

## INTRODUCTION

# Animism and Invisible Worlds: The Place of Non-humans in Indigenous Ontologies

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Shamanic peoples such as the indigenous inhabitants of Amazonia and Siberia frequently appear in the popular imagination as ‘living in harmony with nature’, and indeed this image has become part of their identity on the global political stage (United Nations 2007). It is therefore not entirely accidental that two thinkers, Rousseau and Marx, had particularly lasting influence over the ethnography of these two regions. Each of them relies in important and divergent ways upon the distinction between nature and culture, and together they have been described as part of the bedrock of modern anthropology (Leach 2000). Rousseau’s noble savage, partly inspired by reports of Amazonian Indians, represented humanity before its decisive break with nature, while Marx’s vision of human history depends on humanity’s ability to act autonomously upon nature as a separate entity.<sup>1</sup> The anthropology of nature has become prominent since the publication by Tim Ingold (1990, 2000), Bruno Latour (1997, 1999) and Philippe Descola (2005) of powerful arguments that the conventional Western nature/culture dichotomy is contingent, historically situated and just one of many other possible and indeed empirically existing modes of understanding relations between humans and non-humans. Many years before them, Edmund Leach, in a wide-ranging discussion of the problem, pointed out that the dichotomy mirrors other recurring themes in the Western history of ideas – for instance, ‘the artificial distinction between nature and culture ... which is, from one point of view, a logical derivation from the moral relativism of Locke, is, from another angle, a transformation of the Cartesian opposition between conscious mind and mindless matter. The limitations of the latter dyad apply equally to the former’ (Leach 2000: 324). The nature/culture dichotomy is part of the legacy of Western philosophy out of which modern social anthropology has grown, but the very emergence of the anthropology of nature, and its practice, have been dedicated precisely to deconstructing and discrediting the dyad with which they are concerned.<sup>2</sup> This volume is dedicated

to the cross-cultural study of relations between humans and non-humans, and focusing on personhood allows us to avoid the trap of criticising the conventional nature/culture dyad without ever being able to escape its terms. Data on personhood in animistic societies have always raised questions about the supposed universal validity of the concept of nature, because they invariably demonstrate that non-human entities may be regarded as social persons.

The study of personhood has a tradition in anthropology going back at least as far as Mauss's 1938 essay on the category of the person (Mauss 1985), in which he argues for the importance of names in ascribing and denoting social roles in a way akin to classical theatrical masks. His argument influenced later authors interested in the relationship between individual and society (e.g., Fortes 1987). Mauss contrasted the 'primitive' person with personhood in modern societies, which he suggested had become associated with individual consciousness (Carithers, Collins and Lukes 1985). Since Mauss's time, ethnographic data have grown more abundant and, perhaps more importantly, appear different in the light of the abandonment of theories of social evolution. Indeed, the development of the anthropological representation of the non-Western person mirrors in a certain sense the evolution that Mauss took for granted from the person as social object in 'primitive' societies to the person as individual subject in contemporary Western European societies. In accordance with the contemporary view of the anthropological object as 'subject' (Spiro 2006), and following the evidence of their own field data, the contributors to this volume take personhood to be a category of human-like subjectivity. In doing so, we build on an anthropological tradition that arguably begins with Irving Hallowell's essay on Ojibwa ontology, behaviour and world-view, in which he shows that the Ojibwa category of the person 'is by no means limited to *human* beings', and that for a culture such as theirs, 'the concept of "person" is not, in fact, synonymous with human being but transcends it' (Hallowell 1960: 21). Eduardo Viveiros de Castro has described this notion of personhood as follows, and although he refers only to the Americas, his words could equally apply to Siberian societies:

The ethnography of indigenous America is peopled with these references to a cosmopolitical theory which describes a universe inhabited by diverse types of actants or of subjective agents, human and non-human – gods, animals, the dead, plants, meteorological phenomena, very often objects and artefacts too – all equipped with the same general ensemble of perceptive, appetitive and cognitive dispositions, in other words, of a similar 'soul'. This resemblance includes a shared performative mode, so to speak, of apperception: animals and other non-humans with souls 'see themselves as persons' and therefore, they 'are persons', that is to say: intentional or double-faced (visible and invisible) objects, constituted by social relations and existing under the double pronominal mode of the reflexive and the reciprocal, that is to say of the collective. (Viveiros de Castro 2009: 21)<sup>3</sup>

Thus, certain non-human beings, whether animals, plants or 'things', are regarded by many societies in different regions of the world as having charac-

teristics which conventional Western or Euro-American rationality associates exclusively with human persons: as Hallowell wrote, among such peoples, '[a]nimals are believed to have essentially the same sort of animating agency which man possesses. They have a language of their own, can understand what human beings say and do, have forms of social or tribal organisation, and live a life which is parallel in other respects to that of human societies' (Hallowell 1926: 7).<sup>4</sup> At the dawn of professional anthropology (Bird-David 1999), Tylor assimilated these characteristics with the concept of the soul, and recaptured the term 'animism' from contemporary spiritualists to denote the practice of ascribing souls to non-human entities (Tylor 1913: 428–57). He explained this widespread tendency citing Hume's *Natural History of Religion*:

There is a universal tendency among mankind to conceive all beings like themselves, and to transfer to every object those qualities with which they are familiarly acquainted, and of which they are intimately conscious ... The *unknown causes*, which continually employ their thought, appearing always in the same aspect, are all apprehended to be of the same kind or species. Nor is it long before we ascribe to them thought and reason, and passion, and sometimes even the limbs and figures of men, in order to bring them nearer to a resemblance with ourselves. (quoted in *ibid.*: 477)

This manner of 'explaining' religion as a universal human tendency to project human-like agency upon non-human entities has recently been taken up by cognitive anthropologists (Boyer 2003). But, leaving cognitive evolutionary explanations aside, for social anthropology many other questions remain to be answered whose importance lies in their relevance to human, social and environmental interactions: Which objects, animals or plants have these human-like qualities, and what distinguishes them from others? What, indeed, do humanity or subjectivity mean, and are they adequate translations of the qualities that are regarded as shared across species? What do the relationships between human and non-human persons consist of, and what can we learn from them? As Viveiros de Castro puts it, 'What these persons see ... – and therefore what they are as persons – constitutes precisely the philosophical problem posed by and for indigenous thought' (Viveiros de Castro 2009: 21).<sup>5</sup> The point echoes that of Hallowell, who wrote, 'in the metaphysics of being found among these Indians, the action of persons provides the major key to their world view' (Hallowell 1960: 21). Within the anthropology of Amazonia and Siberia, there has been an ongoing and fruitful engagement with such questions, which are raised by and resonate with the ethnography of both regions. However, apart from certain important theoretical borrowings and token ethnographic illustrations, this engagement and the debates surrounding it have hitherto remained largely confined to the literature stemming from each region.

## The Comparison between Amazonia and Siberia

This volume seeks to cross-fertilise debate by providing an ethnographic window between the anthropology of Amazonia and Siberia. The specific comparison

between Amazonia and Siberia has been brewing for some time in the literature of each region, perhaps most notably in the ongoing dialogue between Philippe Descola and Tim Ingold on animism (Descola 1996; Ingold 2000) – of which, more below. However, while Descola and Ingold have drawn on each other's theoretical reflections, each has continued to pursue his own agenda with little mutual engagement at an empirical level, although the former has recently summoned data from both regions – as well as others – to support his argument (Descola 2005).

An important stimulus for this volume lies in Siberianists' engagement in recent years with theory emerging from Amazonia, particularly Amerindian perspectivism as expounded by Eduardo Viveiros de Castro (1998; see also Århem 1996; Lima 1999). This theory of relative ontologies, based on the ethnography of the Araweté, the Juruna and other native Amazonian peoples, focuses on how 'the different sorts of persons – human and non-human (animals, spirits, the dead, denizens of other cosmic layers, plants, occasionally even objects and artefacts) – apprehend reality from distinct points of view' (Viveiros de Castro 2004: 466). Amerindian perspectivism emerged from a long period of reflection on the nature of personhood in Amazonia, which arguably began with an influential article on the construction of the person in indigenous Brazilian societies (Seeger, Da Matta and Viveiros de Castro 1979). Here it was asserted that personhood and 'corporeality' were fundamental structuring elements in Lowland South American societies which appeared fluid when measured using established anthropological categories: such societies 'are structured in terms of symbolic idioms which ... refer not to the definition of groups and the transmission of property, but to the construction of persons and to the fabrication of bodies' (ibid.: 10).<sup>6</sup> It is worth quoting at length:

It is not a matter of an opposition between man and animal realized far from the body and through individualizing categories, where the natural and the social repel each other by definition, but of a dialectic in which the natural elements are domesticated by the group and the elements of the group (social elements) are naturalized in the world of animals. The body is the great arena in which these transformations are possible, as is shown by all of South American mythology which must, now, be re-read as stories with a centre: the fundamental idea of corporeality. (ibid.: 14)<sup>7</sup>

Over the ensuing decades, an efflorescence of Lowland South American ethnography has engaged with this challenge (e.g., Carneiro da Cunha 1978; Seeger 1981; Vilaça 1992; Viveiros de Castro 1992; Conklin 1996; Kelly Luciani 2003), forming a significant part of what Peter Rivière has referred to as the 'Amerindianization' of anthropological concepts (Rivière 1993). To take just one especially pertinent example, Anne-Christine Taylor (1996) offers a reflection on what it means to be 'human' for one Amazonian people, and offers a definition of indigenous Amazonian selfhood. She shows that 'the Jivaroan sense of self is predicated on the fusion of a singular though generic body image and other people's emotionally laden perception of this body-image, whereby it comes to be experienced

as uniquely personal' (Taylor 1996: 209). It is significant that the 'body-image' refers to the *wakan*, usually translated as 'soul', but which refers 'to the reflected image of a thing, the appearance of someone in a dream as well as the dreamer's consciousness' (ibid.: 206), causing Taylor to remark that 'the Achuar would certainly endorse Wittgenstein's claim that the body is the best image we may have of the soul, not least for its reversibility, since it is equally obvious to them that the soul is also the best image we may have of the body as a generic personalized form' (ibid.: 206). This recalls the idea of the 'eye-soul', which is widespread in Amazonia: the Waiwai, for example, explain it as 'the small person one always sees in the other's eye', and for them 'to see is the same as being seen when it is a matter of supernatural beings' (Fock 1963: 19). For the Trio, although the soul 'is thought to permeate the body with special concentrations at the heart and pulses', they also recognise a 'distinct eye-soul that is extinguished on death' (Rivière 1999: 77). The eye-soul, or the soul as (reflected) body-image, provide a vivid illustration of the reversibility that is a key feature of perspectivism, and which has also been identified in Siberian ethnography (Willerslev 2006).

Perspectivism has been a constant theme in debates in Amazonianist anthropology for many years now, but the question remains open as to how far it can be taken as an analytical device applied to native Amazonian societies. As an illustration of its possible limitations it may be useful to note the variability in the nature and number of souls in Amazonia. Souls or spirits are not necessarily equivalent to subjectivity (Lima 1999) or to vital principle (Vilaça 2005). In addition to the eye-soul, many Amazonian peoples recognise as many as five different souls, discussed by Rivière (1999). For instance, the Yekuana, in addition to the eye-soul, recognise the 'heart soul', the 'soul in the moon' (a receptacle for evil thoughts and actions), the 'soul in the water' (a reflection in the water) and the 'soul in the earth' (the shadow). Souls may also be immortal and retain their identity, as is the case of name-souls among the Barasana instead of their identity being purely relational (ibid.: 80–81). This complexity in the invisible aspects of the human agent, or in the human image, show that the 'double' or binary relationship through which perspectivism has often been discussed is at best only one of its many dimensions (Lima 1999).

Certain authors have pointed directly to the limitations of perspectivism, notably Rival (2005), who has argued that gender differences are prior to and encompass the soul–body relationship, and Turner (2009), who argues that humans and the human body are a privileged kind of person in the Amerindian cosmos, thus placing a limit on the potential for reversibility between human and non-human. On a classificatory level, Descola has argued that perspectivism is a subset of animism, on the grounds that, although for all animist societies non-humans see themselves as humans, for only some such societies do certain non-humans (who see themselves as humans) see humans as non-humans (Descola 2006: 141). The key to resolving such categorical problems may eventually lie in further ethnographic study, especially of communication between humans and non-humans (e.g., Yvinec 2005; Gutierrez Choquevilca 2008).

One of the most interesting challenges for Amerindian perspectivism is an empirical one, set by Césard, Deturche and Erikson (2003). They point out that very few Amazonianist authors have discussed insects, despite the fact that they are not only omnipresent in the environment of the region but play highly significant practical and cultural roles, serving as food, medicine, playthings, fish-hooks, indicators of the quality of land for cultivation or hunting, and stings used in initiation rituals. Sometimes insects are considered to be spirits (*ibid.*: 391); among Kaingang, mosquitoes or ants are spirits of the dead; shamanic arrows can take the form of insects (*cf.* High, this volume), and insects often seem to be the tangible manifestation of malign principles, or the desire to do harm. Certain insects, because of the supposed power of their venom, are often among the ingredients of hunting poison. Not always merely instruments, they can be subjective agents: bees may have shamanic powers, and the Matsigenka regard red ants as autonomous subjects with their own agency (Césard, Deturche and Erikson 2003: 392–93). The Amerindian imagination is especially struck by insects' lack of blood and their desire for the blood of others – blood being associated with vital energy. Despite all of this, the authors point out that indigenous discourses on insects have hitherto been 'surprisingly neglected' in recent debates on both animism and perspectivism, which 'give an eminent place to the relative indifferenciation between the ontological status respectively attributed to humans and to animals, as well as to the notion of metamorphosis and transformability that underpins this' (*ibid.*: 394).

Lavrillier's chapter in this volume shows that Siberia too has much potential for investigation in a similar direction. For the Evenki, insects are not a generic category, but carrion bugs are said to come from the world of the dead, and the giant woodwasp is said to be the 'soul' of big game such as reindeer or moose; some insects are treated as pets, while others, like spiders, are considered to be ancestor spirits. Beyond Siberia, among the Nuosu, human souls take the form of spiders (Swancutt, this volume), and spiders are so important for them that the Nuosu could even be said to have an arachnidian cosmological idiom. The parallels clearly suggest that this could be fertile ground for further comparison between the regions.

The first attempt to consider the animist cosmologies of North Asia in the light of perspectivist theory was made by Morten Pedersen (2001). Using classic ethnographies of the Siberian Chukchi and Koryak by Bogoraz (1909) and Jochelson (1908, 1926), Pedersen pointed to the common elements present in Amazonian and Siberian animist societies such as continuity between humans and non-humans, shamanist cosmology, egalitarian ethos and unbounded potential for identification (Pedersen 2001: 416). Pedersen's attempt to draw an ontological link between North Asia and Amazonia sparked debate on the implications of perspectivist theory for the ethnographies of shamanic societies in and around Mongolia (Pedersen, Empson and Humphrey 2007). The contributors to the latter collection experimented with stretching the original theory that was built on specific ethnographic data while also diverging from it by introducing

innovations in the process of its application to the analysis of different cultural settings. This led them to introduce Inner Asian 'transcendental' perspectivism as the characteristic feature of these societies with a hierarchical cosmological order (Holbraad and Willerslev 2007). In this avatar of perspectivism the symmetrical Amerindian model was subverted and all its components were put in vertical terms and presented as ethnographic varieties of inter- and intra-human perspectivisms across Inner Asia.

An important attempt to bring animistic modalities across Siberia, North America and Amazonia into a comparative account has been made by Carlos Fausto, who elaborated on distinctive features of socio-cosmic systems, particularly 'a common mode of identification between humans and non-humans' (Fausto 2007: 498). His endeavour to draw on the ethnographies from what he dubbed the 'Sibero-American' domain highlighted that predation is the 'more productive schema in Amazonia' (ibid.: 498) whereas the progenerative model is dominant in the Siberian and American sub-Arctic (see Brightman 1993; Fienup-Riordan 1990, 1994; Hamayon 1994, 2003; Ingold 2000). His account illustrates that prominent in both Amazonian hunting modalities of predation and commensality, and in Siberian and North American hunter-gathering idioms of love sharing, compassion and reciprocity, are distinctly and dynamically articulated ways of producing people and sociality. The distinction between the models of predation and reciprocity drawn by Fausto appears less sharp in the Siberian and Inner Asian ethnographies of this volume, which show that predatory and extractive relations are also at work but in a less straightforward and even 'masked' manner (Swancutt, this volume; Willerslev and Ulturgasheva, this volume).

No previous volume has compared the ontologies, cosmologies, myth or religion of Amazonia and Siberia, but several previous studies exist of contiguous regions of the Americas, or Siberia and North America.<sup>8</sup> Hallowell's work, especially his doctoral dissertation on bear ceremonialism (Hallowell 1926) and his classic essay on Ojibwa ontology (Hallowell 1960), has been a rich and inspiring resource for scholars such as Descola, Ingold and Viveiros de Castro. Indeed, Viveiros de Castro's most recent project (Viveiros de Castro 2009) could be described as a continuation of Hallowell's pioneering explorations of 'a relatively unexplored territory – ethno-metaphysics' (Hallowell 1960: 20).

Hallowell focuses his 1926 study on cultural practices and beliefs associated with the bear, and thus limits his analysis to the principal geographical distribution of bear hunting, which ranges from northern Europe, across Inner Asia and the American North, to Meso-America. Limiting the comparison to one (albeit culturally very important) species has the advantage of reducing the number of variables. If a similar study were to be conducted for Lowland South America, the species upon which it would focus would undoubtedly be the jaguar, the consummate and iconic predator of the region. No such work exists, but a focused comparison between the symbolism, beliefs and practices associated with jaguars and bears would make a fascinating study. Both animals are large predators that play a central role in the cosmologies of indigenous peoples, who look upon them

with a mixture of awed respect and fear. Both are associated with mystical powers and quasi-human qualities. Hunters in both Amazonia and Siberia address jaguars as 'grandfather' or 'grandmother' (Hallowell 1926: 53; Brightman 2007: 265–68), and the ritual and mythological importance of bear and jaguar imagery is vast (Hallowell 1926; Benson 1972; Sullivan 1988). Bears and jaguars are also both closely associated with shamans: they may be said to 'be' shamans themselves, or to be able to transform themselves into humans; shamans are likewise said to be able to transform themselves, or parts of themselves, into shamans or jaguars (Hallowell 1926: 86; Rivière 1994; Costa 2007: 381–83; High, this volume). Perhaps most importantly, both jaguars and bears play key roles in the symbolic organisation of society. In Amazonia there are innumerable pairs of relationships between masters and auxiliaries, in which the jaguar symbolically represents the master 'part', as both tutelary 'fatherhood' and predatory power are expressed as 'jaguarness' (Fausto 2007, this volume). Meanwhile in Siberia, the complex figure of the bear is used in the performance of different forms of alliance: direct exchange (among the Evenks of Lénisséi) is expressed through a ritual hunt, whereas indirect exchange (among the Nivh or Giliak in the region of Amour and Orochon in East Siberia) is expressed through the ritual slaughter of a captive bear (De Sales 1980; Kwon 1999).

On the other hand there are clear differences. Although the flesh of both bears and jaguars is said to be highly potent, for the jaguar there is nothing to compare with the rich variety of ceremonial practices associated with the treatment of the bear carcass and consumption of the meat, and jaguar meat is rarely if ever eaten. Likewise, although a certain amount of respect is shown to the jaguar in general terms, there is nothing in Amazonia to compare with the ritualised respect and 'conciliatory' treatment of the slain bear (Hallowell 1926: 144). It is perhaps therefore on the level of symbolism, ritual and myth that comparisons can be made most fruitfully between indigenous peoples' relationships with jaguars and bears, and this brief consideration of the evidence at hand indeed suggests that on such a level, jaguars and bears are similar kinds of 'person'.

Hallowell's work was based on North American as well as Siberian material, and as this indicates, the limits of a comparative project are, in the end, arbitrary – especially in the absence of a more restrictive theme (such as the bear). It would be reasonable, indeed useful, to extend the comparison offered in the present volume, at least to North America, where the kinds of ontologies and notions of personhood and agency described in this book can also be found, as is clearly shown by the work of authors such as Adrian Tanner (1979), Colin Scott (1989), Robert Brightman (1993), Ann Fienup-Riordan (1994) or Georg Henriksen (2010), and in regionally specific collections (Irimoto and Yamada 1997). Indeed, worthwhile comparisons can be made with other regions further afield, such as South-east Asia (Bird-David 1999; Platenkamp 2007), China and Mongolia (Swancutt, this volume) or Melanesia (Gregor and Tuzin 2001). Vilaça has already noted the points of similarity between Amazonian material and Leenhardt's account of the Kanak concept of the human being (Vilaça 2005). Clearly,



there is rich potential for future comparative projects on the themes of personhood, animism and relations between humans and non-humans.

## **Siberian Studies and the Amerindian Stimulus under the Soviet Regime**

Some of the differences between the characteristics of Amazonian and Siberian ethnography must be attributed to stark contrasts in the historical conditions under which fieldwork was conducted. The history of Amazonian ethnography diverges from that of mainstream anthropology largely in that: firstly, the first systematic studies began to emerge more recently than in other regions, notably Africa; secondly, the presence of French and Latin American practitioners (rather than British and American ones) has traditionally been stronger; and thirdly, the influence of Lévi-Strauss, whose own ethnographic fieldwork was of course carried out in Amazonia, has been more marked and sustained than in other regions. The history of Siberian ethnography differs in important ways because of the hegemony of the Soviet state in the region for most of the twentieth century, precisely the period during which anthropology defined itself as a discipline in the West. Yet before Siberia became closed to researchers who did not operate under the conditions prescribed by the Russian politburo, scientists were already carrying out comparative ethnographic studies as part of an attempt to identify the relationship between populations of the Americas and Northern Asia or Siberia (see Cavalli-Sforza et al. 1988; Fortescue 1998). Perhaps most significantly, Franz Boas pioneered an attempt to explore the cultural and physical relationship between inhabitants of the Siberian coast and the Amerindians of the Pacific Northwest.

The project of the Jesup North Pacific Expedition organised in 1897 and led by Boas until 1902 allowed the collection of precious items of material culture as well as linguistic, religious and statistical data from the Siberian North, which still often serve as the only ethnographic source that allows contemporary scholars to observe and reflect on the nature of social transformations and the continuity of certain social and cultural phenomena among Siberian groups over the last century (Pedersen 2001; Willerslev 2007; Willerslev and Ulturgasheva, this volume). The Jesup monographs, which were published as a result of this expedition, gave rise to the academic notion of 'shamanism' that anthropologists began to use to describe the spiritual practices of native populations of Siberia and the Americas.<sup>9</sup> Western scholars, 'who rarely operated with the definition of shamanism prior to 1900, now increasingly began to juxtapose Native American practitioners against their classic "Siberian analogies"' (Znamenski 2003: 17, see also Hultkrantz 1999: 2). At the same time, the scope of literature that documents animistic and shamanic practices in Siberia largely remains unknown to Western scholars and 'lay' audiences (Vasilevich 1936, 1957, 1969; Smolyak 1966, 1974). It is not only that Siberia, as part of the Soviet Union, was inaccessible to Western observers, but there is also a significant language barrier (Znamenski 2003: 31).

While pursuing his interest in remote Siberian ethnic groups, Boas persuaded Morris K. Jesup, a rich American banker, philanthropist and president of the American Museum of Natural History, to fund ethnographic fieldwork on the two coasts of Bering Strait: Siberia and north-western North America (Krupnik and Fitzhugh 2001). This led to work in Siberia that was part of a highly ambitious project that lasted six years from 1898. '[M]uch of the work was carried out by Russian revolutionaries who, during years of political exile in Siberia, had become experts on the ethnology of that region' (Freed, Freed and Williamson 1988: 9). When they joined the Jesup Expedition, Bogoras, Jochelson and Shternberg were already veterans of several years of Siberian research. During their years of political exile in Siberia they made collections, took photographs and anthropometric measurements, and studied the languages of Chukchi, Koryak, Itel'men, Siberian Yupik, Yakuts, Yukaghir, Lamuts (Eveny) and Nivkhi. Their efforts laid the foundations for subsequent ethnographic, linguistic and folklore studies of Siberian indigenous groups.

The Stalinist purge against 'enemies of the people' between 1921 and 1932 brought severe disruption to Siberian ethnographic studies. The campaign against 'non-Marxist' and 'bourgeois' academics declared ethnography a 'tribute to colonialism' (Gagen-Torn 1992, 1994) and, as a result, 'museums were closed, scholarly societies disbanded, the teaching of ethnography discontinued, and teachers of ethnography persecuted' (Slezkine 1991: 479). To survive the ideological purge most of the older academics either went completely silent or tried to follow Soviet rule (Bogoras 1931; Ssorin-Chaikov 2003: 97). Under the Communist Party's ideological agenda, ethnography was reduced to the theory of 'primitive communist formation' and the study of any facets of 'primitive' societies had to consist of the task of defining the role of archaic survivals in the subsequent evolution of society, based on the premise that all peoples, including the most backward, were subject to limitless change.

This view contributed to the proliferation of studies of folklore, which have been interpreted as an ideologically safe exercise in the reconstruction of the past (Ssorin-Chaikov 2003: 88), and to the new theory of language, according to which the 'history of language consisted of linear, synthetic, agglutinative, and inflective stages, each corresponding to a specific socioeconomic formation and developing dialectically (i.e. replacing another via a revolutionary "leap")' (Slezkine 1991: 478). Hence, folklorists and students of the oral traditions of various Siberian groups collected folklore items with the aim of exploring a perpetual 'ethnographic past'.

Given these ideological restrictions, it is important to mention that this historical field, which was mostly based on the study of folkloric texts, includes an unforeseeable and, perhaps, unavoidable twist due to the creative endeavours of some remarkable scholars who worked during that period. One of them was Eleazar Meletinsky, who was responsible for substantively forming Siberian folklore studies during the period. Although Russian scholarly literature always highlights the substantial influence of Vladimir Propp on Meletinsky

and, although his methodology is undoubtedly significantly shaped by Propp's theory on the morphology of folkloric texts (Propp 1946, 1969), Meletinsky was probably the first and only scholar of the period who took the significant step of openly acknowledging the influence of the work of Claude Lévi-Strauss, particularly, his four-volume *Mythologiques* (1964–1971). This monumental work, in which Lévi-Strauss applies his structural method to hundreds of South and North American Indian myths, became a milestone in the development of Meletinsky's study of myths and the mythological thought of Siberian indigenous groups. Meletinsky discusses Lévi-Straussian theory in his seminal monograph *The Poetics of Myth*, which became a key textbook for several generations of Russian and Soviet scholars of Siberian folklore.<sup>10</sup>

In his discussion of elements of mythological thought, Meletinsky imitates Lévi-Strauss's comparative approach and suggests that it is possible to discern universal models in any 'primitive/archaic' culture through the analysis of the semantic structure of myths (Meletinsky 1998: 60). Though he commends Lévi-Strauss for his detailed examination of the specific characteristics of mythologic (its metaphoric nature, the tendency for *bricolage*) and his emphasis on mytho-logic's ability to generalise, classify, and analyse (ibid.: 120), which are particularly suitable to structural analysis, Meletinsky criticises what he took to be his anti-historical viewpoint and considers it as complementary to historical and diachronic approaches to the study of events.<sup>11</sup>

Meletinsky's emphasis on historicism and the search for the mythological origin of modern literature might be explained by the omnipresence of Marxist doctrine in Soviet academia, according to which the evolution of literature was viewed as inseparable from the socio-economic formation in which it existed. This agenda dominates his theory of myth, and consequently his analysis of the mythological thinking of tribal societies is carried out in accordance with Engels's evolutionary thesis on the emergence of statehood in stateless societies (Engels 1970) and the Hegelian distinction between historical and non-historical nations (Hegel 1956).<sup>12</sup>

Given that Meletinsky himself suffered political persecution and imprisonment in Stalinist camps, these latter aspects of his approach can legitimately be understood as an unavoidable product of political censorship from Soviet legal and academic authorities. To secure the chance to publish one's own book or theory one had to pay homage to the Marxist historiographic framework and ensure that the obligatory 'Soviet' terminology was in place (Lanoue 1998: xi). In relation to this, the publication of Russian translations of Lévi-Strauss's work appears as a most extraordinary accomplishment even in view of the fact that it took place at the expense of certain theoretical and analytical contingencies. Soviet versions of *Anthropologie structurale* (1958), *Le Totémisme aujourd'hui* (1962a) and *La Pensée sauvage* (1962b) were first published in the early 1980s (see Lévi-Strauss 1983, 1985b, 1994a, 1994b). It appears that these works of Lévi-Strauss succeeded in presenting themselves as compatible with Russian Soviet scholarly discourse in which the study of the 'otherness' and 'backwardness' of 'aliens'

inhabiting remote lands has been viewed as a unique key to understanding the past ‘in order for the future to become present’ (Slezkine 1992: 57). So the Lévi-Straussian view of ‘noble savages’ and ethnographic examples from all over the world did not contradict the Soviet ethnographic practice of depicting the lives of ‘natural communists’ and their mythological way of thinking as synonymous with ‘primitive’ thinking.

In regard to this, Meletinsky’s articles ‘Typological Analysis of the Paleo-Asiatic Raven Myths’ (Meletinsky 1973) and ‘Paleo-Asiatic Myths about Raven and the Issue of the Relationship between North-eastern Asia and North-western America in the Field of Folklore’ (Meletinsky 1981) might be viewed as a direct outgrowth of Lévi-Straussian methodology. Meletinsky even devoted the latter article to his theoretical progenitor. In these two articles he uses folkloric texts collected by Bogoras and Jochelson during their fieldwork among the Chukchi, Koryak, Iteĺmen and Siberian Yupik at the beginning of the twentieth century, and employs them in a typological analysis of the myths collected by Boas among the Tsimshian, Haida, Tlingit and Kwakiutl.

In ethnographic studies of Siberia, Lévi-Strauss’s influence is not only limited to the study of narratives and myths. His work on kinship and exchange among Tupian groups of the Brazilian coast (Lévi-Strauss 1969) has greatly shaped Siberian research in France, particularly the works of the prominent French anthropologist Roberte Hamayon. She was among the very few Western anthropologists who managed to gain access to the Siberian field in 1970s and 1980s and conducted research among the Buryat, a large ethnic group of Mongolian origin in the region of Transbaikalia, south Siberia (see Hamayon 1990, 1994, 2003; see also Safanova and Sántha, this volume; Swancutt, this volume). The Lévi-Straussian influence is particularly clear in her study of the notion of exchange in pastoral shamanism in which she presents a thorough examination of Buryat social organisation and kinship (Hamayon 1990, 1994, 2003).

Lévi-Strauss’s project was germane not only to a certain tradition of Russian ethnography dedicated to indigenous peoples and their ontologies, but also (and even more so) inspired an entire generation of structuralist anthropologists to study indigenous ontologies in Amazonia. As part of what might be described as the second generation of structuralist-inspired scholars working in this tradition, Viveiros de Castro, whose influence we have discussed above, has recently paid homage to the central role played by Lévi-Strauss’s *Mythologiques* in the development of his own thought. In his book *Métaphysiques cannibales* (Viveiros de Castro 2009), which addresses a readership beyond Amazonia and beyond anthropology, Viveiros de Castro discusses his two principal influences: the philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari, and Lévi-Strauss’s *Mythologiques*. He attributes to Lévi-Strauss the first correct analysis of native ontologies of the Americas as characterised by ‘an economy of *corporeality*’ (ibid.: 18),<sup>13</sup> and the first description of:

an indigenous anthropology formulated in terms of organic flows and material codifications, of significant multiplicities and instances of becoming-animal, rather than

expressed in the spectral terms of our own anthropology which the juridico-theological fog (think of the rights and duties, rules and principles, categories and ‘moral persons’ that make up our discipline) overcomes through comparison. [*Mythologiques*] made it possible to discern some of the theoretical implications of this unmarked or generic status of the virtual dimension (the ‘soul’) of each being, which was the chief premise of a powerful indigenous intellectual structure, capable, *inter alia*, of counter-describing its own image as described by Western anthropology, and thus, ‘to send back to us an image of ourselves in which we do not recognise ourselves’. (ibid.: 19)<sup>14</sup>

Viveiros de Castro tries to show the possibility of studying ‘indigenous anthropologies’ rather than merely subjecting data about indigenous peoples to Western theoretical scrutiny. The analysis of mythic transformations has revealed that the key to doing so, at least in the case of so-called ‘animist’ societies, is to focus on the body and what we refer to as ‘personhood’. But, he argues, the structuralist tradition is not to be confused with the phenomenological tradition, which he follows Deleuze and Guattari in criticising:

By drawing explicitly on the *Mythologiques*, this work [i.e., Seeger, Da Matta and Viveiros de Castro 1979] developed without any connection with the theme of *embodiment*, which would take anthropology by storm in the ensuing decades. The structuralist current in Amerindian ethnology, deaf to the ‘at once pious and sensual’ appeal of phenomenological Carnism (Deleuze and Guattari 1991: 169) – ‘the call of rotten wood’, as a reader of *The Raw and the Cooked* might say – has always thought of incarnation from the point of view of the culinary Triangle rather than that of the holy Trinity. (ibid.: 19 n.1)<sup>15</sup>

Drawing both on the legacy of structuralism and phenomenology, the present volume may be viewed as a renewal and reappraisal of both Boasian and Lévi-Straussian traditions in the light of the most recent ethnographic data on topics which include the animistic conceptualisation of property and ownership (Fausto), agency and intentionality (Costa; Grotti and Brightman; Lavrillier; Rival), recursivity and reversibility (High; Willerslev and Ulturgasheva), spirituality and materiality (Skvirskaja) and predation and reciprocity (Safanova and Sántha; Swancutt).

## The Limits of Perspectivism and the Limits of Comparison

Some of the limitations of perspectivism as formalised by Viveiros de Castro (1998) – or, perhaps, an indication of how to develop it – are exposed by Santos-Granero’s volume on material culture in Amazonia (Santos-Granero 2009). Here, against Viveiros de Castro’s claim that humans and animals take primordial forms and plants and objects are derivative (Viveiros de Castro 2004: 477, cited in Santos-Granero 2009: 4–5), it is argued that Amerindian cosmologies have a ‘constructional’ character and that objects often play a prototypical role in Amazonian ontologies. A similar argument can be made for plants, which

are often related to as persons by those who cultivate them (Descola 1986) and by shamans and plant specialists (Lenaerts 2006), and which may have kinship systems of their own (Chaumeil and Chaumeil 1992). Santos-Granero's volume emerges as part of a widespread revival in the study of material culture in the last ten years following the publication of Alfred Gell's *Art and Agency* (Gell 1998), which offered a theory of the attribution of 'agency' and 'intentionality' to human artefacts. We will not discuss here the many fruitful arguments that have followed, and the specific relevance of Gell's theory for Amazonian societies is considered by Laura Rival in her contribution to the present volume. But one point that we would like to take up is that various authors (e.g., Van Velthem 2003; Henare, Holbraad and Wastell 2007) have emphasised the attribution of 'subjectivity' to non-humans other than animals. Animism is, by definition, the attribution of human(-like) subjectivity, agency and emotion to non-humans: in short, non-humans seem to be endowed with personhood. But in animistic societies, are things endowed with the same kind of personhood as humans and animals? The nature of soul (a primary attribute of personhood) in the cosmologies with which we are concerned does not correspond to the conventional Western understanding of the term, which follows Kant in loosely equating it with mind. For the Siberian Chukchi, for example, the word for 'soul' comes from a linguistic root meaning 'body'. Chukchi souls are 'a form of bodies', and body and soul are 'flip sides of each other' (Willerslev 2009: 697). Similarly, among the Wari' in Amazonia, souls are not separate from bodies except when the body becomes attacked by illness, and at this point it is being appropriated by another being – souls in a sense are other bodies. Both regions thus share this materiality and corporeality of the soul (Rivière 1999; Vilaça 2005; Miller 2009). As discussed above, the souls of humans and animals resembles the human or animal body or takes the form of one of its parts. Although the spirit- or animal-masters of plants are often birds (Chapuis and Rivière 2003: 388–89; Gutierrez Choquevilca 2008), the nature of the plant or object soul tends to be less clear.

The ethnographies presented below testify to the importance of other non-humans such as objects, plants and insects (Grotti and Brightman; Rival; Skvirskaja; Swancutt). They challenge some of the conceptual boundaries identifying abstract dichotomies such as animism/totemism, egalitarianism/hierarchy and horizontal/vertical which were conceptual resources for previous anthropological discussions of Amazonian and Siberian societies (Hill 1984; Hugh-Jones 1994; Descola 1996, 2005; Ingold 2000; Pedersen 2001), showing them in dynamic interplay and never as fixed or static.

Many studies of Amazonian sociality have shown the importance of process, especially bodily process, in the constitution of human personhood (Crocker 1985). In an Amazonian world which Fausto (this volume) has described as being made of 'infinite differences characterised by an ontological regime of metamorphosis', babies are 'moulded' into real human beings (Lagrou 2000), and eating together, cooperation, physical contact and verbal interaction are all considered necessary for a person to become, and to remain, human (Vilaça 2000).

There has, however, been less emphasis on the effects that humanising processes can have on non-human actors – on animals and plants, for instance. Nor has there been detailed consideration of where the line is drawn in such processes between personhood (understood as constituted by agentivity, intentionality and subjectivity) and humanity (a special kind of personhood attributed by a group to its members). Descola has written that, at least for the Achuar:

The hierarchy of animate and inanimate objects ... rests upon the variation in the modes of communication which permit the apprehension of unequally distributed sensible qualities. Insofar as the category of 'persons' includes spirits, plants and animals, all endowed with a soul, this cosmology does not discriminate between humans and non-humans; it only introduces a scale of order according to the levels of exchange of information reputed to be feasible. (Descola 2005: 23)<sup>16</sup>

So much for one animistic society. But questioning the distinction between humanity and personhood can be a revealing path of inquiry. The contributors consider processes by which animals, plants and objects become persons, and to what extent they become human. Such processes include the cultivation of manioc (Rival) and the training of hunting dogs (Safanova and Sántha), which are shown to be different processes of kin-making, in which agentive persons are created by humans without becoming fully realised as human beings. Plants and dogs are not fully involved in the processes of human sociality, and, therefore, despite being addressed as kin, are not human (Grotti and Brightman). In analogous cases, Rivière (1994) and Van Velthem (2001) have both independently shown that basket motifs among certain Amazonian peoples can take on personhood, but are kept from fully realising their potential as dangerous and powerful non-human agents by the limits of the basketmaker's skill – though these limits are sometimes said to be self-imposed. In all these cases, human control maintains non-human personhood; human creativity produces a relation of ownership which is exceptional in Amazonian cosmology in that it is not reversible (Fausto, this volume; see also Brightman 2010). Beyond the human social spaces in which manioc, dogs and basketry occur lie non-human others who can in turn 'see' like humans. Here, humanity is subjective.

Death, and the cosmological role and characterisation of the dead, provide fertile ground for comparison between Amazonia and Siberia, and for testing the limits of perspectivism. In Willerslev's ethnography of the Siberian 'hall of mirrors world' – phrasing which echoes Viveiros de Castro's 'forest of mirrors' (Viveiros de Castro 2007) – every relation becomes an inversion of another. The dead have their flesh on the outside of their bodies and their limbs the wrong way round; time for them goes in the opposite direction so that 'before' becomes 'after' and vice versa; 'death' for the deceased is 'birth' for the living, and indeed the living are dead for the dead: when a deceased person dies (s)he returns to the world of the living (Willerslev 2009: 696). However, the deceased are seen as hierarchically superior – suggesting a parallel with the cannibal gods

of the Araweté (Viveiros de Castro 1992). Their world is an idealised version of this world, and they are the ‘true owners’ of reindeer. Here, the role of agency played by the dead can be compared to the masters of animals in Amazonia, who are ‘owners’ of animal species, and with whom there must be a certain level of reciprocity as they receive human souls with which to replenish their stock. This is why overhunting is commonly said to lead to illness and death: the master of animals is taking back souls (for a similar Amazonian case, see Costa, this volume). Among the Chukchi, there is a ‘fixed pool of souls that simply go round in an endless circle’ (Willerslev 2007: 697), recalling the north-west Amazonian Makuna’s conception of the cosmos as an interlinked web in which energy and souls are perpetually exchanged and regenerated (Århem 1996). Even if the hierarchically superior nature of the deceased noted by Willerslev is in marked distinction to the classic Amazonian type of animist society, exemplified by the Achuar (above), in which humanity is the index of superiority, the Araweté case suggests that the distinction is not so clear cut.

Among the Chukchi, humans are in a relationship of ‘unconditional indebtedness toward the deceased’ (Willerslev 2009: 698) rather than being involved within a network of gift exchange or mutual obligation. In Amazonia, the dead matter, in the sense that all dead (humans as well as non-humans) matter, but relations with them are kept to a safe minimum, they are not individualised, and indebtedness is strongly avoided (see High, this volume). But there are exceptions to this, which Viveiros de Castro has analysed in terms of Hugh-Jones’s distinction between ‘vertical’ and ‘horizontal’ shamanism (Hugh-Jones 1994): if horizontal shamanism corresponds to the classic Amazonian model in which animals and the dead are assimilated as the ‘other’ of humanity, and vertical shamanism results from the ‘divorce between the dead and animals, the former remain human, or even become superhuman, and the latter begin to cease to be human, moving towards a sub- or anti-humanity’ (Viveiros de Castro 2009: 127).<sup>17</sup> Viveiros de Castro attaches great importance to this, associating the former, horizontal type with ‘exopraxis’ and the vertical type with ‘endopraxis’, and suggesting that the former is ‘anterior – logically, chronologically and cosmologically – to endopraxis, and that it remains always operational, even in more hierarchical formations such as those in north-west Amazonia, in the manner of a residue that blocks the constitution of chiefdoms or of States equipped with a complete metaphysical interiority’ (ibid. :127; cf. Clastres 1974).<sup>18</sup> This suggests that a possibility for further comparison with Siberia may lie in examining the ‘residue’ of exopraxis in societies characterised by vertical shamanism.

### **Animism and Totemism: Complementary Models (and Only Models)**

Animism and totemism have been defined as modes of relationship with nature (Descola 1986). But for totemism this is not necessarily so.<sup>19</sup> The defining characteristic of totemism for Lévi-Strauss is the metaphorical transposition of an



ensemble of relationships between elements in a classificatory system; it is arguably of secondary importance that this transposition tends to occur between nature and culture (Lévi-Strauss 1962b: 160). For animism, as we have seen, certain characteristics of personhood can be attributed to cultural artefacts, suggesting that the nature/culture dichotomy (of which Descola is himself a prominent critic) does not hold in the case of animism either. However, Descola himself proposes a stricter definition of animism: for him the non-human 'persons' within animistic systems are regarded as having 'social attributes – a hierarchy of positions, behaviours based on kinship, respect for certain norms of conduct' (Descola 1992: 114). In recent years he has also revised his characterisation of totemism and animism derived from relationships between nature and society, choosing instead to define them in terms of the relationship between 'interiority' and 'physicality', corresponding to Husserl's 'intentionality' and 'body' respectively (Descola 2006: 138). It is consequently more difficult to distinguish Descola's animism from perspectivism, for the 'social attributes' of non-humans in such a system tend to be identical to those of the culture to which the system belongs, and these attributes tend to be said to be present from the point of view of non-humans as subjects. However, Viveiros de Castro has taken pains to distinguish the two, writing as follows to define perspectivism: 'Neither animism – which would assert a substantial or analogical resemblance between animals and humans, nor totemism – which would assert a formal or homological resemblance between intra-human differences and inter-animal differences, perspectivism asserts an intensive difference which brings the human/non-human difference *to the interior of each being*' (Viveiros de Castro 2009: 36).<sup>20</sup>

All the chapters of this volume show that the current tendency to classify societies according to their 'ontologies' – totemistic, animistic or other – may create problems especially when it comes to interpreting ethnographic elements that do not fit such neat categories – although one of the most interesting lines of inquiry of Descola's monograph on the subject (Descola 2005) is the discussion of the ways in which these categories are blurred by ethnographic facts. One of the lessons of perspectivist theory itself is that some societies define themselves precisely by their transformability, their inconsistency and their instability (Vilaça 2005; Grotti and Brightman, this volume).

In his discussion of the distinctions between totemism and animism, Descola points out that some societies combine degrees of both analytical constructs (Descola 1996: 88). He derives this point from Århem's account of the Makuna (Århem 1996) in which he suggests that 'intellectually, totemism and animism are complementary and commensurate strategies for comprehending reality and relating humans to their environment (Århem 1996: 186)'. Willerslev and Ulturgasheva (this volume) go further, arguing that the combination of animistic and totemic features should not be treated as an exception but as a rule. They suggest that animism and totemism 'shade into each other rather than appear as two opposites of one dichotomy'. Hence, if these categories are to be maintained, it is mutual implication, interdependence and 'shading' that should be taken as the

main conceptual components for the perception of complex and incommensurate ethnographic data.

In a similar vein Swancutt effectively introduces in this volume a 'scaling' mode that is analytically necessary for the consideration of ontological differentiations between predation and hierarchy. Swancutt's emphasis on the potential for movement not only between different ontological registers but also between differently scaled elements within any given ontology enforces a particular analytical pattern that enables one to grasp and uncover ethnographic expressions of social relations which are veiled or masked. In her analysis of ethnographic data from different sites in south-west China and Mongolia she elaborates on cases where people who explicitly emphasise their social hierarchies also make efforts to mask their predatory motives. Among the Buryats of north-east Mongolia and the Deed Mongols of Qinghai, China, the scaling of hierarchy and predation, which is masked under seemingly selfless and virtuous acts of Buddhist offerings and blessings, tips increasingly towards the pole of explicit predation. In the same fashion, her Nuosu case study shows that the sliding scale implies a movement along different degrees of 'overlap' between hierarchy and predation so it is a 'loophole' in the Nuosu's masked hierarchy, which takes the form of a vestigial slavery, that even gives rise to more explicit predation.

In his discussion of mastery and control, Ingold draws a straightforward distinction between two modes of hunter–animal relations: one relies on the mutual trust common among egalitarian hunter–gatherers and the other is based on coercion exercised by hierarchical cattle-breeding pastoralists (Ingold 2000: 61–76). According to Ingold, in the case of pastoralists, 'the attempt to extract by force represents a betrayal of trust' and there is an automatic movement from trust to domination or hierarchy (ibid.: 71). This involves ontological ramifications, particularly those related to the notion of domestication, that implies 'a kind of mastery and control similar to that entailed in slavery' (ibid.: 73). Such a clear-cut categorisation of 'hierarchy' as absent in hunter-gatherer ontologies can only appear valid on a macro scale of analysis. Closer examination of indigenous practices reveals that the distinction is far from clear. As studies of mastery and control, and of pets, in Amazonia have shown, the taming of animals constitutes a counterpoint to predation (Erikson 2000) and a reiteration of the hierarchical relations that it enacts (Fausto, this volume). The control devices and forms of manipulation to which Ingold is referring seem to derive from a Western preoccupation with mechanical, instrumental and social domination and do not really account for the more intricate details of indigenous socio-cosmologies.

Hierarchy is an important part of the cosmological systems of all of the groups presented in this volume (cf. Descola 2005: 24; Brightman 2007; Kohn 2007: 17). In contrast to Ingold's treatment of mastery and hierarchy, Fausto's analysis of the plural and altering nature of Amazonian mastery shows that practices of enslavement and ownership are also involved in the construction of social relations between humans and non-humans, and he argues that mastery operates at multiple cosmological scales. Once again, here 'hierarchy' slides along scales from authority

and control to enmity and filiation, which is why ‘captives, orphans and pet animals often receive treatment that veers between care and cruelty’ (ibid.; cf. Erikson 2000).

## Conclusion

In a passage praising Descola’s recent study of different ontologies (Descola 2005), Bruno Latour muses, ‘[w]hereas for its first century, anthropology could multiply “cultures” while nature remained the non-coded category in contrast to which cultures could be defined, it is fair to say that, in this century, anthropology will go on multiplying the ways in which former cultures and natures (now in the plural) become coded categories’ (Latour 2009: 466). The work presented here shows that this may raise the old ethnological problem of the tension between generalisation and the integrity of individual cases. But cross-regional comparison may highlight potential connecting points between seemingly unrelated ontologies. In conclusion we would like to stress that this remains a study of classic themes within two regional contexts, and that this volume should be considered as a first attempt to engage comparatively with the contemporary shamanic cosmologies of Amazonia and Siberia. A fruitful addition to this initial comparative presentation of the entanglement of relations between humans and non-humans would be one which grapples with the additional transformations of the lived environment of native Siberians and Amazonians, such as the depletion of natural resources, changes in the practical involvement with ecosystems through migration to urban centres or sedentarisation processes, or transformations of the symbolic engagement with other living beings, through conversion to national or alien modes of being, such as Christianity or ‘nationalisation’. Further clues should be sought as to the management of these various ‘perspectives’ and what that can tell us of ideas of change and continuity. The contributors to the present volume all conducted their ethnographic fieldwork among peoples undergoing such transformative processes, and they have described here fundamental relational modes which have been tested in the face of change. Indeed, in the ‘relational spaces’ (García Hierro and Surrallès 2005) in which the indigenous peoples of Amazonia and Siberia live, they are the medium through which such changes are experienced.

## Notes

1. This could be seen as another example of ‘Whitehead’s “fallacy of misplaced concreteness”’, the confusion of abstractions with real phenomena, of which Bateson accused Marxist historians for believing that ‘economic “phenomena” are “primary”’ (Bateson 1972: 64).
2. The Cartesian dichotomy may in fact be more robust than that of nature and culture. Descola has argued that his concepts of ‘interiority’ and ‘physicality’, corresponding to Husserl’s ‘intentionality’ and ‘body’, ‘are not Western constructs generated by the marriage of Greek philosophy with Christian theology and subsequently raised under the rigorous ferule of a long line of Cartesian tutors. According to developmental psychology,

- the awareness of this duality is probably innate and specific to the human species, a point confirmed by ethnographic and historical accounts' (Descola 2006: 139).
3. 'L'ethnographie de l'Amérique indigène est peuplée de ces références à une théorie cosmopolitique qui décrit un univers habité par divers types d'actants ou d'agents subjectifs, humains et non humains – les dieux, les animaux, les morts, les plantes, les phénomènes météorologiques, très souvent les objets et les artefacts aussi –, tous munis d'un même ensemble général de dispositions perceptives, appétitives et cognitives, autrement dit, d'une "âme" semblable. Cet ressemblance inclut un même mode, pour ainsi dire performatif, d'aperception: les animaux et les autres non-humains pourvus d'âme "se voient comme des personnes" et donc, ils "sont des personnes", c'est-à-dire: des objets intentionnels ou à deux faces (visible et invisibles), constitués par des relations sociales et existant sous le double modes pronominal du réflexif et du réciproque, c'est-à-dire du collectif. All translations by Marc Brightman.
  4. However we are aware of the danger of essentialising the nature of human–animal relations in 'the West', which are highly complex and diverse, and the subject of sophisticated analyses in their own right (see, e.g., Haraway 2007).
  5. 'Ce que ces personnes voient, cependant – et donc ce qu'elles sont en tant que personnes – constitue précisément le problème philosophique posé par et pour la pensée indigène'.
  6. 'se estruturam em termos de idiomas simbólicos que ... não dizem respeito à definição de grupos e à transmissão de bens, mas à construção de pessoas e à fabricação de corpos'.
  7. 'Não se trata de uma oposição entre o homem e o animal realizada longe do corpo e ao longo de categorias individualizantes, onde o natural e o social se auto-repelem por definição, mas de uma dialética onde os elementos naturais são domesticados pelo grupo e os elementos do grupo (as coisas sociais) são naturalizados no mundo dos animais. O corpo é a grande arena onde essas transformações são possíveis, como faz prova toda a mitologia sul-americana que deve, agora, ser relida como histórias com um centro: a idéia fundamental de corporalidade'.
  8. See Hallowell (1926), Lévi-Strauss (1964, 1966, 1968, 1971, 1975, 1985a, 1991), Irimoto and Yamada (1997), Sullivan (1988) and Laugrand and Oosten (2007).
  9. 'Shaman' is a Tungus word for a person chosen and trained to work for the community by engaging with significant other-than-human persons (Vitebsky 1995; Harvey 2003). On the Jesup Expedition, see Boas (1905), and for monographs, see Jochelson (1908, 1926) and Bogoras (1909, 1910). In addition, see Shternberg (1925, 1933, 1936).
  10. Meletinsky's book was first published in Russian as *Poetika Mifa* (1976), and later in English translation (Meletinsky 1998).
  11. See Gow (2001) for a criticism of similar readings of the relationship between myth and history in Lévi-Strauss's *Mythologiques*.
  12. Meletinsky's historicism could also conceivably have been a reaction against the lack of historicism (in a conventional sense) of Lévi-Strauss's *Mythologiques*, in which there is less emphasis on dynamic processes than in the later 'petites mythologiques' (Lévi-Strauss 1975, 1985a, 1991). We are grateful to Katherine Swancutt for suggesting this point.
  13. 'Une économie de la *corporalité* au coeur même des ontologies qui venaient d'être redéfinies ... comme *animistes* (par Descola)'.
  14. 'une anthropologie indigène formulée en termes de flux organiques et de codages matériels, de multiplicités sensibles et de devenirs-animaux, plutôt qu'exprimée dans les termes spectraux de notre propre anthropologie que la grisaille juridico-théologique (songeons aux droits et aux devoirs, aux catégories et aux "personnes morales" qui façonnent notre discipline) accable par comparaison. Ensuite, il permettait d'entrevoir

certaines des implications théoriques de ce statut non marqué ou générique de la dimension virtuelle (l'“âme”) des existants, prémisse capitale d'une puissante structure intellectuelle indigène, capable, *inter alia*, de contre-décrire sa propre image dessinée par l'anthropologie occidentale, et, par là, “nous renvoyer de nous-même une image où nous ne nous reconnaissons pas”.

15. 'En s'appuyant explicitement sur les *Mythologiques*, ce travail s'est développé sans aucune connexion avec le thème de l'*embodiment*, qui prendrait l'anthropologie d'assaut dans les décennies suivantes. Le courant structuraliste de l'ethnologie amérindienne, sourd à l'appel “pieux et sensuel à la fois” du Carnisme phénoménologique (Deleuze et Guattari 1991: 169) – “à l'appel du bois pourri”, dirait un lecteur de *Le cru et le cuit* – a toujours pensé l'incarnation du point de vue du Triangle culinaire plutôt de celui de la sainte Trinité'.
16. 'La hiérarchie des objets animés et inanimés ... s'appuie sur la variation dans les modes de communication qu'autorise l'appréhension de qualités sensibles inégalement distribuées. Dans la mesure où la catégorie des “personnes” englobe des esprits, des plantes et des animaux, tous dotés d'un âme, cette cosmologie ne discrimine pas entre les humains et les non-humains; elle introduit seulement une échelle d'ordre selon les niveaux d'échange d'information réputés faisables'.
17. 'avec le divorce entre morts et animaux, les premiers restent humains, ou deviennent même des surhumains, et les seconds commencent à cesser de l'être, en dérivant vers une sous- ou une anti-humanité'.
18. 'Je suggère qu'en Amazonie indigène l'exopraxis est antérieur – logiquement, chronologiquement, et cosmologiquement – à l'endopraxis, et qu'elle reste toujours opérationnelle, même dans ces formations plus hiérarchiques telles que celles du Nord-Ouest amazonien, à la manière d'un résidu qui bloque la constitution de chefferies ou d'États pourvus d'une intériorité métaphysique achevée'.
19. Descola's totemism is more narrowly defined than that of Lévi-Strauss. As Viveiros de Castro has pointed out, Descola divides Lévi-Strauss's totemism into two sub-types: 'totemism *sensu* Descola' and 'analogism' (Viveiros de Castro 2009: 50).
20. 'Ni animisme – qui affirmerait une ressemblance substantielle ou analogique entre animaux et humains –, ni totémisme – qui affirmerait une ressemblance formelle ou homologique entre différences intrahumaines et différences inter-animales –, le perspectivisme affirme une différence intensive qui porte la différence humain/non-humain à l'intérieur de chaque existant'. Elsewhere, Viveiros de Castro distinguishes perspectivism from animism by saying that for the former all creatures are human (i.e., they share a human subjectivity), whereas for the latter, they all have spirit (Stzutman 2008: 6). For a measured and more sustained criticism of Descola's approach as an amplification in 'extension' of Lévi-Strauss's structuralism, in contrast to his own perspectivism as an interpretation in 'intensity' of the same, see Viveiros de Castro (2009: 47–51).

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