests on the very evidence of his senses? (Tylor 1871, 1: 431)

He did not think that the evidence of feverish visions or dreams should be taken seriously, but saw them as providing a basis, albeit a less than modern or scientific one, for the beliefs he presented. Dreams and visions were, in short, the kind of evidence a premodern individual would have found convincing,

both because their 'primitive culture' encouraged a pre-Cartesian trust in bodily senses and because dreams and visions would have seemed similarly sensible and trustworthy. Moderns, however, are expected to find visions of the 'phantoms of objects' absurd. Nonetheless, because animism and fetishism survived, according to Tylor, among his contemporaries his work was intended to aid the rational recognition of their absurdity. Just as museums displayed the evolution of stone technologies 'from the rudest natural bludgeon up to the weapon of finished shape and carving' (Tylor 1871, 1: 59) and beyond, Tylor could position the alleged animation or personifying of 'stocks and stones' as a primitive stage in ongoing cultural evolution.

In contrast with Tylor, Hallowell sought to make sense of the ontology, behaviour and world view of his hosts, the Ojibwa[2] of Berens River in Manitoba, Canada, without relegating them to a primitive past. He cited his conversation with an unnamed Ojibwa elder as illustrative of his argument. Hallowell asked the elder, 'Are *all* the stones we see about us here alive?' Hallowell continued, 'He reflected a long while and then replied, 'No! But *some* are" (Hallowell 1960: 24; emphasis in original). Hallowell's exploration of this tricky or enigmatic answer teaches us more about the animacy of rocks, the animism of Ojibwa culture, and Hallowell's attitude and approach. The question arose for Hallowell because the language of his hosts had animate and inanimate gender categories (rather than, for example, feminine and masculine in French or masculine, feminine and neutral in German) and the word for rocks, *asiniig*, was grammatically animate. Hallowell used his discussion with the elder to introduce his exploration of whether there was anything more than grammar, something more pervasive about animism, among his Ojibwa hosts. He wrote:

> This qualified answer made a lasting impression on me. And it is thoroughly consistent with other data that indicate that the Ojibwa are not animists in the sense that they dogmatically attribute living souls to inanimate objects such as stones. The hypothesis which suggests itself to me is that the allocation of stones to an animate grammatical category is part of a culturally constituted cognitive 'set.' It does not involve a consciously formulated theory about the nature of stones. It leaves a door open that our orientation on dogmatic grounds keeps shut tight. Whereas we should never expect a stone to manifest animate properties of any kind under any circumstances, the Ojibwa recognize, *a priori*, potentialities for animation in certain classes of objects under certain circumstances. The Ojibwa do not perceive stones, in general, as animate, any more than we do. The crucial test is experience. Is there any personal testimony available? In answer to this question we can say that it is asserted by informants that stones

> have been seen to move, that some stones manifest other animate properties, and, as we shall see, Flint is represented as a living personage in their mythology. (Hallowell 1960: 24–25)

While those promised testimonies shared by informants (set out by Hallowell in more detail) might seem to parallel the seemingly peculiar ideas with which Tylor's work is replete, something more interesting is involved in Hallowell's discussion. These testimonies serve as data to justify Hallowell's claim that 'the Ojibwa are not animists in the sense that they dogmatically attribute living souls to inanimate objects such as stones'. In reading Hallowell's article (and subsequent work), it becomes apparent that it is less important to know whether or not stones might be believed to have moved of their own accord. The issue is one of relationship. Stones are classed as animate because traditional or respectful people act (or are encouraged to act) towards them as if they *might* sometimes, under *some* circumstances, give and/or receive gifts. That is sufficient for the use of animate gender terms. Testimony about movement is an extra, an illustration of particular relationships. The key issue arising in Hallowell's discussion of the animacy of stones is that relationships are formed and maintained by acts demonstrative of respect towards those who Hallowell terms 'other-than-human persons' (Hallowell 1992: 63–65). This phrase has gained considerable currency in more recent discussions, and more will be said about it later. First, however, there is the matter of animate kettles.

Kettles

Alongside rocks, Tylor and Hallowell also present us with animate artefacts, things made by human hands. Writing of the 'lower races of mankind' who 'hold most explicitly and distinctly the doctrine of object-souls', Tylor wrote:

> Among the Indians of North America, Father Charlevoix wrote, souls are, as it were, the shadows and animated images of the body, and it is by a consequence of this principle that they believe everything to be animate in the universe. This missionary was especially conversant with the Algonquins, and it was among one of their tribes, the Ojibwas, that Keating noticed the opinion that not only men and beasts have souls, but inorganic things, such as kettles, &c., have in them a similar essence. In the same district Father Le Jeune had described, in the seventeenth century, the belief that the souls, not only of men and animals, but

> of hatchets and kettles, had to cross the water to the Great Village, out where the sun sets. (Tylor 1871, 1: 432–33)

Tylor followed this with records of beliefs about the dead carrying ghostly objects (clothes, tools, weapons and food) with them. He listed such beliefs to illustrate his evolutionary schema from primitive animism through the fetishism and idolatry of increasingly advanced savages, to the atrophied survivals of odd beliefs among contemporary religionists and ending up with the rational scepticism and careful taxonomies of modern science.

Hallowell did something different when he mentioned kettles, including them as another prime example of a grammatically animate object:

> Yet a closer examination [of the animate-inanimate dichotomy in Ojibwa language] indicates that, as in the gender categories of other languages, the distinction in some cases appears to be arbitrary, if not extremely puzzling, from the standpoint of common sense or in a naturalistic frame of reference. Thus substantives for some, but not all – trees, sun-moon (*gĭzis*), thunder, stones, and objects of material culture like kettle and pipe – are classified as 'animate'. (Hallowell 1960: 23)

As with Tylor, Hallowell placed kettles alongside stones and things which would be classed as 'natural' in a normative European derived taxonomy. He then used these things in a discussion of the evidence his hosts offered him in reflecting on the more-than-grammatical and not merely arbitrary issue of animacy.

Part of what is at stake is the recognition that Hallowell's hosts did not distinguish things on the basis of their belonging to categories that are, as he said, 'complex' in the history of Western or European linguistics and philosophy. He was clear that the 'concept of the "natural" … is not present in Ojibwa thought' (1960: 28). They grouped trees, sun, moon, thunder, stones along with kettles and pipes because all of these *may* act deliberately towards others. They are persons or relations, not inert objects. Any 'regularity in the[ir] movements [e.g. the sun rising every day, kettles resting by fires] … is of the same order as the habitual activities of human beings' (Hallowell 1960: 29). This was a crucial step in the formation of Hallowell's understanding of Ojibwa animism and of his efforts to see 'Western' ontological assumptions and schema in a new light. Hallowell did not follow Tylor in imagining that animists embrace an 'early childlike philosophy in which human life seems the direct key to the understanding of nature at large' (Tylor 1871, 2: 99). His influential phrase 'other-than-human persons' makes 'humans' a subcategory of 'persons'. It disarms the accusative

terms 'anthropomorphism' and 'projection'. It counters that the kinship between humans and other persons requires the demolition of the modernist separation between (human) culture and 'nature'. Indeed, by recognizing the interrelatedness and interactivity of humans, stones and kettles, Ojibwa animism and Hallowell's theorization anticipate some of the most exciting ontological debates in the twenty-first century. I will pick up this point in a while. First, the related distinction between 'nature' and 'supernature' requires consideration because it forms the warp for Tylor's weaving and is at the heart of Hallowell's ongoing challenge to rethink human relations with the world.

Dancing tables and shaking tents

Tylor's visits to Spiritualist mediums provided him with more information about what he called survivals into his own time of primitive, irrational or religious beliefs, or animism. These putative beliefs were, in his view, the survival of cognitive and cultural mechanisms into an era in which they should have been obsolete. In *Primitive Culture* he drew on his experiences among Spiritualists only obliquely. For instance, he wrote:

> A further stretch of imagination enables the lower races to associate the souls of the dead with mere objects, a practice which may have had its origin in the merest childish make-believe, but which would lead a thorough savage animist straight on to the conception of the soul entering the object as a body. Mr. Darwin saw two Malay women in Keeling Island who held a wooden spoon dressed in clothes like a doll; this spoon had been carried to the grave of a dead man, and becoming inspired at full moon, in fact lunatic, it danced about convulsively like a table or a hat at a modern spirit-séance. (Tylor 1871, 2: 137–38)

Later he said that:

> The mental and physical phenomena of what is now called 'table-turning' belong to a class of proceedings which we have seen to be familiar to the lower races, and accounted for by them on a theory of extra-human influence which is in the most extreme sense spiritualistic. (Tylor 1871, 2: 146)

Tylor's observation of Spiritualists continued and is recorded in his 'Notes on Spiritualism' (Stocking 1971).[3] Regarding a séance on 27 November 1872, he commented, 'I forget whether the table was moved when I sat at it or stood aside[;] but I went out of the room for a while[,] during which time there were

some movements' (Stocking 1971: 100, punctuation added by Stocking). He then noted that, despite the evidence 'that this particular medium had been fraudulently assisting nature' (i.e. Mrs Jaquet felt the medium violently pushing the table), his companions not only retained 'their faith in the manifestations of mediums under other circumstances' but even their 'wonder at [this medium's] spiritual gifts'. Tylor's proposal of a barbed aphorism with which to denigrate faith both sums up his rationalism and chimes with his efforts to encourage a more definitive turn from religion to science: 'Blessed are they that have seen, and yet have believed' (Stocking 1971: 100, punctuation added by Stocking).

The flavour of Hallowell's discussion of 'The Shaking Tent' (1992: 68–71) is revealing not only of a different attitude to that of Tylor but also of Hallowell's non-supernaturalist theorization of religion (Morrison 1992b, 2013). According to Hallowell:

> When a conjuring performance is to be undertaken in summer, a barrellike framework of poles about seven feet high is set up outdoors and covered with birchbark, skins or canvas. In winter, of course, it must be set up inside a dwelling. After dark the conjurer enters this structure; the audience gathers outside. The conjurer invokes his particular benefactors among other than human persons, that is, his *pawaganak* or 'guardian spirits'. Upon their arrival the structure becomes agitated and sways from side to side. In fact, it is seldom still. […] The Ojibwa say that the Winds are responsible for this agitation; the lodge is never shaken by human hands. (1992: 68)

While 'conjurer' may suggest a dismissive attitude, Hallowell had already noted that during his first encounter with a shaking tent performance, 'the conjurer made a prediction about some difficulties I would experience on the return trip, which proved to be true' (1992: 4). In the following sentence he reported being told of eyewitness accounts of 'miracles' performed by a 'notorious "medicine man" of a previous generation. These choices of terms offer intriguing indications of Hallowell's struggle to convey the drama of both community entertainment and leadership – something akin to Rane Willerslev's effort to take animism seriously but not too seriously (Willerslev 2013). Nonetheless, Hallowell's use of these somewhat opaque terms, was not the end of his work. Further suggestions of his confidence in the abilities of these ritual specialists is provided in his observation that while 'conjurers' were within the tent, they were sometimes bound with rope so as to be unable to move and therefore shake the tent themselves. He offered no challenge to, or dismissal of, this claim.

In further describing the shaking tent ceremony, Hallowell noted that various other-than-human persons were invoked and 'manifested themselves vocally in differentiated voices' (1992: 68) from within the tents. An informant identified powerful beings called 'owners' of twenty-two species of mammals and fish (i.e. powerful beings in charge of the lives of these species and attentive to the respect given to them), five beings from myth narrations, and 'several semihuman entities' including a class of cannibal (1992: 68–70). These beings were recognizable to the audience because their voices 'had the same characteristics as those used by the narrators of myths' and other classes of discourse (1992: 70). Whether the other-than-human persons making themselves known through the shaking tent ritual were serious or witty, they seemed responsive to the audience, which sometimes comprised the whole community. Hallowell also discussed the ways in which these dramatic ritual occasions were reinforced by more everyday encounters between human and other–than-human persons. Indeed, he thought his argument that such encounters, interactions and testimonies provide insights into the 'psychological depth and behavioral consequences of the Ojibwa world view' was strengthened by the occurrence of interactions 'outside of any institutional setting like the shaking tent' (1992: 70).

In short, Tylor and Hallowell both had first-hand experience of what might be called séances, interactions between those they called 'spirits' or 'other-than-human persons' and enquirers, mediated by performers of varied skill or credibility. The major difference between them is that Tylor's interpretative schema ('belief in spirits') remained unchanged throughout his work (e.g. the various editions of *Primitive Culture*), while Hallowell's developed. In the process of his increased engagement and reflection, Hallowell gained a positive appreciation for his informants' ontological and epistemological knowledges and testimonies. More significantly, especially for later scholars, he came to allow this to challenge his understanding of the world to the degree that he was willing to form a theory of religion more deeply rooted in Ojibwa cultural experience and relationships than in what he continued to call 'our' culture, thinking, world view or approach. More will be said about Hallowell's approach, but the point of placing Tylor's dancing tables and Hallowell's shaking tents together is to draw a comparative point about their understandings of what religion involved.

Tylor entrenched the notion that religion is definitively a cognitive process of 'believing' in supernatural and non-empirical postulates. This 'believing' is not a trusting of other persons but a cognitive notion that 'spirits' exist and that their actions explain observable phenomena such as tables shaking or crops growing. For Tylor, such beliefs arose from some sort of observation but remained

disconnected from the kind of rational thinking which deserves to be labelled 'science'. As Robert Segal establishes, Tylor assumed that:

> Science … renders religion not merely redundant but outright impossible. For the religious as well as the scientific explanation is direct, so that one cannot stack the religious explanation atop the scientific one, with science providing the direct explanation and religion the indirect one. According to religion, the vegetation god acts not *through* vegetative processes but *in place of* them. One cannot, then, reconcile the explanations and must instead choose between them. (Segal 2013: 54–55)

By contrast, Hallowell developed an understanding of religion as non-supernaturalist, intersubjective interactions between persons who inhabit a world that is not divided between cultural, natural and supernatural realms (see Morrison 1992a, 1992b, 2000; Harvey 2013b). This is a theory of religion that does not require metaphysics (even when it utilizes testimonies of self-motivated or responsive rocks) and does not seek to explain but to energize the acts and interrelationships that make the world thoroughly social (but not anthropocentric). The doing of religion, as Hallowell understood what Ojibwa told and showed him, concerned entrainment in locally appropriate behaviours (e.g. ritual and etiquette) towards others so that each member of the (always social) world could contribute to 'good living'.

Attention to ethics and etiquette arising from Ojibwa relational ontology and/or world view led Hallowell to understand that:

> If the study of religion is thought to concern itself with man's social relations with beings beyond the limits of human society, rather than primarily with theological questions and systems of beliefs, the other than human persons of the Ojibwa world are religious figures. (1992: 64)

Such attention also explains why the concluding section of his 'Ojibwa ontology' article is not about the psychology of individuals but about the 'psychological unity of the Ojibwa world' (Hallowell 1960: 43–48). Its key point is that:

> The central goal of life for the Ojibwa is expressed by the term *pīmädäzīwin*, life in the fullest sense, life in the sense of longevity, health and freedom from misfortune. This goal cannot be achieved without the effective help and cooperation of *both* human and other-than-human 'persons,' as well as by one's own personal efforts. (1960: 45)

The contrasts indicated by Tylor's discussion of spirit-moved tables and Hallowell's of person-moved tents, along with those of animate rocks and kettles,

are both illustrative and generative of different understandings of animism and of related ways of theorizing about things. I expand on this in the following section.

New turns after Tylor and Hallowell

Two approaches to animism have gained the labels 'old animism' and 'new animism'. Willerslev attributes this coining to me (Willerslev 2013: 41, citing Harvey 2005a: xi). However, I imagined I was simply noting a recent ferment of activity concerned with phenomena that encouraged what Nurit Bird-David (1999) had already called a 'revisitation' of the term animism or what Ernst Halbmayer has since called the reformulation of 'outdated evolutionist notions of animism' (2012: 9). Publications by Philippe Descola (1992, 1996), Daniel Quinn (1995), Kaj Århem (1996), David Abram (1996), Eduardo Viveiros de Castro (1998), Tim Ingold (1998, 2000) and others had already made interesting new uses of 'animism' to talk about the ways in which humans relate with, belong to, move among and/or 'become' in their environments or larger-than-human communities. These and other scholars, sometimes explicitly distancing themselves from Tylor while approvingly citing Hallowell, have also been deeply involved in the 'turns' to materiality and ontology.

A full survey of these 'turns' which focus attention on the lives and relations of things is beyond the remit of this chapter. Amiria Salmond (2014) helpfully cites the inspiration of work by Roy Wagner (1975), Marilyn Strathern (1990, 2005), Alfred Gell (1998) and Viveiros de Castro (1998, 2004) for initiating and spearheading this scholarly turn which, she says, was fully set in motion by the volume *Thinking through Things: Theorising Artefacts Ethnographically* (Henare, Holbraad and Wastell 2007). She goes on to summarize that volume as showing that,

> the proper subjects of ethnographic treatment are not necessarily (just) people, but may turn out to be all manner of unexpected entities, relations, and beings. They may include, for instance, artifacts of a kind we might intuitively think of as objects – only to find them playing subject-like roles: wood carvings that are ancestors; powerful powder; collections that make sense of catastrophes; and so on. (Salmond 2014: 167)

The mingling of approaches tested and applied in the ontological turn and material turn meant that *Thinking through Things* signalled a more robust

emphasis on the 'subject-like roles' of things. Viveiros de Castro (2015) says that it also gained the term 'ontology' considerable notoriety, as becomes evident to anyone conducting even a brief online search for the term. In short, a vibrant debate about both the subject matter (broadly, human relationships with things) and the approaches (broadly, going beyond a relativistic noting that 'other people see the world differently') of various disciplines has met with contrasting judgements. In part, at least, this is illustrated by Bruno Latour's weaving of these debates into his challenge to modernity. He makes use of 'thing' to refer to both material stuff and (drawing on a Germanic and Norse sense of 'thing') to parliaments:

> My point is thus very simple: things have become Things again, objects have re-entered the arena, the Thing, in which they have to be gathered first in order to exist later as what *stands apart*. The parenthesis that we can call the modern parenthesis during which we had, on the one hand, a world of objects, *Gegenstand,* out there, unconcerned by any sort of parliament, forum, agora, congress, court and, on the other, a whole set of forums, meeting places, town halls where people debated, has come to a close. What the etymology of the word *thing – chose, causa, res, aitia* – had conserved for us mysteriously as a sort of fabulous and mythical past has now become, for all to see, our most ordinary present. Things are gathered again. (Latour 2004: 236)

More forcefully, Latour asserts that:

> If there is one thing to wonder about in the history of Modernism, it is not that there are still people 'mad enough to believe in animism', but that so many hard headed thinkers have invented what should be called inanimism and have tied to this sheer impossibility their definition of what it is to be 'rational' and 'scientific'. It is inanimism that is the queer invention: an agency without agency constantly denied by practice. (Latour, 2010: 10)

In yet other words, expressive of the same challenge to the kind of modernity Tylor's work aimed to create, Donna Haraway tells us that '[i]f we appreciate the foolishness of human exceptionalism then we know that becoming is always becoming *with,* in a contact zone where the outcome, where who is in the world, is at stake' (Haraway 2008: 244).

The world approached by contributors to these debates is often a less systematized and more relational one than Tylor seems to have imagined. It is not so much a question of a focus on objects, or even about how things are interpreted, since Tylor presented plenty of data about materiality and how people related with stuff. The larger issue is about the ways in which both Tylor and Hallowell

pursued the project of constructing academia and the wider world around them. For both scholars, questions about the animacy or otherwise of stones, kettles, tables and tents contributed to understanding the ways in which humans relate to the world. Tylor denied seeking merely to satisfy 'frivolous curiosity' but proposed that the ethnographer's task was 'to learn the laws that under new circumstances are working for good or ill in our own development' (1871, 1: 144). Hallowell's essay begins with the assertion that, 'It has become increasingly apparent in recent years that the potential significance of the data collected by cultural anthropologists far transcends in interest the level of simple, objective, ethnographic description of the peoples they have studied'. In particular, Hallowell pointed to the 'special attention now being paid to values' which, he concluded, was a significant benefit of engaging with 'other cultures' (1960: 19–20). His work illustrates his struggle to do justice to what he learnt from his Ojibwa hosts and to communicate what he learnt to a wider community.

Towards a post-Cartesian academy

The 'old' animism has not ceased to generate research and publications. The fact that some people may be said to 'believe in spirits' continues to animate interesting debates. While 'rethinking animism' in 1999, Martin Stringer concluded that although there was 'much in [Tylor's] work that we would want to reject today', Tylor's theory of animism is 'simply the way in which ordinary people late in the twentieth century talk about that which is perceived to be non-empirical in their lives, whatever forms that non-empirical might take' (1999a: 554). Stringer's more recent work continues to say important things about the lived realities of people who engage with their deceased relatives, and demonstrates that Tylorian definitions of religion can be greatly improved on (e.g. Stringer 2008). Relations with spirits (e.g. those labelled possession and shamanism) are of renewed critical attention in the context of South American and other cultures (e.g. Schmidt 2016). Other scholars have pursued questions about the cognitive processes by which people (modern or otherwise) believe some things or attribute things that seem (to them or others) not entirely rational (e.g. Guthrie 1993). An almost Tylorian animism also remains in use as one term among many for religious traditions in Africa that are other than Christianity or Islam (though many religious practitioners seem untroubled by the alleged boundaries erected between them by more ideologically motivated companions, elites or observers). Here, 'animism' and 'fetishism' are employed to label what others might call 'traditional

religion' or 'traditional lifeways'. Whether this is useful or appropriate remains to be considered.

Certainly there is more to be said than that some colleagues continue to ask questions which Tylor would recognize, that is, questions assuming the veracity of Western dualisms. The crux of the shift towards the 'revisiting' unfolding within the 'new animism' and in an emerging 'new fetishism' (perhaps a braiding of 'new animism' with 'new materialism') touch the heart of the whole project of academia. The assumption of Tylor's work is of a more-or-less Cartesian cosmos divided between mind and matter, culture and nature, and embracing human exceptionalism. It is a world in which some people (not 'us') misunderstand what they experience. In contrast, the Ojibwa assumption which inspired much of the 'new animism' is of a thoroughly relational cosmos, within which humans are one kind of person among many. The exciting matter, then, is not only that there is data to be reconsidered but that scholarly approaches, methods and relations are challenged, tested, refined and/or inspired.

In fact, since the data discussed by both old and new animisms is the same (the ways in which humans relate to the world), subject to fact-checking, the 'new' thing in recent scholarship has to do with approaches and relationships. The value of contrasting Tylor and Hallowell is not that the latter had entirely escaped the Cartesian modernist context inhabited so securely by Tylor. It is, rather, that Hallowell's work from the 1930s to the 1970s evidences efforts to recognize, critique and move beyond that context. Ken Morrison (2013) traces Hallowell's trajectory towards an 'anthropology of engagement' in line with his own 'proposal for a post-Cartesian anthropology'. Morrison notes that:

> Hallowell was not alone in struggling against the categorical commitments of Cartesian ethnology. Our [scholarly] reification 'animism' resisted explanation because anthropologists have been poorly positioned to understand sociality in either indigenous or Western lives. (2013: 46)

For the 'anthropology of engagement' to be effective, Morrison proposes, we need the more thoroughly relational approaches that much of the 'new animism' entails. This means more than 'we could learn a lot from other cultures', though that might be an improvement on a relativism, which is too lazy to be changed by encounters with diversity or difference.

Beyond learning from others (let alone learning about others), and beyond reflecting on ourselves, there is the possibility of learning together, of more thoroughly dialogical relationships. As we learn more about sociality by attending to the relations between all manner of species (evolved or made), we may also

improve on the dialogical approaches and methods which have been gaining traction in recent decades. In part, this includes a more robust recognition and reflection on the ways in which scholarly arguments construct the world. According to Latour's 'Compositionist Manifesto':

> It's no use speaking of 'epistemological breaks' any more. Fleeing from the past while continuing to look at it will not do. Nor will critique be of any help. It is time to compose – in all the meanings of the word, including to compose with, that is to compromise, to care, to move slowly, with caution and precaution. (Latour 2010: 487)

A cautious approach to building, maintaining and improving relations with others, including other-than-human persons in this larger-than-human world, has been a regular theme of (new) animism discussions. Hallowell heard what Tylor had failed to hear in what was conveyed to them of Indigenous knowledges and lifeways: that all of us are always composing the world. In order to communicate this he increased the work that words like 'person' had to do. This, finally, requires consideration as to whether our scholarly terms aid or obscure understanding.

Whose terms, whose understanding?

Fetishism has served as an accusation of primitive stupidity in which people make things to which they then attribute fateful power. Animism, similarly, has served as an accusation of a primitive confusion in which human-likeness is found where it is unwarranted. These uses were reinforced (though not initiated) by Tylor. As a result of his conversations with Ojibwa hosts Hallowell made use of the term 'animism' to refer to a relational ontology and epistemology that resonates with more contemporary understandings of human evolutionary kinship with(in) the world. In the train of this new usage of 'animism', a 'new fetishism' has been proposed by Amy Whitehead (2013a, 2013b). In addition to citing scholars who seek to convey a new (to outsiders) understanding of West African and other Indigenous relationships with powerful made-things (e.g. Graeber 2005; Johnson 2000; Pels 1998, 2008; Manning and Menely, 2008), Whitehead finds 'fetishism' helpful in discussing the acts and ideas of contemporary Spanish Roman Catholic devotees of a Virgin statue. She and others involved in the new fetishism have no truck with primitivism. Their use of the term 'fetish' is two pronged: it enables them to say new things about religious materialism and it

allows them to contest the denigration of those who honour matter. The challenge is made all the more rich by the re-formation or reclamation of 'fetish' as a verb: 'to fetish' (Johnson 2000: 249) or even 'fetishing'. But most of all, the new fetishism is a powerful challenge because it propels scholars of religion to examine religious materiality more consistently and vigorously.

If anyone is accused of misunderstanding the world in this debate it is Latour's 'moderns'. It is their (Tylorian) belief in inanimation (against their own daily practice of relations with things) which needs explanation or correction. Nonetheless, those of us who seek to understand and discuss the knowledges of Indigenous and other hosts and knowledge holders need to listen to objections to terms which have been and continue to be used to denigrate and marginalize them. Certainly there are people who self-identify as 'fetishists': Tord Olsson conveyed a rich sense of what an emphatic and proud claim of this kind meant among his Bambara friends and teachers. For example, he noted that in ritual contexts, especially those involving *tontigi*, carriers of bags containing made-persons, Bambara used *məgaw* (otherwise a word reserved for human 'persons') as an analytical term indicating the relational personhood of masks and similarly powerful things (Olsson 2013: 228). Although Latour's co-location of 'fetish' and 'factish' (e.g. 2011) is both educative and amusing, its provocative power is exceeded by the Ewe Gorovodu priest Fo Idi's statement that 'We Ewe are not like Christians, who are created by their gods. We Ewe create our gods, and we create only the gods we want to possess us, not any others' (cited in Rosenthal1998: 45).[4] People who make gods do not forget what they have done. What they do is far more interesting than keeping a primitive error in circulation. Their clarity about human relatedness continues to challenge the polemics of colonialism and the postulation of human exceptionalism.

Nonetheless, what is the result of naming such people fetishists or animists in contexts where these terms are undoubtedly burdened by negativity? What is the result of adding the word 'person' to the Ojibwa word *asiniig* or its English translation 'stones'? Perhaps these are the wrong questions. Perhaps they are Tylorian questions, seeking to establish fixed categories and proper understanding, or seeking to compare certain knowledge with curious beliefs. If the Ojibwa elder's response to Hallowell's question about the animism of stones is followed, not only are stones and humans animate only when acting relationally, but we must also attend to the relationality of all discourses and practices. Bambara can speak of masks as 'persons' in ritual contexts but also

as 'artefacts' in other situations. Ojibwa traditionalists speaking together in Ojibwa-language do not need to add 'person' to words like 'stone', 'bear' or 'human'. These are already known to be capable of acting relationally ('personing' perhaps). Hallowell only needed to create the phrase 'other-than-human persons' because he was not addressing Ojibwa animists. He was attempting to convey animists' knowledge to an audience in whose taken-for-granted world animism and fetishism were foolish mistakes. Insisting on the value of the term 'person' in that context served to establish or increase knowledge of the world as thoroughly relational – first as 'they', the Ojibwa or other animists understood it, and second, as 'we' (not really moderns in actual practice or lived reality) experience it.

Tylor's animism and fetishism were weapons in an arsenal aimed at eradicating even the vestiges of survivals of primitive mistakes. The various 'new' approaches which refer to lessons Hallowell learnt among his Ojibwa hosts aim to do something quite different to the 'explaining away' of Tylor. If Hallowell's early ambition was to explain Ojibwa world views to his academic colleagues and wider audiences, he increasingly established a more dialogical way of doing scholarly work. As varied multi- and interdisciplinary projects have presented improved knowledge of human kinship with all other species, so Ojibwa and other Indigenous knowledges have gained in importance to those open to new perspectives. At present, the starting point for much ethnographic research and debate still sits on the foundations of European-derived ontology (with its separations of nature from culture). In that context, the reclamation and pointed use of terms like 'animism', 'fetishism' and 'other-than-human person' seem useful and even necessary. However, the rise of Indigenous studies means that different contexts for discussion are now possible. Indeed, Indigenous self-presentation has changed everything. The Berens River Ojibwa community have a website and do not need outside 'experts' to translate their views. Indigenous scholars are at the forefront of many disciplines (from climate science to literature) and seek to explore and debate Indigenous knowledges without the distortions of invasive interpretations.

Just as Tylor's work contributed to the construction of the modern world, so the work of Hallowell and his heirs contributed to the unsettling and destabilizing of that world. Indigenous perspectives may yet provide more vital material for the construction of whatever comes next in the evolution of human relations with the larger-than-human world.

Notes

1 Indigenous is capitalized in this chapter to indicate a usage linked to issues of sovereignty rather than mere origination.
2 I will follow Hallowell's usage of 'Ojibwa' here although elsewhere I have preferred the more usual self-description of my hosts and friends in similar communities: 'Anishinaabeg'.
3 Discussed more fully by Anne Kalvig in this book.
4 I am grateful to Elana Jefferson-Tatum for drawing my attention to this statement.

3

‘Belief in Spiritual Beings’: E. B. Tylor’s (Primitive) Cognitive Theory of Religion

Jonathan Jong

There is nothing terribly new about attempts to provide causal explanations of religion. Xenophanes (c. 570–475 BCE) thought of the traditional Greek gods as anthropomorphic projections, made in our own image. Lucretius (c. 99–55 BCE) attributes the belief in and worship of gods to fear. Both ideas remain influential today, not the least thanks to David Hume, who developed them more fully in what is perhaps the first modern theory of religion, laid out in his *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion, and Natural History of Religion* (2008). Here, Hume aims to elucidate religion’s ‘origin in human nature’ (2008: 134), and proceeds to construct a genealogy, beginning with a psychological explanation of polytheism as the ‘primary religion of men’ (2008: 135) before theorizing about how monotheism eventually evolved: ‘from rude beginnings to a state of greater perfection’ (ibid.). E. B. Tylor’s account of religion stands firmly in this tradition, beginning as he does with a psychological explanation of animism, the ‘essential source’ (1871, 1: 383) of religion, before proceeding to theorize about the development of other beliefs: from souls to spirits, lower to higher deities. So too is the nascent cognitive science of religion (CSR) an heir to this project, in specifically neo-Tylorian mode. This chapter recasts Tylor’s own contributions to the scientific study of religion in a cognitive mould to consider what value his work, particularly in his magnum opus *Primitive Culture: Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Art, and Custom*,[1] still holds for us today. First, the chapter examines the use of Tylor’s infamous and much contended minimum definition of religion – the ‘belief in spiritual beings’ – in CSR. Then, it evaluates his main aetiological contributions, chiefly his work on animism as a ‘primitive’ explanatory strategy. In each case, CSR’s relationship with its Tylorian heritage is ambivalent, albeit fruitfully so. Tylor’s definition

finds its place amid a characteristically deflationary account of 'religion' that generally denies the plausibility of real (as opposed to nominal) and substantive (as opposed to functional) definitions, while nevertheless prioritizing the belief in 'supernatural agents'. Tylor's progressivist view of animism as proto-science is also simultaneously endorsed and problematized by recent research on the evolutionary foundations of the cognitive biases involved in animistic and other related phenomena.

Tylor's minimum definition and theory of religion

Chapter XI of *Primitive Culture* opens with a consideration of the universality of religion, and quickly arrives at the familiar conclusion that it depends on what one means by 'religion'. Enter the 'minimum definition of Religion, the belief in Spiritual Beings' (1871, 1: 383). This definition, untethered as it is from more specific theological claims about supreme deities or afterlives, allows Tylor to claim that religion 'appears among all low races with whom we have attained to thoroughly intimate acquaintance' (1871, 1: 384). Furthermore, it is not only the low races that are religious – or, to use Tylor's preferred term, 'animistic' – in this way: the 'deep-lying doctrine of Spiritual Beings' (ibid.) is, Tylor asserts, 'the groundwork of the Philosophy of Religion, from that of savages up to that of civilized men' (1871, 1: 385). While a definition of 'Spiritual Beings' is never provided, Tylor does clarify that the doctrine consists of two parts. The first part concerns the 'souls of individual creatures, capable of continued existence after the death or destruction of the body', while the second concerns 'other spirits, upward to the rank of powerful deities' (ibid.). This, then, is Tylor's explanandum: Why do people believe in (and even worship) spiritual beings?

Tylor first attempts to explain the doctrine of human and other souls. His hypothesis is the classic expression of an intellectualist theory of religion. The concept of a soul, Tylor posits, emerged as a way in which our ancestors could account for two commonplace phenomena. First, it helped to account for the difference between living bodies and dead ones – the former possesses a soul, whereas the latter does not. Second, it helped to identify what people see in dreams and visions – either their souls are leaving their bodies, or other souls and spiritual beings are visiting and appearing before them. The concept of the soul is therefore functionally equivalent to hypothetical entities in the physical sciences, such as phlogiston or dark matter: all these play a role in explaining observable phenomena. Thus, Tylor argues that beliefs about the nature of the soul

come from 'the plain *evidence* of men's senses' (1871, 1: 387; emphasis added). Breathing – and its cessation – is so intimately associated with life and death that the soul is thought to resemble breath in some way. Thus, Tylor observes, the recurring tendency of people around the world to use the same word to refer both to soul and breath. Similarly, as we are conscious (or semiconscious) during dreams and often see vague apparitions during visions, souls and spirits are commonly conceived as 'thin, unsubstantial human image[s]' possessing 'personal consciousness and volition' (ibid.). These inferences are, Tylor insists, quite rational. Even the belief that inanimate objects and artefacts – 'stocks and stones, weapons, boats, food, clothes, ornaments, and other objects which to us are not merely soulless but lifeless' (1871, 1: 430) – have souls is reasonable, because these objects too appear in dreams and visions, just as persons and animals do. It is no wonder, then, that they are accounted for in the same way. This is a common thread in Tylor's theorizing, that religious beliefs are held by people, not irrationally or 'in the teeth of evidence' (Dawkins 1989: 198), but 'on the very evidence of their senses, interpreted on the biological theory which seems to them most reasonable' (Tylor 1871, 1: 451).

Equipped with the notion that things – humans and animals, perhaps even plants and other inanimate objects – possess souls that are the hidden causes of life and agency, people could now construct a more general causal theory. Tylor argues that the doctrine of spirits (i.e. spiritual beings that are not necessarily parts of more solid objects) is an extension of the doctrine of souls – like souls, spirits are personified causes[2] – and this applies to all kinds of spiritual beings, 'from the tiniest elf … to the heavenly Creator and Ruler of the world, the Great Spirit' (1871, 2: 100–01). Indeed, Tylor observes that in many cultures, the gods – and demons – are often the spirits of deceased ancestors or powerful wizards. Ancestor worship and the closely related veneration of saints are still among the most ubiquitous religious acts. If the doctrine of souls arose to explain dreams and death, then the doctrine of spirits arose to explain disease (and more positively, oracular inspiration) – both are due to possession or other forms of spiritual influence. From here, Tylor argues, it is a short step to the notion that spirits can possess inanimate objects, thus conferring powers upon them. These objects are therefore treated as sacred, and sometimes even venerated as the dwelling places, or at least symbolic representations, of gods. At this point of cultural evolution, spirits can possess or otherwise act upon both animate and inanimate objects: that is, they can influence *everything*, '[a]nd thus, Animism, starting as a philosophy of human life, extended and expanded itself till it became a philosophy of nature at large' (1871, 2: 169). Gods, then, are a proper subset

of these spiritual causes of things, personified and anthropomorphized; like people, gods can come in varieties, including varieties and hierarchies of power. There are, even in so-called monotheistic religions, high gods and low gods, even if such a description will be deemed theologically incorrect by religious experts: angels and demons are deities by any other name.

Conspicuously missing from the foregoing discussion is any mention of the role of emotion in religion (and vice versa), the role of religion in morality (and vice versa) and the relationship(s) between religious belief and ritual. Tylor cursorily acknowledges the first omission, saying only that his task was 'not to discuss Religion in all its bearings, but to portray in outline the great doctrine of Animism' (1871, 2: 326). Still, this implies that animism – the belief in Spiritual Beings – has little to do with emotions. On the second point, Tylor claims that 'the relation of morality to religion is one that only belongs in its rudiments, or not at all, to rudimentary civilization' (ibid.), and therefore excludes ethical questions from his investigation altogether. This is not to say that he has nothing to say about the religious beliefs of what he deems as the more civilized cultures. He does not, for example, shy away from extrapolating from ancestor worship to the Roman Catholic veneration of saints, or from overt polytheism to the subtler polytheism of the ostensibly monotheistic faiths; it is just that he thinks that morality is not intertwined with religion per se, even though religion can sometimes be an effective enforcer of moral norms. On the subject of ritual, Tylor finally arrives at this point in the penultimate chapter of *Primitive Culture*, just before his brief concluding remarks. Here, ritual is an expression of religious belief – 'the dramatic utterance of religious thought' (1871, 2: 328) on the one hand, and a means of communicating with and thereby influencing spiritual beings on the other. That is, 'the belief in Spiritual Beings' comes first, and rituals are secondary and supplementary.

Thus, we have Tylor's 'theory' of religion. Despite the evident breadth of his investigation, however, Tylor's theory itself is somewhat thin on detail, at least from a psychological perspective. What he provides in *Primitive Culture* is a genealogy of religious ideas, not unlike Hume's, beginning from the doctrine of souls (of humans, and then of animals, and even plants and inanimate objects) and building up to so-called monotheism through the doctrine of spirits, idolatry and polytheism. In terms of an *explanatory* or *causal* theory, Tylor offers much less. Indeed, he does not go much beyond his summary in Chapter XV, '[F]irst, that spiritual beings are modelled by man on his primary conception of his own human soul, and second, that their purpose is to explain nature on the primitive and childlike theory that it is truly and throughout "Animated Nature"'

(1871, 2: 168). No special religious faculty is invoked here, merely general principles of causal reasoning and inference or extrapolation. Why do people believe in gods? Because they encountered (and still encounter) phenomena – dreams, disease and death – for which gods are, given their state of knowledge, perfectly reasonable explanations. From there, theologies developed in accordance to people's observations and experiences: souls are likened to breath because breath ends at death; there are hierarchies of gods because there are hierarchies of people, and so forth. But why do people naturally land upon *personified causes*? For this, Tylor has no explanation, except to cite Hume approvingly, who asserts that the tendency to anthropomorphize – to project familiar human qualities to all manner of things – is a universal one.

The cognitive science of religion

The CSR shares with Tylor not only its definition of 'religion' (with some qualifications, more on which later), but also its focus on religious *thought* (hence 'cognitive'), and even its most prominent hypothesis revolving around anthropomorphism. Before we get to direct comparisons, however, some exposition of what CSR is might be helpful, starting at the beginning. E. Thomas Lawson and Robert McCauley's (1990) *Rethinking Religion: Connecting Cognition and Culture* is generally agreed to be the foundational text of the CSR, and its subtitle remains the field's clarion call. By 'cognition', CSR theorists refer to the universal features of human psychology. The assumption is that we are born, not with blank slates in our heads, but with a slew of predispositions to develop certain psychological abilities and constraints, shared by all normally functioning human beings. We are, for example, predisposed to learn language. Furthermore, while natural languages do vary widely, the possible variation is constrained by pancultural cognitive traits (e.g. Chomsky's 'Universal Grammar'; cf. Cook and Newson 2007). Our tacit assumptions are not restricted to the linguistic domain: human beings also share intuitions about causality and motion, physical and biological objects, agency and psychology (Sperber and Hirschfeld 2004; Sperber, Premack and Premack 1995). CSR builds on this view of human cognition, applying it to religious beliefs and behaviours. In their book, Lawson and McCauley first considered how these universal features of human psychology constrain the way we – that is, human beings in general – think about religious rituals. This is not to say that everybody thinks about religious rituals in exactly the same way; this is patently false. It is, however, to say that there are predictable limits to,

for example, the kinds of rituals that can exist and even the kinds of rituals that can be perceived to be efficacious. If the 'cognition' part of the formula helps to explain underlying cross-cultural similarities and recurring themes, then the 'culture' part refers to the historical and social contingencies that help to explain the rich varieties of religious belief and practice that exist around the world and across time. Furthermore, cognition and culture are not causally independent; rather, they interact, just as genetic and environmental factors interact in morphological development. Since *Rethinking Religion*, this basic explanatory strategy has been applied to other features of religious belief and practice, especially the belief in supernatural agents: gods and ghosts, souls and spirits (e.g. Atran 2002; Barrett 2004; Bering 2011; Boyer 2001; McCauley 2011; Pyysiäinen 2009, Tremlin 2006; in keeping with the convention in CSR, the term 'gods' will henceforth be used as shorthand for supernatural agents more broadly).

CSR as a neo-Tylorian project

Already, we can see potential similarities and differences between Tylor and CSR. Tylor relegates his discussion of ritual to the penultimate chapter of his magnum opus, whereas the seminal work in CSR is a book on ritual cognition. However, Lawson and McCauley also insist from the outset that 'what is unique to *religious* ritual systems is their inclusion of culturally postulated superhuman *agents*' (1990: 5). Pascal Boyer's *Religion Explained: The Evolutionary Origins of Religious Thought* echoes this sense that there is no necessary connection between the belief in supernatural agents and the participation in rituals: 'supernatural participation' in rituals is an interesting added extra (2001: 236). Like Tylor, Boyer leaves his discussion of ritual to the end of the book, most of which is preoccupied with explaining the belief in gods. This focus on the belief in supernatural agents is also clear from book-length expositions of CSR, with titles like Justin Barrett's (2004) *Why Would Anyone Believe in God?*, Scott Atran's (2002) *In Gods We Trust: The Evolutionary Landscape of Religion*, Todd Tremlin's (2006) *Minds and Gods: The Cognitive Foundations of Religion*, Ilkka Pyysiäinen's (2009) *Supernatural Agents: Why We Believe in Souls, Gods, and Buddhas*, and Jesse Bering's (2011) *The God Instinct: The Psychology of Souls, Destiny and the Meaning of Life*. In his *Modes of Religiosity: A Cognitive Theory of Religious Transmission*, Harvey Whitehouse (2004) even explicitly endorses Tylor's minimum definition. However, he and other CSR theorists are less reticent than Tylor was, to offer a definition of 'supernatural agent'. Whitehouse's

definition is representative: agents are supernatural by virtue of their ability to 'supersede … natural constraints', to overcome 'the intuitively expectable limitations of normal agents' (2004: 10–11). Thus, CSR's definition of 'supernatural agent' is decidedly *cognitive*, focusing as it does on our intuitive expectations: the term 'counterintuitive agent' is also often used interchangeably with 'supernatural agent' (e.g. Atran 2002; Barrett 2004; Boyer 2001; Jensen 2014; Pyysiäinen 2009; Whitehouse 2004). Furthermore, CSR theorists have a specific understanding of the 'counterintuitive' in mind. It is not simply that the concept is surprising, but that it violates very basic, psychologically universal (and therefore cross-culturally invariant) intuitive expectations. We shall return to this notion later on. In any case, this definition is clearly broad enough to capture the diversity of spiritual beings that Tylor describes, from souls to sprites to supreme deities.

So, CSR and Tylor are agreed on the definition of religion, notably contra Tylor's detractors – at least since Durkheim (2008) – who complain, for example, that religions like Buddhism are excluded by it. (In response, CSR theorists often point out that whereas Theravada Buddh*ism* may well be atheistic, Theravada Buddh*ists* are inveterate believers in gods. See, for example, Slone 2004). Indeed, CSR provides more detail to Tylor's minimum definition, and steers it in an overtly cognitive direction. Tylor would hardly disapprove. But what about the causal theories themselves? The difficulty with comparing Tylor's theory with CSR is twofold: first, as we have seen, Tylor does not really have a detailed causal theory so much as a genealogy of religion; second, CSR does not have a *single* theory, so much as a general approach to the scientific study of religion that comes with clusters of shared goals, theoretical commitments and methodological preferences (Barrett 2007; Visala 2011). On most of these points, CSR inherits many of Tylor's positions, albeit in an updated and more detailed form. Even methodologically – where Tylor's armchair theorizing seems so far removed from CSR's penchant for the research methods of quantitative experimental psychology – the latter inherits the former's empiricism, against the hermeneutic methods associated with the postmodern turn in the social sciences. Indeed, *Primitive Culture* consists mainly of (second-hand) observations and, as has already been mentioned, is relatively thin on theoretical speculation.

Similarly, evolutionary theorizing underpins both CSR and Tylor's work on religion in surprisingly similar ways, given the reputation of Victorian anthropologists on this point. Tylor's evolutionism has been widely criticized, with its assertion of cultural progress and its concomitantly condescending references to 'primitives' or even 'savages', whom Tylor often compares to children. This

sentiment is best captured in his memorable statement in *Anthropology: An Introduction to the Study of Man and Civilization*: 'History, so far as it reaches back, shows arts, sciences, and political institutions beginning in ruder states, and becoming in the course of ages, more intelligent, more systematic, more perfectly arranged or organized, to answer their purposes' (1881: 15). Despite this reputation, however, Tylor did not think that progress was uniform across domains. While he certainly believed that the Western world occupied the superior end of the spectrum when it came to the industrial arts and scientific knowledge, he is happy to admit that other cultures might have them beat in other domains: the modern Chinese in artisanship, the ancient Greeks in oratory, the Creek Indians in religious tolerance, and so forth. Nor did he think that the minds possessed by people in his own 'civilized' or 'cultured' or 'modern educated' Victorian English context were essentially different and superior to those of the preceding 'savage' and 'barbaric' societies. Thus, in the first chapter of *Primitive Culture*, Tylor emphatically deals with 'a problem which would complicate the argument, namely, the question of race' (1871, 1: 6), first by arguing the then uncontroversial point that primitive cultures were all rather alike before swiftly following that up by pointing out that '[e]ven when it comes to comparing barbarous hordes with civilized nations', the differences were such that all human beings should be treated as 'homogenous in nature, though placed in different grades of civilization' (see also Opler 1964; Stocking 1963; Stringer 1999a).

In its commitment to 'the psychic unity of mankind', Tylor's evolutionism and contemporary evolutionary approaches to human behaviour are cut from the same cloth. CSR assumes a nativist view of human cognition. It explicitly rejects a 'blank slate' view of human cognitive development, in which psychology is strongly determined by culture. This entails that human beings across cultures all share certain psychological predispositions. These pancultural cognitive traits are part of our evolutionary endowment, having been selected for in the course of hominid evolution. Thus, CSR is committed to an evolutionary approach to psychology, though there is still much disagreement among CSR theorists about the extent and ways in which evolutionary theorizing is relevant to CSR's proximate explanatory goals. As we shall see, the so-called *standard model* in CSR posits religion as a by-product of other evolutionary adaptations, rather than it being adaptive itself. However, there are also adaptationist and exaptationist accounts, in which various aspects of religion did confer reproductive advantages to our ancestors. These accounts come in multiple flavours, some of which focus on the evolutionary benefits of religion for the individual,

while others focus on the benefits for the group. To complicate matters, most CSR theories involve cultural evolutionary hypotheses, according to which religious ideas and practices evolve in a Darwinian fashion more or less independently of biological evolution.

The starkest difference between Tylor and CSR is perhaps that we now have an allergy against the whiggishness evident in Tylor's progressivism: when we speak of evolution, we hasten to add that there is no teleology involved, not even when it comes to cultural evolution. We would be reticent to speak, as Tylor did following Montesquieu, of savagery, barbarism and civilization; we would certainly not argue for an inexorable march from the former through to the latter. This is not to deny that cultural evolution is cumulative, but only to doubt that it is irreversible. Evolution is not irreversible simply because selection pressures vary with context. What counts as *fitness* is not fixed: in some situations, it is better to have gills, and in others it is better to have lungs. So it is with cultural evolution. In contrast, while Tylor was certainly a Darwinian of sorts (as Opler 1964 has ably shown; but see Stocking 1965), he seemed to assume that cultural selection pressures generally – with occasional perturbations – moved in one direction, towards 'higher knowledge' and 'better life' (1881: 372). Tylor also assumed that the fitness of a belief or practice was tied closely either to some benefit for the believer or practitioner or even to some objective criterion (e.g. truth). This assumption is no longer widely held by evolutionary theorists. On a gene-centric conception of biological evolution, what matters is what is good for the propagation of our genes, not what is good for us per se. Similarly, in the case of cultural evolution, the beliefs and practices that are efficiently and effectively transmitted might not be those that benefit us either individually or collectively. Finally, whereas Tylor's Darwinism lies in the background of his work on religion – he rarely explicitly speculates about the selection pressures that worked in the evolutionary history of some belief or practice – CSR theorists are often overtly interested in specific evolutionary hypotheses, and the debates over whether or not religion is a biological evolutionary adaptation are very salient.

This brings us finally to Tylor's and CSR's goals vis-à-vis causal explanation. CSR aims to elucidate the cognitive processes at play in religion: that is, its goal is to provide a causal account of various aspects of religion in psychological terms. In contrast, as we have already seen, Tylor has little to say about psychological processes. However, this is not because he is uninterested in psychological questions. After all, the story he tells about the cultural evolution of religion – from souls to supreme deities – involves processes of causal attribution, anthropomorphism, inference and generalization. The 'ancient savage philosopher'

(1871, 1: 387) posited causes to explain her dreams and the difference between living bodies and dead corpses; furthermore, she posited *agentic* causes, even personified causes; from there, over the generations, people made inferences about what these causes were like, and generalized the notion of spiritual causation from human life to all of nature. This story is all about the human mind at work, though Tylor never spells out the cognitive mechanisms involved in these doctrinal developments. Perhaps it is asking too much, to expect Tylor to have speculated about cognitive mechanisms. After all, cognitive psychology was, at the time, as nascent a field as anthropology. Tylor, arguably the founding father of the latter, was born in the same year as Wilhelm Wundt, arguably the founding father of the former. Nevertheless, echoes of Tylor's general approach – an intellectualist account, with a focus on the widespread preference for personified explanations – can still be found in CSR. In this final section, we now turn to the dominant explanatory theory in CSR, to detect these Tylorian echoes.

The standard model of the cognitive science of religion

Having denied that CSR has a single theory, it is nevertheless the case that there may be said to be a 'standard model', accepted by most CSR researchers, even if not as an object of belief, then as source of testable hypotheses or even as foil to be falsified. Taken and abstracted from the work of key theorists including Pascal Boyer (1994, 2001), Justin Barrett (2004), Scott Atran (2002), Robert McCauley (2011), and others, the standard model provides a causal narrative for the psychological and cultural origins of religious belief – that is, belief in supernatural agents – that is empirically tractable and amenable to updating with incoming evidence. The model begins with two basic psychological traits: *hypersensitive agency detection* and *theory of mind*. Agency detection refers to our ability to efficiently distinguish between agents (e.g. conspecifics, prey, predators) and nonagents (e.g. plants, rocks, artefacts) in our physical environment; this ability is necessary for survival, not just for humans, but for other animals too. According to the standard model, human beings – and perhaps other animals – have a *hypersensitive* tendency to detect agents: we are biased to making false positives in our detection of agency in the environment. This too is advantageous: as Guthrie puts it, 'it is better for a hiker to mistake a boulder for a bear than to mistake a bear for a boulder' (1993: 6). And so it was for our phylogenetic ancestors: the former error might entail a loss of energy if it causes us to run needlessly, but the latter error is potentially fatal, which significantly curtails our

reproductive potential. Thus, a tendency to overdetect agency is more likely to have evolved than a tendency to underdetect agency. Theory of mind refers to a related ability, this time to make inferences about others' mental states. The ability to reason about others' beliefs and desires is of great social value, enabling cooperation and trade, courtship and mating. Indeed, deficits in theory of mind – as seen, for example, in autism – can be dysfunctional and maladaptive (Baron-Cohen, Leslie and Frith 1985). Like our tendency to detect agents, our tendency to attribute mental states is also hypersensitive: again, this is advantageous, because it is often necessary for us to infer mental states from very subtle behavioural data. We rely on facial cues and body postures, for example, not least because people do not reliably tell us how they feel or what they are thinking. As a consequence of this hypersensitivity, we attribute mental states – intentionality in particular – to diverse objects, including nonhuman animals and inanimate objects like personal computers and vending machines. Together, our tendencies to (over)detect agents and (over)attribute mental states form the primary building blocks of religious belief. Gods are, after all, perceptually ambiguous intentional agents: they are among the agents we (over)detect in the world, to whom we (over)attribute rich mental states. As hidden agents, gods can conveniently serve as means to explain otherwise unexplained phenomena. Furthermore, this tendency to (over)attribute mental states also contributes to our reluctance to treat dead animals and humans are mere objects, as well as our inability to comprehend death itself. On the latter point, cross-cultural studies on children and adults have shown that we find it much easier to deny the dead psychobiological and perceptual states like hunger and vision than to deny them richer psychological states like desire and knowledge (Bering 2011).

Gods are not merely perceptually ambiguous intentional agents. They are also memorable and useful. Were it not so, gods would not be culturally successful; stories about them would not spread. The standard model therefore posits various factors that promote the cultural transmission of gods. The first of these pertains to memorability. According to the standard model, gods are *counterintuitive* or *counterontological* agent concepts: that is, they violate our basic intuitive expectations. Recall that CSR assumes cognitive nativism. One aspect of this is the view that we share tacit assumptions about different domains of things: we share 'naïve' (i.e. intuitive) physics, biology and psychology, for example, as part of our evolutionary endowment. We just *know*, for example, that two physical objects cannot occupy the same space: experiments have shown that even 3.5 year old infants make such tacit assumptions (Baillargeon 1987). We also know that people have perceptual limitations: they cannot always see what we can see, for example, if

they are looking elsewhere. Our theory of mind leads us to automatically perform visual perspective taking, and make inferences about others' perceptual and cognitive states. But these assumptions and inferences can sometimes be violated. Magic tricks, for example, are all about violating our intuitive expectations, generally about physical properties. Experiments in child developmental psychology similarly exploit our intuitive expectations and gauge our responses to expectation violations. According to the CSR standard model, experiences and ideas that violate our intuitive expectations enjoy a mnemonic advantage (cf. Purzycki and Willard 2015): we are more likely to remember them than more mundane events, and are therefore more likely to tell others about them. Furthermore, according to CSR, gods – or, at least culturally successful gods – are counterintuitive or counterontological. For example, one extremely widespread idea is that of spiritual beings that often behave like physical objects (e.g. they might walk on the ground, which requires physical contact with the ground, or produce sounds, which requires the physical movement of air), but are also able to do impossible things like pass through walls or even possess animal and human bodies. Similarly, gods also often violate our intuitive assumptions about agents' perceptual and cognitive limitations: they can see and know more than normal agents can. This, in turn, enables them to play a role in policing social and moral norms.

Finally, the standard model includes functionalist explanations for religious belief, though it is uncommitted to any particular functionalist view. Two hypotheses have already been alluded to. First, as perceptually ambiguous intentional agents, gods can play the role of hidden causes, and help to fulfil needs to explain, predict, or control events. Indeed, there is increasing evidence that, from an early age, human beings are cognitively biased toward intentional and functional explanations of natural things and life events: even before exposure to explicitly religious ideas, children believe that the rain is *for* growing crops and the rocks are *for* animals to rest on (Kelemen 2004; Rottman et al. 2017), while even atheists struggle to deny that significant life events happened *for a reason* (Heywood and Bering 2014; see also Järnefelt, Canfield and Kelemen 2015). None of this evidence guarantees that there is an inherently (or even culturally variable) human curiosity that requires satisfaction, or a need to understand phenomena for the sake of controlling them. However, this evidence can contribute to cumulative argument for such theories. In any case, gods provide convenient sources of intentionality in the world, and are thus able to fulfil any such explanatory goals. Second, as agents with special access to knowledge, gods can play the role of moral police. This role is not as ubiquitous

as the first, as not all gods are believed to have special access to information (Norenzayan 2013). However, gods' special access to knowledge and their moral concerns do tend to co-occur (Purzycki et al. 2012). Gods might also help to allay our existential concerns, including fears about our lack of control in the world (Kay, Gaucher, McGregor and Nash 2010), fears about loneliness and social ostracism (Aydin, Fischer and Frey 2010; Epley, Akalis, Waytz and Cacciopo 2008), and fears about death (Jong, Halberstadt and Bluemke 2012; Vail et al. 2010). Now, not only is CSR uncommitted to any particular functionalist view, but it is also uncommitted to the general view that there are universal human psychological needs that the belief in gods can fulfil. That is, the fear of death or the need for explanation may or may not be cross-culturally invariant. Furthermore, the role of religion in fulfilling any of these needs is not necessarily invariant either: they might depend on the particularities of the religious beliefs that are culturally available in any given context. However, given what gods are like at the most basic level – perceptually ambiguous intentional agents – they are potentially able to solve a wide variety of social and psychological problems in contextually sensitive ways. Here again, we see basic cognition and cultural contingency interacting.

Thus, the standard model consists of a biological evolutionary by-product account on one hand, and a cultural evolutionary adaptationist account on the other. However, acceptance of the standard model's account of how religious ideas arose in the first place does not preclude theorizing that they also conferred reproductive advantages to our ancestors. Indeed, many CSR theorists propose that while the emergence of religious ideas might be a by-product of other evolved cognitive abilities and tendencies, religious *commitments* were selected for by virtue of the various advantages they offered. Various proposals have been made about the adaptive functions of religious beliefs, including the role of morally policing gods ('supernatural watchers') in reducing potentially reputation damaging behaviour (Bering, 2011; Johnson and Bering 2006) and increasing social solidarity (Wilson 2002), and the role of afterlife beliefs in mitigating crippling existential anxiety (Greenberg, Landau, Solomon and Pyszczynski forthcoming; Vail et al. 2010). Religious rituals have also been speculated to have conferred evolutionary advantages by promoting cooperation within groups (Sosis and Alcorta 2003), and even by providing analgesic and other health-related benefits via placebo healing (Bulbulia 2006; Rossano 2010). The general thesis here is that individuals or groups in our phylogenetic past who were religiously committed enjoyed various benefits that translated into reproductive advantages. Given that religiosity is heritable, these reproductive

advantages led, over generations, to an increase in religiosity in the population, such that it is now endemic throughout the species.

Tylor begins his account with two intellectual puzzles to be solved by our ancestors – death and dreams – and asserts that the most obvious solution to these puzzles, to them, involved personified causes. CSR's standard model flips this order on its head. It begins with an account of why it should be, evolutionarily speaking, that we tend to detect persons – intentional agents – where there may be none. Only then, when perceptually ambiguous intentional agents are already in mind, can they be plausible candidates for solving such puzzles as the ones Tylor proposes. The standard model is not, strictly speaking, an intellectualist theory, but the notion that gods serve as causal explanations can hardly be said to be foreign to it; it comes at least in the work on teleofunctional biases. However, CSR theorists would argue that the desire to solve puzzles – to answer questions about death, or incidents in human life, or natural phenomena – stems out of affect-laden concerns, and not just basic curiosity. Human beings construe events as fortunes and misfortunes, and need to understand them, not least to try to control them or feel that they can. Furthermore, there are, in CSR, many more potential social and psychological functions for gods to play, such as the mitigation of existential anxieties and the formation of social bonds.

Reading Tylor in the twenty-first-century laboratory

Scientists are not known for their penchant for consulting Victorian scholarship. We can barely keep up with our contemporaries, let alone dead, white, English dons, whose views have long gone out of fashion or been empirically falsified. And yet, there are classics in every field, to which it is worth returning, time and time again. It is worth revisiting them, not because their answers were right, but because their questions were interesting, and we could do much worse than attempt to provide fresh answers with new methods. Or, it is worth revisiting them, not because they were accurate in detail, but because their broad strokes were realistic, and we could do much worse than spend our efforts filling them in. A hundred years after his death – 146 years after *Primitive Culture* was first published – we still do not know much about the role dreams and other atypical states of consciousness plays in the development and evolution of religion. We still do not know much about the historical and cultural processes that get us from basic animism and

polytheism to moral monotheism, or about why this only happened in some cultures and not others. Tylor's work is not just a treasure trove of hypotheses to be tested, but also a rich tapestry of ethnographic data. These data are, admittedly second hand and often haphazardly and unreliably collected, but nevertheless serve as an important reminder for those of us who work in laboratories that our findings are, in the final analysis, answerable to the world outside the laboratory, in mosques and temples, churches and gurdwaras. There is no need to fetishize our intellectual ancestors, nor to worship them, nor to venerate them; but the best among them – and Tylor surely counts in these ranks – still speak wisely from the dead.

Notes

1 For convenience, all references to *Primitive Culture* are from the first edition, published in 1871.
2 The phrase 'personified causes' first appears in *Primitive Culture* in its second edition, published in 1873.

4

From Nineteenth- to Twentieth-Century Theorizing about Myth in Britain and Germany: Tylor versus Blumenberg

Robert A. Segal

This chapter contrasts Tylor's view on myth to that of the German philosopher Hans Blumenberg. Tylor's characterization of myth epitomizes the nineteenth-century position that myth is the 'primitive' counterpart to science, which is assumed to be distinctively modern. Blumenberg's characterization of myth epitomizes the twentieth-century position that the modern is not merely primitive but universal, and that myth is not at odds with science.

The study of myth across the disciplines is united by the questions asked. The three main questions are those of origin, function and subject matter. 'Origin' means why and how myth arises. 'Function' means why and how myth persists. The answer to the why of origin and function is usually a need, which myth arises to fulfil and lasts by continuing to fulfil. What the need is, varies from theory to theory. 'Subject matter' means the referent of myth. Some theories read myth literally, so that the referent is the straightforward, apparent one, such as gods. Other theories read myth symbolically, and the symbolized referent can be anything.

Theories differ not only in their answers to these questions but also in the questions they ask. Some theories, and perhaps some disciplines, concentrate on the origin of myth; others, on the function; still others, on the subject matter. Only a few theories attend to all three questions, and some of the theories that focus on origin or function deal only with either 'why' or 'how' but not both.

It is commonly said that theories of the nineteenth century focused on the question of origin and that theories of the twentieth century have focused on the questions of function and subject matter. But this characterization confuses *historical* origin with *recurrent* one. Theories that profess to provide the origin

of myth do not claim to know where and when myth first arose. Rather, they claim to know why and how myth arises, wherever and whenever it does. The issue of recurrent origin has been as popular with twentieth-century theories as with nineteenth-century ones, and interest in function and subject matter was as common to nineteenth-century theories as to twentieth-century ones.

There is one genuine difference between nineteenth- and twentieth-century theories. Nineteenth-century theories tended to see the subject matter of myth as the natural world and to see the origin and function of myth as the provision of either a literal explanation or a symbolic description of that world. Myth was typically taken to be the 'primitive' counterpart to science, which was assumed to be wholly modern. It was recognized that the beginnings of science went back to ancient times, but science as the commonplace explanation of the world was considered to be only a few centuries old. Nineteenth-century theories assumed that science rendered myth not merely superfluous but also impossible. Moderns, who by definition were scientific, therefore had to reject myth. By contrast, twentieth-century theories tended to see myth as almost anything but an outdated counterpart to modern science, either in subject matter or in origin and function. Consequently, moderns could retain myth alongside science. For some twentieth-century theories, myth was not merely still possible for moderns but outright indispensable.

Twentieth-century theories spurned nineteenth-century ones on many grounds: for pitting myth against science and thereby precluding modern myths, for subsuming myth under religion and thereby precluding secular myths, for deeming the function of myth to be intellectual, for deeming myth to be false, and for reading myth literally. Above all, twentieth-century theories rejected nineteenth-century ones on the grounds that myths, far from dying out, were still 'around'. If myth was incompatible with science, how did myth survive – and survive not merely as a relic, which is what a 'survival' meant in the nineteenth century, but as a living phenomenon? How did myth survive not *in place of* science – the way the Bible is for creationists – but *alongside* science? Surely, the survival of living myth meant that whatever myth was, it was other than a literal explanation of the physical world.

Nineteenth-century theorists were not without a defence. They maintained that those who retained myth in the wake of science either did not recognize or did not accept the incompatibility of myth with science. But their arguments scarcely persuaded twentieth-century theorists. Who, it was asked, did not recognize the incompatibility of attributing lightning to Zeus's thrusting a bolt with attributing lightning to meteorological processes? If moderns still did not accept

the incompatibility of myth with science, why not consider the reason to be that for them myth was doing something different from what science did? In that event, nineteenth-century theories had got myth wrong.

The divide between nineteenth- and twentieth-century theories was not over whether primitive peoples have myth. That they do, was taken for granted by both sides. The divide was over whether moderns, who for both sides have science, can also have myth. Twentieth-century theorists argued that they can and do and even must. At the same time the divide between nineteenth- and twentieth-century theories was not over whether myth must be compatible with science. The authority of science was taken for granted by both sides. The twentieth-century approach was not to challenge science but to re-characterize myth. Only with the emergence of postmodernism has the deference to science, assumed by both sides, been questioned.

As uncompromisingly as twentieth-century theories reject nineteenth-century ones, twentieth-century theories can best be seen as responses to nineteenth-century ones. There were three main responses. One response was to take the function of myth as other than explanatory, in which case myth diverges from science and can therefore coexist with it. Another response was to read myth other than literally, in which case myth does not even refer to the physical world and can therefore likewise coexist with science. The most radical response was to alter both the explanatory function and the literal reading of myth.

This difference among theories of myth cuts across national boundaries. It is therefore to be found in both Britain and Germany, as well as elsewhere in Europe and in North America. To illustrate the difference between the nineteenth-century view of myth and the twentieth-century one, I could, then, choose one Briton and one German from each period. There are many theorists I could choose. In the case of Britain, I could choose the Scot James George Frazer, the first edition of whose opus, *The Golden Bough*, appeared in 1890. But as my exemplar, I will choose the Englishman E. B. (Edward Burnett) Tylor, the first edition of whose key work, *Primitive Culture: Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Art, and Custom*, appeared in 1871. In the case of Germany, I could choose from the group known as the nature mythologists, who, while not confined to Germany, were especially prominent there. The most eminent were Adalbert Kuhn and F. Max Müller, the latter, to be sure, spent most of his career at Oxford.

The list of possible twentieth-century theorists from both countries is longer. For example, I could choose any of the following Brits: Jane Harrison, F. M. Cornford and S. H. Hooke. I could also choose non-British theorists who wrote

in English: the Australian Gilbert Murray, the Americans Kenneth Burke and Joseph Campbell, or the Polish Bronislaw Malinowski. Similarly, I could choose any of the following Germans: Ernst Cassirer, Rudolf Bultmann, Hans Jonas, Walter Burkert or Hans Blumenberg. And of course, I could choose non-German theorists who wrote in German – above all, the Austrian Sigmund Freud and the Swiss C. G. Jung.

Admittedly, the chronological divide between these camps is not rigid. Nineteenth-century views are to be found in the twentieth century – for example, in the English anthropologist Robin Horton, who is even labelled a 'neo-Tylorian,' or in the American anthropologist David Bidney (1955; 1967, ch.10), who could likewise be called a neo-Tylorian. The view that primitive myth is not the parallel to modern science but is itself scientific is to be found most grandly in the French structuralist Claude Lévi-Strauss (1966; 1970 [1969]). And the classic expression of the view that ancient myths record sophisticated scientific observations is the 1969 *Hamlet's Mill*, written by the Italian historian of science Giorgio de Santillana and the Dutch historian of science Hertha von Dechend. Conversely, the nineteenth-century Nietzsche psychologizes myth as fully as Freud and Jung. Still, the chronological division, even if only of degree, remains.

Because the deepest divide among modern theorists is for me chronological rather than geographical, I will choose only one theorist to evince it: Tylor for the nineteenth century and Blumenberg for the twentieth century.

Tylor

Tylor subsumes myth under religion and in turn subsumes both religion and science under philosophy. He divides philosophy into 'primitive' and 'modern.' Primitive philosophy is identical with primitive religion. There is no primitive science. Modern philosophy, by contrast, has two subdivisions: religion and science. Of the two, science is by far the more important and is the modern counterpart to primitive religion. Modern religion is composed of two elements – metaphysics and ethics – neither of which is present in primitive religion. Metaphysics deals with nonphysical entities, of which primitive peoples have no conception. Ethics is not absent from primitive culture, but it falls outside primitive religion: 'the conjunction of ethics and Animistic philosophy, so intimate and powerful in the higher culture, seems scarcely yet to have begun in the lower' (Tylor 1871, 2: 11). Tylor uses the term 'animism' for religion per se, modern and primitive alike, because he derives the belief in gods from the

belief in souls (*anima* in Latin means soul). In primitive religion, souls occupy all physical entities, beginning with the bodies of humans. Gods are the souls in all physical entities *except* humans, who are not themselves gods.

Primitive religion is the primitive counterpart to science because both are explanations of the physical world. Tylor thus characterizes primitive religion as 'savage biology' (1871, 2: 20) and maintains that 'mechanical astronomy gradually superseded the animistic astronomy of the lower races' and that today 'biological pathology gradually supersedes animistic pathology' (1871, 2: 229). The religious explanation is personalistic: the decisions of gods explain events. The scientific explanation is impersonal: mechanical laws explain events. The natural sciences as a whole have replaced religion as the explanation of the physical world, so that 'animistic astronomy' and 'animistic pathology' refer only to primitive, not modern, animism. Modern religion has surrendered the physical world to science and has retreated to the immaterial world, especially to the realm of life after death – that is, of the life of the soul after the death of the body. Where in primitive religion, souls are deemed to be material, in modern religion they are deemed as immaterial and are limited to human beings:

> In our own day and country, the notion of souls of beasts is to be seen dying out. Animism, indeed, seems to be drawing in its outposts, and concentrating itself on its first and main position, the doctrine of the human soul … The soul has given up its ethereal substance, and become an immaterial entity, 'the shadow of a shade'. Its theory is becoming separated from the investigations of biology and mental science, which now discuss the phenomena of life and thought, the senses and the intellect, the emotions and the will, on a ground-work of pure experience. There has arisen an intellectual product whose very existence is of the deepest significance, a 'psychology' which has no longer anything to do with 'soul'. The soul's place in modern thought is in the metaphysics of religion, and its especial office there is that of furnishing an intellectual side to the religious doctrine of the future. (Tylor 1871, 2: 85)

Similarly, where in primitive religion gods are deemed as material, in modern religion they are deemed as immaterial. Gods thereby cease to be agents in the physical world – Tylor assumes that physical effects must have physical causes – and religion ceases to be an explanation of the physical world.

Gods are relocated from the physical world to the social world. They become models for humans, just as they would be for Plato. One now reads the Bible, for not for the story of creation but for the Ten Commandments, just as for Plato a bowdlerized Homer would enable one to do. Jesus is to be emulated as the ideal human, not as a miracle worker.

This irenic position is also like that of the late evolutionary biologist Stephen Jay Gould, for whom science, above all evolution, is compatible with religion because the two never intersect. Science explains the physical world; religion prescribes ethics and gives meaning to life: 'Science tries to document the factual character of the natural world, and to develop theories that coordinate and explain these facts. Religion, on the other hand, operates in the equally important, but utterly different, realm of human purposes, meanings, and values' (Gould 2002 [1999]: 4). But where for Gould, religion has *always* served a function different from that of science, for Tylor, religion has been forced to retrain upon having been made compulsorily redundant by science. And its present function is a demotion. Tylor is closer to biologist Richard Dawkins, though Dawkins, unlike Tylor, is unprepared to grant religion even a lesser function in the wake of science.

For Tylor, the demise of religion as an explanation of the physical world has meant the demise of myth altogether, which for him is thus confined to primitive religion. Even though myth is an elaboration on the belief in gods, the belief itself can survive the rise of science where somehow myth cannot. Apparently, myths are too closely tied to gods as agents in the world to permit any comparable transformation from physics to metaphysics. Where, then, there is 'modern religion', albeit religion shorn of its key role as explanation, there are no modern myths. The term 'modern myth' is an oxymoron.

For Tylor, science makes myth not merely superfluous but incompatible. Why? Because the explanations the two give are incompatible. It is not simply that the mythic explanation is personalistic and the scientific one impersonal. It is that both are *direct* explanations and of the *same* events. Gods operate, not behind or through impersonal forces but in place of them. According to myth, the rain god, let us say, collects rain in buckets and then chooses to empty the buckets on some spot below. According to science, meteorological processes cause rain. One cannot stack the mythic account atop the scientific one, for the rain god, rather than utilizing meteorological processes, acts in place of them. Tylor thus notes the gradual displacement of the direct causes of religion, or 'animism,' by the equally direct ones of science: 'But just as mechanical astronomy gradually superseded the animistic astronomy of the lower races, so biological pathology gradually supersedes animistic pathology, the *immediate* operation of personal spiritual beings in both cases giving place to the operation of natural processes' (1871, 2: 229 [italics added]).

Strictly, causation in myth is never entirely personalistic. The decision of the rain god to dump rain on a chosen spot below presupposes physical laws that

account for the accumulation of rain in heaven, the capacity of the buckets to retain the rain, and the direction of the dumped rain. But to maintain his rigid hiatus between myth and science, Tylor would doubtless note that myths themselves ignore physical processes and focus instead on divine decisions.

Yet, even if myth and science are incompatible for Tylor, why is myth unscientific? The answer must be that personal causes are unscientific. But why? Tylor never answers this. Among the possible reasons: that personal causes are mental – the decisions of divine agents – whereas impersonal causes are material; that personal causes are neither predictable nor testable, whereas impersonal ones are both predictable and testable; that personal causes are particularistic, whereas impersonal ones are generalized; and that personal causes are final, or teleological, whereas impersonal ones are efficient. But none of these reasons in fact differentiates personal from impersonal causes, so that it is not easy to see how Tylor could defend his conviction that myth is unscientific.

Because Tylor never questions this assumption, he takes for granted not merely that primitive peoples have only myth but, even more, that moderns have only science. Not coincidentally, he refers to the 'myth-making stage' of culture. Rather than an eternal phenomenon, as such twentieth-century theorists as Mircea Eliade, Jung and Campbell grandly proclaim, myth for Tylor is merely a passing, if slowly passing, one. Myth has admirably served its function, but its time is over. While Tylor does not date the beginning of the scientific stage, it is identical with the beginning of modernity and is therefore only a few centuries old. Dying in 1917, Tylor never quite envisioned a stage post the modern one.

One reason Tylor pits myth against science is that he subsumes myth under religion. For him, there is no myth outside religion, even though modern religion is without myth. Because primitive religion is the counterpart to science, myth must be as well. Because religion is to be taken literally, so too must myth.

Another reason Tylor pits myth against science is that he reads myth literally. He opposes those who read myth symbolically, poetically or metaphorically – for him, interchangeable terms. He opposes the 'moral allegorizers', for whom the myth of Helius's daily driving his chariot across the sky is a way of instilling self-discipline. Likewise, he opposes the 'euhemerists', for whom the myth is simply a colourful way of describing the exploits of some local or national hero. For Tylor, the myth is an explanation of why the sun rises and sets, and the explanatory function *requires* a literal reading. To read myth nonliterally is automatically to cede any explanatory function, and to cede the explanatory function is automatically to trivialize myth. Tylor thus writes that 'the basis on which such [mythic] ideas as these are built is not to be narrowed down to poetic fancy and

transformed metaphor. They rest upon a broad philosophy of nature, early and crude indeed, but thoughtful, consistent, and quite really and seriously meant' (1871, 1: 285). Myth makers are like modern scientists, not poets, and myth should be read as prose, not poetry (see 1871, 1: 292).

For both the allegorizers and the euhemerists, myth is not the primitive counterpart to science because, read symbolically, it is about human beings rather than about gods or the world. For the allegorizers, myth is also unlike science because, read symbolically, it functions to prescribe how humans ought to behave rather than to explain how they do behave. For the euhemerists, too, myth is also unlike science because it functions to describe, rather than to explain, heroic deeds. As interpretations of myth, moral allegory and euhemerism alike go back to antiquity, but Tylor sees contemporaneous exponents of both as motivated by a desire to preserve myth in the face of the distinctively modern challenge of science. In taking the subject matter of myth to be other than the world, and in taking the function of myth to be other than explanatory, both moral allegory and euhemerism are akin to twentieth-century theories.

Opposite to Tylor stands Müller (1869 [1856]). Where for Tylor moderns misread myth by taking it symbolically, for Müller ancients themselves eventually came to misread their own myths, or mythical data, by gradually taking them literally. Originally symbolic descriptions of natural processes came to be read as literal descriptions of the attributes of gods. For example, the sea described poetically as 'raging' was eventually taken as the characteristic of the personality responsible for the sea, and a myth was then invented to account for this characteristic. Mythology for Müller stems from the absence in ancient languages of a neuter gender. Speakers therefore had to refer to impersonal entities in the male or female gender, misleading later generations into taking the referent to be a person rather than a thing. But Müller is still the German counterpart to Tylor because, for Müller as much as for Tylor, myth is about the external world.

Since Tylor denies the reality of the gods, he himself might seem to be taking them as mere personifications of natural phenomena and thereby be taking myth nonliterally. But he is not. Unlike both the euhemerists and the moral allegorizers, he assumes that primitive peoples themselves take the gods literally. Also unlike his antagonists, so does he. He breaks with primitive peoples in taking the gods as real only in intent, not also in fact.

Gods for Tylor are the purported causes of events in the physical world. Myths do not merely describe events but explain them. The ultimate subject matter of myth for Tylor is not events themselves, as it is for most nature mythologists and as it is at time for Frazer, but the causes of those events. As mere descriptions of

events, myths would be unnecessary. Ever observant, primitive peoples for Tylor notice events on their own. They invent myths to account for their observations, not to record them. For Tylor, gods originate out of the personification of nature; but once conjured up, they are more than mere personifications. They are the causes – the professed literal causes – of the origin and operation of the world.

Tylor's most telling argument for a literal reading of myth is the otherwise inexplicable beliefs of primitive peoples. Only persons who took myth literally would think the way they do:

> When the Aleutians thought that if anyone gave offence to the moon, he [i.e., moon] would fling down stones on the offender and kill him, or when the moon came down to an Indian squaw, appearing in the form of a beautiful woman with a child in her arms, and demanding an offering of tobacco and fur robes, what conceptions of personal life could be more distinct [i.e., real] than these? (1871, 1, 289–90)

While for Tylor, taking the gods literally does not entail taking them as real, taking them as real does presuppose taking them literally.

For Tylor, myth stems from innate intellectual curiosity, which is as strong in primitive peoples as in moderns: 'Man's craving to know the causes at work in each event he witnesses, the reasons why each state of things he surveys is such as it is and no other, is no product of high civilization, but a characteristic of his race down to its lowest stages' (1871, 1: 368–69). More than idle curiosity, the quest for knowledge among even primitive peoples 'is already an intellectual appetite whose satisfaction claims many of the moments not engrossed by war or sport, food or sleep' (1871, 1: 369).

For Tylor, the postulation of first souls and then gods is a rational inference from the data: '[T]he primitive animistic doctrine is thoroughly at home among savages, who appear to hold it on the very evidence of their senses, interpreted on the biological principle which seems to them most reasonable' (1871, 2: 83–84; see also, for example, 29–31, 62, 194). We moderns consider even more madcap the postulation of souls and gods in inanimate objects like 'stocks and stones, weapons, boats, food, clothes, ornaments, and other objects', for to us these objects 'are not merely soulless but [underlying it] lifeless' (1871, 2: 61). But 'if we place ourselves by an effort in the intellectual position of an uncultured tribe, and examine the theory of object-souls from their point of view, we shall hardly pronounce it irrational' (1871, 2: 61). A stone over which one trips can seem to have placed itself there. Plants as well as animals do seem to be exercising their wills in their varying responses to human effort.

Once primitive peoples hypothesize souls and gods as the causes of natural events, they *experience*, not just *explain*, the world as filled with souls and gods:

> They [primitives] could see the flame licking its yet undevoured prey with tongues of fire, or the serpent gliding along the waving sword from hilt to point; they could feel a live creature gnawing within their bodies in the pangs of hunger; they heard the voices of the hill-dwarfs answering in the echo, and the chariot of the Heaven-god rattling in thunder over the solid firmament. (Tylor 1871, 1, 297)

But unlike such theorists as Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, Cassirer and Henri Frankfort, for all of whom primitive religion shapes experience from the outset, Tylor maintains that primitive peoples initially experience the world no differently from moderns. Primitive peoples see and hear what moderns do. They merely trust their eyes and ears and on the basis of them reason out, not assume or project, the existence of souls and gods. Primitive peoples may be uncritical, but they are not illogical. Like moderns, they work scrupulously inductively – from observations to inferences to generalizations. Tylor thus preserves the parallel between primitive religion and modern science, or his conception of modern science.

As much as Tylor stresses the role of reason in myth and religion, he accords a place to imagination, at least in myth. Like the rest of religion, myth functions to explain the world. But, unlike the rest of religion, myth does so in the form of stories, which are in part the product of imagination.

It is imagination that transforms the rational belief in Helius as the sun god into the fantastic story of Helius's daily driving a chariot across the sky. Undeniably, Tylor vigorously decries the view that myth stems from *unrestrained* imagination:

> Among those opinions which are produced by a little knowledge, to be dispelled by a little more, is the belief in an almost boundless creative power of the human imagination. The superficial student, mazed in a crowd of seemingly wild and lawless fancies, which he thinks to have no reason in nature nor pattern in this material world, at first concludes them to be new births from the imagination of the poet, the tale-teller, and the seer. (1871, 1: 273)

Tylor even maintains that both the euhemerists and the moral allegorizers fail to take myth seriously *because* they attribute it to unbridled imagination, which he equates with 'poetic fancy' (see, for example, 1871, 1: 285, 289–90). For Tylor,

to attribute myth to imagination is invariably to make its subject other than the physical world and is thereby to make its function other than explanatory.

Still, Tylor accords a commodious place to *restrained* imagination – imagination restrained by reason. The comparative approach, which he takes for granted neither the euhemerists nor the moral allegorizers employ (see 1871, 1: 280–82), 'makes it possible to trace in mythology the operation of imaginative processes recurring with the evident regularity of mental law' (1871, 1: 282; see also I: 274–75). Tylor assumes that untethered imagination would never yield the patterns he finds in myths, so that regularities constitute ipso facto evidence of the subordination of imagination to reason. The stories may be fantastic, but they are fantastic in uniform ways. Tylor asks rhetorically: 'What would be popularly thought more indefinite and uncontrolled than the products of the imagination in myths and fables?' (1871, 1: 18). Here he anticipates Lévi-Strauss. For both, the demonstration of uniformity in myth, the seemingly least orderly of artefacts, proves that not only it but also its primitive creators are rational (see Lévi-Strauss 1955: 430; 1970 [1969]: 10). For both Tylor and Lévi-Strauss as well, the rational function of myth must be science-like.

Tylor's subordination of imagination to reason is symptomatic of the central limitation of his overall theory of myth: his overemphasis on myth as akin to science and his underemphasis on it as akin to literature. Myth for him is a science-like hypothesis that merely happens to take the form of a narrative. Like Lévi-Strauss, he downplays the format in order to uphold the content. He assumes that myth, like the rest of religion, is an explanation of the physical world, is taken seriously only when it is taken as an explanation of the physical world, and is taken as an explanation of the physical world only when the form is taken as merely a colourful way of presenting the content. Form and content are separable, and content alone counts. To treat the form as anything more than that is to reduce a set of truth-claims about the world to fiction.

Tylor's attempt at minimizing both narrative and imagination fails. First, he simply cannot confine the subject of myth to the physical world or even the human one. He cannot disregard the divine world. Even if gods are postulated in order to explain the physical world, surely they become of interest in their own right, if only for their power over the physical world. Surely the intellectual inquisitiveness that Tylor is so zealous to credit to primitive peoples would not abate with the postulation of gods as the causes of events in the world. Exactly insofar as myths for Tylor are narratives about gods, surely there is interest in gods in themselves. The Hebrew Bible may present God only in relation to

humans and the world, but Homer and Hesiod, for example, also depict the gods among themselves. Certainly in science the microscopic world, even if initially postulated to account for the macroscopic world, becomes of interest in itself.

Second, descriptions of the divine world are surely the work of the imagination. Gods may be postulated as an analogy to human beings, but they are more than human beings. Whatever qualities make gods gods and make heaven heaven, are surely the product of imagination. Far from constricting the exercise of imagination, the belief in gods spurs it.

Third, the content of myth does not readily evince 'the operation of imaginative processes recurring with the evident regularity of mental law' (Tylor 1871, 1: 282). Strikingly, Tylor barely discusses the content of myth – beyond stipulating that myth presents a divine explanation of natural phenomena. What form that explanation takes, he never says. Unlike some other theorists such as Frazer, he provides no common pattern for myths. The sole myths for which he provides any regularity are hero myths, in which, according to him, the subjects are exposed at birth, are saved, and grow up to become national heroes (see Tylor 1871, 1: 281–82). But his pattern is neither universal nor detailed. And hero myths for Tylor are an anomaly within his characterization of myths as explanations of physical events. He offers no comparable pattern for creation myths, flood myths or myths of recurrent natural processes.

In the light of postmodernism, Tylor's approach doubtless seems not simply one-sided but hopelessly out of date. Where postmodernists would view myth as a mere story and not an explanation, Tylor views myth as an explanation and only incidentally a story. What is needed is not the replacement of myth as explanation by myth as story but instead the integration of the two: the working out of how form and content, story and explanation, operate together.

Blumenberg

In *Work on Myth* (1985), Hans Blumenberg attacks two leading modern views of myth: that of the Enlightenment and that of Romanticism. Tylor, though cited only once (see Blumenberg 1985: 151), and Campbell, though never cited, are standard exemplars of each view.

Blumenberg sums up the Enlightenment view, which he by no means limits to the eighteenth century, in the familiar phrase 'from *mythos* to *logos*' (see, for example, 1985: 49).[1] Tylor, epitomizing that view, assumes an evolution from myth, which he subsumes under religion, to science. For him, primitive peoples

alone have myth and moderns alone have science. Myth and science not only are incompatible in content but also duplicate each other in function.

Blumenberg assumes that the contrast between *mythos* and *logos* necessarily makes myth irrational: 'What [to the Enlightenment] was meant by the antithesis of reason and myth was in fact that of science and myth' (1985: 49). He thus berates the Enlightenment for failing to see myth 'as itself [serving] a rational function' (1985: 48). But his criticism does not hold for all 'Enlightened' theorists and certainly not for Tylor. Far from either blind superstition or frivolous storytelling, myth for Tylor is a scrupulously logical and reflective enterprise. As he explains: 'The basis on which such [mythic] ideas as these are built is not to be narrowed down to poetic fancy and transformed metaphor. They rest upon a broad philosophy of nature, early and crude indeed, but thoughtful, consistent, and quite really and seriously meant' (1871, 1: 285). Tylor does judge myth to be false, but not irrational. Otherwise it could not be the primitive counterpart to science – a point about the Enlightenment missed by Blumenberg. As the primitive counterpart to modern science, myth for Tylor and others offers a rigorous and systematic account of the world.

Having been displaced by science as the explanation of the world, myth, according to Blumenberg, is left by Enlightened theorists with a merely aesthetic role:

> In his discussion of myth Fontenelle expressed the Enlightenment's amazement at the fact that the myths of the Greeks had still not disappeared from the world. Religion [i.e., Christianity] and reason had, it is true, weaned people from them, but poetry and painting had given them the means by which to survive. They had known how to make themselves indispensable to these arts. (1985: 263)

Ironically, Tylor here goes even further than Blumenberg assumes that Enlightened theorists go. In the wake of science, myth for Tylor, unlike the rest of religion, is left with no role at all and will eventually die out.

Blumenberg rejects the Enlightenment view of myth on two grounds: that myth continues to exist in modernity (see 1985: 263–64, 274); and that myth was never an explanation of the world. Combining these arguments, Blumenberg states:

> That does not yet mean that the *explanation* of phenomena has always had priority and that myths are something like early ways of dealing with the difficulty of lacking theory. If they were an expression of the lack of science or of prescientific explanation, they would have been disposed of automatically at the latest when science … made its entrance. The opposite was the case. (1985: 274)

For Blumenberg, the survival of living myth in the wake of science proves that its function was never scientific.

Of course, what Tylor claims of religion *minus* myth, someone else might claim of myth itself: that not serving to explain the world now hardly proves that it never served to explain the world. For Bultmann (1953), for example, myth prior to the rise of science served both to explain the world and to depict the state of human beings in the world, which remains as its sole (and proper) function. Blumenberg needs an additional argument for his claim that myth never served a science-like function. He offers multiple arguments.

By a scientific explanation Blumenberg means a genetic, or an etiological, one. As he writes in criticism of the Enlightenment view, 'That the relationship between the "prejudice" called myth and the new science should [for the Enlightenment] be one of competition necessarily presupposes the interpretation of individual myths as etiological' (1985: 265).

On four grounds, asserts Blumenberg, myth is nonetiological. First, even standard creation myths like Hesiod's *Theogony* and Genesis 1–2 give no ultimate origin of the world. Rather, they presuppose the existence of something and explain the creation of the world either by or from it:

> Flaubert noted in his Egyptian diary on June 12, 1850, that during the day his group had climbed a mountain on the summit of which there was a great number of large round stones that almost resembled cannonballs. He was told that these had originally been melons, which God had turned into stones. The story is over, the narrator is evidently satisfied; but not the traveler, who has to ask for the reason why. Because it pleased God, is the answer, and the story simply goes no further. (Blumenberg 1985: 257; see also 126–27, 128, 161, 257–59)

Second, myths tell stories rather than give reasons: 'In the [erroneous] etiological explanation of myth … the recognition of myth as an archaic accomplishment of reason has to be justified by its having initially and especially given answers to questions, rather than having [in actuality] been the implied rejection of those questions by means of storytelling' (Blumenberg 1985: 166; see also 184–85, 257–59).

Third, within a myth anything can derive from anything else, in which case there must be scant interest in accurate derivation and therefore in derivation itself: 'When anything can be derived from anything, then there just is no explaining, and no demand for explanation. One just tells stories' (Blumenberg 1985: 127). Indeed, myth presents mere 'sequences' rather than 'chronology', by which he means causality (Blumenberg 1985: 126; see also 128).

Fourth and most important, myth describes the significance more than the origin of phenomena. Thus the Bible tells not how, but why God created the rainbow:

> He [God] gives those who have just escaped the Flood a first specimen of the sequence of agreements and covenants that were to characterize his dealings with his people: 'This is the token of the covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations …' One will not want to say that this is an 'explanation' of the rainbow, which would have had to be replaced as quickly as possible, with arrival at a higher level of knowledge, by a physical [i.e., scientific] theory. (Blumenberg 1985: 265)

Blumenberg asserts not only that myth fails to give the origin of phenomena but also that the origin of myth itself is unknowable: 'But theories about the origin of myths are idle. Here the rule is: *Ignorabimus* [We will not know]' (1985: 45; see also 59). If so, then Blumenberg's consequent turning from the origin of myth to the function makes sense. What does not make sense is his seeming additional justification for so doing: the fact that myth itself is not concerned with the origin of things! Surely, even if Blumenberg's claim that myth itself scorns the question of the origin of phenomena is correct, a *theory* of myth need not therefore scorn the question of the origin of *myth*. Yet, Blumenberg repeatedly implies that the issues that myth itself considers somehow determine the issues which theories of myth should consider.

Blumenberg argues that the function, or 'work', of myth is not, as for the Enlightenment, to explain the world but to allay anxiety over the world, to fulfil the need 'to be at home in the world' (1985: 113). Like Freud in *The Future of an Illusion* (1964), Blumenberg asserts that humans wish the world were nicer than it is. For Freud, humans fulfil their wish by transforming an indifferent, impersonal world into one ruled by a caring, human-like god. For Blumenberg, there are many stages in between. First, the still impersonal world gets named – as Fate, for example. Anxiety, which has no object, thereby gets reduced to fear, which does. The impersonal force then gets transformed into animal gods, who in turn become human-like gods. Initially nameless and vague gods acquire names and attributes, both of which make them easier to control; initially capricious gods become predictable; initially indifferent gods become just and then merciful; initially implacable gods become appeasable through rituals and ethics. The originally single cosmic force, which is omnipotent, becomes multiple gods, who neutralize one another's power. Many gods in turn, ultimately, become a single god, but one whose omnipotence is tempered by justice and mercy (see Blumenberg 1985, esp. 5–6, 13–14, 18, 22–23, 35–36, 42–43, 117, 124–25).[2]

For the Enlightenment, according to Blumenberg, myth creates anxiety by turning the natural world into a world filled with terrifying supernatural figures. For Blumenberg himself, by contrast, myth *alleviates* anxiety by turning a terrifying *natural* world into one filled with supernatural figures who can be placated. Myth 'is a way of expressing the fact that the world and the powers that hold sway in it are not abandoned to pure arbitrariness' (1985: 42).[3]

For Freud, the transformation of the world under myth serves less to control than to justify the world. For Blumenberg, the transformation serves less to control or even to justify the world than, in a nonetiological sense to be spelled out, to 'explain' it. Freud assumes that humans seek above all to justify the world and that a world ruled by personal agents offers the possibility of a rationale and therefore of a justification. Blumenberg assumes that a world ruled, like society, by personalities is more familiar and therefore less alien than an impersonal one.[4]

Unlike Freud, Blumenberg attributes human helplessness to biology, not to the environment. He is here like the early psychoanalyst Géza Róheim (1943) and the sociologist Peter L. Berger (1967), among others. Róheim argues that humans are born much too soon and are thus more dependent on their mothers than other animals. Culture, including myth, arises to provide a substitute for the mother and thereby to restore some control over the world. Berger maintains that humans are born less premature than, in existentialist fashion, 'unfixed'. Culture, again including myth, arises not, as for Róheim, to tame the world but to make sense of it – above all by justifying the experiences that cannot be ameliorated: suffering, especially death. The justification provided gives humans a settled place in the world. While Blumenberg singles out myth, he, too, sees all of culture as serving to compensate for the limits of human biology – but, again, primarily by 'explaining' rather than by either controlling or justifying the world.

When Blumenberg writes that myth 'explains', that it provides 'explanations for the inexplicable' (1985: 5), he likely means that myth explains the *operation* rather than the *origin* of the world and in this sense is nonetiological. But myth, for Tylor as well, explains the operation more than the origin of the world, though Tylor is not, like Blumenberg, preoccupied with the distinction. How much Blumenberg's view of myth really differs from that of his Enlightened nemeses will be considered after considering the view of his other nemeses: the Romantics.

Where the Enlightenment sees myth as superseded by science, Romanticism, itself no more restricted to the nineteenth century than the Enlightenment is to the eighteenth, sees myth as eternal. Where the Enlightenment believes that myth gets superseded by something that better serves the same *function*,

Romanticism believes that myth can never be superseded because nothing else bears the same *content*. As a representative Romantic, Campbell thus applauds the view of fellow Romantic, Jung, that myths

> are telling us in picture language of powers of the psyche to be recognized and integrated in our lives, powers that have been common to the human spirit forever, and which represent that wisdom of the species by which man has weathered the milleniums. Thus they have not been, and can never be, displaced by the findings of science. (1973 [1972]: 13)

Romanticism argues that myth not only offers eternal wisdom but also that it has always offered it. Moderns thus lack, not only a superior successor to myth but also superior myths: ancient myths contain all the wisdom to be had. Still, moderns are not bereft of myths of their own. For Campbell, all humans are continuously spinning them. He himself cites the distinctively modern myths of space travel, as typified by the *Star Wars* saga. Moderns harbour no superior myths because there are none: all myths are the same because all say the same. 'Romanticism', writes Blumenberg, 'set up the more or less distinct idea of a substance of tradition that changes only in form' (1985: 49; see also 130–31). Not coincidentally, Campbell is an arch-comparativist, seeking only similarities and dismissing all differences as trivial.

For Romantics, moderns no more possess superior interpretations of traditional myths than they possess superior myths: ancients had already intuited the deepest meanings of their own myths. Only obtuse moderns need sophisticated theories to extricate those meanings. Romanticism, writes Blumenberg, 'attaches the seriousness of the conjecture that in it [myth] there is hidden [to moderns] the unrecognized, smuggled contents of an earliest revelation to mankind, perhaps of the recollection of Paradise, which was so nicely interchangeable with Platonic anamnesis' (1985: 48; see also 273–74).

To be sure, Blumenberg may not be claiming that for Romantics, ancients themselves were conscious of this revelation, only that it was present in their myths. But at least for Campbell they were fully conscious of it. Hence he employs Freud and Jung alike to raise to modern consciousness the meaning of which our forebears were fully aware:

> The old teachers knew what they were saying. Once we have learned to read again their symbolic language, it requires no more than the talent of an anthologist [i.e., Campbell] to let their teaching be heard. But first we must learn the grammar of the symbols, and as a key to this mystery I know of no better tool than psychoanalysis. (Campbell 1949: vii)

Freud and Jung themselves never credit early humanity with superior consciousness. Quite the opposite.

Against Romanticism, Blumenberg argues, first, that new myths are not constantly being created. Rather, old myths are continually getting reworked, and by a Darwinian competition only the most effective myths or versions of myths survive. Blumenberg argues, second, that the meaning of myths changes. If, then, on the one hand there are no new myths, on the other hand there are new meanings to old ones – a process of reinterpretation that Blumenberg calls 'work on' myth.[5]

Blumenberg is consequently a staunch particularist rather than a comparativist. Echoing the philosopher R. G. Collingwood, he goes as far as to claim that even though the myths remain the same, the reinterpretations change the questions and not merely give new answers to perennial ones (see Blumenberg 1985: 182–84; Collingwood 1939, ch. 5). At the same time new interpreters feel obliged to answer old questions in order to prove their worth–a process that Blumenberg calls 'reoccupation' (see Blumenberg 1985: 27–28).[6] The effort of new interpreters to meet their predecessors on their predecessors' home grounds bolsters the false, Romantic view that there is nothing new under the sun.[7]

Blumenberg's arguments against both Romanticism and the Enlightenment are moot. Even though he traces brilliantly the sharply shifting meanings of the Prometheus myth, to which three of the five parts of his book is devoted, his Romantic adversaries would surely emphasize the persistence of the myth itself. The debate between comparativists and particularists seems unresolvable. Just as particularists can always point to differences between one myth and another, or between one interpretation of a myth and another, so also comparativists can always point to similarities. More accurately, each side need deny only the importance, not the existence, of the other. Particularists maintain that the similarities deciphered by comparativists are vague and superficial. Comparativists contend that the differences etched by particularists are trivial and incidental.

So what, say Campbell's critics, if all heroes undertake a dangerous trek to a distant world and return to spread the word? The differences between one heroic quest and another count more. Where, for example, Odysseus is seeking to return home, Aeneas is seeking a new home. Where Odysseus is at least eventually eager to reach Ithaca, Aeneas must relentlessly be prodded to proceed to Italy. Where Odysseus encounters largely supernatural entities along the way, Aeneas encounters largely human ones. Where Odysseus's triumph is entirely personal, Aeneas's is that of a whole people. Campbell would retort that,

as different as Odysseus and Aeneas are, both are heroes. Blumenberg's appeal to the differences thus convinces only confirmed particularists.

As for Blumenberg's arguments against the Enlightenment, first, the undeniable survival of myth in modernity scarcely proves that its function must be non-scientific. Surely myth and science can simultaneously serve the same function, whether or not compatibly. Like Bultmann, Blumenberg wrongly assumes as well that myth actually does yield explanation to science. Fundamentalists are not the only ones who seemingly manage to espouse both mythic and scientific explanations.

Second, even if science does preclude a mythic explanation of the world, *prior* to science myth might have functioned as an explanation. So maintains Tylor. Or myth might have functioned concurrently as both explanation and something else – the nonexplanatory function alone remaining now. So maintains Bultmann. To make his case, Blumenberg must rebut these alternatives.

It would be one thing for Blumenberg, like numerous other theorists, to deny that myth is the primitive counterpart to modern science on the grounds that the real subject of myth is human nature (Freud, Jung), society (Emile Durkheim, A. R. Radcliffe-Brown, Malinowski), or ultimate reality (Bultmann, Campbell) *rather than* the physical world (Tylor, Frazer). It is another thing for him, to deny that myth is the primitive counterpart to modern science *even though* its subject matter is the physical world. Here Blumenberg and Tylor are akin: for both, myth is about gods, not humans, but is about their actions in the human world.

That Blumenberg deems the subject matter of myth the physical world is clear from his criticism of Freud for rooting myth in pleasure – the 'absolutism of images and wishes' – rather than in 'reality' (1985: 8). It is even clearer from his castigation of the Enlightenment for contrasting *logos*, which deals with physical reality, to myth, which supposedly does not: 'The boundary line between myth and logos is imaginary and does not obviate the need to inquire about the logos of myth in the process of working free of the absolutism of reality' (Blumenberg 1985: 12). Myth helps humans master the physical world and is itself 'a piece of high-carat "work of logos"' (Blumenberg 1985: 12; see also 3ff., 26, 27, 48). For Blumenberg, the shift from *mythos* to *logos* begins within *mythos* itself.

Certainly, myth can refer to the physical world and still not be the primitive counterpart to modern science. For Samuel Noah Kramer, for example, Sumerian myth is merely a metaphorical description of the physical world: stripped of the metaphor, myth is not primitive but *modern* science – observationally, even if not theoretically (see Kramer 1961 [1944]: 73). For Lévy-Bruhl, myth functions to unite primitive peoples mystically with the physical world rather than

to explain the world (see Lévy-Bruhl 1926: 368–71). For Lévi-Strauss, whom Blumenberg berates on other grounds, myth is outright primitive science, but it is not, as for the Enlightenment, inferior science (see Lévi-Strauss 1966, esp. ch. 1). Certainly for Malinowski (1926) and Eliade (1959, ch. 2), myths about the physical world are more than scientific in function. Whether or not these strategies succeed in reconciling myth with science without sacrificing a common subject matter, they at least confront the problem. Blumenberg evades it: he says *that*, never *how*, myth and science manage to deal compatibly with the same subject.

Blumenberg himself waxes ambivalent about the relationship between myth and science. In faulting the Enlightenment for failing to give myth credit for beginning the process of mastering the physical world – of overcoming the 'absolutism of reality' (see Blumenberg 1985: 3ff.) – he surely implies that science continues the process. In that case myth must be serving the same function as science:

> Theory [i.e. science] is the better adapted mode of mastering the episodic *tremenda* [terrors] of recurring world events. But leisure and dispassion in viewing the world, which theory presupposes, are already results of that millenniums-long work of myth itself … [T]he antithesis between myth and reason [i.e. science] is a late and a poor invention, because it forgoes seeing the function of myth, in the overcoming of that archaic unfamiliarity of the world, as itself a rational function, however due for expiration its means may seem after the event. (Blumenberg 1985: 26, 48)

Even in asserting that science can never fully master the world, so that a place for myth always remains, Blumenberg must still mean that the two serve the same function: science cannot be merely 'reoccupying' the position of myth.

Blumenberg's other arguments for myth as nonetiological are even more tenuous. First, if creation myths provide no etiology because they presuppose the existence of something, then science provides no etiology either, as Blumenberg himself concedes. Explaining the origin of anything means explaining out of what it came (see Blumenberg 1985: 126–27). Ironically, science often gets faulted for failing to do what religion, including myth, purportedly does: explaining 'where it all began' (see Hempel 1973, section 6).

Second, myths undeniably tell stories rather than give arguments. But this difference in form need scarcely mean a difference in function. Tylor, for his part, disregards the form for the content and sees myth as presenting arguments in the form of stories. Plato, Plotinus, and other ancient critics of myth as story

take for granted that the function of myth is the same as that of philosophy, which Blumenberg rightly associates with science. Insofar as Thales and other Presocratics succeed Homer and Hesiod, Homer and especially Hesiod must be providing etiologies of their own. Again, philosophy cannot be merely reoccupying the place vacated by myth.

Third, undeniably in myth anything can derive from anything else. Indeed, nearly anything at all can happen. But even the most fantastic etiologies are not therefore less etiological. Even if anythng can happen in myth, myth is still reporting how it did happen.

Fourth, even granting that above all myth provides the significance, not the origin, of the world, the significance still depends on the origin. The Bible may not explain how God created the rainbow, but only the divine origin of the rainbow gives it its clout. As a merely natural occurrence, the rainbow would not quite represent God's covenant with future humanity. The significance of woman in the *Theogony* and in Genesis 2 stems chiefly from the circumstances of her origin. All of the world in Genesis 1 is good, in no small part because God created it. For theorists of myth like Malinowski (1926) and Eliade (1959, ch. 2), the significance of the phenomena considered by myth stems entirely, not just partly, from their primordial lineage.

Blumenberg declares that myths, as stories, block, not merely ignore, etiological questions: 'The stories that it is our purpose to discuss here simply weren't told in order to answer questions, but rather in order to dispel uneasiness and discontent, which have to be present in the beginning for questions to be able to form themselves' (1985: 184; see also 166). Augustine, he writes, asks why God created the world, not 'in order to give an answer, but rather in order simply to discredit inquiry' (Blumenberg 1985: 258). Hence Augustine's sole answer: 'Because he wanted to' (Blumenberg 1985: 258) – an answer as satisfying as Bartley the Scrivener's 'I would prefer not to'. Myth takes events back to what Eliade calls 'primordial time' to make its account of events sacrosanct: 'Myths do not answer questions; they make things unquestionable. Anything that could give rise to demands for explanation is shifted into the position of something that legitimates the rejection of such claims' (Blumenberg 1985: 126; see also 127).

If, however, myth gives either arbitrary answers to etiological questions or none at all, how is it managing to quell anxiety? How is it 'a way of expressing the fact that the world and the powers that hold sway in it are not abandoned to pure arbitrariness … a system of the elimination of arbirariness' (Blumenberg 1985: 42–43)? Blumenberg never explains. Perhaps he would reply that myth eliminates arbitrariness by cogently explaining the operation rather than the

origin of the world. But myth typically explains how things *are* by explaining how they *came to be*. Hesiod provides no cosmology in *addition* to his cosmogony. From his cosmogony *comes* the cosmology. The same is true of the Bible. Even if, contrary to Aristotle, Thales is offering a cosmology *rather than* a cosmogony, Hesiod and the Bible are not.

Blumenberg boasts that the meaning myth provides rests on no scientific grounds:

> No one will want to maintain that myth has better arguments than science … Nevertheless it has something to offer that–even with reduced claims to reliability, certainty, faith, realism, and intersubjectivity – still constitutes satisfaction of intelligent expectations. The quality on which this depends can be designated by the term significance [Bedeutsamkeit], taken from Dilthey. (1985: 67)

But if neither evidence nor etiology supports mythic pronouncements of significance, what does? Blumenberg never elaborates.

Blumenberg notes that classical, not biblical, myths are the ones that survive (see Blumenberg 1985: 215–18, 238–40). The use of biblical myths by modern writers like Thomas Mann is presumably an exception. Blumenberg's justification for nevertheless claiming that mythology generally did not die out with science must be his argument that the Bible remained tied to a fixed text and to adherents controlling its interpretation: 'What prevents the [modern] poet from making use of the figures in the Bible … is the way they are fixed in a written book, and the incomparable presence of this book in people's memories' (1985: 216). In proceeding to assert that classical mythology was free of not only a single text and disciples but also a priesthood and dogma, Blumenberg is really asserting that it was free of religion (see 1985: 237–40). But is classical mythology thereby typical of mythology worldwide? Does, then, mythology generally survive science? If only because of the presence in myths of gods and other supernatural elements, many theorists subsume myth under religion. The Enlightenment shift from myth to science is thus, as for Tylor, also a shift from religion, or religion as it had traditionally operated.

Suppose that Enlightened theorists wrongly assume that myth survives only as literature or art. By contrasting the survival of classical mythology to the demise of its biblical counterpart, Blumenberg himself appears to be agreeing with them that the survival of myth in any form requires its severance from religion. Whether a state exists for myth between religion and aesthetics is the question. Truncated from Greek religion, Prometheus ceases to be an actual entity and becomes only a symbol of something else, presumably human. Is he not thus reduced to a literary or artistic figure?

Yet Blumenberg, despite his peremptory dismissal of the quest for origin, does not himself forsake the quest. He may refuse to speculate on *how* myth arose, but he certainly hypothesizes on *why* and even *when*.[8] He denies both the Enlightenment view that myth arose to satisfy intellectual curiosity and the Romantic view that myth simply arose spontaneously. Rather, he says, myth arose to cope with the anxiety felt by those who had ventured from the shelter and security of the forest to the expanse and uncertainty of the savanna:

> It was a situational leap, which made the unoccupied distant horizon into the ongoing expectation of hitherto unknown things. What came about through the combination of leaving the shrinking forest for the savanna and settling in caves was a combination of the meeting of new requirements for performance in obtaining food outside the living places and the old advantage of undisturbed reproduction and rearing of the next generation. (Blumenberg 1985: 4)

Surely this is speculation at its most grandiose.

Conclusion

The views of the nineteenth-century Tylor and the twentieth-century Blumenberg could not be more opposed. In the twenty-first century the issue for some has become the compatibility, not of Tylor with Blumenberg but of myth with science, yet in a way that does not require the removal of science from the physical world. One example would be the myth of Gaia, or of the Earth. Seeing the Earth as an almost conscious agent regulating itself to preserve itself against threats almost makes Earth a god, and a god involved in the physical world. Here myth is not just compatible with science but is a scientific principle itself.

Notes

1 In fact, Blumenberg singles out Ernst Cassirer as epitomizing the Enlightenment view. As Blumenberg rightly notes, Cassirer on the one hand maintains that myth is irreducible to science or any other symbolic form, but on the other hand, maintains that myth is incompatible with science, which succeeds it (Blumenberg 1985: 168). See Cassirer 1955: 21 (on the one hand) and Cassier 1955: xvii (on the other).

2 Oddly, Blumenberg cites *Totem and Taboo* rather than *The Future of an Illusion*, where Freud, in contrast to Blumenberg, does see myth – better, religion generally – as serving to facilitate escape from the world rather than coping with the world (see Blumenberg 1985: 8).
3 The debate over whether myth creates (Enlightenment) or alleviates (Blumenberg) anxiety repeats the classical debate between A. R. Radcliffe-Brown and Bronislaw Malinowski over whether ritual creates (Radcliffe-Brown) or alleviates (Malinowski) anxiety: see Radcliffe-Brown 1939 and Malinowski 1925, sections 4–6.
4 On the reduction of the unfamiliar to the familiar, see Blumenberg 1985: 5, 25.
5 On the difference between the work *of* myth and work *on* myth, see Blumenberg 1985: 118, 266; see also the translator's note: 112 note w.
6 On 'reoccupation', see also Blumenberg, *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age* (1983), esp. 48–50 and part 1, ch. 6.
7 If in the *Work on Myth* Blumenberg rails more fervently against the Enlightenment belief in progress than against the Romantic belief in continuity, in *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age* (pt. 1, esp. chs. 3–4) he rails against Romanticism almost exclusively: he denies that the modern, Enlightened notion of progress is merely traditional religious eschatology in secular guise.
8 In his introduction to *Work on Myth*, translator Robert Wallace defends Blumenberg's claim that he is skirting the issue of origin by restricting origin to 'how' and categorizing 'why' under function (xvii). But by that criterion, many theorists of myth ignore the issue of origin – among them Eliade, Bultmann, Jonas, Radcliffe-Brown, and Malinowski. Only the last two of these theorists *profess* to be doing so.

5

Tylor and Debates about the Definition of 'Religion': Then and Now

Liam T. Sutherland

Scholars of Tylor may have cause to complain that he is more thoroughly critiqued than thoroughly read but his 'minimal' definition of religion as 'belief in spiritual beings' rarely fails to crop up in most introductory textbooks in religious studies. These same textbooks also initiate students into a key controversy of the field: the supposedly insurmountable task of defining religion as an object of scientific enquiry and analysis. Debates about the definition of religion are not new however, and in early anthropological circles Tylor was at the centre of these debates. Though many of these debates were framed in terms of the origins and 'core' of religion, which may be of less interest to contemporary scholars, they still reveal much about the demarcation of the subject area.

None of this is an indication of the continuing significance of Tylor though, and the historical background of the field is usually where Tylor's work is left. This chapter will experiment with foregrounding Tylor in contemporary debates about the definition of religion as a relevant interlocutor. It was during an undergraduate module in religious studies, at the University of Edinburgh, that I first came across both Tylor's definition and the debates about the definition of religion. A menagerie of wildly variant definitions of religion were paraded before us but a rough consensus emerged that Tylor's definition was the soundest, if far from perfect. I pursued this several years later through my unpublished MSc research dissertation completed in 2012, which provides the groundwork for this chapter.

I will begin by outlining the stakes of the debate around the definition of religion, particularly Tim Fitzgerald's challenge to the field: that if its object of study cannot be defined, then the category religion should be retired. I will argue that Tylor's approach to the definition cuts a path around many of the obstacles which

litter this terrain. I think there is something fruitful to be gained from putting this seminal, flawed but also often overlooked ancestor into dialogue with one of the field's greatest critics. As such, I will locate Tylor's definition comparatively alongside other major approaches, discuss some of the ways in which Tylor has been influential before introducing my own Neo-Tylorian approach in the light of my current doctoral research.

The crisis of definition

The fact that a consensus on what religion refers to has failed to emerge among scholars specifically concerned with its study has been troubling. Though some researchers do not see the need to create definitions, often focusing on the specifics of 'a religion' (Platvoet 1999: 252–53) these difficulties also provoke the deconstruction of the concept (e.g. Asad 1993: 28; McCutcheon 2003: 3–4). Tim Fitzgerald has gone further, arguing that attempts to define religion as a concept are futile because the term is analytically meaningless, grouping together a range of cultural practices which have little in common:

> It picks out nothing distinctive – Christmas cakes, nature, the value of hierarchy, vegetarianism, witchcraft, veneration of the emperor, the rights of man, supernatural technology, possession, amulets, charms, the tea ceremony, ethics, ritual in general, the Imperial Rescript of Education, the motor show, salvation, Marxism, Maoism, Freudianism, marriage, gift exchange … There is not much within culture that cannot be included as religion. (Fitzgerald 2000: 26)

On the other hand, he argues that when 'religion' is used restrictively, it often expresses a liberal ecumenical theology, smoothing over the differences between religions to match the scriptural, doctrinal theism of Christianity (Fitzgerald 2000: 14). He traces this to the founding figure of Max Müller, who denounced Hindu image worship and polytheism to emphasize the scriptural and theistic schools of the Vedanta (Fitzgerald 2000: 11) and argued that religions were 'responses' to the 'infinite', with nature worship explained as the perception of the one God confused with natural phenomena (Sharpe 1986: 37).

It is my contention, however, that Fitzgerald has created a false dichotomy between 'theological' and 'meaningless' definitions of religion (Fitzgerald 2000: 10–11), and that there is a middle ground which Tylor had helped to pioneer. Fitzgerald did recognize Tylor, among others, as genuinely non-theological and foundational for the social sciences but assessed him as simply having

pursued the avenue of religion to a dead end (Fitzgerald 2000: 33). I contend that this was no dead end, but that Tylor created a clear, non-theological approach to religion which used religion to pick out and explain comparable phenomena.

Tylor's definition of religion

> The first requisite in a systematic study of religions of the lower races, is to lay down a rudimentary definition. By requiring in this definition the belief in a Supreme Deity or judgement after death, the adoration of idols or the practice of sacrifice, or other partially-diffused doctrine or rites, no doubt many tribes may be excluded from the category of religions. But such a narrow definition has the fault of identifying religion rather with particular developments than with the deeper nature which underlies them. It seems best to fall back at once on this essential source, and simply claim as a minimum definition of Religion belief in Spiritual Beings. (Tylor 1903 [1871] 1: 424)

Tylor's definition distinguishes religion without reducing it to Christian theism. For him, religion was an outgrowth of the idea of the human soul, accounting for the life and operation of the human body and then projected on to nature and causation in the world through the idea of spiritual beings as animism (Tylor 1903 [1871] 2: 185).[1] I am not here advocating the adoption of Tylor's specific definition, but rather his approach to the problem of definition.

On definition and 'religion'

Definitions serve to stipulate the specific subject matter for research and analysis, from Latin *de – finere* to 'demarcate out' (Platvoet 1999: 248). As religion is not a category indigenous to all cultures or something which can be neatly translated into all languages, its imposition must be analytically justified and the subject matter it picks out made clear. The point of a scholarly definition is not to impose the term on the population or control wider usage, but to tailor it for quite specifically academic classificatory purposes (see Jensen 1993: 110–11, McCutcheon 2001: 63).

These issues are shaped by the history of Western colonialism but also increased global communications, travel and migration. Members of communities adapt new languages and labels as they self-describe and self-identify, using different terms and concepts more or less interchangeably, and their shifting

identifications are important sites of research in their own right (e.g. Taira 2013: 26). Despite this diversity and mutability, the assumption that societies are comparable, with some universal or at least widespread features expressed by cognitively similar persons, arguably form the necessary premises of social science. Putting Tylor's evolutionism aside, this was also his starting position. One can speak of religion if elements defined as 'religious' are discernible. While there may not be an indigenous category framing these features, imposing heuristic categories to make the data intelligible may be necessary.

Concepts used by scholars for the purposes of classification, comparison and explanation are 'etic' and can be contrasted with 'emic' categories, which are those used by the subjects themselves (McCutcheon 2001: 63–65). Academic categories generally have an emic origin but become etic once used by social scientists to classify, compare and theorize. While contextual peculiarities are vital, etic concepts can highlight the similarities, differences and the traffic between societies. This reflects Tylor's method, of using a minimal definition to set out the broad parameters of research.

These parameters also need not follow convention. Durkheim argued that religion should not be defined by 'supernatural beings' because it may exclude Buddhism (Durkheim 2001 [1912]: 32). But, as Melford Spiro astutely asked, why should Buddhism necessarily be included? While many forms of Buddhism could fit those definitions (Spiro 1966: 92–93, Guthrie 1993: 19), if they could not, that would also be interesting (Spiro 1966: 88–89). Furthermore, however else Buddhism is defined by scholars, for its practitioners it would not cease to be 'dhamma' or for some 'philosophy' or indeed sometimes religion.

While researchers can create working definitions for specific studies and can fruitfully adopt modified emic terminology, by referring to religions a comparative analysis is already implied. After all, defining religion is not defining a specific Sufi community in Manchester, and insisting on emic terminology risks offering an 'exaggerated localism' which reifies religions as entities rather than concepts (Smith 2000: 35–36). For the purposes of intelligibility, some outsider concepts and viewpoints need to be used (Platvoet 1999: 250–51), because groups may be written about in languages other than their own, for purposes alien to them.

To remain scientific, the study of religion must be independent of the practice and practitioners of religion (Wiebe 1998: 7). Even if scholars are studying a Protestant Church in London, for whom religion is an indigenous concept, they do not use it from a Protestant perspective, just as they do not merely replicate the perspectives of Buddhist or Sufi communities. Historically, shifting

scholarly definitions are themselves cultural artefacts which reveal much about the development of the field, just as key emic concepts reveal much about a culture. I will now place Tylor's definition in its historical context of debates within early anthropological circles, to explain why Tylor's approach can be relevant.

Debates about definition in Tylor's time

As we have seen, Tylor wrote in contrast to those who pegged religion to theism and his definition is rooted in animism, that the origin of religion is in relations with human-like beings. It is also dependent on the 'psychic unity of mankind' (Tylor 1903 [1871] 1: 158–59), that the conceptions and relations of all cultures are comparable and rationally intelligible in their own context. This can be contrasted with Lucien Lévy-Bruhl – a contemporary of Tylor – who differentiated 'Western' and 'Primitive' or 'pre-logical' mentalities (Lévy-Bruhl 1966 [1923]: 89–90).

Andrew Lang criticized Tylor for downplaying the significance of 'high gods' and argued that a primal monotheism formed the likely origin of religion rather than animism (Sharpe 1986: 62).[2] One of Tylor's students, Robert Ranulph Marett, argued that 'pre-animistic' impersonal forces were integral to the development of religion, like the Oceanic 'mana' (Marett 1914: 104–05), while James G. Frazer, who is often treated as virtually interchangeable with Tylor, argued that it was magic postulated as a technical pseudo-science which was foundational, with religion forming a later development (Morris 1987: 105).

These debates are significant because they demonstrate the impact of Tylor in initiating new modes of thinking about religion comparatively based on ethnographic data compared to the textual focus of scholars such as Max Müller. Arguably, these debates about the origins of religion were as much about what was deemed fundamental to religion as a category. Discerning the origin of religion may be a fruitless enterprise, at the very least in terms of ethnographic evidence as it is possible to discern monotheism or 'high gods', 'animism' and belief in impersonal forces in the same societies at the same time (Stringer 2008: 104–05).[3] However, Tylor forms the core of this tradition not only because of his historical role but because, setting evolutionism and the quest for origins aside, his approach matches that of modern scholarship in several ways.

Though 'religion' and 'magic' are conceptually separable, they overlap and share cultural space and Tylor did not try to neatly separate them like Frazer did. His approach does not inflate the significance of deities which resemble

the Abrahamic deity like Lang, while his minimal approach to religion allows for cross-cultural comparison. Most importantly, his emphasis on the cognitive unity and rationality of all human beings, though controversial at the time, makes his approach more amenable to modern scholars than that of Lévy-Bruhl. These debates of course were far wider than the first generation of anthropologists, and I will now place Tylor into this broader framework.

Classifying definitions in the study of religion

Traditionally, approaches to defining religion are divided into two camps comprised of 'substantivists' and 'functionalists'. Substantivists, like Tylor, define religion through identifiable characteristics, usually related to claims about gods, spirits and life after death, while 'functionalists' such as Émile Durkheim define religion through some identified political, social or psychological role or need. Substantivists may risk essentialism, reifying religion as a homogenous object with an 'essence' (e.g. Van Der Leeuw 1963: 679) found in all cultures, rather than comparable elements of cultures.

However, just because substantivism can lead to essentialism does not mean that it must. Substantivist definitions of religion can be used to pick out subject matter without specifying any relationship. Further, because most substantivist theories refer to belief in God, gods or spirits, some argue that they are theological but some human beings do claim to experience and communicate with such beings which can be contextualized, compared and explained by scholars. Daniele Hervieu-Légér argued that substantive definitions risk ethnocentrism by specifying a particular content to religion (Hervieu-Légér 2000: 32) but the problem with this argument is that religion is not a category indigenous to all cultures. If religion is to serve an analytical purpose, its specific content must be specified.

The problem with functional definitions of religion is that they widen the category to the point of redundancy. This is exemplified by Durkheim, who defined religion as 'a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things … that unite its adherents in a single moral community called a church' (Durkheim 2001 [1912]: 46). Religion refers to things which are sacred to the community, set apart from ordinary, profane things and which should not be defiled by them. Certain beings, objects, times and places are thus paramount not because of anything intrinsic but because the community considers them so. However, because religion is related to anything held sacred by a community, these can include a

very wide range of content, and Durkheim himself applied this to national symbols (Durkheim 2001 [1912]: 332–33).

While Durkheim's 'sacred' is a useful category and area of research in itself, problems arise from tethering it to the category of religion. Religion is rendered indistinguishable from anything of paramount social significance. This problem is avoided by refusing to stipulate that religion is always of paramount social or personal significance as Tylor did, and to allow for the fact that religion, if defined substantively, can be a pragmatic and pedestrian affair.

Features of a Tylorian approach

A core component of Tylor's definition of religion is 'belief', which has been thoroughly critiqued as a comparative category in contemporary scholarship as too specifically Western or Protestant (e.g. Harvey 2013a: 2–3). Many religions are undeniably orthopraxic rather than orthodoxic: membership and participation are not mediated by belief but by birth, location, pragmatic needs, and so forth. However, orthopraxic religion does not preclude belief if informants profess the reality of deities, the efficacy of rituals may not be deemed to depend on their inner states but consistent claims about deities should be accepted as reflections of internalized patterns of thought. One can certainly never truly know whether anyone believes anything (Needham 1972: 31), let alone directly study it. However, 'belief' as an etic category need not depend on this, it is ethnographic, and concerned with claims to hold something to be true or even to 'know'. In traditional epistemology, knowledge is considered to depend upon belief, in other words all statements of knowledge are beliefs (Sturgeon, Martin and Grayling 1998: 13–14). For social scientists, 'belief' does not need to imply truth or falsehood but allows them to negotiate different, sometimes competing claims made by agents.

Beliefs understood in this way are not necessarily intellectual or doctrinal but pedestrian patterns of thought and assumptions. As Clifford Geertz remarked, belief does not necessarily entail some form of abstract Baconian deduction, and omitting it from the study of religion attempts 'to stage Hamlet without the Prince' (Geertz 1973: 109). Without it, religion is genuinely indistinguishable from categories like 'culture' and 'ritual', we could not distinguish symbolism from claims about reality, for example, that a law court's statue of justice is understood symbolically while a Cathedral's image of the Virgin Mary represents a being who practitioners claim can intervene in their lives (Sutherland

2012: 55). Beliefs structure the cosmology of actors, providing a framework within which actors presume to act. For example, sacrifice can be accounted for by a variety of factors, but the fact that there is belief in beings with needs and desires like those of human beings, is indispensable when explaining such actions (Horton 1993: 54).

Tylor argued that even the spontaneous experiences of folklore and religion including sightings of ghosts, visions of gods and saints, trances and shamanic flights, always conform to specific cultural types. When novel elements are introduced these become standardized or pedestrianized (Tylor 1903 [1871] 2: 49). Visions of the Virgin Mary, for example, conform to the standardized Roman Catholic image, complete with petticoats and tiaras (Tylor 1903 [1871] 1: 305–06). Though these are subject to change and agents may not experience these entirely passively, playing a role in cultivating or training their capacities for absorption in such experiences (Luhrmann 2013: 157), this agency must not be overstated.

To put Tylor back into dialogue with Fitzgerald, the latter has objected that values like hierarchy, deference, order, purity and honour are often more socially significant than gods, governing relationships with humans and with gods. In India, for example, the system of purity and pollution between castes, lower castes serving higher castes and removing their pollution is reflected in the worship of deities (Fuller 1992: 75–76). Japanese Shinto involves a vast array of local spirits (kami) with whom communities relate through the same rituals employed to relate with human beings (Fitzgerald 2000: 185). Religion may not necessarily represent the most important groups or institutions within a given context. The assumption that religion is isolatable or paramount is the problem for him, but the Tylorian approach demonstrates that this can be incorporated without needing to jettison religion as a comparative category.

This approach is a direct reflection of Tylor's minimal definition. Not only has a specific subject matter, belief in spiritual beings, been identified, but no stipulations have been made about the individual or social significance of religious practices or institutions. Tylor was misinterpreted by Durkheim as entailing that spiritual beings were necessarily conceived of as above or removed from human beings (e.g. Durkheim 2001 [1912]: 31, see Stringer 2008: 9). Spirits and deities may not be postulated to be much more powerful, paramount or moral than human beings, either. Together with an appreciation of belief as internalized world view, religious actors for their part need not be construed as necessarily doing religion for its own sake but often in pursuit of their interests or other reasons.

Tylorian influences on modern scholarship

As contemporary scholars, we must reject much of Tylor's approach, especially his ethnocentrism and evolutionism. However, many scholars ultimately follow a path which he helped to pioneer, using a minimal cross-cultural definition of religion for non-confessional and analytical purposes but some show stronger Tylorian influences. Two key examples are the anthropologist Robin Horton and the cognitive theorist of religion, Stewart Guthrie.

Robin Horton is one of the few scholars to openly embrace the term 'Neo-Tylorian'. His definition attempts to balance the clarity of a Tylorian minimal definition with a greater social focus:

> In short, religion can be looked upon as an extension of the field of people's social relationships beyond the confines of purely human society. And for completeness' sake, we should perhaps add a rider that this extension must be in which human beings involved see themselves in a dependent position *vis-à-vis* their non-human alters – a qualification necessary to exclude pets from the pantheon of gods. (Horton 1960: 211)

Horton's definition is Tylorian in its focus on relations with personal beings patterned on interactions with human being. He critiqued the common association between religion and intense emotion or awe, which he did not consider relevant to his fieldwork among the West African Kalabari people. He also praised Tylor for closely comparing relations among human beings and relations with gods and spirits (Horton 1960: 206–07).

Further, Horton championed the use of a sociologically grounded form of 'intellectualism' (1968: 632), castigating many of his contemporaries for refusing to take the claims of informants at face value regarding hidden, personal agents (1968: 625). He argued that such hidden agencies were appealed to as explanations by the Kalabari, rather than being simply symbolic. He lambasted the refusal of some scholars to countenance the fact that these assertions were generally intended to be literal, as reflecting their own discomfort regarding claims that they themselves would not accept (1968: 629–30). Horton recognized that religion was frequently used as a political tool by agents, but asserted that this is only effective because these beliefs are widely accepted patterns of thought (1968: 626–27).

The cognitive sciences of religion[4] is one area within religious studies in which many of its practitioners continue to recognize the influence and utility of the Tylorian approach because of his stress on the psychic unity of humanity

and discussion of patterns of thought (e.g. McCorkle and Xygalatas 2013: 5). One of the pioneers of this field was Stewart Guthrie, who recognized both Tylor and Horton as influences on the cognitive sciences of religion (Guthrie 2013: 38–39). He argued that religious beliefs are rooted in anthropomorphizations of the environment (1993: 177), that there is an ingrained tendency of the human mind to 'bet' that an object is animate rather than inanimate when it is unclear, because the former is far safer, strategically. Hikers often mistake boulders for a bear, for example, because they are hardwired to do so (Guthrie 1993: 5–6). Mistaking a boulder for a bear leads to no great consequences, while the reverse could leave one unprepared for a threat (Guthrie 1993: 45). This is a psychological animism exhibited by all human beings, and Guthrie argues that it is the root of religious animism (Guthrie 1993: 41) and it explains what makes religion plausible (Guthrie 1993: 5). This is very similar to Tylor's conclusion; humans are animistic and have applied a logical inference with explanatory potential to everything around them. It is a development which survives tenaciously in numerous forms because human beings always seek explanation (Guthrie 1993: 186). Like Tylor, Guthrie is interested in the fact that people perceive anthropomorphic beings of various forms not specifically supreme beings or in terms of any sense of awe. Anthropomorphizations are not exclusively religious but religions are the most distinct examples of the phenomena because for him, anthropomorphic beings form the centre of religions (Guthrie 1993: 178). Thus, Guthrie outlines a clear minimal and scientific theory of religion similar to Tylor's, in which religions fulfil the need for explanation, allowing actors to comprehend and react to the world. I will now outline my own Neo-Tylorian approach, which provides a minimal definition for social scientific purposes, is concerned with belief and avoids stipulating any specific social or personal significance to religion, though like other Neo-Tylorian scholars I also reject Tylor's evolutionism.

Offering a Neo-Tylorian approach

I define religions as beliefs and practices based around postulated 'extra-natural' beings, forces and realms (Sutherland 2012: 53) emerging and transmitted in particular social contexts. To some degree I have departed from Tylor in extending religious beliefs to include realms and impersonal forces, though relations with postulated personal beings are crucial, and they are often bound up with belief in realms and forces. The most obvious example is ideas of the 'soul' which

may be believed to travel to a realm of the dead or be subject to impersonal forces like 'karma'. This is not as big a departure from Tylor as it might first appear, because he also discussed the realms of the dead (Tylor 1903 [1871] 2: 60) and magic (Tylor 1903 [1871] 1: 112–13).

These beliefs are particular 'additions' to the common-sense world of surface empiricism which need to be appreciated to understand the behaviours and perspectives of agents. They can also be distinguished from, often counter-intuitive, scientific knowledge (Geertz 1973: 111–12), which also adds invisible things such as atoms, bacteria or alternate dimensions. The difference between scientific and religious additions is that the former accrue through the application of rational and critical-empirical techniques while the latter are usually based on tradition or claimed experiences (Sutherland 2012: 54–55).

I identify one among many possible functions of religions, as they allow human beings to map reality, in a world where complete empirical knowledge is always lacking. Science can never provide total knowledge because of its technicality and intrinsic scepticism. Religions provide frameworks within which one may act, predict, explain and respond to events that have unknown causes. Losing such maps can be terrifying and disorientating (Berger 1969: 22–23) and even negative interpretations of the world are less terrifying than complete nothingness (Guthrie 1993: 12).

'Extra-natural' is an etic category because these phenomena are often considered to be a part of 'nature'. Non-theological studies of religion are 'naturalistic', rooted in the modern scientific view of nature and humanity as with other cultural studies (Martin 2000: 54). It should be unsurprising that the social scientific study of religion is situated in a scientific world view but one whose etic view of 'nature' differs from many emic ones.

For religious people, religious beliefs complete the map of reality, enriching their cosmology and ontology but these additions can differ in scale or significance. Crucial to this approach is the contention that neither religious institutions, rituals nor the postulated extra-natural phenomena are necessarily of paramount personal or social significance. In short, they may or may not be particularly sacred, and it is the task of the social scientist to ascertain what position and significance they do have for the people in question. The ways in which people engage with this subject matter is dynamic in the modern world, subject to new forms of organization and categorization. For this approach to be workable, it might need to be applicable to cases which are far from prototypical.

Research applications

I will elucidate this approach with my current doctoral research, to show how my definition would be applied but also how it differs from the specific emic understandings of religion of the group under study. This lack of fit may appear counterproductive, but it is precisely this lack of fit which provides a useful perspective because the emic perspective of the group is a reflection of their ideological needs, specific processes of representation and category construction which my approach highlights through the application of a more general etic lens. Hopefully, it is clear though that emic constructions of religion and related categories are just as significant as my own etic applications but they are applied in different contexts and reveal different things about the groups, their relations and representations.

My research concerns the national interfaith association of Scotland – Interfaith Scotland (see www.interfaithscotland.org last accessed 13 December 2016), formerly the Scottish Inter Faith Council – and representations of religious and national belonging through their literature. As a Scottish organization, they operate in an English speaking, traditionally Christian country where the category of religion is indigenous, though treated as interchangeable with 'faith'. Thus, as an interfaith organization, we can glean which groups are classed as religions from their membership.

Their view of religion is bound up with the world religions paradigm: emphasizing a handful of world spanning traditions, over specific sects, denominations or regions. Usually by placing stress on intellectual or philosophical traditions, texts and doctrines (see Masuzawa 2005: 2–3; Cotter and Robertson 2016: 2; Cox 2007: 9–10). This is reflected by the membership of the organization: all members are institutionalized groups not individuals and further member-groups are classified by 'tradition', they each elect a representative of that 'tradition' to sit on the governing board.

All Christian members from the Scottish Roman Catholic Church to the Religious Society of Friends Scotland ('Quakers'), elect a single 'Christian' representative, similarly joined by 'Hindu', 'Sikh', 'Baha'i', 'Islamic', 'Jewish' and 'Buddhist' representatives. This world religions approach is confirmed by their literature,[5] for example, *A Guide to the Faith Communities of Scotland* presents sections introducing world religious traditions in general terms which happen to be found in Scotland, rather than specific member-communities such as the Sikh Sanjog, the Giffnock and Newlands Synagogue, Kagyu Samyé Dzong or the Muslim Council of Scotland (see http://www.interfaithscotland.org/about-us/members/

last accessed 13 December 2016). They work with a discernible, if implicit 'substantive' definition of religion. These traditions, as represented in the document, all make extra-natural claims, largely related to a deity or deities but also, in the case of Buddhism, statements about reincarnation and karma (Interfaith Scotland n.d.: 6–7).

This is reinforced by their association with the Humanist Society Scotland who contributed to another document, *Values in Harmony* who along with other 'traditions', were allotted a section, outlining their worldview and ethics and which also presented Humanism as the 'tradition' of the 'non-religious' (Scottish Inter Faith Council n.d.: 10). Interfaith Scotland recognized Humanism as 'non-religious', never referring to them as a 'religion' or 'faith', because they disavow belief in the supernatural. While the document shows concern with good relations between religious and non-religious Scots, this has not led to clamour for the incorporation of the Humanist Society into the organization or the abandonment of the religious and non-religious distinction.

Interfaith Scotland presents a substantive category of religion and an emphasis on 'world' traditions. This is demonstrable because there is a second tier of membership within the organization, 'associate membership' who lack a common representative, incorporating members who do not fit or do not comfortably fit into one of the seven world traditions. This includes along with local interfaith groups[6] and charities, the Pagan Federation Scotland, the Brahma Kumaris Scotland, the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification, the Church of Latter Day Saints, and the Scottish Unitarian Association. These are groups which are not considered to fit into one of the established, global traditions because they are either not classifiable as such or are too much on the fringes of the tradition to be recognized as such.

However, when the Pagan Federation were accorded their own section in the documents discussed above, Paganism was represented as a common tradition through sources as historically and culturally diverse as ancient Babylonian proverbs, quotes from ancient Greek writers to the modern pagan author Starhawk (Scottish Inter Faith Council n.d.: 69). These groups are discursively remade as bearers of intellectualized, moral traditions compatible with their values. While Interfaith Scotland will work with non-religious groups, they are still an organization with the specific aim of representing 'religious' groups to the Scottish Government (http://www.interfaithscotland.org/about-us/ last accessed 13 December 2016), representing them using the model of the world religions paradigm.

I have thus far concentrated on Interfaith Scotland's own emic categories of religion or 'faith', 'non-religion' and 'tradition'. I have tied these categories to the

composition of the organization, their cultural context, their representations of themselves, specific groups, wider society and the relationships of power which they effect. This is certainly engaging in social scientific analysis, and I do not need to impose my own specific definition but there are reasons why I regard it as fruitful to do so, as long as the emic perspective is appreciated.

My own definition of religion was beliefs and practices based around postulated 'extra-natural' phenomena, emerging and transmitted in identifiable social contexts. The purpose of this definition is to pick out a particular subject matter into which more specific research fits but also to allow for comparison with other contexts. I can use this definition to compare Interfaith Scotland's representations of all manner of groups which can be so defined and those which would be placed outside this category, to the ways in which they are represented in other contexts. This broader, more expansive comparison can shed light on the various forms of 'religion' and 'non-religion', as I define them, and how they are used to construct emic categories including 'religion' and 'non-religion'.

Interfaith Scotland themselves have an understanding of religion which is universalistic, incorporating all religions as they see it without being dependent on the perspective of any one community, but it is nonetheless an emic rather than an etic perspective. Moreover, it is one that can be shown to be historically culturally contingent and ideological. It is the product of the widespread acceptance of the world religions paradigm and is theologically loaded in the sense of rendering diverse groups in a Christian or even specifically Protestant mould. Their representations of religions are also ideological, aimed at reinforcing the idea of religion as intrinsically socially beneficial and of deep personal and communal significance. This sense of the fundamental importance of religion means that religious groups are viewed as influential and thereby fruitful for the government to specifically engage with, despite the secularity of the Scottish population and the growing non-religious population.

This ideological influence runs in two directions though, as promoting good relations between communities generally promotes stability upon which the government is dependent. Furthermore, reinforcing the notion of religious communities as fundamentally equal, promotes common allegiance to an overarching identity, that of the nation. *Values in Harmony*, which contains a foreword by the then Scottish Minister for Community Safety, Fergus Ewing MSP, particularly attacked so-called mosaic multiculturalism: the idea that communities could lead parallel lives within a societal or national shared space. Instead, it was argued that communities should be integrated and view themselves as part of wider society, which is implicitly the Scottish nation (Scottish Inter Faith Council n.d.: 8).

In order to theorize the process by which Interfaith Scotland's particular emic perspective of religion is constructed and allow for comparison with other contexts, a definition which allows for broader application is useful. For any definition to be useful, it needs to demarcate its particular subject matter but also be minimal enough to allow for the analysis of change and for comparison between different contexts. As I am advocating a Neo-Tylorian approach, I am interested in the widely recurring phenomena of claims about extra-natural phenomena but do not make presumptions about their personal or communal significance and position. This allows me to account for how and why Interfaith Scotland constructs religion in a particular way and have come to imbue it with such particular characteristics and significance.

Using my own working definition makes it clear what I mean by religion when I am discussing it independently of their understanding of religion, as I have different presuppositions and interests. I am interested in the ways in which they relate to, represent and construct groups through specific categories, but I am also interested in the ways in which beliefs and practices related to postulated extra-natural beings, forces and realms are socialized and transmitted in relation to other factors.

This minimal approach however, also allows for comparison outside of the emic perspective of Interfaith Scotland specifically within Scotland, as their perspective does not reflect those of all Scots. It is notable that there are forms of religion operating in Scotland which Interfaith Scotland do not relate to at all. These include Conservative Christian churches, uninterested in interfaith relations but also certain institutionalized groups from Spiritualists to Scientologists. However, where my own definition departs from their implicit understanding of religion the most is in relation to beliefs and practices without formal institutionalization, such as the 'New Age' or 'holistic' milieu. While one of their documents produced for patients of the Scottish National Health Service (NHS Scotland), *Reflections on Life Matters*, did present material described as for 'believers not belongers' (NHS Scotland 2011: 11), the intellectualized focus on texts and beliefs is significantly understood as inner and personal. What they do not represent are practices informed by beliefs in the sense I have used it above but not necessarily with this inner focus, perhaps embodied through practices such as reiki, aromatherapy, crystal healing, astrology or dowsing.

That these practitioners may be members of other traditions or none, that their extra-natural claims do not form a broad separable worldview from many of their 'religious' and 'non-religious' neighbours, which may not be of fundamental personal or communal significance means that they do not fit into Interfaith Scotland's categories, even negatively. These practitioners may not

themselves even claim that their practices form a religion but they nonetheless fit the definition of the subject matter that I have outlined. These practices are effected by extra-natural claims which can be analysed in terms of their social contexts and the human relationships in which they are caught.

Conclusion

Tylor's approach to defining religion can still be exemplary for the field, because he introduced a minimal definition – belief in spiritual beings – which demarcated a specific subject matter for the purposes of social scientific analysis. This demonstrates that definitions of religion are not doomed to be either theological or overly expansive and thus analytically useless, as Fitzgerald insisted. Tylor's approach was influential in his context, acting as a focus for debate in early anthropological circles and he has continued to influence contemporary strands of scholarship, notably the work of Robin Horton and Stewart Guthrie. I have also introduced my own Neo-Tylorian approach as belief in extra-natural beings, forces and realms emerging and transmitted in particular social contexts.

Scholarly uses of the category religion are etic because there is not always an emic equivalent and even where it is widely used, its emic use does not reflect scholarly aims or concerns. This means that if religion is to be analytically useful as a category, it must be clear and minimal enough to allow for comparison between different social and historical contexts. This attempt to balance these competing needs is one of the strengths of the Neo-Tylorian approach. Controversially, this approach focuses on belief but in a pedestrian form, as patterns of thought and assumptions rather than necessarily entailing intellectualized doctrines. The strength of this approach as a comparative tool is that it does not stipulate that religious practices, institutions or beliefs are necessarily of paramount personal or communal significance or associated with particular emotional states. This allows for comparison on the theme of what personal or communal significance they are given.

While my particular Neo-Tylorian approach is not intended to downplay the analytical significance of emic perspectives of religion, let alone to 'correct' or replace them, it can play a particular comparative and analytical role. It can compare the different ways in which claims about extra-natural beings, forces and realms are socialized by different actors in different contexts, including through the construction of emic categories such as the emic application of religion itself, by making use of an approach designed to stand back from these processes.

Notes

1 See Harvey's chapter, this volume.
2 See Cox's chapter, this volume.
3 See Stringer's chapter, this volume.
4 See Jong's chapter in this volume.
5 The primary sources referred to in this section are unpublished documents available through the Interfaith Scotland website, as such I have listed them under the named organization on each document: Scottish Inter Faith Council and the Scottish National Health Service – NHS Scotland (produced in house).
6 Local interfaith groups actually do specifically have a representative on the board of Interfaith Scotland along with a representative of women of faith, but other 'associate members' do not.

Part Two

Tylor beyond the Canon

6

Edward Burnett Tylor as Ethnographer

Miguel Astor-Aguilera

> It is the duty of ethnographic research to follow up lines of thought, to mark out, among existing opinions (Tylor 1867: 93) [and it is] the ethnographer's business to classify social details with a view to making out their distribution in geography and history, and the relations which exist among them. (Tylor 1903 [1871] 1: 8)

This chapter concerns Edward Burnett Tylor, in his little acknowledged academic role as ethnographer. Tylor received a University of Oxford honorary Civil Law doctorate in 1875 (Logan 2009: 91; *The Daily News [of London]* 1875; *The Times [of London]* 1875) despite never earning a Bachelor of Arts degree, or its equivalent, and is today widely regarded as the founder of cultural anthropology and the anthropology of religion (Lowie 1917: 263). Since 1871, anyone studying in a discipline associated with religion, society and culture comes upon the name of E. B. Tylor (ibid., 262). That doctoral students, even coming upon Tylor's one hundredth death anniversary in 2017, are expected to know something about what a Victorian cultural theoretician wrote (who never studied for a doctorate or was examined for a diploma) is not a common occurrence (Myres 1953: 6–7). Tylor, however, was not a common figure or any ordinary academic and it was lung health issues that would affect who he would meet and what profession would stem from his intensive private studies (Leopold 1980: 31; Price 2003: 2.4).

Tylor's (1903 [1871] 1: 1) science of culture was an empirically focused, comparative ethnological endeavour in which he defined culture as 'that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society'. Tylor's anthropological career began with an unplanned trip to Central Mexico in 1856 (Haddon 1917: 373) and his accomplishments on this excursion compose the

core of this chapter. My goal, herein, is akin to what Willerslev argues we do with James Frazer's (1922) legacy in that, 'the distinctive value of large-scale comparative scholarship lies not in the expectation of ranking cultural phenomena in evolutionary terms, but rather, that juxtaposing phenomena bearing a cross-cultural resemblance can be a thought-provoking, creative venture, which may re-open new insights' (Willerslev 2011: 505).

Consumed by consumption

Sometimes it is life-shattering events that are the catalyst to a different future. At the age of twenty-three, Tylor was diagnosed with preliminary tuberculosis, a condition that in 1855 was not well understood. The stage of tuberculosis at which Tylor left England for the warmer climates of the Midwest to the southern United States, Cuba, and then, by happenstance, Central Mexico, proved consequential to his future profession. Robert Koch identified mycobacterium tuberculosis lung infection in 1882 (Bonah 2005). However, it was not until 1921, due to the 1906 vaccine invented by Albert Calmette and Camille Guérin, that it was treatable (Comstock 1994).

Called 'consumption' by Tylor and his contemporaries, due to its wasting effect on the body, today this illness is known as tuberculosis and is found throughout the world, but is more virulent in warmer climates (see Trask 1917). The son of a prosperous family, Tylor was able to travel in 1856 to climates supposedly better suited to his health, although the colder climate of England in actuality offered better protection from the disease. Nevertheless, during his daily outdoor travels, including his research in Mexico, Tylor's health began to improve. In 1858, Tylor (1861: 270) traveled throughout Europe while processing what would, in 1861 – exactly 100 years before the birth of this chapter's Mexican born author – become *Anahuac: or Mexico and the Mexicans, Ancient and Modern*, combining ethnology and archaeology.

Science-minded Quakers-in-arms

In 1856, Tylor traveled to the United States and then to Cuba, where by chance he met the archaeologist and ethnologist Henry Christy (1861: 1). Tylor quickly befriended Christy, who invited him on his impending trip to Mexico (ibid.: 2–16). What followed on their Mexican trip literally became history from which

the legacy of Tylor begins (see Marett 1936: 29). Tylor, like Christy, was born into the Christian tradition of the Religious Society of Friends, known as Quakers due to Christ's spirit – imagined as an 'Inner Light' – acting directly on an adherent's soul causing the human body to animatedly quake, tremble or shake (see Jones 1904: 167–68). The Quaker movement – also called Children of the Light, founded by George Fox began in the mid-seventeenth century – were a dissenting Protestant group from the Church of England. Quakers stress a direct relationship to Christ's divinity as experienced in the physical body (see Fryer 2014).

Quakers' luminous body-object animacy, as linked to the soul (see Jones 1947), apparently had some impact on Tylor and seemingly led to his (1866a: 71) hypothesis that religion in all societies evolves from the belief in animism as stemming from the soul as found in various bodies and objects. Tylor's (1865: 107–09; 1903 [1971] 1: 27, 470–80) animistic soul theory drew in part from his observations of children playing with toys, who according to him, like childlike 'primitive' peoples, did not differentiate inanimate objects from animate beings (see Leopold 1980: 63; Stocking 1971: 90). Soul in Spanish is 'anima', and Tylor surely encountered this word in Mexico, which is perhaps what set him working towards what would become part of his life's work: 'primitive religion' and the evolution of savage into barbaric and later civilized life (see Tylor 1866b; 1889: 269).

Mediums and spirits

Tylor conducted ethnography among non-English European peoples and non-European traditional societies and therefore did not settle into armchair analysis even after his Mexican trip (Strenski 2015: 45). For example, he spent an unspecified amount of time doing fieldwork with Henry Moseley when visiting the Ojibwa of Lake Huron, Canada, and the United States Native American Southwest Pueblos, especially the Zuni of Arizona and New Mexico, in 1884, to study, as he said, the 'comparatively little changed old life of these Indians' (1892b: 410; also see Marett 1936: 14–15, 41–42; Price 2003: 2.1). Tylor later began composing articles, book reviews and lectures at Oxford on Pueblo culture, posing anthropological problems and comparing what he observed ethnographically with written reports (1884b: 394; 1884c; 1885: 429 col. 1; 1892b: 398–401; also see Cotton and Bradley 1884). Tylor also spent an unspecified amount of time in London and Berlin, conducting fieldwork at 'Deaf-and-Dumb Institutions'

studying their sign languages (1865: 14–82; also see Marett 1936: 51). Published posthumously, Tylor also conducted ethnographic work among Spiritualists in London (see Stocking 1971 and Kalvig, in this volume).

Tylor's fieldwork changes our historical genealogy of when the formal academic practice of ethnography as a social science began (Pels 2003). In his research on Spiritualism, Tylor focused on mediums in order to study 'primitive superstitious notions such as witchcraft, divination, and astrology pretending to be knowledge' (1867: 91, 93; Stocking 1971) as found in modern 'civilized Europe' (see Schüttpelz 2010; Stocking 1971). Tylor (1869a: 523, 528) claimed that Spiritualism was linked to witchcraft and compared it to 'primitive animism' when trying to disprove mediums using his 'ethnographic point of view' (Ratnapalan 2008: 139). Tylor's (1870: 369–71; 1903 [1871] 1: 426) fascination with what he called superstitious beliefs in spirits, propelled his study of both Spiritualism and animism in order to distinguish primitive and modern beliefs and practices (see Marett 1914: 8; Schüttpelz 2010: 161–62). Tylor's pioneering the use of the now common method of participant-observation in his study of Spiritualism (1866a: 83–85; 1867: 87–92), however, demonstrates his evolutionist assumptions determining his conclusions in that 'man in his lowest known state of culture is a wonderfully ignorant, consistent, and natural spiritualist' and that 'spiritualism, as every ethnographer may know, is pure and simple savagery both in its theory and tricks' which he later simply compressed to 'spiritualism is a survival of savage thought'(Tylor in Stocking 1971: 90).

Tylor (1869a: 523–28) never published his ethnography of Spiritualism but alluded to beginning it in his 1872 diary, in apparently 1867 (see Stocking 1971: 91). Stocking (1971: 101, 103) and Schüttpelz (2010: 169) conclude that Tylor never published his work on Spiritualism because he was conflicted about his results. Tylor (in Stocking 1971: 98, 100) did not acknowledge personal conflicts, perhaps due to his Quaker upbringing, despite Spiritualists telling him he was 'a powerful but undeveloped medium' who 'could produce physical manifestations' to which he claimed he felt his body animate as if in 'the incipient stage of hysterical simulation' during a séance. Ratnapalan (2008: 139), in contrast, claims that Tylor's ethnographic work on Spiritualism was shelved due to one of Tylor's close friends, Alfred Wallace (1874), being a devout believer in mediums like other of Tylor's educated and respectable acquaintances (see also Stocking 1971: 102).

Spiritualists, deemed lower class by Tylor, were thought to be gullible and described as engaging in the singing of 'nigger melodies' while summoning forth socially inferior spirits (Stocking 1971: 90, 102). Marett (1936: 7–8), then,

needed to better assess the man he extended the Polynesian 'magical' power notion of *mana* to the point of being 'almost a sacrilege to measure him'. Lowie also almost likens Tylor to some mystical being when describing him as 'an entirely different category of intellectual being' (1917: 265). Tylor's (1861: 120–24, 126, 153) 'magical' interests grew in Mexico and this is appropriate since the country retained, and arguably still does, a Roman Catholicism imbued with notions of animate icons thought to literally manifest a pantheon of saints, the Virgin Mary and Christ (see Pardo 2006).

Mexico and the Mexicans

Tylor (1861: 148, 162–69, 211–12, 311, 327–30) considered his Mesoamerican trip with Christy highly successful, and they spent a capital time in Mexico relishing the 'wonderful Mexican stews' and wearing traditional Mexican serapes (shawls). What Tylor previously read about Mexican life he took careful note of, and then on those grounds elaborated his own theories and ideas. Marett is careful in his judgement of Tylor, when referring to *Anahuac*, noting that if we discern

> crudeness in Tylor's [1861: 278] treatment, it must be remembered in fairness that this youth who casually introduces larger topics into his notes of travel is at most feeling his way … For example, declaring his belief that Quetzalcoatl, the supreme god and culture-hero of Cholula, was a real man, he goes on to hint that he may have been an Irishman. (1936: 36–38)

Tylor's notion of Quetzalcoatl being Irish stems from his statements claiming the existence of Scandinavian antiquities along eastern North America, linked to the 'colonization of Iceland by the Northmen shown by the context to have been Irish priests' (1861: 279). Tylor, then, apparently served a speculative type of anthropological apprenticeship, that included imaginative hypothesizing about the diffusion of culture, during his Mexican travels (see Leopold 1980: 27, 51; Marett 1936: 29).

Whether Christy taught Tylor to be observant is doubtful, since being as a good observer, as Tylor was, is not easy to teach: someone either observes well or does not. As Marett notes, Tylor's quality of observation is obvious in *Anahuac* along with his 'firm grasp on the essential facts pertaining to geology, climate, and flora and fauna' (1936: 32), as well as his recognition that the present 'Indians' were the naturally indigenous peoples of the American continents,

a view that most of his contemporaries did not accept. Tylor (1865: 13) did, however, extend Christy his appreciation for helping him develop his deep ethnographic knowledge while in the Americas and he later acknowledged the Deaf and Dumb Institution's head administrator, Dr W. Scott, in Exeter, England, in similar terms.

Tylor (1861: iii, 18, 325), and Christy who had a set itinerary for mid-March, April, May, and mid-June (comprising in total three months), used Mexico City as a hub while traveling on horseback to the pre-Columbian ruins of Teotihuacan, Tula, Cholula, and Xochicalco (see Marett 1936: 33). Tylor used his Mexican observations for *Anahuac* and later comparative analyses (Ratnapalan 2008: 135) like his study of the game of 'patolli' (Marett 1936: 210). Per Tylor, after *Anahuac* 'I formed the plan of learning all that was known about the lower races of man' (in Price 2003: 2.1). According to Lang this later led, to Tylor's diffusion analysis of whether the 'Aztecs and Polynesians borrowed from Asiatic sources' (1907a: 3) since various versions of patolli, Tylor claimed, were present in Mexico, Polynesia and Asia (1896a).

Despite being open to ideas of diffusion, Tylor will always be linked to evolutionism (see Leopold 1980: 38; Lowie 1917: 264–65). Tylor, for example, distinguished independent social evolution from cultural borrowing when stating that 'the small part of art and custom which any people may have invented or adapted to themselves is comprised with the large part which has been acquired by adopting from foreigners whatever was seen to suit their own circumstances' (1896b: v–xi). As noted by Lowie, 'whatever we may think of particular interpretations offered by Tylor, the traditional American conception of him as merely an armchair evolutionist of the classical school is ridiculously false' (Lowie 1917: 265; see also Stocking 2001: 112).

From the fieldwork in *Anahuac*, Tylor starts to imagine the origins of apparently similar customs. Aware that his evolutionary conclusions were being critiqued (see Leopold 1980: 62; Stocking 1983: 91), Tylor pleads that, 'whatever be the fate of my arguments, anyone who collects and groups mass evidence, and makes an attempt to turn it to account which may lead to something better, has a claim to be exempt from harsh criticisms' (1865: 13). Tylor's request for critical leniency was not heeded as he again later implores, 'it is much for any single writer to venture to deal even in the most elementary way with so immense a variety of subjects. In such a task I have the right to ask that errors and imperfections be lightly judged' (1898 [1871]: vii). Tylor was, however, not lightly judged.

According to Radin (1970: xiv), while we acknowledge that Tylor founded anthropology, we struggle with his claim that,

> little respect need be had in such comparisons for date in history or place on the map; the ancient Swiss lake-dweller may be set beside the mediaeval Aztec, and the Ojibwa of North America beside the Zulu of South Africa. As Dr. Johnson said … 'one set of savages is like another'. How true a generalization this really is, any Ethnological Museum may show. (1903 [1871] 1: 6)

It is Tylor's overreaching and biased generalizations, then, rather than his pioneering methods, which have been subject to heavy critique (see Brown, Coote and Gosden 2000: 262). A case in point is Tylor's (1903 [1871] 1: 6) two-pronged approach to ethnographic work: first, the wide-ranging collection of global cultural material, and second, the establishing of general patterns and universal social laws from the said disparate material. For Tylor, material objects and their display in museums was evidence of the systematic social facts that, according to him, backed up his ethnological claims. Tylor's artefact collecting is conspicuous in *Anahuac* when he admits to taking pre-Columbian objects illegally out of Mexico while, ironically, repeatedly stereotyping Mexicans as thieves (1861: 55, 170–71, 246, 264). Tylor (ibid.: 221) routinely disparages Mexicans, though he was conflicted in his disdain as he was clearly relishing his experiences throughout Mexico and feeling as if it were something of a second home. Tylor for example, describes his initial impressions of Mexican food as if from Anthony Bourdain's (2000) irreverent, yet praising, mouth:

> Christy and I had our first taste of the great Mexican institutions – tortillas and pulque. The pulque was being brewed in vats made of cow-skins and in them was pulque in every stage, beginning with the sweet aguamiel – honey-water – the fresh juice of the aloe, and then the same in different degrees of fermentation till we come to the 'madre pulque', the mother pulque, a little of which is used like yeast, to start the fermentation, and which has a combined odour of gas-works and drains. Pulque, as you drink it, looks like milk and water, and has a mild smell and taste of rotten eggs. Tortillas are like oat cakes, but made of Indian corn meal, not crisp, but soft and leathery. We thought both dreadfully nasty for a day or two; *then* we could just endure them; *then* we came to like them; and *then*, before we left the country, we wondered how we should do without them. (ibid.: 38, 64 [my emphasis]).

Mexico's other food institution, however, was apparently too rich for Tylor's Victorian intestines, which we can deduce from his comment that beans 'are all very well as accessories to dinner, but our English digestions could not stand living upon them' (1861: 272). While in Mexico, then, Tylor was no philosopher sitting comfortably in an armchair (Marett 1936: 56–57).

Anahuac's legacy

In *Anahuac* we see Tylor, despite his lack of a doctoral degree, armed with much knowledge of the world stemming in large part from his voracious reading. *Anahuac* was written before Tylor's most famous works: it is an eloquent travelogue describing Tylor's often overdramatized journeys with many politically incorrect details that perhaps only a Mexican scholar, such as myself, could fairly assess. *Anahuac* variously exhibits Tylor's methods as he addressed the data at hand, the cultural differences he witnessed, and what he considered as scientific facts. Despite Tylor's (1861) frequent racist tone and language in *Anahuac*, much can be learned from his self-described growing love of Mexican geography, flora and fauna, its people, food and drink, customs and his ready conflicts with Roman Catholic religion and indigenous so-called primitiveness.

But Tylor (ibid.: 77, 124–27, 213), being prejudiced against Jews and anti-Catholic (Ackerman 1987: 77), deeming Catholicism 'superstition and imposture' (Tylor 1994: 130, 181), not only targets Mexicans but also what he considers the irrational thinking of supposedly more civilized Europeans. He says, for example, concerning earthquakes, that

> there is an opinion, so received in Mexico that even the most educated will tell you that there is an earthquake-season in January or February; and that the shocks are far more frequent than at any other time of the year … This is all nonsense … In southern Italy, when shocks were of almost daily occurrence, people believed that they were more frequent in the middle four hours of the night, from ten to two, than at other times that proved on examination to be without foundation … How many of our almanac books contain prophecies of wet and fine weather, deduced from the moon's quarters! How long will it be before we get rid of this queer old astrological superstition! (1861: 67)

Tylor (1903 [1871] 2: 410; 1994: 114) was so concerned with so-called superstitious beliefs that his ethnological work, his 'office of ethnography', was often focused on trying to expose and destroy what he considered primitive survivals

(see Ratnapalan 2008: 132). Human frail rationality, then, lies at the core of Tylor's constant central research problem (Parmentier 1976: 62). Many cross-cultural judgments appear in Tylor's *Anahuac*, such as, 'we must not judge Mexican labourers as though we had a very high standard of honesty at home' (1861: 81). Tylor was patronizing and ethnocentric, but he was more complex than that (Stocking 1995: 10). *Anahuac* demonstrates his perplexing personality, while trying to understand the variety of life he encountered on his travels.

The strange case of Dr Tylor and Dr Who

Tylor is often a whipping boy for a variety of reasons that initially emanate from *Anahuac*. Busto (2016), for example, latches onto Tylor's remarks that Mexico would be and should be absorbed by the United States of America because Mexicans are 'totally incapable of governing themselves' (1861: 107, 329). Busto's critique is that

> Tylor's *Anahuac* is 'fiction' in the same way that Europeans drew on their vast reservoir of myths, legends, and stories of Amazons and the Lost Tribes of Israel in their conquest of the Americas. Columbus for example, (in)famously believed he was near the Garden of Eden as he entered the Orinoco [River in Venezuela] in 1498. So, too, Tylor cannot contain his wonder at the similarities between the Aztec and Hindu cosmogenesis, and Aztec and Asian calendrics and astronomy. (2016)

Busto's literary critique is informed by current claims that the social science of cultural anthropology, as created by Tylor, is closer to a 'soft science' having more in common with the humanities than the 'hard sciences' (see Clifford and Marcus 1986; Rabinow 1977). He compares Tylor's Mexican imaginary with British television's 1964 *Doctor Who* which aired four Aztec-themed episodes: 'The Temple of Evil'; 'The Warriors of Death'; 'The Bride of Sacrifice' and 'The Day of Darkness'. Dr Tylor is considered subpar to Dr Who by Busto, who claims that what the *Doctor Who* screenplay writer John Lucarotti

> couldn't know was that his fiction turned out to be closer to the idea of Nahua 'divinity' than Tylor's. Like most scholars of Aztec religion, Tylor believed that Aztec 'gods' bore similarities with Indo Europeans too close to ignore. Like his comparison of Nahuatl words to Sanskrit and Greek, Tylor continued the common error of classifying the Aztec *teteo* to the Olympian pantheon. Science fiction's imaginative leap away from the pantheon model to Yetaxa's spirit leaping

> from body to body is more in line with our current understanding of how sacred power worked in ancient Mexico.

Busto, being part indigenous and a religious studies scholar, partly exhibits a contemporary understanding of Mesoamerican ontologies that Tylor could not have had in the nineteenth century. Tylor mostly cast culture as one social evolutionary linear concept rather than in terms of multilinear variables to be understood within their own historical and social contexts (Stocking 2001: 112).

As part of his critique of Tylor's social evolutionary scheme, Marett (1914: 1–8, 99–121; 1936: 101, 106–07) saw flaws in Tylor's theory of animism, preferring the term *mana*, a Melanesian term, to refer to the vital essences said to be found in varying degrees in things animate and inanimate. Sillar (2009), for the Andean region, and Astor-Aguilera (2010) for Mesoamerica that includes the Anahuac (Valley of Mexico '*By the Waterside*') area, indicate that what appeared to Tylor as supernatural animistic religious belief, is more like what Bird-David (1999) terms 'relational epistemologies' for the Nayaka of India, or ontologies similar to the Melanesian concept of *mana* in that humans, animals, plants, places, things, and meteorological phenomena can enter into personal communicative relationships that superficially appears to be the worship of spirits (see also Harvey 2005a: xvii, 109–13, 122–27). What Tylor (1861:87) tried to understand in Mexico was why indigenous peoples thought it was possible to communicate with some inanimate material objects such as trees, springs and stones. Tylor, regrettably, cast animism as 'primitive superstition' and thereby loaded the term with baggage that has impeded its service as a heuristic, theoretical tool ever since (see Gell 1998: 121). What Tylor lacked in social theoretical maturity was the extensive corpus of current scholarship at his disposal that, ironically, draws from his rarely acknowledged work (White 1960: iv).

Busto (2016) states that 'Tylor might have benefitted from taking [indigenous Central Mexican ontology] on its own terms rather than fall back on the work of earlier speculators', but that would have required Tylor to spend more than three months conducting research in Mexico, minimally attain semi-fluency in the *Nahuatl* language, and escape the Judeo-Christian-Muslim theological polar binaries that, ironically, even Busto struggles to escape from. Increasingly, over the last sixty years, there has been an ontological turn within academia marked by a move away from the study of indigenous cosmologies and rituals in terms of supernatural belief and Western theological assumptions (see Astor-Aguilera 2010: 4, 7–12; Goody 1962: 36–7; Harvey 2005b: 14–15; Walker 1995: 70; Zedeño 2009: 409). Per Willerslev (2011: 506, 516), we scholars

studying religion are variously uncritically influenced, whether we acknowledge it or not, by 'our Judeo-Christian' heritage and the giant academic shadows of Tylor and Frazer who, according to Bell, 'stressed the primacy of religious ideas, born of pseudoscientific explanations or emotional experience, as the basis of religion' (1992: 14).

Tylor's *Anahuac* was published in 1861 and Busto's critique (2016) could be more appropriately targeted on current researchers continuing to pursue uncritical universal religious ideas when reifying 'Aztec religion'. Tylor's (1898 [1881]: v) anthropology focused on data based on assumed objective reasoning (see Marett 1936: 211); however, his social science is now acknowledged to be historically and culturally Christian dependent (see Price 2003: 2.3). Tylor was all-too-human, and while *Anahuac* demonstrates his knack for thinking comparatively, it does so in a fashion loaded with indications that his social conditioning as a wealthy, nineteenth-century Victorian was hard to shake off (Stocking 1963: 793, 795), for example, when he makes frequent and explicit and condescending remarks towards Mexicans. Still, for Tylor (1863) to conclude, unlike his contemporary academic peers or lay readers, that the human mind, including that of indigenous Mexicans, is the same the world over in terms of intelligence and capability, merits respect in its anticipation of contemporary cognitive approaches (see the chapter by Jong, this volume).

Anticipating applied anthropology, Tylor thought his work useful in challenging the views of his peers towards humankind at large in that at least 'primitives' had culture albeit on a supposed lower level than his own (Lowie 1917: 268; Stocking 1963: 794; Stocking 2001: 105). In Mexico, Tylor (1861: 183–90, 222–25; 1884b: 452) admired first-hand the monumental indigenous structures bearing elaborate glyphic writing constructed prior to Iberian contact. His (1861: 183–90) curiosity was much aroused when seeing the writing systems on the pre-Hispanic Mexican buildings and ceramics that to him meant that civilization, though allegedly on a lower rung from his, was present (see Marett 1936: 57). Engaging a culture first-hand while doing fieldwork, even if stressing its material remnants, was important for Tylor and he emphasizes that he and Christy

> doubted the accounts of the historians of the Conquest, believing that they had exaggerated in order to write as wonderful a history as they could … But our examination of Mexican remains soon induced us to withdraw this accusation, and made us inclined to blame the chroniclers for having had no eyes for the wonderful things that surrounded them. (1861: 147)

Tylor knew how advanced the indigenous Mexicans were prior to European contact, and this is exemplified in his discussion of native technology when he says, 'The Aztecs worked silver-mines long before the Spaniards came, and they knew how to smelt the ore … To know how to extract silver at all was a great step; and indeed at that time, and for long after the Conquest, there was no better method known in Europe' (ibid.: 74, 96–101, 103). For Tylor, the differences in intelligence throughout the world were not due to any inherent biological differences as all humans enjoyed the same mental architecture (Lang 1907a: 12). Tylor's experiences, after traveling in Mexico and studying indigenous Mexican technology, arguably coalesced to become the foundation of his view of culture:

> The condition of culture among the various societies of mankind is a subject apt for the study of laws of human thought and action. On the one hand, the uniformity which so largely pervades civilization may be ascribed, in great measure, to the uniform action of uniform causes: while on the other hand its various grades may be regarded as stages of development of evolution, each the outcome of previous history and about to do its proper part in shaping the history of the future. (Tylor 1903 [1871], 1: 1)

Tylor's *Anahuac* commentary concerning indigenous Central Mexican technological achievements, explicitly and implicitly states that the presence of civilization here, as in other parts of the world, was achieved through the domestication of natural resources. Despite the flaws of Tylor's evolutionary approach, he did accept cases of indigenous development from the ground up and looked for explanations in the specific environment and social context rather than insisting on diffusion from elsewhere, and this position of his is perhaps more dramatic than has been previously recognized. Cases in point are his pioneering studies in the area of language and linguistics.

Sound in intention

An enduring cultural anthropological given of ethnography is that fieldworkers learn the indigenous language of their target study population and Tylor admired the linguistic methods of inquiry of colonial administrators and missionaries (see Marett 1936: 46). Did Tylor study Spanish while in Mexico? Did he learn to understand Central Mexican *Nahuatl*? As noted by Marett, the tool set 'of any student of human culture' includes

> linguistics which cannot be left out of the account if a comprehensive view is to be taken … The infinite multiplicity of the details furnishes no sufficient excuse for leaving out of sight the supreme importance of language as a vehicle of meaning and Tylor acquired enough of an indigenous *Nahua* vocabulary to make use of it at every turn as a guide in Central Mexico … All this in *Anahuac* that, after all, professes to be no more than a chronicle of gay adventure. (ibid.: 39–40)

Tylor emphasized language and its power to convey the abstract ideas of a culture (Marett 1936: 48–9; Price 2003: 2.4). He (1865: 14–82; 1867: 87) speculated on the beginnings of numeracy, language and culture, positing their origins in sounds and gestures that led him to conduct ethnographic research amongst the deaf-and-mute in England and Germany (see Price 2003: 2.4).

Tylor's conclusions in conducting ethnography and historical analyses, however, were driven by theory, with the theory leading the data rather than the data leading the theory. Tylor always seemed to know what he wanted to prove in looking for remnants of the primitive in modern societies, to explain correlations in the 'stratigraphic' human past and present (Leopold 1980: 55; Lowie 1917: 267). His purpose, for example, while conducting ethnography with deaf-and-mute people, was to understand how meaning was arrived at through the articulation of primitive sounds that would eventually, as language evolved, be understood as words standing in for abstract thought (1865: 16). As Tylor said, 'if we knew now how language sprang up and grew in the world, our knowledge of man's earliest condition and history would stand on a very different basis from what it now does' (ibid.: 15).

Tylor trailblazed the path for future ethnographic practice by stressing that his main informant be his consultant-mentor (ibid.; 20). Within his ethnographic interactions, Tylor explained that, per his interviewing experience with deaf-and-mute people, when two people cannot speak each other's language and 'have to communicate without an interpreter, they adopt all over the world the method of communication by signs, which is the natural language of the deaf-mutes' (ibid.: 34). Recognizing that ethnographers enter the world of their informants and must therefore try to live in or be excluded from that world by those he or she wishes to analyse, Tylor added that 'he who talks to the deaf-and-dumb in their own language as I did, must throw off the rigid covering that the Englishman wears over his face like a tragic mask, that never changes its expression while love and hate, joy and sorrow, come out from behind it' (ibid.: 33).

Tylor, then, did conduct various ethnographic field investigations though none were very extensive, with the longest being his three-month long Central Mexican trip with Christy. Today, therefore, Tylor's work is for the most part

relegated to be doing what is termed 'armchair' analysis. Tylor also, however, did engage, from his London office, his far away subjects in an ethnographic method pioneering the use of questionnaires by staff fieldworkers that, though not without critique by primary investigators conducting their own on-site research, is still used today (Stocking 1983: 72–73; Stocking 2001: 112; Urry 1972: 46). Tylor maintained contact, through long-distance postal mail, 'with various "men on the spot" who seemed particularly well-situated and competent observers … And some of these people became active participants in the ethnographic process by answering queries and volunteering information' (Stocking 1995: 16). Unfortunately, 'the most active and sophisticated of Tylor's fieldworkers were missionaries of whom only a few were able to respond to native religion in a relatively unethnocentric way' (ibid.).

Stocking notes that Tylor's reliance on cultural documentation by missionaries trying to change the culture of their subjects surprises since 'Tylor was interested in the improvement of ethnographic data and his emphasis on detailed and careful observation was ironically intended to counteract the effects of ethnocentrism' (1995: 15) of which, however, he was so much at fault himself. According to Logan, Tylor noted that subjectivity biased

> the observer's reports and complained that, even when a behavior or belief is accurately recorded, its meaning is often misconstrued. No one today sees Tylor as successful in overcoming subjective bias; in fact, he is regularly held up as an example of precisely the opposite.… His interest in accuracy and his efforts to counteract bias in ethnography present us with a conundrum that goes to the essence of his project. How could a writer so clearly preoccupied with avoiding bias also be so patently guilty of it? (2009: 90)

Tylor, then, was reflexive but often struggled to transform his anthropology into a social science that was objective and free from theological bias.

Conclusion

Edward Burnett Tylor is not politically correct in 2017, and was not even in the mid-twentieth century, but he played, and continues to play, an important part in the history of anthropology (see Evans-Pritchard 1968: 3). Academics interested in the social, cultural and religious realms of humans cannot evade Tylor's theories and methods, whether they cite him or not (Lang 1907a: 6). However, as a

Tarascan/Purépecha descended Mexican author, I would have relished engaging with Tylor concerning his little explored conclusions that indigenous peoples do not make binary distinctions such as nature/culture (1903 [1871] 2: 445) – a case in point being *The Natural History of Religion* manuscript he was contemplating but never developed – re-evaluating diffusion in his coming to terms with his evolutionary priorities (1892b: 401, 406); for example, Western theological ideas assumed to be universal religious traits actually being introduced to 'primitives' by Christian missionaries (see Price 2003: 2.4; Stocking 1995: 13 and Stocking 2001: 114–15).

If a critique can be raised at Tylor by this Mexican author regarding his perception of indigenous Mexicans as ignorant savages, it is, ironically, that his own naïve assumptions led to his overreaching conclusions (see McClenon 1998: 529). Tylor took for granted the accuracy of the anthropological, biological and psychological knowledge of his time, though this was not already without controversy (Stocking 1963: 784–86; White 1960: iv). Though science was rapidly advancing during the Victorian age, the hubris of Tylor's time led him to produce erroneous explanations, which means that we have to situate his conclusions within his biographical, spatial and historical contexts (see Logan 2009: 112–13). A case in point is Tylor's dubious conclusion that 'the most probable view of the origin of the Mexican tribes seems to be the one ordinarily held, that they came from the Old World [Middle-East], bringing with them several legends, evidently the same as the histories recorded in the book of Genesis' (1861: 104).

Tylor acknowledged anthropology's limits admitting it to be an 'imperfect science' (1884d: 159), and will continue to be regarded as an advocate of cross-cultural comparisons in anthropological method (see Haddon 1917: 374; Lowie 1917: 266; Stocking 1995: 4, 8). Although not widely read anymore, Tylor's scholarship has had an enduring effect on academic disciplines well beyond the Victorian age (Ratnapalan 2008: 132). 'Culture', as the technical term for an interactive local societal whole, remains the ethnographic bread-and-butter concept that had been coined by Arnold (1869: 52) but which was popularized by Tylor to become the constitutive concept of anthropology (Stocking 1963: 796; Stocking 2001: 112; White 1960: iii).

Tylor stressed that ethnographers should emphasize that no human concept can be understood devoid of its history since 'the civilization of any age is not a new creation but a result of past times, modified to meet new conditions of life' (1869b: 533). Traces of Tylor's emerging method and theory are seen in *Anahuac,*

albeit not yet in cohesive manner (Ratnapalan 2008: 138). Tylor's ethnology was holistic, and his combined interests in archaeology, human biology, linguistics and ethnography gave rise to combining the four disciplines upon which most social and cultural anthropologists, including this author, were trained; and that is no small achievement.

7

‘Necromancy Is a Religion’: Tylor’s Discussion of Spiritualism in *Primitive Culture* and in His Diary

Anne Kalvig

When Edward B. Tylor wrote and published his works on ethnography and anthropology, he did so in a British society well familiar with the ‘modern sect’ of Spiritualism, as Tylor called it (Tylor 1958 [1871] 2: 10).[1] In some respects, one might say that Spiritualism bears its stamp on the whole of *Primitive Culture: Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Art, and Custom*, his most important work published in 1871 and in a second edition in 1873. In this magnum opus on the origin and development of culture and religion, the very notion of *spiritualism* as opposed to *materialism* is one of its main pillars. Spiritualism though, is mostly labelled and examined as *animism*.

In this chapter, I will shed light on how Tylor treats Spiritualism – understood as a general term without capitalization and as such mostly, not consistently, translated into animism, and as a label for a religious movement of his time, sometimes capitalized. I will give a close reading of certain parts of his texts and discuss what characterize these. I look at Spiritualism conveyed in *Primitive Culture* and in Tylor’s unpublished ‘Notes on Spiritualism’ (Stocking 1971), and also compare his fieldwork on Spiritualism and séances with my own fieldwork. Tylor treated Spiritualism and animism in many of his previous papers and articles, but the arguments of these were incorporated into *Primitive Culture* (Stocking 1971: 89–90). In conclusion, I reflect upon whether Tylor’s claims on mediumship, and Spiritualism in particular, and animism in general have anything to offer to us today, in terms of understanding the contemporary appeal of talking to the dead and other spirits.

As a Norwegian undergraduate student of religious studies in the 1990s, I learnt of Tylor as one of the founding fathers of our discipline (labelled ‘science

of religion' in Norway). Though, in our curriculum, Tylor's views were presented through other scholars' writings like Evans-Pritchard (1968), Sharpe (1986) and Morris (1987). We were not encouraged to read Tylor or other of the 'evolutionists' from the primary sources, which made us of course prone to buy other scholars' remediation of them – a well-known situation considering much of the transfer of knowledge in various fields. The focus was on Tylor's definition of religion and his theory of animism within an evolutionist paradigm. When researching contemporary Spiritualism as a scholar of religious studies in recent years, I was thus unaware of Tylor's keen interest in mediums and Spiritualism, and it has been fun and interesting to learn how he, as a Victorian intellectual, approached the phenomenon. There is some discursive similarity between the scholarly attitude towards Spiritualism of Tylor's days and our own time.

Spiritualism in *Primitive Culture,* Vol. I

As is well known and often appreciated, there is a pragmatic, witty tone throughout both volumes of *Primitive Culture*. The text is brimming with ethnographic examples to verify the hypothesis of the unity of human cognition and human nature, and of human history going through the evolutionary stages of savagery, barbarism and civilization. Tylor starts his survey by considering the theories of cultural development of his time, claiming '[p]rogress, degradation, survival, revival, modification, are all modes of the connexion that binds together the complex network of civilization' (1958 [1871] 1: 17). 'Survival', a term he introduces, is defined as

> processes, customs, opinions, and so forth, which have been carried on by force of habit into a new state of society different form that in which they had their original home, and they thus remain as proofs and examples of an older condition of culture out of which a newer has been evolved. (Tylor 1958 [1871] 1: 16)

The Midsummer bonfire and the Breton peasants' All Souls' supper for the spirits of the dead are such survivals (ibid.), whereas old thoughts and practices that 'burst out afresh, to the amazement of a world that thought them long since dead or dying' is survival passed into *revival* (Tylor 1958 [1871] 1: 17). Spiritualism is such a revival, Tylor holds, and a truly instructive case for the ethnographer (ibid.). Chapter IV of *Primitive Culture,* entitled 'Survival in Culture (Continued)', deals with 'occult sciences', or magic, and Spiritualism is presented here. The precursor to mediumship and Spiritualism of Victorian times is, for

Tylor, witchcraft. He writes with sympathy of the victims of accusations of witchcraft in various cultures and times, including his own, and holds that:

> Our own time has revived a group of beliefs and practices which have their roots deep in the very stratum of early philosophy where witchcraft makes its first appearance. This group of beliefs and practices constitutes what is now commonly known as Spiritualism. (Tylor 1958 [1871] 1: 141)

Tylor does not elaborate on how witchcraft in particular and Spiritualism are related, possibly it is the 'pagan' associations or 'savage philosophy and peasant folk-lore' (Tylor 1958 [1871] 1: 142) of both Spiritualism and witchcraft that comprise their connection. However, having given accounts of variations of 'magic art' in the twenty-seven pages of the chapter preceding the discussion of witchcraft and then Spiritualism, it does not become self-evident or clear why the witch and the Spiritualist or medium are more closely connected than other experts in 'magical' techniques. Tylor simply does not give us enough evidence to make this 'closeness of union' (1958 [1871] 1: 141) between witchcraft and Spiritualism probable.[2] One does here perhaps see, however, a foreshadowing of what is in later times a discussion of the relationship between pagan practices, like (neo)shamanism, and Spiritualism (Harner 2013; Wilson 2013; Kalvig 2015).

'Apparitions have regained the place and meaning which they held from the level of the lower races to that of mediæval Europe (…) As of old, men live now in habitual intercourse with the spirits of the dead. Necromancy is a religion (…)', Tylor vigorously claims (1958 [1871] 1: 143). In order to show the relationship between the newer and older Spiritualistic ideas, Tylor presents the ethnography of the most popular forms of spirit contact. He also tells the reader that he will later discuss some of the doctrines of modern Spiritualism in relation to animism (Tylor 1958 [1871] 1: 144). Spirit rapping and writing, levitation and unbinding are referred to by historical examples of a typically diverse kind: from the knocking of elves in European folk-lore, to spirits making similar sounds among 'the modern Dayaks, Siamese, and Singhalese' who also 'agree with the Esths as to such routing and rapping being caused by spirits' (Tylor 1958 [1871] 1: 145). Cited are also the knockings, from Roman times to 'modern folk-lore', popularly held to be omens of death (ibid.) as well as rapping being a kind of counted alphabet, for example, among prisoners. Tylor refers to how rappings started to trouble the Fox family in Arcadia, New York, in 1847 and heralded the start of modern Spiritualism after their deciphering of the knocks on 31 March 1848. He claims that the family 'had on the one hand only to revive the ancient

prevalent belief in spirit-rappings, which had almost fallen into the limbo of discredited superstitions, while, on the other hand, the system of communication with the spirits was ready made to their hand' (Tylor 1958 [1871] 1: 146).

It is interesting to note how Tylor displays a 'matter-of-fact' attitude to the spirit communications commencing with the Fox family, seeing it as a revival of ancient folklore. Later analyses have presented, in hindsight not available to Tylor of course, a variety of explanatory models concerning Spiritualism as a new religious movement, stressing themes like politics, class, gender, race/abolitionism, the novel theory of evolutionism and religious revivalism as a reaction towards modernity and secularism, as well as the development of mass media and more. The historical accounts presented in standard works like Braude (2001) and Owen (1989) are less engaged with folklore and folk religion, but very attentive towards the healing practices that were an integral part of (especially women's) Spiritualist activities in Tylor's days, and still are today (Kalvig 2016).[3] Tylor omits this important aspect in his accounts, except from a remark about spirit writing curing rheumatism (1958 [1871] 1: 149). His historical examples of early Spiritualist ideas and practices appearing as survivals and then as a revival in his contemporary England, range – besides the phenomenon of rapping traced back in history – from Chinese divinatory writing, through ecclesiastical accounts of signatures by deceased bishops, to Buddhist, Brahmanic and ancient Greek floating in the air (Tylor 1958 [1871] 1: 149–51). After comparing his contemporary, Davenport brothers' unbinding by the spirits with that of the 'Greenland angekok' and the Siberian shamans (Tylor 1958 [1871] 1: 154), Tylor concludes: 'Hereby it appears that the received spiritualistic theory of the alleged phenomena belongs to the philosophy of savages' (1958 [1871] 1: 155). He is certain that if a 'wild North American Indian' (ibid.) participated in a spirit séance in London, he would feel 'perfectly at home' (1958 [1871] 1: 156).

There is no little reason for searching ethnographic evidence for Spiritualism, and Tylor explains it this way:

> The issue raised by the comparison of savage, barbaric, and civilized spiritualism, is this: Do the Red Indian medicine-man, the Tatar necromancer, the Highland ghost-seer, and the Boston medium, share the possession of belief and knowledge of the highest truth and import, which, nevertheless, the great intellectual movement of the last two centuries has simply thrown aside as worthless? (1958 [1871] 1: 156)

Here, Tylor seems to be sincerely doubtful on behalf of Enlightenment and modernity, for he continues to ask whether 'what we are habitually boasting of

and calling new enlightenment, then, [is] in fact a decay of knowledge?' (ibid.). Still, in the remaining three pages of the chapter, Tylor does not readdress or come to a conclusion concerning this specific question of degeneration and how this fits into the greater evolutionary scheme of civilization and science comprising the climax of human history. Perhaps it is too obvious to him, and the questions are purely ironical? This does not seem to be in accordance with the tone of his ethnographic demonstrations throughout the volume, though, which are marked by a will to see human culture as rational within its own level of evolution and material conditions.

The conclusion of chapter IV in Volume I is a return to the starting point of the chapter, concerning what might be gained by looking at the history of 'occult science', that is, magic. Possibly ahead of his own time, Tylor remarked that the judgement of 'magic' (sorcery) worldwide is typically passed on the culturally 'other' (1958 [1871] 1: 113–15), a discussion to be developed in later times. He characterizes magic in rather conventional (and witty) turns as 'based on the Association of Ideas, a faculty which lies at the very foundation of human reason, but in no small degree of human unreason also' (Tylor 1958 [1871] 1: 116). It is this reason–unreason dichotomy that he revives at the end of the chapter, though now as an answer to possible accusations against the ethnographers' study of 'matters without practical moment' (1958 [1871] 1: 158) as a futile or vain occupation. Here he seemingly turns against his own material, otherwise exposed with some sympathy or at least attempts at contextual understanding. Now the general characteristics of what has been displayed as ethnographic material, is deemed as:

> [T]hings worn out, worthless, frivolous, or even bad with downright folly (…) we have reason to be thankful for fools. It is quite wonderful (…) to see how large a share stupidity and unpractical conservatism and dogged superstition have had in preserving for us traces of the history of our race. (Tylor 1958 [1871] 1: 156)

This is not only true for the savage and barbarian stages of cultural evolution, as Tylor claims: 'Yet even the modern civilized world has but half learnt this lesson [of advancing culture], and an unprejudiced survey may lead us to judge how many of our ideas and customs exist rather by being old than by being good' (1958 [1871] 1: 157).[4] A rather morbid example aimed, it seems, at silencing opponents closes the chapter. Tylor holds that just as it is better for an anatomist to carry out his studies on a dead rather than a living body, so it is better for the ethnographer to seek 'his evidence rather in such dead old history, than in

the discussions where he and those he lives among are alive with intense party feeling, and where his judgment is biased by the pressure of personal sympathy, and even it may be of personal gain or loss' (Tylor 1958 [1871] 1: 158). He is concerned with establishing his science of culture as a neutral discipline of its own, without normative, theological or political objectives. The defensive claim is that in order to do so, it is better to use 'dead' evidence that is not entangled in contemporary, social life and people's personal interests. Spiritualism, however, is exactly such a hotly debated kind of ethnographic material, and we see Tylor's inconsequential or ambiguous attitude towards it, by deeming it 'a truly instructive case' (1958 [1871] 1: 157), though 'things which have fallen out of popular significance, or even out of popular memory' are held to be the better to 'elicit general laws of culture' (1958 [1871] 1: 158). By looking at how this ambiguity is further explored in Volume II of *Primitive Culture,* we will perhaps understand more of Tylor's work and contribution towards Spiritualism. As it turns out, Spiritualism also came to be Tylor's only fieldwork conducted on native soil.

Spiritualism–animism in *Primitive Culture,* Vol. II

Tylor presents his still relevant and debated minimum definition of religion as 'the belief in Spiritual Beings' (Tylor 1958 [1871] 2: 8) in chapter XI, 'Animism'. He gives a nuanced discussion as to how far one could or should assert such beliefs being held by 'low races' past and present. Animism, 'not a new technical term' (Tylor 1958 [1871] 2: 9), has as its fundamental trait 'the deep-lying doctrine of Spiritual Beings, which embodies the very essence of Spiritualistic as opposed to Materialistic philosophy' (ibid.), and is chosen as a term over 'Spiritualism', due to the Spiritualist movement of his time having annexed it.

Tylor wanted his science of culture to be based on observation, logic and inference and pragmatic thinking. Of course, Tylor's suggestion that it is primitive man's pondering on the difference between a living and a dead body, the causes of waking, sleep, trance, disease and death and the appearances of human shapes in dreams and visions (Tylor 1958 [1871] 2: 12) that produce the idea of the *soul*, is based on speculation, not observation. However, he is cautious enough to write 'It seems as though' (Tylor 1958 [1871] 2: 12) concerning the origin of the idea of the soul, and 'this definition is by no means of universal application' concerning the characteristics of the soul as a thin unsubstantial human image with all those qualities of personality, mobility and imperishability (Tylor 1958 [1871] 2: 13) that are culturally well-known assumptions. The

fact that concepts like life, mind, soul, spirit, ghost, and so forth (Tylor 1958 [1871] 2: 19) are often used in a mixed up and confused manner, Tylor ascribes to these terms being more like 'several forms and functions of one individual being', and not really separate entities (ibid.). The ambiguity thus has to do with not only vagueness in terms, but with 'an ancient theory of substantial unity which underlies them' (Tylor 1958 [1871] 2: 20).

After the introductory compassing of the concept of the soul, the following chapters of Volume II on animism comprise a multitude of examples of how soul and spirit are shown in belief and practice, from ethnographic accounts and literary sources. How do these accounts fit in with what he presents as Spiritualism in Volume I? Actually, modern Spiritualism is almost absent from Tylor's second volume, even though the discussion of the qualities of the soul, its departure from and communication with the living world, spirits as good or evil, possession as the cause of diseases and oracle-inspiration and more, are thoroughly presented throughout chapters XI–XV. All of which could have been related to Tylor's present-day Spiritualism. Yet he does not, and it does not seem to be because he is utterly concerned with demonstrating the evolution of conceptualizations and philosophy from 'savage' culture via 'barbarian' to 'civilized' culture, with a focus on the first two. In Volume I, Tylor has made it clear that evolution and civilization are a complex of '[p]rogress, degradation, survival, revival, modification' (1958 [1871] 1: 17), and not a uniform or one-sided development. Modern Spiritualism could thus fit within the frames of animism, in fact, the case of mediumship, Spiritualism and its popular appeal could have made a strong case for Tylor's hypothesis of humanity's common rationality (and irrationality, as per his definition of magic). It would also be a logical follow-up of his questions raised in chapter IV, Volume I, cited above (Tylor 1958 [1871] 1: 156), as to whether the modern and enlightened denial of Spiritualistic and mediumistic 'truths' as seen in various cultures, represents a 'decay in knowledge'.

It seems as if the seventeenth-century intelligentsia (Tylor cites John Milton's *Paradise Lost*) and an occasional reference to the English peasantry of the immediate past is the closest Tylor will go, concerning animist-Spiritualist notions of his own culture and time, in Volume II. An important exception to this rule is Tylor's discussion of 'wraiths and doubles', where he holds that, 'Examining the position of the doctrine of wraiths among the higher races, we find it especially prominent in three intellectual districts, Christian hagiography, popular folklore, and modern spiritualism' (1958 [1871] 2: 32). The modern Spiritualistic material cited, he feels compelled to disassociate himself from by writing 'Narratives of this class, which I can here only specify without arguing on them,

are abundantly in circulation' (1958 [1871] 2: 33–34). Tylor does not make this manoeuvre when discussing similar ethnographic material from other times and places.

Thus, within volumes I and II of *Primitive Culture*, Spiritualism is both directly and indirectly addressed, as an example of animism/Spiritualism and of savagery or savage thought seeping into modern civilization. There is, however, a reluctance to employ this ethnographic material in its contemporary version in Volume II, when animism is elaborated. And in Volume I, the discussion of Spiritualism as occult science turns into a defence of ethnography as sound and rational science.

Spiritualism as fieldwork: Tylor's diary

In 1971, anthropologist George W. Stocking Jr. made some, until then unpublished, notes by Tylor accessible in an article called 'Animism in Theory and Practice: E. B. Tylor's Unpublished "Notes on Spiritualism"'. Stocking discusses how Tylor's knowledge of the Spiritualism of his time influenced his development of the theory of animism, and the middle section of Stocking's article is the printed version of Tylor's diary and field notes from his ethnographic fieldwork on Spiritualism. Tylor spent the month of November 1872 in London 'to look into the alleged manifestations' (Tylor in Stocking 1971: 92). With the permission of Mr Bernhard Fagg at the Pitt Rivers Museum, Stocking has painstakingly decoded Tylor's sixty-eight handwritten pages (Stocking 1971: 104). Stocking does not comment upon the ethical problems raised by the publishing of private notes, perhaps never meant for the public.[5] The right to privacy for the dead is weaker than for the living, and Stocking had his permissions in order. Nevertheless, we owe it both to Tylor and the persons he name in his notes, to be considerate and apologetic. We may never know if Tylor intended, in an official and adapted version, to characterize the people and events the way he did in his diary. Still, the notes have now been easily accessible for forty-five years, and comprise a highly illuminating case of ethnography on Spiritualism, both fun as well as disturbing to read.

The field notes comprise the documentation of seven different sittings or séances during one month. However, the notes start with a retelling of a former field experience with Spiritualism, possibly in 1867, with the legendary Daniel Dunglas Home (Tylor in Stocking 1971: 92). Tylor recalls an accordion held by Home the wrong way under a table playing tunes 'as if by a player accustomed to

the instrument touching them' (ibid.) as well as of the table tilting and spirit raps being heard. 'All complained that the sitting was a total failure, but I failed to make out how either raps, table-levitation, or accordion-playing were produced' (ibid.). More than pondering the inexplicable phenomena, though, Tylor closes the introductory account by expressing reservations about Home, him being too clever a man, who makes women act stupidly around him (ibid.). Tylor also reveals that due to severe illness and the loss of a child, Home's 'power of psychism [is] declared to have left him entirely' (Tylor in Stocking 1971: 93). This directness sets the tone for the rest of the reports: Tylor is quite ready to focus on the appearances and perceived personalities of the mediums, and he is not merciful. The female mediums, responsible for six out of the seven séances, are often 'stout', 'pasty-faced', 'long-nosed', 'ugly creature', 'coarse' (Tylor in Stocking 1971: 93–96). Thinner and younger female mediums are less grossly characterized, and the only male medium (except the former account of Home), Rev. W. Stainton Moses, is described as a sensitive and sickly man. This is the only medium with whom he spends time beyond the séances, and he learns of Moses's life story and personal challenges. He views Moses as 'a gentleman & apparently sincere' (Tylor in Stocking 1971: 100).

Tylor talks of a busy and social time during his fieldwork. However, seven séances or sittings during twenty-three days (4–27 November) could be said to be a rather relaxed pace regarding spirit encounters, and Tylor has had ample time to ponder on his experiences during this month-long stay in London. He is great fun to read, as he with a dry sense of humour notes various instances of 'frantic mock merriment' and of mediums and sitters singing out of tune, of wild guessing and cheating by the mediums and the other séance participants' reactions. Tylor behaves rather childishly himself, reporting that he made 'the long nose for a good time' in the dark, at medium Jennie Holmes (Tylor in Stocking 1971: 93). The notes are an eyewitness account of the atmosphere, motivations, social context, class and gender divisions, as well as language, conventions, techniques and phenomena of Victorian, bourgeois Spiritualist events. These are not the noisy, public demonstrations of paid working-class mediums in a town hall filled with a drunken audience demanding spectacular communication and proofs from the other side. It is the quieter, smaller gatherings of upper-middle-class people, with the medium sometimes paid, or sometimes unpaid, in private homes. However, the mediums Tylor encountered were generally of a 'lower class origin' (Stocking 1971: 102). The sitters hoped to encounter their beloved dead ones and get proof of eternal life, but some were openly sceptical, like Tylor.

The following excerpt shows part of the content of a séance and Tylor's wry style of reporting:[6]

> In the evening I went to (…) to see Miss Lottie Fowler. In the room I found a curios assortment of 20 people. Among them was a girl of 22 in sealskin jacket, lady-like but ready to talk confidentially with anybody. (…) Then came in the medium, a pasty-faced, long-nosed, ugly creature. We joined hands, but her going off into a trance was interrupted by a grave absorbed old man sneezing violently (…) and the medium, who had a sense of humour, writhed in agonies of suppressed laughter. At last going off, with sighs, yawns and starts she became possessed, & started up with a child's voice & gesture & attitude in the character of Annie, a child-spirit with quaint child's jargon (…) She [the medium channeling Annie] went round the company, stopping before each with eyes shut, and telling each of the spirits she saw behind him or her. Her descriptions were guessed wrong 4 times in 5, or 9 in 10, but cleverly shifted and made right by getting something out of the sitter (…) Stopping over against a youth of 20 who wore a woman's wedding ring, she said 'me knows whose dat ring, dat your mother's ring'. No one of the interested audience seemed to be struck with my simple question: whose else could it be? (Tylor in Stocking 1971: 95)

We note the different words used for a young, female co-sitter and the female medium, and the witty mixture of reporting and commenting. As an ethnographer, Tylor does reflect upon his own role as participant-observer elsewhere in the notes, as to how he is received and evaluated by the mediums and the channelled spirits. In several of the sittings, the alleged spirits point out Tylor as a mediumistic person not yet aware of his abilities and as such, a hindrance to their communication. This, in fact, marks a climax of the notes, namely, that Tylor himself goes into trance in the second to last séance he attends. There, Rev. Moses, whom Tylor respects, writes in spirit writing (automatic/trance writing): 'We [the spirits] cannot manifest through the medium' – 'the medium' being either Moses, whose powers Tylor absorbed, or Tylor himself, 'being a powerful but underdeveloped medium' (Tylor in Stocking 1971: 100). Tylor recalls what happened:

> I myself became drowsy & seemed to the others about to go off likewise. To myself, I seemed partly under a drowsy influence, and partly consciously shamming, a curious state of mind which I have felt before & which is very likely the incipient stage of hysterical simulation. It was a kind of tendency to affect more than I actually felt. (Tylor in Stocking 1971: 100)

Tylor is thus dismissing himself as 'genuine', even though the others in the circle witnessed his apparent trance. His looking back at the incident makes it clear that this is something he has experienced *before*, a curious though familiar state of mind; it is something psychological and self-induced, not spiritual.

In an article discussing Victorian Spiritualist adherents' and sceptics' understanding of so-called spirit attacks, of revelation and refutation in séances, media theorist Erhard Schüttpeltz finds Tylor's 'Unpublished Notes' a telling example (Schüttpeltz 2010). Tylor had, with his Spiritualist fieldwork, set out to encounter 'animism' in a non-authentic or at least questionable form, and a 'survival' of older and still potent customs, Schüttpeltz holds (2010: 161). 'He would meet there [in Spiritualism] (…) the dis-simultaneity of the simultaneous, the asynchronicity of the synchronous' (ibid.). However, experiencing and dismissing his own trance, Tylor comes close to admitting to a male hysteria, thus undermining his own authenticity, Schüttpeltz suggest (2010: 169). Having found the notes as most likely meant for publication, Schüttpeltz wonders if this is the reason why they remained unpublished (ibid.). I will return to this question after providing a piece of modern fieldwork from a similar Spiritualist practice as the ones seen by Tylor. Tylor's own concluding remarks in his field notes, are that he is less convinced of a 'genuine residue' (Tylor in Stocking 1971: 100) now than before, and that his judgement is 'in abeyance' (ibid.). 'Seeing has not (to me) been believing, & I propose a new text to define faith: "Blessed are they that have seen, and *yet* have believed"'. (ibid.).

A contemporary, comparative example of fieldwork on spiritualism

In recent years, I have conducted fieldwork in Norway and the United Kingdom comprising Spiritualist séances, 'spiritual evenings' ('services'), private sittings, Spiritualism as part of healing practices, Spiritualism in psychic lines, on Facebook as well as within popular culture (Kalvig 2014, 2015, 2016). The example below is from English soil, from the Spiritualist institution Arthur Findlay College (AFC) at Stansted, Mountfitchet. The case will provide material to compare and discuss Tylor's field notes and his categories of Spiritualism and animism and their relevance today, and serve as another example of 'anxiety and of method', as Schüttpeltz puts it, regarding Tylor's notes (Schüttpeltz 2010: 169).

The table turning at Stansted Hall[7]

In a large and beautiful room in a Victorian estate, thirty-five adults sit in chairs in a circle. The chairs are facing the centre of the circle and everyone is visible to each other, full daylight pours in from the many, tall windows displaying the enormous estate garden. There is an eager atmosphere in the room, almost trembling with expectation. In the middle of the circle are two mature, well-dressed English women seated in chairs facing each other. They are going to lead a séance where the spirits will communicate through a piece of furniture, a coffee table. If we are lucky, that is – it does not always work, I am told.

Between the long-standing Spiritualist mediums and teachers, Val Williams and Sally Barnes, is a small coffee table. The women smile at each other; they appear focused, almost a bit nervous. Val says a prayer before we start, she asks those on the other side to come through to us here if they like to, and she assures them and us that everything done in this séance, is done out of love and to serve the spirit world and Spirit in general. Val and Sally put their hands on the table between them, and then we get going. Perhaps, half a minute passes without anything happening. Then I note the table start to move; it is rocking back and forth. Ok, I privately ponder as they hold their hands on it; it is a round, quite small three-legged coffee table, it is probably easy to make it rock like that. I look at the participant next to me, a Norwegian woman of long standing in the Spiritualist field; we smile at each other. We whisper, silence and reverence are not required at this séance; to the contrary, sounds and responses from the participants are seen as positive and contributing to the séance reaching the right 'energy level'.

Val and Sally speak aloud about what is happening. The table between them now tilts so fiercely, that they have to get up from the chairs. People smile and laugh when the two women, in their stockings, must start following the table – the table-turning dance is on! I laugh aloud myself, as this looks completely surreal. I see something for the first time in my life, and I feel like a little child. Here are two adult, well-mannered women now barely touching a table that tilts and rocks and in fact *walks* by means of these movements, with seeming determination towards one of the circle participants! The atmosphere is constantly rising, with laughter, cheering and shouting from us sitting and watching this phenomenon that run counter to all natural science. This little table wants something; it moves with a purpose, or perhaps more correctly, the possible spirits around have a purpose with this table, and Val and Sally must hang on while tripping and bowing! The table stops and rocks with more quiet movements at a joyful

and touched circle participant, and Sal and Val, who hear and see things I cannot hear or see, tell the chosen one who are visiting from the spirit world and what they want to convey.

As it turned out, this was only the beginning of a séance that became a very lively event indeed. I also had to get up and dance with the moving furniture, with yet another table that had been brought into the circle, due to there being so much 'influx' from the other side, that two tables were needed. And I know for sure I did not move the table that rushed around under my fingers! Discussing in depth how to understand materiality, animation and agency in things (Collins 2015; Harvey 2013b; Houtman and Meyer 2012) will, however intriguing it may be, exceed the scope of this chapter. Some points will be made, though, as the happenings and the items involved in séances, *are there*, so to speak, for both Tylor and me, and are of course open to interpretation and discussion (in Kalvig 2017, I try to make sense of table tilting by employing cognitive perspectives from the science of religion). When Pels (2012: 36) holds that Tylor's view on the 'materiality of the séance' is that it is a human construction, a result of either fraud or hysteria, as voluntary or involuntary deception, the question marks and open endings that Tylor did leave behind in his notes, disappear. Pels (2012: 37–38) makes sense out of Tylor's manoeuvres regarding how to place his scientific work within the Victorian debates on materiality, Spirituality and Christianity. I employ here a more narrowly focused method, suggesting what the reading of Tylor's text might tell us of Spiritualism's appeal then and now, somewhat loosened from the specific, Victorian discursive context in order to make comparison possible.

Belief in spiritual beings and the challenge of spiritualism

We see that there is great similarity between Victorian Spiritualism and the Spiritualism of today – and, of course, great differences. The similarities – the belief in a benign spirit world, that the spirits can and desire to communicate to us, that mediums are able to facilitate this communication and that it can be done in a circle of both like-minded as well as neutral or sceptic participants, point to an enduring Spiritualist movement commencing in the mid-1800s in the United States and Europe. That this movement also takes the form of a more integrated, cultural field or trait, is not new, since for nearly 170 years, organized and unorganized forms of spirit belief and spirit contact have flourished. In neither Tylor's case nor mine, are the participants likely to have seen themselves as

animists. They are Spiritualists; possibly seeing some kind of connectedness with the mediums and their audience of earlier times, but most likely focusing on the connections to the spirit world. Differences between Tylor's and my examples, are that the table turning of Stansted Hall happened in the context of a course, of professional training, and was as such not as open to the public as the séances Tylor attended. However, other séances and services at AFC are open, and the data from spirit communication in Norway and the United Kingdom are much in accordance.[8]

As a scholar, Tylor appears open-minded and playful, even though he is a sceptic. There is a long leap from the sketching out of a union between the witch and the medium in *Primitive Culture*, and the sometimes wondering, sometimes harshly dismissing character of the field notes. It seems as though Tylor embarked on his fieldwork in Spiritualism not to conclude whether it was an anachronism and a 'stupid' survival turned into a revival, but rather to see for himself, what it was, or perhaps hoping to achieve something. Of course, introspecting into Tylor's motives is futile, but his notes are brimming with expressed hope, expectations as well as disappointments. The fieldwork seems more like a response to Tylor's own questions in *Primitive Culture*, of whether the comparison of savage, barbaric and civilized Spiritualism has revealed belief and knowledge 'of the highest truth and import', deemed worthless by scientific progress. His answer leans to 'no', but is actually 'in abeyance', and many of the inexplicable happenings he reports (and does not dismiss) stand by themselves as mysterious and suggestive to the reader.

Tylor reports in his field notes phenomena he easily can explain (away), like the medium's 'channelling' being clever guesswork, as well as phenomena he deem 'unintelligible to me', like the raps occurring during a séance with Katie Fox herself (Tylor in Stocking 1971: 98). Stocking provides a fine discussion of how social standing and class consciousness becomes relevant in Tylor's notes (Stocking 1971: 102–03), stating that 'The problem was that people who theoretically should not have believed were in fact believers. According to Tylor's notion of survivals, the contemporary locus of traces of early animistic belief should have been among the lower classes' (Stocking 1971: 102). However, Stocking finds that Spiritualism as a manifestation of religion of 'the most basic, primitive sort' appealed to the middle-class intellectualists because of the general Victorian 'crisis in faith' (1971: 103). Here, a number of other factors could also be highlighted, as several later analysts have done. There are several reasons why Tylor would be both interested in and ambivalent towards Spiritualism. His Quaker background could be relevant; Quakers in the United States being

supportive of Spiritualism and several groups of Progressive Friends evolving into Spiritualist meetings (Braude 2001: 67). On this aspect, however, Tylor and the secondary sources seem to be rather silent.

Spiritualism got dryly catalogued in Volume I of *Primitive Culture* compared to the lively accounts from the field. The genres are of course, very different. However, the field notes reveal an interest in people, in their world views and meaning making that is nice to read, even though Tylor is at times derogatory. Tylor's findings in Volume II of *Primitive Culture* concerning the soul, the human tendency of mixing concepts like life, mind, soul, spirit, ghost and more, the characteristics of animism as a variegated phenomenon – this discussion could, as mentioned, indeed have shed light on Victorian Spiritualism. Instead, Tylor created a distance from this material in his scholarly writing, and chose not to publish his notes. What troubled him, and is this uneasiness perhaps similar to contemporary, academic attitudes towards Spiritualism?

Tylor's belief-based and rationalistic theory of religion has been criticized as being purely intellectualist. However, this may be ascribed to later developments and 'hang-ups' in the theories of religion, as Paul Radin claimed in the introduction to the 1958 edition of *Primitive Culture* (Radin in Tylor 1958 [1871] 2: xi). Concerning Spiritualism both as a phenomenon and a concept, belief *is* indeed vital, as I will claim. That of course does not imply the whole edifice of allegedly typical Protestant understandings of 'belief' as a dogmatic and scripture-oriented, solemn act distanced from the body and the senses. If a table turns, raps are heard and a message is given by a medium, the meaning of these phenomena will differ according to whether one believes the spirits are real or not. Since Spiritualist affairs may greatly involve the senses, material items and direct communication, the question of belief is a complex one: In my case, I could not deny as a researcher that I danced with a table moving about in inexplicable ways – and it was impossible not to be swept off my feet by the intense and joyous atmosphere. Whether the table thumped out messages actually from my deceased ones, is another question, involving belief of some kind.

Perhaps, a different definition of religion would have made it easier for Tylor to examine the Spiritualism of his contemporaries. Having Tylor's definition in the back of my mind, the definition I have used when exploring mediumship and Spiritualism, is religion as 'communicated conceptual universes, practices and experiences related to a spiritual reality', in order to be able to investigate what people do and experience, not just what they believe, related to spiritual reality. With the scholarly discourses and his interests at the time, obvious and interesting findings of the fieldwork of Tylor do not quite surface. The séances

Tylor attends, like the ones I have seen over the years, are condensed expressions of social interaction, relationality, experiences, meaning making, hope and longing encompassing understandings of the spiritual and the material, the transcendent and the immanent, in intriguing ways. For Tylor, patterns, rules and laws of culture as comparable to natural science, comprise the context of his endeavours. He appears inconclusive and ambivalent in his field notes as well as in *Primitive Culture* concerning how to understand Spiritualism and its appeal – and where to place himself regarding this material.

Concluding remarks

When I, as a scholar, am allowed to do fieldwork in Spiritualism, I can do so, confident that people will not question my wits or judgement. Or, that is not completely true; talking to and engaging with people who talk to the dead – a majority of them women – is not prestigious in our days, and is still not seen by quite a few as a proper object of study for the scholar of religion. In Tylor's days, other and similar issues were at stake, the battles being tougher and having bigger consequences. The role of science, materialism, the Christian Church and how to understand religion and belief in spiritual beings in rational, cultural scientific ways in the growing modernity, was high on the agenda (in an article from 2014, Ann Taves shows how these trends became cemented in the congresses of psychology at the turn of the century, shifting scientific focus from paranormal phenomena to religious *experience*).

When Tylor's ethnographic material comes too close, so to speak, as when he goes into trance during Rev. Moses's séance, his reaction is to assure himself (and a future reader?) that the feeling was nothing new, he had had it before (which makes one wonder what state this really is, and why he has been prone to it, perhaps in Quaker meetings?). Here is the serious, Victorian academic who, in spite of his humour and playfulness, nevertheless needs to demonstrate control and restraint. When I saw, touched and danced with a moving table, I did not have any prestige to lose; I felt like a child and at that moment acted almost like a child, I guess, giggling, laughing, and indulging in the unknown. In the séance of the table, it was the messages from the table (the spirits) that made people cry. These messages were 'decoded' by the mediums, in my case, three circle participants simultaneously telling me what my dead relatives allegedly wanted me to know. For Tylor, the messages

are – mostly – fraud and deception. The material phenomena as such seems to thrill him more. However, Stocking (1971: 101) underscores the fact that a dead sister of Tylor might have been channelled. Tylor seems to give this some consideration in retrospect (cf. Tylor in Stocking 1971: 94), but again, in a subdued way – her name is anonymized by asterisks, and he refrains from commenting upon it.

It is challenging to handle Spiritualism when 'belief' and the spiritual seems to become material and tangible, in the 1870s as it is today. Had 'animism' been our common denominator of this human tendency instead of religion, it could perhaps have been less controversial. However, the insider-outsider and emic-etic dichotomies, to name but one important issue, cannot be erased by a word or name alone. Awareness of and protest against cultural stigma towards the belief and practice of 'the other', however, perhaps requires new terms and categories. As such, Tylor is in fact inspiring and appears fresh, in spite of obvious shortcomings as a representative of a formative phase in the science of religion.

Notes

1 In this chapter, I employ Tylor's *Primitive Culture*, second edition from 1873, in its Harper Torchbooks editions from 1958. Volumes I and II are indicated by 1958 [1871] 1 and 1958 [1871] 2, respectively.
2 He does cite a verse from John Bale's sixteenth-century *Interlude Concerning Nature* (John Bale 1562: *A New Comedy or Interlude, Concerning the Laws of Nature, Moises, and Christ*, London, 4to) where the voice of a witch holds that he or she is able to do harm to wells, crops and poultry, as well as 'make stoles to daunce' (1958 [1871] 1: 142), but this is hardly persuasive as a general explanation of witchcraft and spiritualism being intimately related.
3 Swatos and Gissurarson (1997): *Icelandic Spiritualism: Mediumship and Modernity in Iceland* is an example of an ethnography on spiritualism more attentive to its folk religion and pagan predecessors.
4 He is obviously integrating, into the text, more direct references to ongoing debates or discourses with his contemporaries, named 'moralist or politician' (1958 [1871] 1: 159), who seemingly criticize his ethnographic method or the assumptions forming its basis, like the idea of humanity being equally rational or cognitively equipped.
5 Media theorist Erhard Schüttpelz seems to find that the notes were meant for publication: 'While Tylor did leave the journal in publishable form, giving it the

unmistakeable title "Notes on Spiritualism" and providing it with a literary ending unarguably clear and memorable, the text remained unpublished for a hundred years' (Schüttpelz 2010: 162). To me, the case is less convincing. The notes are, in Stocking's words, difficult to reproduce: 'The punctuation is often haphazard, the language is often elliptical, and the handwriting is often quite difficult to decipher' (1971: 104). The notes are also inserted with various photographs, drawings and advertisement clippings. Tylor did not publish the notes, neither did he destroy them, but how he, as a scholar, would have liked them to appear to the public, is an open and ethically demanding question.

6 Here, I omit Stocking's brackets originally indicating where he has put in lacking words like 'I' and 'the' and punctuations to clarify the text. The one explanatory bracket is inserted by me.

7 A longer version of this field report is included in Kalvig 2016.

8 For details on various forms and actors of Norway, see Kalvig 2016. There is a diversity of organized Spiritualists in Norway, including spiritists following Kardec's teachings. The Norwegian Spiritualist Union and the Spiritualist National Union of the United Kingdom have close ties, and Norwegian Spiritualists are often eager to attend AFC courses. In addition, of course, there are large numbers of people both in the United Kingdom and in Norway and elsewhere, who relate more loosely to spirit belief and communication of some sort. In Norway, mediation of spirit communication is immensely popular; of a population of 5 million, nearly half a million weekly watch the series *The Power of the Spirits* on national television, a house-cleansing docu-drama with renowned mediums as stars.

8

Edward Tylor, Archaeologist? The Archaeological Foundations of 'Mr Tylor's Science'[1]

Katy Soar

With his 1871 publication *Primitive Culture: Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Art, and Custom*, Edward Tylor pioneered ethnography as a new branch of study. In that book, the separate threads of his previous works were drawn together to create the final version of his theory of culture, and of the evolution of religion, and as a result he became known – in a British context at least – as 'the father of anthropology'. His work had considerable impact with admirers such as Charles Darwin, who wrote to Tylor that, 'It is wonderful how you trace animism from the lower races up to the religious beliefs of the different races. It will make me for the future look at religion – a belief in a soul, etc. – from a new point of view' (C. Darwin to E. B. Tylor, 24 September 1871; British Library Manuscripts, Add 50254, f.41–2). In an oft-repeated phrase, Max Müller, professor of comparative philology at Oxford University, referred to the new discipline of ethnography as espoused in *Primitive Culture* as 'Mr. Tylor's Science'.

Here, I want to make the case for Tylor the archaeologist – not that Tylor practised archaeology per se (although the collection of material culture was a prominent element in his work) – but rather, that 'Mr Tylor's Science' owes a debt to the discipline of archaeology. Tylor's attempts to distinguish the parameters of his new science were heavily influenced by the intellectual context of his time, but I suggest here that it was archaeology that provided the most enduring of these, and that this is both explicit (through his use of material culture) and implicit (through analogy and his use of the language of archaeology) in his work.

In *Primitive Culture*, Tylor's central concept was culture, 'that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and other capabilities and habits acquired by man as members of society' (Tylor 1871, 1: 1). His aim was to disentangle, develop and outline the general principles, tendencies and laws of all human life (Brown, Coote and Gosden 2000: 262) – and in this his framework was explicitly archaeological, as it was the discovery of the deep past and the utilization of prehistoric material that allowed Tylor to build his new science (Gruber 2008: 45). The disciplines of archaeology and anthropology prior to Tylor were intertwined, until Tylor was rewarded for his endeavours with two 'firsts' – the position of reader in anthropology at Oxford in 1884, and that of professor in 1896 – representing the first recognition of anthropology as an academic science. Compare that with archaeology – the Disney Chair of Archaeology at Cambridge was first appointed in 1851 (John Howard Marsden), and Oxford had the Lincoln and Merton Chair of Classical Archaeology from 1885.[2] Thus, it is with Tylor that we see the institutionalization of the discipline of anthropology for the first time. The approaches taken by Tylor stimulated the growth of anthropology and recast the relationship between archaeology and anthropology (Murray 2014: 141).

In the mid- to late-nineteenth century, the disciplines of prehistoric archaeology and anthropology were close relatives. The accumulating evidence from prehistoric sites was used by anthropologists such as Tylor to provide empirical examples of the stages of human social and cultural evolution. Similarly, anthropological accounts were used by archaeologists such as Arthur Evans and James Fergusson to endorse their theories of the process of social evolution and of material culture (Price 2007: 10). By the end of the century, the emergence of professional posts in university departments – such as Tylor's – had constructed new intellectual boundaries (ibid.: 15).

To raise ethnography to the level of a science, Tylor utilized the methodologies of contemporary natural sciences, by comparative methods which involved the collection of data and the delineation of the laws and patterns which lay behind them (Atherton 2010: 69). Foremost among these was an evolutionary model of human culture, which was central to Tylor's work – the idea, based on the Darwinian premise that historical processes operated in a slow continuous manner (Gosden 1999: 64) – and which he based on the concept of 'the psychic unity of humankind', originally pioneered by Adolf Bastian, which argued that mental apparatus were the same across time and space; it was social conditions which led to different levels of rational development (ibid.: 65). This holistic notion combined all human capabilities and practices together, from techniques

of food production to abstract ideas of religion and spirituality, and offered a coherency and logic that could be discovered by a single discipline.

To be fair, Tylor himself was explicit about his debt to archaeology. In *Primitive Culture* he notes that 'the master key to the investigation of man's primeval condition is held by Prehistoric Archaeology' (Tylor 1871, 1: 52). While the focus of *Primitive Culture* is the 'modern primitive' and the evolution of mental culture, Tylor sets up his argument for the evolution of cultural traits on the basis of material culture, and prehistoric material culture at that. In the book's second chapter, 'Developments in Culture', Tylor expands his arguments on the development of culture 'by comparing the various stages of civilization among races known to history, with the aid of archaeological inference from the remains of pre-historic tribes' (ibid., 19). Here, he extrapolates direct relations between 'rude tribes of the East Indies, Africa and South America' (ibid.: 55) and prehistoric Swiss lake dwellings or Scandinavian shell middens. Tylor also traces the development of weaponry, from 'rough sticks' or 'rounded stones' through to the finished spear or hammer (ibid.: 58), drawing on the work of, among others, Colonel Lane Fox (aka Augustus Pitt Rivers), of whom he later declared: 'The principle that thus became visible to him in weapon-development is not less true through the whole range of civilization' (Tylor 1884a: 549) – a notion shared by Tylor himself. In discussing his friend John Evans's attempts to create stone implements using prehistoric technology (Tylor 1871, 1: 59), he even presents an early form of experimental archaeology to facilitate his argument on the evolutionary development of Stone Age tool technology. Archaeology thus supplies the physical evidence – the material signposts – of the development of culture, in regard to culture and religion, through time. Tied to evolutionary theory, this approach constituted a new object of archaeology – that more mundane material items could delineate stages of cultural development, from savagery to civilization (Shanks, Platt and Rathje 2004: 67). In his declaration that 'the tendency of culture has been similar throughout the existence of human society, and that we may fairly judge from its known historic course what its prehistoric course may have been, is a theory clearly entitled to precedence as a fundamental principle of ethnographic research' (Tylor 1871, 1: 32–33), the relationship between archaeology and prehistory and the development of 'Mr Tylor's Science' is made explicit.

But how did he get here? The rest of this chapter will explore the origins of Tylor's methodologies and approaches to anthropology and culture, with an eye to delineating the origins and trajectories of archaeology's influence in his most famous work. Tylor's experiences in Mexico in the 1850s led to the first

of his major publications, *Anauhac; or, Mexico and the Mexicans Ancient and Modern*, in 1861. As we shall see, Tylor was at the heart of developments in geology and prehistoric archaeology that were gathering momentum throughout the late 1850s and in the 1860s. But in the early, formative years of his work, there is perhaps one person who played a crucial role in the development of Edward Tylor, archaeologist, than any of the others to be considered. That person was Henry Christy.

Tylor, Christy and the creation of *Anahuac*

It was Tylor's travel experiences in the 1850s that principally shaped the foundation of his anthropological writings. These laid the foundations for the development of the new science, and these experiences were directly and indirectly influenced by archaeology, partly through the presence and influence of his travelling companion, Henry Christy. As Marett notes in his 1936 biography of Tylor:

> Nay, mankind might never have appealed to him as his 'proper study,' had not Henry Christy, omnivagant and omnivorous snapper-up of *Realien*, fired him to collect not only such ponderable facts, but any and all facts that bore on the human story. (Marett 1936, 193)

It was a chance meeting that led Tylor to encounter Christy. Tylor's brother Alfred encouraged Tylor to travel to North America for his health, after he contracted tuberculosis in 1854. The younger Tylor spent 'the best part of a year' (1855) travelling through Louisiana (Tylor 1861: 1), before heading to Cuba where he met Christy, a businessman and fellow Quaker, on a bus in Havana in the spring of 1856. Christy was on his way to Mexico to study remnants of the ancient Toltec culture in the Valley of Mexico and persuaded Tylor to accompany him (Street 2007). Tylor's account of their travels, entitled *Anahuac; or Mexico and the Mexicans Ancient and Modern*, was published soon after their return, in 1861 (for more discussion on the writing of *Anahuac*, see Astor-Aguilera, this volume).

There was much in common between Christy and Tylor, who, at forty-five, was twenty years Tylor's senior. Both were Quakers, who had grown up in London and came from manufacturing families. They also had similar educational backgrounds, having studied at schools operated by the Society of Friends (Sera-Shriar 2016: 155).

While more of a travelogue than a sustained piece of anthropological writing, Tylor noted the suitability of Mexico as a place to conduct ethnological research, with the substantial amount of archaeological evidence available throughout the countryside which made it possible to trace the history of the indigenous peoples (Sera-Shriar 2016: 155). We can therefore already see that even at such an early date in Tylor's career, and without the full flourishing of developments in geology and prehistoric archaeology that were to come, he was using prehistoric material for contemporary information – a method which influenced all his later work. Thus it can be argued that his earliest anthropological work was clearly influenced by archaeological practice even at an early date.

This development was no doubt an outcome of the influence Christy had on Tylor at this stage of his career, and would continue to have until his (Christy's) death in 1865. In Tylor's own words:

> It was after doing the Mexican Journals that I formed the plan of learning all that was known about the lower races of man, which proved to be a huge undertaking and though in those years it was still possible, it has now passed the limits of any one man's industry. (Tylor 1890, in Petch n.d).

Henry Christy

Christy was a businessman whose wealth came from manufacturing hats and cotton goods, as well as from investments in stocks and property. A childhood interest in botany later developed into an interest in ethnology. His Quaker background and beliefs led to a fundamental element in his approach to anthropology, based on the common origins of humanity in a single act of creation (Cook 2012: 177), and also led to philanthropic concerns, such as an increasing concern for the terrible plight of aboriginal peoples in the British colonies. Christy was a founder member of the Aborigines' Protection Society in 1834, whose aim was to save aborigines in the colonies from extinction and exploitation, and to study them for evidence about the early history of humanity (Cook 2012: 178). In Tylor's own words:

> He was led into this subject by his connection with Dr. Hodgkin; the two being at first interested, from the philanthropist's point of view, in the preservation of the less favored races of man, and taking part in a society for this purpose, known as the Aborigines' protection society. (Tylor 1884a, 549)

This background would later influence his collecting.

His wealth allowed him the leisure of travel. His travels of 1850 focused on the collection of items of non-European material culture and technology, such as Eastern fabrics, as well as Cypriot antiquities. On this tour, he was impressed by the Turkish towelling he came across, which he sent to his brother Richard, who developed a loom to manufacture the material that everyone now uses as towelling (Cook 2012: 179; King 1997: 138). This was exhibited at the Great Exhibition of 1951 (at which, incidentally, Alfred Tylor was a juror (Stocking 1987: 157)), which seems to have been a turning point for Christy and his approaches to collecting, as it was here that his interest in artefacts as the empirical basis for studying past societies seems to have developed (Cook 2012: 179). The exhibition placed an emphasis on material culture and juxtaposed contemporary technology, ancient peoples and primitive weapons, as well as geological and archaeological specimens. As a result, Christy saw how objects could be used as the empirical basis for studying people, both past and present (Cook 2012: 179).

One result of this was that Christy became strongly attracted to the ethnographic museums of Stockholm and Copenhagen, which he visited in October 1852. In Copenhagen, he spent several days inspecting the Royal Museum and its ethnographic collection as well as meeting with Christian Jurgensen Thomsen, who introduced him to his collection and its organization – the Three Age System which Thomsen had helped pioneer. In his diary, Christy notes that

> after dinner to the Ethnographic collection in the old Palace where I had the good fortune to meet Professor Thomsen. The collection, although but recently formed … is admirably arranged: first, of those nations that possess but little iron (and manufacture none) and have no literature; second, those who possess iron and a literature; third, those who manufacture metals for the highly civilized. (1852)

These observations satisfied Christy's view that all peoples pass through the same stages of development at different rates and in different periods (Cook 2012: 161). It was also at the Copenhagen Ethnographic Museum that Christy met Carl Ludwig Steinhauer, who on a visit to Paris to learn about phototypograhy in 1842, had met Thomsen, who later appointed him as his assistant in 1846 (King 1997: 138). This association and knowledge on Christy's part of the Three Age System would be most clearly seen by his appointment of Steinhauer to organize and privately publish his collection in 1862, as *Catalogue of a Collection of Ancient and Modern Stone Implements, and of Other Weapons, Tools, and Utensils of the Aborigines of Various Countries, in the Possession of*

Henry S. Christy, F.G.S., F.L.S. Out of the 1085 items listed in this catalogue, 602 of them came from his Mexican trip with Tylor (Weinberg 2009: 90). Thus several years prior to meeting Tylor in Cuba, Christy already knew of these developments in methodology, collection and organization, which he no doubt passed on to Tylor during the course of their friendship, and would later publish a catalogue which utilized this scheme to consider items from both Old World prehistory and ethnographic materials from outside Europe (King 1997: 139): a scheme that would form the framework for Tylor's theoretical notions of the development of civilization.

Mexico and *Anahuac*

The aim of Christy and Tylor's excursion through Mexico was to collect as much information as possible on the indigenous peoples, which in practice involved a considerable element of archaeology. Christy wrote in a letter to his mother, dated 19 March 1856:

> From Texcoco [*sic.*] we made several more interesting antiquarian excursions. One to the Baths of Montezuma at Tescusingo – another to an arched bridge built by the Ancient Mexicans at Huejotla … The remains at Tezcuco itself occupied us near a day, and two days were advantageously spent at the pyramids of San Juan … distance some 16 mile from Tezcuco, and where we obtained some interesting antiquities. (H. Christy to A. Christy, 19 March 1856; British Library Manuscripts, MS 58369)

No doubt it was his exploration of Mexico, and the influence of Christy, that introduced Tylor to the importance of *Realien* (objects) in his work. Indeed, Andrew Lang, writing in 1907, described *Anahuac* as 'a series of essays towards a history of civilization, a history necessarily based rather on Realien, savage weapons, implements, arts and crafts, and on myths, customs, and beliefs, than on written materials' (Lang 1907a: 3).

In *Anahuac*, Tylor argued that the abundance of untouched archaeological evidence made it possible to trace the history of the indigenous Mexican peoples, as well as to provide valuable material for museums in Britain (Sera-Shriar 2016: 155). For instance, on visiting Teotihuacan, Tylor wrote, 'Everywhere the ground was full of unglazed pottery and obsidian; and we even found arrows and clay figures good enough for a museum' (Tylor 1861: 147). Tylor was clearly guided and influenced by Christy in this, as he wrote in 1884 that Christy had

instructed him on 'what it was the business of the anthropologist to collect, and what to leave uncollected; how very useless for anthropologic purposes mere curiosities, and how priceless are every-day things' (Tylor 1884a: 549). His methods of collection involved interacting with the material culture, culminating in a 'solemn market of antiquities' in which he 'sat cross-legged on the ground' while local people 'brought many curious articles in clay and obsidian' for him to examine (Tylor 1861: 148).

Tylor also viewed the many artefacts found on the ground through an archaeological and specifically a stratigraphic perspective. Discussing a field between Tezcuco and the hacienda of Miraflores, he describes 'the accumulation of alluvial soil goes on very rapidly and very regularly all over the plains of Mexico and Puebla, where everything favours its deposit; and the human remains preserved in it are so numerous that its age may readily be seen' (Tylor 1861: 150–51). In this ditch, three levels of human history could be noted: the lowest level contained no human artefacts, while above that was a stratum containing obsidian and unglazed pottery, and the highest stratum contained glazed sherds with Spanish black and yellow patterns. As such, and perhaps unsurprisingly for a man raised in an industrial environment, his primary interest in the material culture concerned technological development (Leopold 1980: 27–28).

Tylor's primary concern in *Anahuac* was the origins of Mexican civilization, rather than the more wide-ranging theories which appeared in his later works (Chapman 1981). Referring to the evidence of stone tools and other remains, his conclusion was, however, a certain one: 'We must admit that the inhabitants of Mexico raised themselves, independently, to the extraordinary degree of culture which distinguished them when Europeans first became aware of their existence' (Tylor 1861: 103). Thus, the problems and solutions considered in *Anahuac* are at their heart primarily archaeological.

Between *Anahuac and Primitive Culture*: developments in geology and archaeology

The discussion of material culture and 'primitive' artefacts in *Anahuac* was predominantly technological, and was more of a description of ancient Mexican remains and a catalogue of antiquarian discoveries than an ethnographical account (Chapman 1981). It was in his later works that Tylor started to engage in theoretical discussions that centred on the question of the progress or degeneration of cultures (Ratnapalan 2008: 135). By the time he wrote *Primitive Culture,*

Tylor more definitely pointed to the study of evolution in material culture as the firm foundation for the treatment of evolution in mental culture (Leopold 1980: 31). Thus Tylor's concept of material culture, archaeology and the evolution of humanity between the publication of his Mexican travelogue and *Primitive Culture* seems to have expanded and become more complex. This section will examine the intellectual developments of the 1860s and onwards to contextualize these changes. As we shall see, from the 1850 and 1860s, the study of the ancient past underwent a fundamental transformation. The extended geological and human timeline, and the theory of evolutionary adaptation, allowed anthropologists like Tylor to explain human variation in a way previous anthropological discussions and approaches had not been able to. While Christy's interest in ethnology and anthropology was fostered by their trip to Mexico, for Tylor this was only the beginning; it was only after the publication of *Anahuac* that Tylor began to familiarize himself with the growing ethnological, linguistic and archaeological literature, keeping numbered notebooks of his research, which are now located in the Balfour Library, Oxford (George 2004).

Tylor and uniformitarianism

Tylor's thoughts on the psychic unity of humankind espoused in *Primitive Culture* were not original to him. These ideas were originally promulgated in an anthropological sense by Adolf Bastian (1860), who argued that all human societies shared a set of *Elementargedanken*, or 'elementary ideas', and for whom Tylor wrote an obituary in *Man* (1905). But the concept goes back further. As Gosden notes, already in the eighteenth century Turgot had held that the present state of the world contains all the past stages of humanity and the key to history lay in the systematic comparison and ordering of societies in the present (Gosden 1999: 63). To Turgot, all history was one and all societies had a common point of origin (Kuper 2005: 31). These ideas continued into the nineteenth century, and coincided with developments in geology, palaeontology and knowledge of the antiquity of man.

In his 1830–1833 work *Principles of Geology*, Charles Lyell espoused a notion of evolutionary geology, in which he proposed that present geological processes could explain geological events that had happened in the past. Building on the work of James Hutton in the previous century, whose 1785 work *Theory of the Earth: Or an Investigation of the Laws Observable in the Composition, Dissolution, and Restoration of Land Upon the Globe* moved away from the

prevailing catastrophist approach to geology and strata, to an approach more firmly grounded in direct observation of natural phenomena: 'No processes are to be employed', he said, 'that are not natural to the globe; no action to be admitted except those of which we know the principle' (Hutton 1795: 257). Lyell built on and popularized this work, arguing for a theory of uniformitarianism which assumed that geological processes in the present should be analysed in analogy to and connection with the past, and could thus provide information about the formation of the earth.

This theory gave rise to the idea of deep time, which extended the past backwards indefinitely. The sudden, dramatic enlargement of the scale of human history demanded new content (Trautmann 1992: 380), and it was this immensity of the newly discovered geological time that permitted the necessary time depth for the development of evolutionary theory. Lyell effectively broke the time-barrier of biblical chronology, which had played a role in earlier approaches to cultural uniformitarianism such as Turgot's, thereby paving the way for cultural evolution of the type espoused by Tylor**.**

Tylor had personal connections with these developments in geology. His elder brother Alfred (1824–1884), whose prime interest was in that particular discipline, was in 1846 elected a fellow of the Geological Society. His areas of interest were river erosion and sea levels in the present and in prehistory (Atherton 2010: 68), and, using the uniformitarian approach popularized by Lyell, he studied modern examples of rivers in order to understand ancient rivers. His 1853 paper 'Changes of the Sea-Level Effected by Existing Physical Causes during stated Periods of Time' was published in *The Philosophical Magazine*. The ideas he presented there and expounded in 1868 in 'On the Quaternary Gravels of England' in the *Quarterly Journal of the Geological Society* – which incorporated uniformitarian comparisons of present rainfall to argue that the Quaternary period was one of exceptional rainfall, and proposed the term 'pluvial period' to describe it – were originally opposed by many in the geological field, but by 1872 other geologists had been swayed to his ideas (Darwin 2015: 289 n.3). These views were later quoted by Lyell (in his 1896 *The Student's Lyell: A Manual of Elementary Geology*) and Darwin (*The Formation of Vegetable Mould, through the Action of Worms, with Observations on Their Habits,* 1890).

Charles Lyell's notion of evolutionary geology espoused in 'The Principles of Geology' strongly influenced Charles Darwin and laid the foundation for Darwinian principles of biological evolution. After his return from the Galapagos in 1836, Darwin became a close personal friend of Lyell, and

shared with him his uniformitarian ideas, writing in a letter of 1844 to Leonard Horner that,

> I always feel as if my books came half out of Lyell's brains & that I never acknowledge this sufficiently, nor do I know how I can, without saying so in so many words – for I have always thought that the great merit of the *Principles* [*of Geology*], was that it altered the whole tone of one's mind & therefore that when seeing a thing never seen by Lyell, one yet saw it partially through his eyes. (Darwin 1987: 55)

The shared thread of explaining the physical and biological processes of the present through the past is more fully explored in *The Descent of Man* (1871), in which Darwin postulated that humans were subject to the same natural processes as animals, and that, therefore, they were themselves animals, just of a different kind (Duesterberg 2015: 69). These uniformitarian approaches to geology and biology, advocated by Lyell and Darwin, and Tylor's brother Alfred, provided an epistemological framework for Tylor's views on religion and culture, allowing him to invoke a comparative method which became the hallmark of his anthropology and included the like-for-like comparison of ethnographic and archaeological material. As Tylor stated in *Primitive Culture*, 'the consideration thrusts itself upon our minds, how far item after item of the life of the lower races passes into analogous proceedings of the higher, in forms not too far changed to be recognised, and sometimes hardly changed at all' (Tylor 1871, 1: 6–7).

As we have seen, Tylor's arguments for cultural evolution rested on a materialist foundation. Here he was aided by developments in archaeology and notions of human temporality – the deep time that Lyell had explored geologically was being filled by developments in the discipline of archaeology which would also radically overthrow previous notions of humanity and human origins. As uniformitarian geologists and biologists like Lyell and Darwin proposed that the history of the Earth could be interpreted through the mechanism of known, observable causes, archaeologists also came to view the pathway of human change as the result of slow-acting cultural evolutionary processes (Feder 2005: 15). A prime example of this was the ordering of prehistoric material culture into the tripartite system of stone, bronze and iron ages, which developed in Denmark at the beginning of the nineteenth century, and which was based on a historical trajectory characterized by slow and uniform progression of human technological prowess (ibid.: 15).

The Three Age System

In 1806, Denmark commissioned the investigation of the geological and natural history of the country. A collection from ancient sites was made and arranged by substance into a stone, copper, iron sequence by L. S. Vedel Simonsen, in a brief mention in his textbook of Danish history published in 1813 (Trigger 2006: 105). Christian Jurgensen Thomsen (1788–1865), curator of the Danish National Museum, used seriational principles to more fully organize the artefacts into an internally consistent developmental sequence confirming the stone, bronze, and iron sequence already suggested. Although his contribution to the *Ledetraad til Nordisk Oldkyndighed* was published 1836, it was not until 1848, however, that this book was translated into English and published under the title *A Guide to Northern Antiquities*. Importantly, we know that from as early as 1825, Thomsen was making use of the Three Age System, as it came to be known, in a letter to the German archaeologist J. G. G. Büsching: 'To put artefacts into their proper context I consider it most important to pay attention to the chronological sequence, and I believe that the old idea of first stone, then copper, and finally iron, appears to be ever more firmly established as far as Scandinavia is concerned' (Thomsen, in Rowley-Conwy 2007: 298). Thomsen's pupil Jens Jacon Asmussen Worsaae would later verify Thomsen's Three Age System in the field, through his excavations of what he called 'closed finds'[3] and through the basis of stratigraphy, which offered more solid proof for cultural change over time than seriation. This Three Age System would provide Tylor and other anthropologists with a theoretical and methodological tool for measuring cultural evolution. Indeed, the idea of stages of development would be fundamental to the work of Tylor, and the serial arrangement of artefacts underpinned and guided the arguments for his theory of development.

The antiquity of man

In addition to the development of the Three Age System as a methodology, dramatic archaeological finds were also occurring. In 1837, the French customs official Jacques Boucher de Perthes excavated chipped stone implements from the gravels of the Somme Valley. By 1842, he had accumulated a collection of hand axes that supposedly had been recovered from the strata that also produced fossil elephants and rhinoceroses, proving the depth of human antiquity (by showing that the two had lived contemporaneously in a time *before* the past ascribed

to human antiquity), and by 1847, he had completed the first edition of his *Les Antiquités Celtiques et Antédiluviennes* (Celtic and Antediluvial Antiquities) (Sackett 2014). Due to the inclusion of fraudulent hand axes, created by his workmen, among the legitimate specimens, and the poorly executed illustrations which he insisted on producing himself in the book, Perthes's discoveries were at the time ignored and rejected (ibid.: 2014). He also positioned his evidence within an extreme catastrophist model of the past, attributing Pleistocene extinctions to a series of deluges (which had also destroyed the human species found in the remains who had since renewed themselves), an approach not looked on favourably by either French or British scientists of the time (Grayson 1984: 27). Both Darwin and Lyell had issues with the discoveries, with Darwin stating in a later letter to Lyell that 'he had looked at his [Boucher de Perthes] book many years ago, and I am ashamed to think that I concluded the whole was rubbish!' (Darwin 1887, 3: 15). Boucher de Perthes continued undaunted, and in his second book in 1857 he retooled his approach to earth history and took a more contemporary approach to geological sciences (Grayson 1990: 9). In this decade, a series of geologists and archaeologists visited his excavations and began to look favourably on his results, among them the antiquarian John Evans and the geologist Joseph Prestwich. Lyell too – despite his earlier scepticism – also confirmed the stratigraphy. A report, corroborating Boucher de Perthes's claims, was presented to the Society of Antiquaries of London in 1859, stating that 'in a period of antiquity remote beyond any of which we have hitherto found traces, this portion of the globe was peopled by man' (Evans 1860: 14–15). The antiquity of humankind and its depth was now the consensus of the scientific establishment.

Archaeology had also begun to share the general prestige attaching to geology – especially in Britain after 1858, following William Pengelly's discovery of human artefacts such as flints associated with extinct mammalian bones under an intact stalagmite floor in Brixham Cave in Devon. This demonstrated that the Palaeolithic English had lived like contemporary 'savages' (Wolfe 1999: 131).

It should be noted that both the Somme and Brixham discoveries were made by contemporaries and friends of Tylor. Evans and Tylor may well have known each other through Alfred, Tylor's brother. Evans was a member of the Geological Society, becoming its president in 1874, and Alfred had been a member since 1846, and twice served on its council, from 1857 to 1865 and again from 1867 to 1870 (George 2004). Evans however disagreed with Alfred Tylor's accounts of gravel deposition in England and France which appeared in 1866 and 1869b (Evans 1872: 613). The two men were also involved in the verification of the claims of Boucher de Perthes – Alfred Tylor had accompanied Evans and

Prestwich on 13 April 1863, to ascertain whether or not a hoax had been carried out on the part of the workmen in the production of prehistoric material; Tylor's account of the finds remains ambiguous as to their origin (A. Tylor 1863). That E. B. Tylor and Evans's relationship also involved Alfred can be seen in a letter from Evans to Tylor in 1871, in which he thanks him for his gift of a copy of *Primitive Culture*, and asks to be remembered kindly 'to your brother' (J. Evans to E. B. Tylor, 3 May 1871; British Library Manuscripts, Add 50254, f.39).

Evans and Tylor were also members of many of the same societies, such as the Anthropological Society (one of whose first published papers was Alfred Tylor's account of the visit to Boucher de Perthes, mentioned above) and the Folklore Society (founded in 1878 by Andrew Lang, a student of Tylor's). That their relationship was both professional and personal can be seen in a letter of January 1872, where Evans informs Tylor that 'I have proposed your name to the council at the Athenaeum [a private members club founded in 1824] for election', which was confirmed in a letter of April of the same year: 'My dear Tylor, I am happy to inform you that you have this day on my recommendation been elected to member of this club by the committee …' (J. Evans to E. B. Tylor, 31 January 1872; British Library Manuscripts, Add 50254, f.47-50b). They also frequently travelled together to examine dolmens and discover prehistoric stone tools (Marinatos 2015: 14).

William Pengelly too seems also to have been acquainted with Tylor through his brother. Pengelly had been elected a Fellow of the Geological Society in February 1850, and his letters to his wife include references to Alfred: 'Stoke Newington, 1857 … On my arrival in the evening, I found an invitation to join my friends next door at a party at Alfred Tylor's, where I found Babbage, Sorby, Morris, and Rupert Jones.… But Alfred Tylor, being engaged to go to Burlington House, to hear the great Surgeon, Paget, read a paper on the rhythmic action of the heart, before the Royal Society, wished me to accompany him …' (Pengelly 1897, 63–64). He also goes on to list Alfred as a one of his 'old friends' in another letter to his wife of 1861 (ibid., 107).

Thus, through his brother Alfred, Tylor was at the heart of circles in archaeology and geology in the 1850s and 1860s. But Tylor also had a more personal connection to the rapidly developing field of prehistoric archaeology – Henry Christy, his erstwhile travelling companion. Tylor and Christy maintained their friendship on their return from Mexico, and in his notebooks Tylor refers to visits they made together to museums in the 1860s (Brown, Coote and Gosden 2000: 259). On his return to England from their Mexican excursions, Christy became interested in the stone tools found at Brixham Cave, near Torquay in Devon, and he joined the Geological Society in 1858 to pursue this interest (Atherton 2010: 68). In 1862, he

joined up with the French palaeontologist Edouard Lartet ([1801–1871], the first man to excavate the remains of the fossil apes *Pliopithecus* in 1837 and *Dryopithecus* in 1856) to excavate the caves of the Dordogne region of the southern France. Building on the Three Age System that Christy was already familiar with, the duo developed a chronology that still forms the basic cultural scheme for the Western European Middle and Upper Palaeolithic (Pettitt and White 2013: 36). Among their achievements was the recognition that the Upper Palaeolithic (what Lartet referred to as the Reindeer Age) was a separate period stratigraphically from the Middle Palaeolithic (or, in Lartet's terminology, the Cave Bear and Mammoth/Rhino age) (Pettitt and White 2013: 36).

These discoveries and theoretical developments were popularized by John Lubbock's best-selling book of 1865, *Prehistoric Times as Illustrated by Ancient Remains,* in which the author introduced the terms Paleolithic and Neolithic to distinguish between the Old and New Stone Ages. In this, Lubbock was responsible for making the new prehistory known in Britain (Kuper 2005: 75). From Lubbock's work, prehistoric archaeology became the link between geology and history, and the discovery of stone implements in the same stratum as fossils of extinct mammals, coupled with the comparison of these tools with those still used by savages in other parts of the world led Lubbock to claim that the antiquity of Europe could be understood by this comparison (Parmentier pers. comm). Lubbock was a family friend of Darwin, and had learned Danish in order to better understand the new approaches to material culture developing there. Most crucially, he connected the developments in material culture to developments in human progress, believing that humankind was capable of improving its own material and intellectual condition (Hutton 2009: 298). He invited Scandinavian scholars such as Sven Nilsson to present papers at the Ethnological Institute in 1851 and, following him, identified these archaeological phases with the classical 'stages of progress' through savagery (hunting and gathering), barbarism (nomadism and pastoralism, and then agriculture) and finally industrial civilization (Kuper 2005: 75).

Tylor's identification with the theories of Lubbock led him to attempt to define 'primitive' culture, in the form of 'modern savages', as a stratum or base level of human civilization (Ratnapalan 2008: 135):

> The more widely and deeply the study of ethnography and prehistoric archaeology is carried out the stronger does the evidence become that the condition of mankind in the remote antiquity of the race is not unfairly represented by modern savage tribes. (Tylor 1869: 105)

Thus Lubbock provided a way in which anthropology could be married with the positivism of the 'palaetiological sciences' (Parmentier pers. comm.), as defined in 1837 by William Whewell ('those researches in which the object is, to ascend from the present state of things to a more ancient condition, from which the present is derived by intelligible causes' [Whewell 1837: 481]).

Like Tylor, Lubbock was a member of the Anthropological Institution (an amalgamation of the Ethnological and Anthropological Societies, founded in 1871), the Folklore Society and the British Association for the Advancement of Science. Certainly they would have known each other through these societies, and through mutual friends such as John Evans, with whom Lubbock excavated the site of Hallstatt in Austria in 1866. That Tylor and Lubbock had a personal and professional relationship can be best seen through a series of letters of 1872, in which Lubbock describes his ever growing frustration at the loss of several onions, used as poppets for sympathetic magic, which Tylor had discovered in a Somerset pub and sent to Lubbock for inspection ('My Dear Tylor, I cannot tell you how vexed I am about the onions …' [J. Lubbock to E. B. Tylor, 6 November 1872; British Library Manuscripts, Add 50254, f. 61]).

As this section has shown, archaeology not only established itself as a science in the nineteenth century, but in doing so, it contributed support for the notion of progress which influenced Tylor and his contemporaries. These ideas began with the correlation of technological artefacts and the origins of the Mexican civilization in *Anahuac* and culminated in the wide-ranging analyses of religion and culture in *Primitive Culture* and which were firmly based on developments in the field of archaeology. Developments in abstract fields of human nature were tied to material artefacts, or *realien* – in terms of religion, for example, he equated animism, the most material of his typology (as it relies on a direct and personal engagement with the materiality of the natural and cultural world [Sillar 2009: 371])[4], with 'stone age religion' and used megaliths in India and the forms of 'simple and primitive' indigenous religion practised by their makers to indicate the primitive religion practised by the megalith builders of Stone Age Europe (Droogan 2013: 34). As such, 'it may be said without exaggeration that archaeological evidence is at least as important as ethnographic evidence for Tylor's conclusions concerning the overall uniformity of evolutionary change' (Harris 2001: 148).

Mr Tylor's archaeology

But Tylor's relationship with archaeology was not a one-way flow of inspiration. This final section will consider briefly the impact of Tylor's theories on the interpretation of archaeological material, focusing specifically on the excavation of Knossos and the discovery of the Minoan civilizaton of Crete, undertaken by Arthur Evans, the son of Tylor's old friend and colleague John Evans.

Arthur Evans's excavations at Knossos began in 1901 and lasted until 1931. Over this period he revealed to the world a civilization he named Minoan, after the legendary king Minos. The themes of evolutionist archaeology and anthropology figured prominently in Arthur Evans's early archaeological career. As the son of John Evans, one of the leading proponents of evolutionist archaeology, Evans the younger was intimately familiar with the concept. Other proponents were good friends of his father, such as John Lubbock and, of course, Edward Tylor. Their personal relationship can be seen in a letter of May 1901, in which Evans writes to Tylor from his excavations on Crete, telling him that he was 'still continuing to dig in the Palace … which grows and grows'. He also mentions the discovery of a'plaster relief with a fleur de lis crown and collar …' (A. Evans to E. B. Tylor, 6 May 1901; Pitt-Rivers MS collection, Box 11, E2) which he would later piece to together to create the Priest King fresco, the foundation of much of his ideas on Minoan religion and ideology.

His appointment to Keeper of the Ashmolean Museum occurred in the same year that Tylor was appointed Keeper of the ethnological collections in the new Pitt-Rivers Museum, and it was here that his interests and Tylor's would converge – and lead to the discoveries at Knossos. In 1886 a sealstone with what Evans recognized as 'hieroglyphic' signs was given to the Ashmolean by the Rev. Greville Chester. This particularly fascinated Evans, and in 1893, during another visit to Athens, he found similar stones in the hands of some of the Athens antiquities dealers, which were said to come from Crete. He was convinced that these seals were writings of an early Aegean civilization. In 1894, he paid his first visit to Crete, including the site of Knossos (Ventris and Chadwick 1956: 8). His quest for clues of a pre-alphabetic writing system in the Aegean fed into his already developed interest in pre-Classical Greece, and led to his discovery at Knossos of various materials inscribed with this and other forms of pre-alphabetic writing, such as Linear A inscriptions (Galanakis 2014: 5).

His interest in writing as proof of civilization was clearly inspired by Tylor and others in his father's circle. Among them, writing came to serve as *the* privileged index of modern, as distinct from prehistoric, people (Worth 2012: 223). Civilization by definition meant writing; as Tylor wrote 'the invention of writing was the greatest movement by which mankind rose from barbarism to civilization' (Tylor 1898 [1871]: 179). Arthur Evans's father John Evans also wrote that 'in no case do we find a knowledge of writing developed in this [Stone Age] stage of culture' (Evans 1872: 7), and in his *The Origin of Civilisation and the Primitive Condition of Man,* Lubbock claimed that:

> We may safely conclude that no race of men in the Stone Age had attained the art of communicating facts by means of letters, or even by the far ruder system of picture-writing; nor does anything, perhaps, surprise the savage more than to find that Europeans can communicate with one another by means of a few black scratches on a piece of white paper. (1870: 35)

Thus, evidence of writing coming from Crete suggested the presence of a civilization worth excavating. In his discussion of these discoveries (made prior to the start of his excavations at Knossos in 1900), in 'Primitive Pictographs and a pre-Phoenician Script from Crete and the Peloponnese' (1894), Evans was also clearly influenced by Tylor, covering as it does evolutionary stages of writing from primitive to complex. He saw the succession of images, progressing from the pictorial to the stylized and linear (the writing forms we now call Cretan Hieroglyphic and Linear A), as an evolution from simple, literal images to more complex writing, drawing on Tylor's theories of the evolution of writing from picture writing to phonetic symbols (Harlan 2011: 218). Other Tylorian allusions in this paper included references to the 'psychic unity of man' and the comparative method, as inferred through universal stages of development – on the first page alone, Evans refers to parallels in Denmark, the Maritime Alps, Lapland, the Balkans, and among the Cherokees and Zulus (MacEnroe 1995: 5). His ideas on the evolution of writing were also expounded in a paper of 1903 ('Pre-Phoenician writing in Crete, and its bearings on the history of the alphabet').

Tylor's influence is also evident in Evans's early writings on religion. His 1901 paper 'Mycenaean Tree and Pillar Cult and its Mediterranean Associations' owed much to Tylor's approach to the evolution of religion, in particular the idea of animism. The concept for the paper was first delivered in 1896, in a lecture given to the British Association for the Advancement of Science (Evans 1896), but a lengthier version was published in 1901 in the *Journal of Hellenic Studies*

incorporating new material from Knossos (Harlan 2011: 224). The premise of the paper is that Minoan religion belonged to a primitive stage of aniconic[5] worship of the sort Tylor had described in *Primitive Culture,* in which spirits entered trees, stones and pillars, temporarily animating them (Tylor 1871, 2: 215–17). As evidence, Evans drew on various forms of Minoan art:

> In which the sacred tree is associated with the sacred pillar. This dual cult is indeed so widespread that it may be said to mark a definite early stage of religious evolution. In treating here of this primitive religious type the cult of trees and pillars, or rude stones, has been regarded as an identical form of worship. (1901: 105)

Further emphasizing Tylorian influences, Evans also cites cross-cultural comparisons ranging from the Bhuta Spirit in contemporary India to Druidical worship at the Rollright Stones (Evans 1901: 106). Evans's debt to Tylor was explicitly stated in such a way as to suggest that one should take Tylor's influence in archaeology at the time as given:

> For the ideas underlying this widespread primitive cult I need only refer to Tylor, Primitive Culture, ii. p. 160 seqq. and p. 215 seqq. The spirit is generally forced to enter the stone or pillar by charms and incantations, and sometimes also passes into the body of the priest or worshipper. The 'possession' itself of the material object is only in its nature temporary. (Evans 1901: 5 n.5)

These papers, with their clear Tylorian influence, were written in the years prior to his excavations at Knossos. In later years and later writings, as more evidence came to light and the idea of the 'primitive' nature of Minoan religion could no longer be borne out, Evans turned away from Tylor's evolutionary anthropology in general. At the palace of Minos at Knossos, he found not the primeval stages of human development (MacEnroe 1995: 5), but a 'peaceful abode of priest-kings, in some respects more modern in its equipments than anything produced by classical Greece' (Evans 1921: 1). Diffusionist ideas of archaeology that developed in the 1890s became a larger part of Evans's approach to the Minoans by the early 1900s (as evidenced by the word 'diffusion' in his 1908 paper on writing), replacing his earlier adherence to evolutionism. In this newer approach, Crete played a pivotal role in the transmission of civilization from the Near East to Europe, making Crete 'the cradle of Minoan civilisation' (and in the process elevating his position as the excavator of the first European civilization) (MacEnroe 1995: 8). Evans's approach to religion also changed as a result of these new theories and discoveries. From aniconic animism of the 'tree and pillar cult' he moved to a

more monotheistic viewpoint, based on a Great Mother Goddess: 'It seems to me that we are in the presence of a largely Monotheistic Cult, in which the female form of divinity held the supreme place' (Evans 1931: 41). Whatever the truth of this notion in reality, the idea of a great goddess fits well with Evans's interests and his conviction of the important contribution his Minoans played in the development of Europe. A monotheistic Mother Goddess culture helped substantiate Cretan ideas as foundations of Greek (and thus European) mythology, and juxtaposed them positively against the polytheistic cultures of the Near East, making the Minoans more evolved, more modern, and by extension more European than their Near Eastern polytheistic neighbours (Morris 2006: 70).

However, while Evans may have abandoned his earlier approaches which were based on Tylor's evolutionary schemes, they never really went away. More recent cognitive approaches to archaeology have adopted what may be considered a 'Neo-Tylorian' approach to religion (see Jong's chapter, this volume). Cognitive archaeological approaches utilize a primarily evolutionary framework to understand the mind, explaining it as having developed in response to adaptive and selective pressures. The cognitive psychological approach has, at times, claimed to be capable of generalizing universal rather culturally specific insights into ancient subjectivities, due to the belief that all humans share the same evolutionary heritage (Droogan 2013: 88). Religion plays a central role in cognitive archaeology. For example, Colin Renfrew, a leading cognitive archaeologist, used material culture from the Aegean (in this case, from the site of Phylakopi on the Cycladic island of Melos) to produce a methodology for the identification and interpretation of religious material in the archaeological record – an approach that is only viable if social groups shared a uniformity in symbol use and practice. Renfrew argues that his framework should be applicable to all excavated shrines, not just Phylakopi (Renfrew 1985). In his working definition of religion, Renfrew aligns himself with Melford Spiro's definition of religion as 'an institution consisting of culturally patterned interaction with culturally postulated superhuman beings' (Spiro 1966: 96). Tambiah has argued that this universalist and theistic definition can be traced back to Tylor, and calls it 'neo-Tylorian' (Tambiah 1985, 129; see Sutherland's chapter, this volume).

Conclusion

This chapter has suggested that archaeology played an important, possibly crucial role, in the formative years of Tylor's development of his new 'science'. Forming

the core of his discussion in *Anahuac*, archaeological data played a smaller, but no less crucial role by the time he wrote *Primitive Culture.* Even if archaeological material was less important for his discussion by 1871 and beyond, the theory and even language of archaeology still permeated his work. In an 1889 paper delivered to the Anthropological Institute, Tylor gives his clearest summary of the key elements of evolutionary anthropology:

> The institutions of man are as distinctly stratified as the earth on which he lives. They succeeded each other in series substantially uniform over the globe, independent of what seem the comparatively superficial differences of race and language, but shaped by similar human nature acting through successively changed conditions in savage, barbaric, and civilised life. (1889: 258)

While discussing the more abstract elements of human life, he still utilized the language of archaeology. Once the antiquity of man had been confirmed, archaeology was less important for the development of anthropology (Van Reybrouck 2012: 79), as the focus moved away from the study of material culture and turned instead to the development of social institutions and religious ideas. By now, archaeology had played its role, and the separation of the two disciplines became more entrenched. But without it, there would be no 'Mr Tylor's Science'.

Notes

1 The majority of this research would not have been possible without the generous support of the Royal Anthropological Institute and their award of a Library Fellowship (2016–2017). Parts of this research were also carried out via a Faculty Small Research Grant awarded by the University of Sheffield (2015). I would like to thank both institutes for their support. I would also like to thank Dr Richard Parmentier for sending me some of his notes on Tylor and the history of anthropology.

2 Although it should be noted that these chairs were originally focused on classical archaeology, which did and to some extent still does have a complicated relationship with prehistoric archaeology of the sort which developed in the mid-nineteenth century. Classical archaeology was traditionally more closely related to philology, 'connoisseurship' and the humanities than with the social or natural sciences.

3 Collections of artefacts which are thought to have been deposited simultaneously and are found in their original depositional context. Examples may include grave finds and hoards.

4 For a fuller discussion of animism, materiality and archaeology, see the special edition of *Journal of Archaeological Method and Theory* (2008, 15:4, 'Special Issue: Archaeology, Animism, and Non-Human Agents') and the special section of *Cambridge Archaeological Journal* (2009, 19:3, 'Animating Archaeology: of Subjects, Objects and Alternative Ontologies').
5 For example, abstract representations, without human or animal form.

9

Telling Tylorian Tales: Reflections on Language, Myth and Religion

Martin D. Stringer

In a previous article I argued that Tylor's work, if stripped of his evolutionary framework and derogatory references to 'childlike savages', still has some interesting things to say to twenty-first-century scholars about the nature and understanding of religion (1999a). In that essay, I focussed primarily on Tylor's chapters in *Primitive Culture: Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Art, and Custom* (1871) that looked at animism and the most elementary forms of religion. I began the essay by looking in detail at what Tylor actually said about animism and then proceeded to look at a number of the classical critiques of this position. My own reanalysis of Tylor's work opened with a reference to the fact that Tylor prefaced his study of religion with three chapters on mythology. I felt Tylor was on to something in doing this, and I briefly outlined his thinking on myth. I concluded the section by saying, 'In doing this, Tylor is constructing religion as a discourse, a way of talking about the world in which different rules apply . . . It demands a switch of thought world, a switch which we still experience in poetry and which we can just about grasp, a switch which demands its own logic and rationality'. I ended the paragraph by stating that, 'Unfortunately for Tylor, he does not have the analytical tools available to explore this kind of discourse. It would have been fascinating to see what he might do with it if he could' (1999a: 549). In subsequent work I have continued to stress the importance, as I see it, of discourse and language in any sociological understanding of religion. In this chapter, therefore, I want to take my discussion of Tylor on by going backwards, at least in terms of Tylor's classic text, and looking in more detail at those three chapters on myth.

What I aim to do in this chapter, however, is not quite the same as I attempted in relation to the chapters on animism in my previous article. This is not a review

of the scholarly commentary on Tylor's ideas over the years, nor is it, strictly, a reanalysis of Tylor's concept or theory of myth. What I want to do here is something slightly different. I want to begin with Tylor's work on myth, to strip it of its evolutionary framework and see what is left of value, and then to use what remains to ask a number of significant questions relating to my own, emerging, understanding of religion. My first attempt to explore a possible definition of, and theory around, religion came in my study, *Contemporary Western Ethnography and Definition of Religion* (2008). The final chapter of that text looked to a reworking of Tylor's concept of animism as a possible framework for an understanding of religion within a contemporary British context, although I did suggest at that point that my ideas had the potential to be applied more widely if the evidence could be shown to support them.

There were two elements of that account, however, that have continued to concern me and that have been raised by reviewers and by questions posed in seminars and lectures. The first is the application of the term 'animism' to a contemporary British context. Some commentators have found that stimulating, others feel it is inappropriate and a stretching of the term 'animism' beyond the usual understandings. I have addressed some of those issues in a subsequent essay on 'animism', although I am still not sure that I am entirely comfortable with this terminology (2013). The second issue is also related to my choice of language, more specifically my choice of the Sperber-inspired language of the 'non-empirical' to describe the nature of other persons who inhabit, and engage with individuals and communities but which cannot be subject to empirical proof. I am even less comfortable with this language than I am with that around animism, although at the time I could not think of any language or terminology that better captured the points that I wanted to make. Harvey's language, borrowed from the work of Irving Hallowell, of 'other-than-human persons' has probably become more common since the publication of my work and that does feel more comfortable, if also not entirely appropriate for various reasons that I will return to below (see Harvey 2005a).

What I wish to do in this chapter, therefore, is to use Tylor's thinking around myth in order to address, not just the terminology of the non-empirical, or other-than-human persons, but more specifically the place of such persons, or rather discourses that engage with, or talk about such persons, within a nascent sociological theory of religion. Obviously, I am not the first to do this, and, naturally, reference to others will be made throughout the text. Nor am I claiming that this particular attempt is either original or definitive. Finally, I am not suggesting that Tylor is the only, or perhaps the best source for this kind of thinking,

although to see somebody struggling with ideas of narrative or discourse in religion in the mid-nineteenth century, long before discourse analysis or related disciplines were being developed, is very interesting. Ultimately this chapter is a thought game: What happens, I want to ask, if we approach the understanding of religion through the lens of Tylor's work on myth? What problems might that solve? What new issues does it raise? And, more importantly, does it help to develop my own thinking around a general theory of religion any further? I will leave others to decide the answers to those questions. I will only say that I have found the exercise to be very instructive and I hope others do as well.

Tylor on myth

The first point that I would want to make about Tylor's three chapters on mythology is that he appears to be very sceptical about the whole idea of myth. He is dismissive of his contemporaries who have tried to find a single, or limited, interpretation of myth, whether that is focused on uncovering historical facts or some other kind of interpretation, such as solar myths or myths of origin. In critiquing the idea of solar myths, for example, Tylor suggests that any story – the example he chooses is the life of Caesar – can, if suitably reinterpreted, be seen as a 'solar myth' (1871, 1: 288). Looking through the three chapters, it becomes clear that Tylor is actually finding it very difficult to find a particular category of story that can be isolated and defined as myth. He continues to use the term 'myth', but often interchangeably with that of 'story', and as he moves through he begins to include a wide range of narrative genres including fairy tales and fables. The point, however, is that Tylor tends to see many of these other kinds of story as 'survivals', the remnants of myth within his own society, but this takes me on to the second point that I would want to make about Tylor's analysis.

As I have demonstrated elsewhere, the excess of Tylor's evidence seriously undermines his own evolutionary framework. Tylor is only able to develop a chronological developmental frame if he is able to reject the many examples of earlier forms within his own society as 'survivals', that is, as degenerate forms of the earlier type, or as practices held to by those who are not as civilized as the society at large, whether children or peasants or occasionally the working classes. However, as Tylor's own evidence shows, there are narratives, for example, within contemporary society that perform exactly the same function within that society that so-called myths perform within primitive or savage societies. This is important as it begins to stretch the definition of myth into

contemporary society and to cover a very wide range of narratives. In fact Tylor, on more than one occasion, claims that the mid- to late-nineteenth century is a very good time to study myth, not only because society was (he believed) moving away from mythic forms of thought, becoming more rational, and therefore could see through the mythic, but more precisely because artists and poets continued to use the metaphorical thought processes associated with myth within their own work and so the scholar could see how the mythic worked, something which, Tylor suggests, might be lost in future social structures (1871, 1: 286).

This emphasis on the ability to understand the nature of mythic thought leads me on to my third point. For Tylor, myth is as much a way of thinking as it is a form of narrative. He famously describes myth as 'a philosophy of the nature of things' and this is the fundamental point that he is trying to make across all three chapters (1866a, 81). There is a way of thinking, or more accurately a series of different ways of thinking, contained within the mythic that is distinct from the rational scientific way of thinking that characterizes his own society, and one assumes, his own personal way of thinking. I will explore the form of this way of thinking in just a moment, but for now I want to relate this point back to my earlier discussion about survivals. If we accept the evolutionary frame for just a moment, then what Tylor is arguing is that there was a time in human history, exemplified by contemporary societies that had not developed out of this period, where all thought was mythic. Likewise, Tylor envisages a time in the future when all thought is rational, when the mythic has been forgotten. In his own society, however, humanity is already some way down that line. However, primarily in the form of survivals, but also apparent in the work of poets and artists, the mythic sits alongside the rational in Victorian society, and is clearly distinct from it. There are hints here of the later 'primitive thought' debate where a distinction between primitive thought on the one hand and civilized, scientific or rational thought on the other, was later redefined as being two different but distinct modes of thought within each society. The first, the pre-rational was associated with religion and the rational was associated with science (Morris 1987: 182–86). Each society, and even each individual, could therefore be seen to move from one mode of thought to the other, and back again, depending on the context. This was later rejected as too simplistic and as separating the two modes of thought too clearly to account for the actual practice. Tylor, however, was already thinking in this way in the 1870s, although he confuses the situation by reference to survivals.

At first sight, Tylor's primitive philosophy is practically identical to Lévy-Bruhl's pre-rational thought (Lévy-Bruhl 1926; see Tremlett, this volume).

There is certainly a great deal in common, and perhaps even a common heritage, between the two. However, on closer inspection I am not convinced that Tylor would really recognize Lévy-Bruhl's ideas. The key for Tylor is 'metaphor'. However, as with so many other terms in *Primitive Culture*, he is never entirely happy with it as a catch-all description of what he is trying to capture (1871, 1: 277–78). Metaphor, in its contemporary poetical context, is less than he wants to capture. And, while metaphor is important to primitive philosophy, it does not express at all clearly the range of thought processes that Tylor explores in order to delineate that particular way of thinking. In chapter IX, he explores one body of myth, which he defines as nature myth (1871, 1: 285–331). This is, for Tylor, the most primitive form of myth and consists, essentially, of the way in which early human societies engaged with the natural world around them. At the core of this philosophy is the way in which all objects are seen to be personal, an engagement with the world that is modelled on the engagement of people with each other, an attributing of personality to all objects, animals and people. This personalized approach to the world is also recognized in Lévy-Bruhl's primitive thought and is recognized in a number of modern understandings of 'animism' (Morris 1987: 184; Harvey, 2005a). It clearly sits at the heart of Tylor's own understanding of animism as well, although he only goes on to explore that in a later chapter.

In chapter X, however, Tylor goes beyond the personalization of the world, to look at other forms of primitive philosophy, and here the idea of metaphor becomes even more tenuous. The chapter begins by looking at stories that aim to explain phenomenon, both natural and human, and Tylor explores the possibility of pre-scientific thought, although he notes that there is a significant difference between the pre-scientific, narrative form of origins, and the later scientific rational, or theory driven mode of thought (1871, 1: 350). The chapter ends, however, by looking more towards morality and the role of fables and other forms of narrative to reinforce particular ethical or moral positions within society, emphasizing their origins in the distant past, the time of stories or myth, but also the use of the story to reinforce such practices in the present (1871, 1: 370). This has moved some way from the idea of metaphor, except perhaps as a mode of language through which the moral is reinforced, and beyond the personalization of the world and Lévy-Bruhl's primitive thought. To end with chapter IX, therefore, clearly misses an important element of what Tylor is trying to struggle with within these chapters.

This takes me on to my last point relating to Tylor's discussion, which is first articulated in his attempt to distinguish his own theory from that of Max Müller.

It is here that Tylor's focus on metaphor first becomes ambiguous as he is keen to state that his own theory is not a 'mistake of language' in the way that Müller outlines (1871, 1: 271). Or at least, he is keen to state that this is not the origin of myth, although he does recognize that, once founded, mythology does often derive from a play on language and the use of tenses that Müller outlines. For Tylor, however, Müller begins with language, while his own theory begins with experience and reflection on nature itself, not the way in which nature is being talked about or captured in stories. Having noted this, however, Tylor is very clear that it is the retelling of stories that in some way transfers the primitive reflections on the experience of nature, captured in metaphor, into concrete facts about gods, spirits and other beings (1871, 1: 272). This is reinforced a number of times over the three chapters from a discussion of the way individuals within a society tend to see certain beings from mythology – the devil, spirits, the Virgin Mary, and so on – in the visual form that is commonly recognized by that society, through to an explicit note that recognizes that a story of origins, understood by the originator as entirely fictional, becomes fact through the retelling of the story over a number of generations (1871, 1: 278). There is an element of Berger and Luckman's social construction of knowledge here, although entirely without the language of objectivation, institutionalization, legitimation, internalization, and so forth (Berger and Luckman 1967). The principles are much the same, and it is this sociological understanding of myth, rather than the strictly intellectualist view that is common in many critiques of Tylor from Evans-Pritchard onwards, that I see as most significant in Tylor's own reflections. It is this sociological understanding that I have found to be most useful in reflecting on my own emerging theory of religion.

Questions on the non-empirical

As I have already suggested in my introduction, I am not so much interested in Tylor's 'theory of myth' in itself. I am not even sure that we can isolate a single theory of myth from his writing at all. My concern is to see how his reflections on myth can begin to address an outstanding problem that arises from my own writing on the theory of religion. As I was writing my *Contemporary Western Ethnography and the Definition of Religion* (2008) the one element that I personally found most unconvincing, and that has been noted by a number of commentators, is my use of the term 'non-empirical' as the central concept through which I ended up defining religion. I chose to use this terminology

because I chose to place Dan Sperber's work on symbolism and symbolic language at the heart of my analysis of belief (Sperber 1975). Sperber suggests that there is a particular verbal construction that enables people to talk about things that, in his terms, are not real. So to state that 'All leopards are Christians' is to make a statement that cannot be true, and is clearly seen not to be true in a linguistic sense. To affirm the sentence as 'true' must, according to Sperber, be to do something else, in this case evoking a thought world in which leopards are in fact Christians (1975: 91–93). I could see the value of such statements in terms of belief statement made by informants, where the same assertion of truth and the evoking of worlds where such truths are fact, but I was concerned by Sperber's own assertion that such statements are not 'true'. If this were the case, then many sentences would fit this category, most of which are seen to be utter nonsense and in no way evoke other worlds in which they are true. I therefore suggested that what was important in such statements was not the fact that leopards are not Christians, but the recognition that there is no plausible way of ever knowing what religion any particular leopard might follow. It was, in my terms, the non-empirical, non-provable, nature of such statements that was important, and not their truth or falsity (1996: 224–25; 2008: 47).

Unfortunately, however, I am not trained in the disciplines of philosophy or cognitive science and therefore I do not really feel qualified to engage in the kind of detailed analysis that a full discussion of Sperber's argument, and my adaptation of it, would justify. The term 'non-empirical' was a useful marker at the time, which, if related to the Sperber analysis, captured something of what I wanted to say about belief statements, and by extension, about religion more generally. I was still very unhappy with the term and others, with more philosophical knowledge and understanding have critiqued it as inappropriate. Essentially, I think I have the same problem as Tylor. He focuses on the concept of 'metaphor', but does not really want to define that too much and at times feels that it is inappropriate. Likewise, I am focusing on the non-empirical but have the same problems. I might even suggest, as I will argue below, that Tylor's 'metaphor' and my 'non-empirical' are probably aiming to capture the same kind of phenomenon, even if one draws on the terminology of language and the other on that of philosophy.

Both Tylor and I are starting from the same basic observation, namely, that practically every human society engages in some way or another with beings, or forces that cannot be validated through science. This is the basis of Tylor's construction of animism and it is the principle that I have used to explore the way contemporary Western societies engage with the non-empirical. The first

question, therefore, is what language should we use to describe these forces or persons that populate human societies but cannot be classified in terms of physical, chemical or biological frameworks? Tylor is very happy to begin from the principle that such forces and beings are imaginary and his task, therefore, is to ask why so many different human societies have in the past, and still continue, to treat them as real. For me, some 150 years later, and after considerable philosophical and psychological analysis, the range of possibilities is in some ways far greater, but the basic question still remains. I am not happy to treat such beings and forces simply as 'imaginary', they are at best a part of a collective imagination, not the product of individual fancy. Nor am I entirely happy with the language of 'reality' and 'unreality' as the nature of 'reality' in these contexts appears to depend entirely on where you stand. The point of all these elements is that for some people, or peoples, the beings and forces are an obvious and accepted part of their reality, for others they are not. To treat them all simply as 'unreal' is to take sides in this debate and to dismiss the perceptions of reality of those for whom specific beings or forces are very real.

Others have debated these issues with far more sophistication and knowledge than I am able to do here and it is not my purpose to find a solution to this problem, or at least not to arrive at a definitive solution. Others again have sidestepped the direct question and have asked, instead, why certain people do accept such forces and beings as real. Again, that is not a question I intend to answer in this chapter. The work of Graham Harvey, building on that of Irving Hallowell, among others, provides a convincing exploration of many of the issues involved, and there are good reasons to accept their terminology of 'other-than-human persons' to cover at least some of what it is that I am trying to struggle towards at this point (Harvey 2005a; and Harvey this volume). There is still, however, the question of the more impersonal, but equally unverifiable, forces that play a part in the reality of some societies and that leaves me with a series of unanswered questions. For me, however, at this time, it is more the consequences of these beings and forces in the lives of those who accept them as real that is the primary concern, and by extension, the means these people use to engage with, and hence to reinforce the sense of reality of, these beings and forces in their lives.

What I am looking for, therefore, is a sociological approach to religion, which is not to deny the value of the philosophical or the cognitive, but simply to suggest a different perspective. I have argued, in a article on the sociology of prayer, that the only sensible solution for the sociologist, looking at phenomena like prayer, where people engage with forces and beings that they consider real, even if others do not, is not to take the traditional root of methodological

agnosticism, but actually to recognize these forces, and particularly the various beings involved, as part of the sociological situation, as players within the society being studied (2015). It is, in part, this kind of approach that has led Harvey, and others who have studied contemporary animism, to recognize the relational element of many of these engagements, along with the personal construction of the being or forces concerned, and so to talk of 'other-than-human persons', and, from the sociological perspective taken in my article on prayer that appears to make sense. These other-than-human persons can take many different forms, and there is no real way to predict exactly what form they will take in any one society, but that is the business of the ethnographer and not, in itself, a problem for the sociologist of religion.

More of a problem for the sociologist comes from the fact that societies are not distinct units and cultures cannot be catalogued with neat boundaries forming a clear mosaic across the globe. Tylor tends to assume, with most of his contemporaries, that societies in the past are somewhat distinct, unique and unchanging, while contemporary Victorian society is a much more complex entity riven through with many different survivals from the past. We could argue, therefore, that the Dogon, to take just one example with which I am particularly familiar, form a distinct community with clearly defined boundaries. That is how they have often been presented in the past, and their position as cliff dwellers in a relatively isolated and hard to reach region of Mali tends to reinforce this perception. The Dogon actually provide an interesting example in relation to Tylor's discussion on myth, not least because the core ethnography of the Dogon has itself focussed on myth, in both *Conversations with Ogotemmêli, an Introduction to Dogon Religious Ideas* (Griaule 1965) and *The Pale Fox* (Griaule and Dieterlen 1986). In both these texts a highly complex sequence of narratives are presented as a mythic whole, whether that is ostensibly constructed by the Dogon informant Ogotemmêli, as in *Conversations*, or by the anthropologists bringing together a wide range of disparate material, as in *The Pale Fox*.

The Dogon world, as presented in the earlier ethnographic literature and in the subsequent mythic cycles, is, of course, both closed in itself, functioning entirely through a mythic mode of thought, and inhabited by a very wide range of other-than-human persons. The life of the hunter is, like hunters in many other parts of the world, taken up with the engagement with wild animals, possible prey, but also other persons within the landscape that need to be propitiated and brought into relations with the human. Much of the ritual associated with hunting deals with the relationships between human persons (the hunter) and various forms of animal persons (the prey). Much of Marcel Griaule's initial

response to the masking traditions associated with death among the Dogon, suggest that these masks, often representing hunted animals, are also engaged in smoothing over the relationship between human persons and other-than-human, animal persons, who are killed by humans (Griaule 1938). Some level of totemism is also present in many accounts of the Dogon, and the restrictions on who or what can be eaten are seen as a central part of this series of relationships. The role of crocodiles (who according to some stories helped the Dogon in the distant past to cross the River Niger) and similar animal persons play a significant role and are treated with considerable respect in different places and at different times.

Many other-than-human persons also inhabit the bush, the wild places surrounding the village. These persons are seen, on occasion, and engaged with through ritual and other means. The andoumboulou, so common in some of the mythical stories, are understood to be fully material and contemporary inhabitants of the bush (Zahan 1969: 31–36). It is still possible to run into them on occasions and, should a human person do so, then certain rituals would need to follow. The recently dead are also, in a slightly different way, other-than-human persons and need to be handled carefully through the various activities associated with through ritual in order to help them to find their final home (Dieterlen 1941). Likewise Amma (God), the Nommo (gods), and even the founding ancestors, who have such a central place in the mythic narratives, are clearly experienced as other-than-human persons who share, in different ways, in the contemporary human world. Suitable rituals are held in order to manage relations between these other-than-human others and humans for the well-being of the wider human (and other-than-human) society. In fact, most of the original texts that are used to construct the mythic structure in *The Pale Fox* are taken from a very wide range of individual ritual events.

This is the classic account of the Dogon, and Griaule develops his own understanding of African thought, or layers of thought out of this material (Griaule and Dieterlen 1986: 60–61), a line of analysis that is subsequently taken up by his daughter (Calume-Griaule 1965). In reality, however, this description only covers a small part of the relations that individual Dogon have with other-than-human persons. Islam and Christianity have introduced other non-human others, as have neighbouring societies. There is no way of predicting which other-than-human persons any one individual, or family might relate to, even if they are nominally Muslims or Christians (Jolly 2004). It has also become clear, through subsequent ethnographic work, that different villages along the

Bandiagara cliffs, the plateau above the cliffs, or the plains beyond, clearly engage in different ways with a different range of other-than-human persons, many of whom the people themselves cannot fully articulate in any clear fashion. All the classic mythic structures originate from one particular cluster of villages within the centre of the cliffs.

Finally, it is also interesting to look at the sculptures and masks that are so much a part of the Western conception of the Dogon, and now exist in great numbers in the museums of Europe and the United States (Leloup 1994). What is very clear from the literature is that these statues, and to a lesser extent masks, are not seen as representations of people, spirits, gods, animals, or whatever it might be, nor as containers for such spirits. They are clearly seen, and engaged with, as persons in their own right. That is not to say that there is no relationship between a particular statue and a specific human person (ancestors, spirit or whatever) but that in practice it is the statue itself (and to a lesser extent the mask, when worn) that is treated as the other-than-human person in the relationship. It is addressed, engaged with, incorporated into ritual and so on. To provide an account, therefore, of the role of myth, or of other-than-human persons within the lives of contemporary Dogon is much more complex, much more fluid, and much more nuanced, than many of the earlier ethnographers could see.

What is seen within the Dogon ethnography, therefore, is not a clearly defined and isolated social group with a clear and distinct mythic narrative (or mode of thought). Rather, what is presented is something that is just as complex as Tylor's own presentation of Victorian Britain, with many different strands of narrative, a number of which are not unique to the Dogon, and a much more fluid series of discourses that are internally distinguished and subdivided, but that also spill out into other communities within the region. One fundamental assumption of Tylor's analysis, therefore, needs to be challenged. However, this is only half the story. As I have already noted, Tylor's own presentation of contemporary society does not fit neatly into his own assumptions (even accepting the role of 'survivals') and is presented within Tylor's text as much more complex. It is this complexity, however, that I would argue that is what Tylor's analysis actually allows us to engage with and to make sense of, through the many layers of analysis each of which can be applied to the same social setting (rather than relating to different groups as is presented in the text). Tylor's three chapters on mythology, therefore, with all their confusion, their many different examples, and their fluid moves across a range of different narrative types, might, ironically, capture the experience of the Dogon, as well as that of contemporary society, much more

appropriately than that of Griaule, Dieterlen and others who have studied them in the past.

The role of myth/narrative

Rather than attempting to answer all the possible questions raised by incorporating other-than-human persons into the sociological analysis within a relatively short book chapter, however, I wish to return, in my final section, to Tylor's understanding of myth and how this might help us to engage with one particular aspect of this wider problem, whether for the Dogon or, in this particular case, for contemporary British society. For Tylor, the question is why certain people, at certain stages of human evolution, accepted narratives about other-than-human persons as true. He recognizes that this might not have been how such stories originated, but that over time their truth becomes accepted. It appears almost as if there is something particular about the story that makes this acceptance possible. He quotes the example, for instance, of a woman who accepted not just the Gospel narratives, but also the content of the parables as 'true', refusing to accept that the Good Samaritan, for example, did not exist (1871, 1: 375). When challenged by the fact that this was merely an illustrative stories told by Jesus, she is reported as saying that Jesus would never tell a lie and so the stories must be true. What we see here is not so much a 'primitive philosophy' as a particular attitude to the story, an acceptance of the truth of the story not merely metaphorically but literally, irrespective of any evidence to the contrary. This is the same construction, although in narrative form, as that of a people accepting the other-than-human persons as real, and as significant players within their social world.

I have written elsewhere about the role of narrative and the story in the way individuals talk about Christian worship (1999b: 102–05). At that time I suggested that they use stories partly because they cannot express in other terms what the worship means to them, but also because it is the emotive, and empathetic potential of the story that enables them to say, not what the liturgy means in abstract or analytic terms, but rather that it is an experience that cannot be expressed in words. Such experiences, and the meanings associated with them, can only be communicated through the empathetic means of the story, assuming that the hearer understands the nature of what is being said. Stories play a particular role in human communication, therefore, and that role almost always engages more than the rational intellect; it also has to do with experience and

emotion, and that is essential to the nature of the story, and hence of myth. Tylor does not state this explicitly, but his emphasis on the origins of myth in an experience of nature, rather than in reflection on language, does go some way towards this.

The real power of the story, however, comes when we move from a simple telling, or even reading, into the dramatic presentation of the narrative. Shakespeare's 400th anniversary came about in 2016 and over the year we have heard a great deal about the power of drama to engage with many different kinds of truth. We have also been told, on more than one occasion, of the ability of the audience to suspend its disbelief within the context of the drama and to experience the actors as the characters being portrayed, and worlds unfolded that would not normally be recognized or accepted in 'real life'. Shakespeare himself recognizes this in many of the texts given to Puck and Ariel in *Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Tempest* respectively, among many others. For the time of the play, the moment of drama, then what we see is 'real' and, unless the play is particularly badly produced or the director specifically sets out to break the spell in some way, we all enter into that acceptance of belief for the period we are sitting within the theatre.

Ritual, of course, can often work in a very similar fashion. I recently attended an Egun masking ceremony in Benin. We were told that the Egun are manifestations of the ancestral spirits that come to bless the families and farms of the village. We were also told that if any of the masks touched us we would collapse and need spiritual help from the people who accompanied them in order to recover. We watched the masked dancers move around the village offering their blessing and we attended a dance in which individual masks came forward to perform. Covered in highly embroidered cloth they span and danced in a way as to make the costume flair out around them. Many also left the central dance space and raced into the audience, scattering people who wanted to avoid being touched. While we, like all those present, knew that these were simply men in masks, and while we as visitors did not 'believe' in the ancestors, or their power, within the context of the ritual we, like everybody else, ran screaming to avoid the advance of the masks and their dangerous costumes. For that time, we not only acted as if we believed, taking our lead from those around us, but also believed as we acted. We did not want to test the power that the mask might have to bring us down.

There is something here of my previous theory of situational belief (1996). The acceptance of the reality of the Egun, as other-than-human persons, and their power to hurt us, is specific to the ritual, but it is spontaneous in the moment, a

basic emotive response, and not an intellectual rationalization. The same is true of the Dogon mentioned earlier, and perhaps the men who wore the masks for the Egun ceremonies. What they take to be other-than-human persons may be real for one moment, for one situation or purpose, for one particular narrative telling, and very different for another. There does not have to be coherence or consistency and, if the ethnographic literature is read across the grain of its obvious sense, then we can see as much variety, complexity and situationality within *The Pale Fox*, and the rest of the Dogon ethnography, as I have demonstrated within contemporary Britain. This is the same kind of reading against the grain that I am proposing for the works of Tylor.

What is also clear, however, is that the attitude to narrative that is shared by theatre and by myth, and the suspension of unbelief that is inherent within it, can continue to exist beyond the drama, the ritual or the telling of the myth. Stories, if told and retold, within the right context, can spill beyond the context of telling and begin to inhabit the everyday life of the individuals concerned. As with the story itself, so too with its characters, both human and other-than-human. We only need to look at the way certain novels and films have been accepted, or adapted as real to see this process in action. I was always somewhat amazed at how willing so many people appeared to be to accept Dan Brown's narrative of the 'true' meaning of the grail in the *Da Vinci Code* as real. What people appeared to want to accept was that the Roman Catholic Church had been hiding something from them, a grand conspiracy, for many centuries. Such conspiracy theories often have their followers and what begins as a story becomes, for many, a statement of reality. In a very different way, the narrative of the *Star Wars* franchise has spilled over into the lives of viewers and 'the force' and other elements of the narrative are accepted as real, even if the films are still understood as 'story'. This kind of relationship is not simple, or straightforward, and examples of individuals who understand themselves to be vampires, the desire to see science through the lens of Frankenstein and many other narrative structures/stories can be seen to tread the very ambiguous boundary between reality and non-reality.

We are conditioned to think that religious stories, whether myths or the scriptural stories of the world religions (and there is always a question about whether the world religions really have myths, or just scripture), are different from the product of drama or film, but this is not the case. In the end all of these are simply stories. Some stories we know are true, accurate, or largely accurate accounts of real events (although as a story the emotional and empathetic element always allows for interpretation and the emphasizing

of particular responses). We can also recognize many stories, from fairy tales through to contemporary novels, film and drama, as obviously fiction (although once again we are always inclined to look for the emotional or psychological 'truth' of such narratives). As human beings we want to tell, and be told, stories and they play a vital part in our lives. The point at which we decide which are 'true' and which are not, or what kind of 'truth' they may contain, is a highly complex area that has its own set of disciplines in order to assess and explore these possibilities.

What is also clear, from evidence in the world, is that the more closed a particular social group may be then the more it is possible to accept uncritically the truth of the stories that society tells to, and about, itself. I am not referring here to the presumed closed nature of 'primitive' or 'tribal' societies. As I have tried to show with the Dogon, these are seldom closed in any real sense. The various examples of Jonestown and Waco which set out to close themselves off from the wider world make this point very clearly, as do many other examples in history, including we must assume the current situation in the so-called Islamic State. In wider societies the acceptance of what is real or unreal, fiction and reality, in stories have changed and it is not possible to say, following Tylor, that there ever was a time when all stories were accepted as true and other times when the majority see them as fiction. The boundaries between the stories and the reality of other-than-human persons and forces with any one society will always be a product of local circumstances and even specific situations. This will require the detailed ethnographic study of the society in question in order to tease it out. In all cases, it will not simply be a case of belief or unbelief, truth or fiction, empirical or non-empirical. It is my contention that all these are fluid and it is the specific circumstances, as with the nature of the play, or ritual or film, that will enable individuals to accept a story as 'true'. The fact that people do so leads inevitably to the populating of their world with other-than-human persons. This is the point, expressed in very different language, which I believe Tylor was trying to express within his three chapters on mythology. If, therefore, I wanted to say what I gained from these chapters, it is not that religion engages in a metaphoric or pre-rational mode of thought, but that all religion is expressed primarily in the form of narrative, and that religious thought is essentially a narrative mode of thought, something that I think Tylor would have been happy to endorse.

10

Deconstructing the Survival in E. B. Tylor's *Primitive Culture*: From Memes to Dreams and Bricolage

Paul-François Tremlett

The objective of this chapter – to borrow from Birgit Meyer's revisiting of R. R. Marrett and his theory of affective pre-animism – is not to blindly celebrate (in this case) E. B. Tylor as 'a timeless, alas ill-remembered classic. Instead, the purpose is to situate his work in the archaeology of knowledge about religion, so as to provide a more three-dimensional view for contemporary debates' (2016: 15). In particular, the object is the deconstruction of Tylor's concept of the survival.

The standard account of Tylor's oeuvre situates the survival as a key element of a comparative anthropology saturated with evolutionist, rationalist and utilitarian assumptions about progress, reason and human nature. The influence of this canonical Tylor on contemporary currents in the anthropology of religion has tended to gravitate rather narrowly to the recapitulation of classical debates around the origins and definition of religion, but with the caveat that Tylor framed his work in terms of an historical anthropology that today lacks any theoretical or empirical credibility, and in terms of an epistemology saturated by the presuppositions of gendered, white, Protestant colonialism. Yet, some of his ideas prefigure in important respects assumptions shared by contemporary cognitive anthropologists, evolutionary psychologists and new atheists. As such, the first part of this chapter will explore the standard account of Tylor's survival with a particular interest in his theory of diffusion to open out the extent of its anticipation of, for example, Dan Sperber's mobilization of the concept of 'epidemiology' and Richard Dawkins's theory of memetics, theories that seek to explain the transmission and distribution of individual units of culture and religion. The second part of the chapter will be concerned with the destabilization of the canonical Tylor. Not because the canonical account is wrong, but rather,

because Tylor's *Primitive Culture: Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Language, Art, and Custom* – like all texts – possesses at best only the illusion of conceptual unity, and deconstruction is a means of breaking down this illusion. Just as in Emile Durkheim's oeuvre, where there is an entanglement of framing concepts and interpretive strategies – evolutionist and functionalist, transgressive, utilitarian and symbolic (1915; 1960; 2014) – so Tylor's work reflects the uneasy intellectual currents of the late nineteenth century and its discontents. The survival is an organizing element of Tylor's theoretical system but by unsettling it, an alternative Tylor – or perhaps an altered Tylor – can be glimpsed. This alter-Tylor's imaginative account of animist cognition evokes Lévy-Bruhl and Lévi-Strauss, while the centrality of the dream to the origins of religion suggests the survival represents less an element of a rational, linear sequence that leads backwards in time to a putative moment of origin than a mode of irrational production perhaps best described as bricolage.

By the conclusion of this chapter, the deconstruction of Tylor's survival will have accomplished two things: first, it will have indicated previously overlooked areas in which Tylor's work anticipates later, psychological and cognitive theories of religion and culture. Second, it will have sketched a new Tylor whose work leaks beyond the narrow evolutionist, rationalist and utilitarian preconceptions of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, towards a very different account of the origins of religion.

Tylor's survival

James Bielo's *Anthropology of Religion: The Basics* (2015) sketches the Tylor of the standard anthropological canon. Tylor is described as an armchair anthropologist, who relied on accounts of non-European societies by explorers and missionaries rather than on his own fieldwork, but who made a 'foundational' (2015: x) contribution to the field notably for having developed 'the first modern anthropological definition of religion' in an approach that focused on 'belief and the supernatural' (2015: 6) (compare Bielo's account with those of Evans-Pritchard 1968 and Morris 1987). Although Bielo suggests that Tylor continues to be important to the contemporary anthropology of religion, he also says that Tylor's evolutionist 'theoretical agenda' is one 'no modern anthropologist would support' (ibid.).[1] Importantly, the survival was a constitutive element of this agenda.[2]

Tylor defined the survival in *Primitive Culture* as 'processes, customs, opinions … which have been carried on by force of habit into a new state of society different from that in which they had their original home' that thus 'remain as proofs and examples of an older condition of culture out of which a newer has been evolved' (Tylor 1903 [1871] 1: 16). In the essay 'On the Survival of Savage Thought in Modern Civilization' (Tylor in Kippenberg 1998: 302) the survival was defined as a 'belief belonging to a low level of culture' that continues 'into the midst of a higher civilisation which practically disowns it' while in *Anthropology: An Introduction to the Study of Man and Civilization* it was described as the 'unchanged relic of primitive man' (1881: 18).[3] The survival was constitutive of a theoretical apparatus that was put to use in much the same way as a geologist might interpret strata – indeed, Tylor claimed that 'geology establishes a principle which lies at the very foundation of the science of anthropology' (1881: 33) – or as a palaeontologist might read fossils, that is, 'to reconstruct the sequence of forms *within* a line of descent' (Ingold 1986: 32; see also Burrow 1968: 240–41; Marett 1936: 26; and Stocking 1995: 6). This Lamarckian or perhaps simply teleological rather than strictly Darwinian vision of evolution, posited a process of continuous development whereby new traits and characteristics replaced old ones that had proven redundant, in a single and unbroken line of progressive improvement (see also Opler 1964: 142–43).[4] Tylor simply transferred this evolutionary hypothesis across from biology to the study of culture:

> In taking up the problem of the development of culture as a branch of ethnological research, a first proceeding is to obtain a means of measurement. Seeking something like a definite line along which to reckon progression and retrogression in civilisation, we may apparently find it best in the classification of real tribes and nations, past and present. Civilisation actually existing among mankind in different grades, we are enabled to estimate and compare it by positive examples. The educated world of Europe and America practically settles a standard by simply placing its own nations at one end of the social series and savage tribes at the other, arranging the rest of mankind between these limits according as they correspond more closely to savage or to cultured life. (Tylor 1903 [1871] 1: 26; see also 1881: 24–25)

Tylor was far from being alone in subscribing to these evolutionary views: it was the paradigm of the day (albeit not uncontested) and it influenced the scholarship of Marx and Freud, as well as a host of now lesser known thinkers such as John Lubbock, Henry Sumner Maine and Lewis Henry Morgan (see Kippenberg

1998: 298–300). For example, Lubbock, in *The Origin of Civilisation and the Primitive Condition of Man*, suggested that:

> In the first place, the condition and habits of existing savages resemble in many ways, though not in all, those of our own ancestors in a period now long gone by; in the second, they illustrate much of what is passing among ourselves, many customs which have evidently no relation to present circumstances, and even some ideas which are rooted in our minds, as fossils are imbedded in the soil; and thirdly, we can even, by means of them, penetrate some of that mist which separates the present from the future. (1870: 1)

Like his contemporaries J. G. Frazer and Hebert Spencer, Tylor applied the idea of a single line of progress to religion (see Bielo 2015: 6). The line was plotted from animism to science and was discernible through the study of beliefs. Tylor suggested that 'spirits are simply personified causes' (1903 [1871] 2: 108), a claim that unambiguously set up the animistic belief in spirits as a hypothesis or explanation about the world, albeit a mistaken one. The assumption that the origins of religion lay in efforts to explain the world assumed religion was a stuttering kind of science or, in Stocking's memorable words, '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' (1987: 192). It also assumed the existence of a common human nature: regardless of how individuals might be separated in time and space, the ways in which they addressed problems were predictable, according to shared cognitive dispositions and capabilities. It was precisely these claims about cognition and human nature that allowed Tylor to imaginatively reconstruct apparently ancient chains of reasoning:

> The intellectualist arguments of the British anthropologists took for granted certain notions of the association of ideas and the inevitable chains of causality, and they assumed that from these premises they could retrace the mental routes by which primitives had been led 'naturally' to certain beliefs and certain practices. (Needham 1972: 181)

Stewart Guthrie has argued for Tylor's influence on the work of the anthropologist Robin Horton but also for the importance of Tylor to the contemporary cognitive science of religion (Guthrie 2013).[5] Indeed, Tylor's influence is rather greater than conventionally thought. Richard Dawkins's new atheist tract *The God Delusion* (2006) makes no reference to Tylor, but reproduces key dimensions of his anthropology – it is teleological, it assumes that religion is a precursor to science as a type of explanation of the world, it presupposes

common, species-specific cognitive processes and dispositions and it focuses on belief and the supernatural. However, arguably as significant as these overlaps between Tylor's anthropology and Dawkins's new atheist populism, is the fact that Tylor's Lamarckian survivals anticipate in certain ways the current direction of Darwinian approaches to the study of religion and culture, particularly when understood in terms of the related question of diffusion. A key feature of contemporary Darwinian approaches is the effort to theorize the diffusion or the distribution of units of religion and culture in much the same way that geneticists study the distribution of genes in a population:

> The geographical distribution of cultural traits is shaped, at least in part, by factors similar to those affecting the distribution of organisms … Whereas organisms can disperse to new environments, cultural traits can spread by the movement of culture-bearing people or the diffusion of ideas and technology among non-kin. Cultural traits may also arise as adaptations to local ecological conditions … One of the main goals of cultural anthropology has been to document and map the worldwide distribution of cultural traits, in a manner resembling the descriptive methods of biogeography. (Mesoudi, Whiten and Laland 2006: 335)

The theory of memetics associated with the work of Dawkins (2006: 191–201) and Sperber's '*epidemiology of representations*' (1996: 1, emphasis in the original) are based on the idea that cultural and religious beliefs and practices can be understood to consist of units of information, whose distribution in a population is analytically comparable to the distribution of genetic information in a population. Dawkins coined the term 'meme', 'to describe a cultural replicator, or a unit of cultural transmission' and the key assumption of the memetic approach is 'that cultural knowledge is stored in brains as discrete packages of semantic information, comparable to how biological information is stored in genes' (Mesoudi, Whiten and Laland 2006: 342). In similar fashion, Sperber claimed that:

> Our individual brains are each inhabited by a large number of ideas that determine our behaviour … An idea, born in the brain of one individual, may have, in the brains of other individuals, descendants that resemble it. Ideas can be transmitted, and by being transmitted from one person to another, they may even propagate … Culture is made up, first and foremost, of such contagious ideas … To explain culture, then, is to explain why and how some ideas happen to be contagious. This calls for the development of a true *epidemiology of representations*. (1996: 1)

Tylor's diffusionism appears to anticipate in significant respects the projects of Dawkins and Sperber:

> The bow and arrow is a species, the habit of flattening children's skulls is a species, the practice of reckoning numbers by tens is a species. The geographical distribution of these things, and their transmission from region to region, have to be studied as the naturalist studies the geography of his botanical and zoological species. (Tylor 1903 [1871] 1: 8)

The survival, then, belongs not only to Tylor's evolutionism but also to a diffusionism embedded in a particular view of cognition and human nature that assumes a common cognitive apparatus (or psychic unity), which solves problems following predictable patterns of approach and resolution. Moreover, it points to a methodological principle shared by Tylor, new atheists and contemporary evolutionary psychologists and cognitive anthropologists, namely, that culture is not to be apprehended holistically but rather in terms of discrete units such as beliefs and practices that can then be compared cross-culturally (Lévi-Strauss 1993a: 4). The functionalist paradigm inaugurated by Boas, Durkheim and Malinowski, which insisted on the study of cultures and societies as wholes, constituted a rejection of such methods. After Tylor, the emphasis in anthropology shifted decisively to fieldwork and ethnography and an explanatory horizon described by its critics as relativism. But, the experimental and laboratory focus of contemporary cognitive anthropology indicates the continuing theoretical attractions of envisioning culture and religion very much in Tylorean terms.

Deconstruction and the alter-Tylor of *Primitive Culture*

In this part of the chapter, Tylor's two-volume *Primitive Culture* is approached as a system-structure, that is, as a text that when under deconstruction, can be shown to generate more than one reading. Shifting the weight of the survival in Tylor's *Primitive Culture* creates new centres of gravity in the text that will allow the alter-Tylor, like a double, to emerge – if only fleetingly – from the shadows. Note, however, that deconstruction is not a method. There is no fixed procedure that can be applied, step by step, to *Primitive Culture*. Rather, there are assumptions.

In *Of Grammatology* (1997), Derrida suggests that the privileging of speech (presence) over writing (absence or distance) had been constitutive of much of the Western philosophical tradition. It has functioned as a strategy to guarantee

the stabilization and crystallization of meaning, and to ensure the possibility of communication and understanding between speakers. Derrida, citing among others Aristotle's claim that 'spoken words … are the symbols of mental experience … and written words are the symbols of spoken words' and 'the voice, [as] producer of the first symbols, has a relationship of essential and immediate proximity with the mind' (1997: 11), argues that the presence and proximity of speech to the mind is the guarantee of meaning's transparency to itself. The proximity of speech to the mind allows speakers to know what they mean, to mean what they say and to understand one another. This speech community is disrupted by writing (in much the same way that, in sociology, modernity disrupts the communing community of the Gemeinschaft) because writing requires interpretation and interpretation threatens understanding with all kinds of temporal and spatial distortions.

Derrida sought to unravel this so-called metaphysics of presence by arguing that writing was not corrupted speech but rather, that both speech and writing were kinds of systems characterized by instability and transformation. Importantly, Derrida situated this claim partly outside philosophy, in biology and cybernetics (1997: 9) in a manner that, according to Johnson (1993), aligned Derrida's conception of writing 'with the metamorphic and adaptational ("open-system") models found in systems theory' (1993: 8; see also 1993: 191). Yet, deconstruction also owes something to Freud. Freud's notion of the unconscious, that realm of dreams, displacements and slips of the tongue, offers a compelling analogy for deconstruction. Deconstruction, then, is less a method than a means of approaching structures and systems, and the processes of transformation that can take place within them. It was for these reasons that in *Memoires for Paul de Man,* Derrida wrote, 'there is always already deconstruction, at work in works, especially in literary works. Deconstruction cannot be applied, after the fact and from the outside, as a technical instrument of modernity. Texts deconstruct themselves by themselves' (Derrida in Moran 2000: 452). Deconstruction is then 'the little push, the "slight movement" [that] produces a revolution out of nothing' (Derrida 1997: 257), and following Laclau, 'something which "works" within the structure from the beginning' (Laclau 1990: 29).

As I have argued in the first part of this chapter, the survival is a key element of Tylor's theoretical apparatus, associated closely with his evolutionist and diffusionist assumptions, but also his conviction of a single human nature defined by universal cognitive dispositions. It is precisely this unity that allows Tylor to suggest to his readers that 'we carry our minds back' (1903 [1871] 2: 59) to experience other modes of cognition. While the phrase may suggest

time travel or an imaginative projection back into humanity's putative origins, it also implies that the cognitive operations in question are in fact quite close to hand through, for example, poetry (1903 [1871] 2: 447), such that the reader apparently needs no anthropological training to accomplish this feat for herself. Indeed, Tylor locates these other cognitive states less in terms of a series of stages of evolutionary progress (from savagery through barbarism and on to civilization) than in terms of a binary opposition of 'primitive to modern civilization' (1903 [1871] 2: 443) and 'of Spiritualistic to Materialistic philosophy' (1903 [1871] 1: 425). These oppositions and the possibility of oscillation between them suggests a continuum of cognitive operations encompassing religious and scientific forms of reasoning both of which must be assumed to be present and known in experience to Tylor and his audience. It is for this reason that Kippenberg (1998: 307) claims that the survival implies 'an attempt at tackling the lasting power of non-rational beliefs and institutions' such that it bears a certain 'affinity with the romantic tradition and its appreciation of the non-rational'. Tylor's anthropology of religion does not only legitimate empire or the British liberal tradition of philosophy. It also beckons to the emotional, non-utilitarian and the non-rational as constitutive elements of primitive and civilized life.

These elements can be glimpsed in Tylor's imaginative reconstruction of mythical and magical modes of cognition. According to Tylor, these types of thinking are 'based on the Association of Ideas' (1903 [1871] 1: 116) and include the 'great doctrine of analogy' (1903 [1871] 1: 296–97) and 'metaphor, which transfers ideas from hearing to seeing, from touching to thinking, from the concrete of one kind to the abstract of another' (Tylor 1903 [1871] 1: 234). Accordingly, cognitive operations characterized by analogy and metaphor point to a mental universe in which 'men to whom these were living thoughts … seemed to see and hear and feel them … with a far deeper consciousness [such] that the circumstance of nature was worked out in endless imaginative detail' (1903 [1871] 1: 297), their 'minds saturated with the most vivid belief in souls, demons and deities' (1903 [1871] 1: 419). Moreover, these beliefs are 'associated with intense emotion, with awful reverence, with agonizing terror, with rapt ecstasy when sense and thought utterly transcend the common level of daily life' (1903 [1871] 2: 359).

These references to intense affective states are not without significance (Guthrie 2013: 38). Nor are Tylor's assertions as to the reasonableness of the beliefs in question. As such, he describes them as being empirical 'answering in the most forcible way to the plain evidence of men's senses' and as anything

but 'arbitrary' (1903 [1871] 1: 429). These passages seem to anticipate less the rationalism of Sperber or Dawkins (or indeed Horton) than perhaps Lévy-Bruhl's idea of mystical and affective participation as a means of characterizing primitive religious culture, and his distinction of 'concrete' from 'abstract' and 'conceptual' modes of thought (Lévy-Bruhl 1923: 433) where 'occult powers, mystic influences, participations of all kinds, are mingled with the data directly afforded by perception' (1923: 445), and where 'legends and proverbs often betray a delicate and roguish power of observation and their myths, a ready and oft-times poetical imagination' (1923: 444).[6] Moreover, there are also resonances with Lévi-Strauss, whose opposition of *la pensée sauvage* to Western thought, the former 'supremely concrete, the other supremely abstract; one proceeds from the angle of sensible qualities and the other from the angle of formal properties' (1966: 269), likewise privileges a binary of two forms of thought.

Yet if the survival, as a 'category of historical imagination' (Kippenberg 1998: 308), allows Tylor (and even his readers) to delineate and even experience for themselves animism as a mode of cognition, it is also a key element in Tylor's attempt to develop, for anthropology, a formal vocabulary able to transcend particularly theological sources of prejudice. Tylor notes that the '"religious world" is so occupied in hating and despising the beliefs of the heathen … that they have little time or capacity left to understand them. It cannot be so with those who fairly seek to comprehend the[ir] nature and meaning' (1903 [1871] 1: 420), adding that the 'reward of these enquirers will be a more rational comprehension of the faiths in whose midst they dwell' (1903 [1871] 1: 421). Warning against 'attempting to explain relics of intellectual antiquity by viewing them from the changed level of modern opinion' (1903 [1871] 1: 496), it is these reflections on method and objectivity that lead Tylor to his minimum definition of religion ('the belief in Spiritual Beings') as a first move for a 'systematic study of the religions' (1903 [1871] 1: 424) free from the 'perversion of judgment' (1903 [1871] 1: 420) occasioned by missionary and theological bias (see also 1903 [1871] 2: 358).[7]

Tylor, then, understands anthropology and the survival as tools for occasioning a necessary, but radical, break from the theology and the Christian culture of his time, to open out a novel space for a new kind of approach to the study of religion. Importantly, this innovative form of enquiry is comparative. *Primitive Culture* expounds a relatively straightforward, liberal and utilitarian account of cognition and human nature, affecting to watch it unfold and mature across different times and places. The survival is a key element of this comparative strategy and Tylor's anthropology depends on the idea of a common human nature

for the imaginative reconstruction of primitive thought given the absence of sustained fieldwork by Tylor himself. Tylor's allusions to a single 'machinery of thinking' (1903 [1871] 1: 497) and the analogy he draws between cognition and 'the laws of chemical combination' (1903 [1871] 1: 159) suggest that the activities of thought proceed everywhere in the same fashion and are therefore liable to reconstruction by the diligent anthropologist:

> The regularity with which such conceptions repeat themselves over the world bears testimony to the regularity of the processes by which opinion is formed among mankind. At the same time, the student who carefully compares them will find in them a perfect illustration of an important principle, widely applicable to the general theory of the formation of human opinion. When a problem has presented itself to mankind at large, susceptible of a number of solutions about equally plausible, the result is that several opinions thus produced will be found lying scattered in country after country. (1903 [1871] 2: 59)

Yet, it is precisely at the point where Tylor's account of cognition meets the dream that lies at the heart of his theory of the origins of religion, that things must begin to unravel. The dream is the switch point between Tylor and his double the alter-Tylor, because the dream is the most important survival of all:

> It seems as though thinking men, as yet at a low level of culture, were deeply impressed by two groups of biological problems. In the first place, what is it that makes the difference between a living body and a dead one; what causes waking, sleep, trance, disease, death? In the second place, what are those human shapes which appear in dreams and visions? Looking at these two groups of phenomena, the ancient savage philosophers probably made their first step by the obvious inference that every man has two things belonging to him, namely, a life and a phantom. These two are evidently in close connection with the body, the life as enabling it to feel and think and act, the phantom as being its image or second self; both, also, are perceived to be things separable from the body. (1903 [1871] 1: 428)

According to Durkheim, at the centre of Tylor's theory of animism lies the idea that the 'ancient savage philosophers' do not distinguish between waking and sleeping. That is, just as the mental representations of waking life are held to be impressions of real states of affairs, so those that appear in dreams are accorded the same reality:

> So when he dreams that he has visited a distant country, he believes that he really was there. But he could not have gone there, unless two beings exist within him …

> From these repeated experiences, he little by little arrives at the idea that each of us has a double. (Durkheim 1915: 50)

The dream – Descartes's cipher for error and for the diabolical, Freud's for the double – is the site at which past and present are reassembled (Freud 1950: 110) in a manner that makes the dream a mode of production akin to Lévi-Strauss's notion of bricolage, a form of cognitive assembly that works with whatever is to hand (Lévi-Strauss 1966). In 'The Structural Study of Myth' (1993b), Lévi-Strauss demonstrated how bricolage works: by collecting different versions of the same myth and comparing them, it became possible to understand the myths as being composed of fragments, which have assembled themselves time and time again to create new versions, each new version a transformation of the last. Importantly, at the centre of this process is not any sovereign human subject, but the myths themselves (Lévi-Strauss 1992). Does the origin of religion lie in dream-like bricolage (Tylor 1903 [1871] 1: 428), and minds deluded less by error and false conceptions than minds activated by curiosity, 'incongruity' (Smith 1993: 293) and perhaps even the pleasures of thinking (see Lévi-Strauss 1991: 89)? Emile Durkheim's rejection of Tylor's theory of animism as the origin of religion was founded partly upon the idea that such pleasure was entirely beyond primitive peoples:

> These weak beings, who have so much trouble in maintaining life against all the forces which assail it, have no means for supporting any luxury in the way of speculation. They do not reflect except when they are driven to it [Il ne doit réfléchir que quand il y est incité]. Now it is difficult to see what could have led them to make dreams the theme of their meditations. What does the dream amount to in our lives? How little is the place it holds, especially because of the very vague impressions it leaves in the memory, and of the rapidity with which it is effaced from remembrance, and consequently how surprising it is that a man of so rudimentary an intelligence [qu'un homme d'une intelligence aussi rudimentaire] should have expended such efforts to find its explanation! (1915: 58; 1960: 82)

The significance of Durkheim's critique cannot be overstated: he is attacking Tylor the liberal, Protestant utilitarian for the anti-utilitarianism of his theory of the origins of religion. But it is in Tylor's dispersed discussions of Spiritualism[8] that Tylor's survival – his 'ethnographical key' (1903 [1871] 1: 84) – flips to embrace the irrational:

> The history of survival in cases like those of the folk-lore and occult arts … has for the most part been a history of dwindling and decay. As men's minds change

> in progressing culture, old customs and opinions fade gradually in a new and uncongenial atmosphere, or pass into states more congruous with the new life around them … For the stream of civilization winds and turns upon itself, and what seems the bright onward current of one age may in the next spin round in a whirling eddy, or spread into a dull and pestilential swamp. Studying with a wide view the course of human opinion, we may now and then trace on from the very turning-point the change from passive survival into active revival. Some well-known belief or custom has for centuries shown symptoms of decay, when we begin to see that the state of society, instead of stunting it, is favouring its new growth, and it bursts forth again. (1903 [1871] 1: 136–7)

This passage is remarkable for the concatenation of linear and nonlinear metaphors that Tylor employs to imagine cultural and religious change. The evolutionist's assumptions concerning religion's 'dwindling and decay' are present, but they are juxtaposed alongside 'winds and turns' and 'whirling' eddies. Tylor here imagines time as both linear line and spiral, and in doing so switches between the idea of religion's extinction and the idea of adaptive change. The survival simply cannot be contained by the idea of the relic after-all, and the implication of redundancy which that word implies. Rather, the survival is a 'metaphor, indicating the presence of primitive religion in modern culture' (Kippenberg 1998: 305), a catalyst for cultural or religious genesis, whereby elements from different contexts are combined to produce something new (see also Tylor 1892). The survival seems to indicate less a linear sequence leading backwards in time than a hybrid assemblage of religion-culture. Tylor appears to frame Spiritualism as such an assemblage of elements, that is of elements produced from religious, secular, past and present, inviting forth the figure of the bricoleur to consider processes of religious and cultural change less in terms of the (evolutionary) substitution of forms and instead in terms of their dreamlike combination. In the discussion of Spiritualism, thinking occurs not as the trial and error process of seeking to fabricate mental representations to first accurately describe reality and second, to manipulate it, than as a process of working with the 'remains and debris of events' (Lévi-Strauss 1966: 22), mixing, blending and combining to produce new forms under distinct conditions of the 'state of society'. The species-specific 'machinery' of thought – of human nature – that make possible Tylor's reconstruction of animistic thought, points then not to an evolutionary account of cognition but to a continuum of cognitive operations suggestive of a kind of drift back and forth between the metaphorical and the logical and between Tylor and his double.

Tanya Luhrmann's ethnography of ritual magic in the England of the 1980s developed an account of 'interpretive drift' which Luhrmann characterized as that 'slow, often unacknowledged shift in someone's manner of interpreting events as they become involved with a particular activity' (1989: 340), and again as 'the slow slide from one form of explanation to another, partially propelled by the dynamics of unverbalised experience' (1989: 351). Interpretive drift constituted a deconstruction of the unitary, thinking, willing self of the liberal, utilitarian imagination:

> The difficulty is that people tend to interpret the behaviour of other people on the basis of ideal models that they have of themselves, which are far from empirical reality. That is, people tend to conceptualise themselves as unitary selves, coherent and all-of-a-piece. In order to understand their actions as part of that self, directed towards an end suitable to that self, they talk about 'beliefs' and 'attitudes' and 'desires', proposition-like assertions which explain why someone performs an action … Our notions of rationality, variegated though they may be, hinge upon the consistency of our beliefs: that they are consistent with each other, with certain ends, with advancing our satisfaction. The very term 'belief system' underlines the hold which the assumption of cognitive consistency has upon the culture … In making sense of other people's behaviour, charitably attributing rationality to them, we treat people as if they have a more or less coherent set of proposition-like beliefs to which they adhere, by which to organise their life and for which they would argue. (1989: 335–36)

Luhrmann's ethnography included a brief summary of some of her own experiences during fieldwork (1989: 347–49): she wrote about feeling magical power vivifying her body, of melting batteries, stopped watches and a powerful dream:

> In the midst of a novel on Arthurian Britain I woke early one morning to see six druids beckoning to me from the window. This was not a dream, but a hypnopompic vision [a vision on the edge of dreaming and wakefulness]. I saw the druids as I see my desk. And while the momentary vision frightened me, it also pleased me deeply, because it taught me experientially what I had learned intellectually: that when people said they 'saw' Christ, or the Goddess, they were not necessarily speaking metaphorically. (1989: 348)

Yet, Luhrmann did not allow the dream to subvert her work (Tremlett 2008). As a peculiar but scientifically verifiable 'hypnopompic' state that lies somewhere between sleeping and wakefulness, the dream is named and located in a manner that acknowledges it's emotional power but which reaffirms a physicalist account of the world, and a rational, realist approach to ethnography. Arguably

Tylor and the dream of his 'ancient savage philosophers' is less easily tamed, once it is allowed to become an example not of representational cognition gone awry but a site at which different forms of activity – metaphor, analogy, dreaming, in short, non-utilitarian thinking – come together as a (ghost in the) machine for making culture and religion.

Conclusions

The purpose of this chapter has not been to rehabilitate Tylor or the survival. Rather, the objective has been twofold: first, to establish some new connections between Tylor's anthropology and contemporary cognitive approaches to religion and culture, and second, to deploy a deconstructive reading to *Primitive Culture* to reveal an alter-Tylor. These double operations have equal significance for both require a certain forgetting of the Tylor recapitulated in the canon-forming text books of anthropology and religious studies. The first sticks to the broad contours of the canonical Tylor but argues that Tylor's work actually anticipates certain lesser commented on contemporary currents in evolutionary psychology and cognitive theory. As such, revisiting classical debates about the survival, diffusion and cognition can cast these contemporary debates in the cognitive anthropology of religion in a new and hopefully illuminating, light. The second re-examines Tylor's theory of animism and the origins of religion in the dream of the double, to reflect on the survival and to place it on a completely new footing. For this alter-Tylor, the journey to the origins of religion does not reveal any hidden hand of reason, but rather the constitutive force of non-utilitarian unreason.

Notes

1 Bielo does discuss some of the politics of the anthropology of religion but not in relation to Tylor. However, the implication of Tylor's theoretical agenda in colonialism is addressed elsewhere. For example according to Stocking (1987: 237), 'whether or not evolutionary writings provided specific guidelines for colonial administrators and missionaries, there can be no doubt that sociocultural thinking offered strong ideological support for the whole colonial enterprise in the later nineteenth century'. Likewise, Willis suggests that 'Before fieldwork was invented there were anthropological giants about; and it was the grandiose anthropology

of 19th century Britain which produced the essential legitimizing *mythos* for the colonial enterprise. The renowned self-confidence and unshakeably paternal authority of Britain's colonial administrators expressed a deep awareness of their country's awesomely responsible position at the top of the social-evolutionary ladder. Without Spencer, Tylor and Frazer there would have been no *Sanders of the River* (Willis 1973: 245) (*Sanders of the River* is a reference to a 1935 film directed by Zoltán Korda. It starred, among others, Paul Robeson and was co-written by Edgar Wallace).

2 The survival was deployed as a critical term even by scholars who rejected Tylor's wider thesis as to the origins of religion. See for example Durkheim in *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (survival/*survivance* 1915: 131; 1960: 186).

3 In his essay 'On the Limits of Savage Religion' Tylor considers the problem of the 'blending of religions' (1892: 298) and the importance of separating out the 'genuine … native theology' (1892: 283) from 'accretions and transformations' (1892: 298) brought about through contact with 'civilized foreigners' (1892: 299). The article addresses a debate with Andrew Lang (see Cox's chapter, this volume) concerning so-called primitive monotheism. 'Blending' threatens Tylor's theoretical operations (comparing discrete beliefs, postulating origins and identifying survivals), hence the importance of establishing a strict and unambiguous sequence of stages which requires monotheism to be preceded by polytheism and animism.

4 'Darwinism treats evolution as a process of divergence (the tree metaphor) … [whereas there is] a strong element of linear progress in Lamarck (the ladder metaphor)' (Bowler 2009: 87).

5 See Jong's chapter, this volume.

6 Lévy-Bruhl's notion of 'participation' was a philosophical adjunct of the 'law of contradiction', and his notion of the 'pre-logical' was precisely supposed to point to the idea that primitive thought operated according to quite different principles to Western thought (Lévy-Bruhl 1923: 55; Mousalimas 1990: 38). By discussing primitive thought in terms of analogy and metaphor, Tylor was able to sustain the idea of shared, universal cognitive dispositions (which in turn, functioned as a kind of guarantee for his imaginative reconstruction of primitive thought and indeed of anthropology itself). By contrast, Lévy-Bruhl – stuck on the rule that 'two incompatible ideas cannot both be true' (amid claims that the Bororo of Brazil believed themselves to be both humans and red parrots) – stressed not universal cognitive dispositions but cross-cultural difference. Evans-Pritchard's extended analysis of the Nuer claim 'twins are birds' (Evans-Pritchard 1956) was essentially a vignette demonstrating the flaws in Lévy-Bruhl's approach, and since Jonathan Z. Smith's devastating critique (1993: 265–88), Lévy-Bruhl's notion of the pre-logical is now known largely as a red herring.

7 Elsewhere, Tylor quotes Captain John Smith's account of Pocahontas' tribe, describing it as a 'quaint account' that might serve as an example of 'the judgment which a half-educated and whole-prejudiced European is apt to pass on savage deities, which from his point of view seem of simply diabolical nature' (1903 [1871] 2: 342).

8 See Kalvig's chapter, this volume.

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