4 Nature Spirits and Non-humans

Symmetry and Translations of Genres in New Animism

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Introduction

In earlier chapters of this book, we have seen how the translator in Sociology of Translation and Actor-Network Theory (ANT) is erased from the translational practice of and between scientific texts. Translation is instead refigured as a transformation occurring between two or more 'actors', which can be faithfully described by the author, without bringing attention to the textual work that makes the relationship visible. We have also seen how Latour, in *The Pasteurization of France*, understands the power relation of these transformations as essentially equal to one another, 'a force', regardless of what concepts they are described with (Latour 1988: 156–159). Actors, both of a social and a narrative kind, are conceptualized as characters which relate to other characters through the *a priori* characterized 'force' of power relations, what we in Chapter 3 have shown to be the ANT actant.

The theories and methodologies of ANT/Sociology of Translation have also had an impact in the field of anthropology. Although the theoretical framework is somewhat different, the same sensibility to the relational constitution of actors can also be seen here. At the same time, anthropological discourse confronts us with a twofold problem. Disciplinary traditions in anthropology, and how they contextualize their material, suggest that group formations also amount to shared beliefs. However, taking relational and symmetrical frameworks seriously in the field of anthropology suggests that mutually excluding beliefs must be considered true if the symmetrical perspective is to be upheld. In other words, if a symmetry of actors is going to be upheld in the context of group formations and their meaning-making practices, not only must people, animals, and things have the same agency, but also beings which cannot be pointed out at all, for example, all the actors conventionally named 'gods', 'spirits', and 'souls'.

The category of non-human actors—where for example Michel Callon had put the non-articulate, but highly material, scallops (Callon 1986)—in anthropology must include actors conventionally understood as not acting

DOI: 10.4324/9781003285038-7

at all, just legitimizing human acts or explaining nature's acts. With regard to the questions we have set out to explore in this book, the genre produced by the proponents of early ANT (the ANT account we discussed in Chapter 3), invests the narratives of scholarly texts with the same epistemological framework as the texts which are studied. The actor of ANT is thus both narrative construction and object of study. To us, this highlights the importance of also paying keen attention to what kinds of texts are used to inscribe non-human actors, and the ontological properties of such texts and the characters or actors within them.

With regard to the concept of non-human actors, the actors we encounter in texts on New Animism are interesting, because they challenge the empirical focus of ANT analyses. Non-material beings (such as gods, spirits, and souls) have no 'body' with which to leave traces, if the cultural frameworks in which these same beings occur are not considered as an integral part of them, and thus draw negotiations of 'beliefs' and their contexts into the descriptions of actors. Traces of beings that have no material body cannot provide meaning if that meaning is not transferred from narratives of some kind, be they myths, legends, fictions, rumours, narrated memories, or written ethnographies. Non-material beings thus challenge the call to 'follow the actors themselves … in order to learn from them what the collective existence has become in their hands' (Latour 2005: 12) because there is no 'themselves' to follow, only traces ascribed to them by the already mentioned narrative forms.

The challenge of reframing characters with a disputed agency as non-human actors is taken on in the so-called 'New Animism'. New Animism is, as explained by Isabel Laack, a cluster of theories, or a movement, closely related to New Materialism and the ontological turn of culture studies and anthropology (Laack 2020). Its main objective is to 'liberate' the concept of animism from its colonial ideology and, to a degree, also show an alternative to the unsustainable lifestyle of Western civilization (ibid.: 116). The concepts of New Animism, or the relations they construct, have in recent years been taken up in wider environmental discourse, as a proposed solution to the unsustainable lifestyle of contemporary society (Helkkula and Arnould 2022; Mikaels 2019; West et al. 2020). It is significant, however, that when the insights of perspectives such as New Animism are used as a model for sustainable practices, the critique of anthropocentrism it expresses serves to differentiate the concept of *nature* (Helkkula and Arnould 2022: 865) or connect *stories* to places (Mikaels 2019: 88). These models do not, however, challenge concepts of nature or genres of stories. Thus, while New Animism challenges deep-seated premises of knowledge production, epistemological frameworks based on these premises continue to be important concepts when the theory is operationalized. The non-human actor seemingly conserves the same categories of nature and culture it is supposed to challenge.

In this chapter, I argue that the problem of using New Animism's concepts to challenge categories of nature and culture in contemporary society is a consequence of the theoretical framing of non-material beings as non-human actors, and disregarding their role as narrative actors in various genres. I will discuss what happens when non-material beings are translated into non-human actors in the discourse of New Animism. I will focus on the intertextual connections between narrative genres which are erased when animism is reframed as a relationship with the natural environment, and how this, at the same time, reframes non-material beings. Thus, I will ask: What is lost in translation, when evocations of non-material beings are reframed as relationships between human and non-human actors?

The Intertextual Links of Animist Relationship—A Case Study of Translation

'Animism' is a term that comes from Edward Burnett Tylor's *Primitive Culture* from 1871. In this chapter, I will begin with Tylor's concept of animism, and explain the notion of 'spirits' and 'souls' that is so central to it. Then, I will do a close reading of two seminal texts of New Animism, the anthropologist Nurit Bird-David's article '"Animism" Revisited: Personhood, Environment, and Relational Epistemology' (1999), and the first two chapters of historian of religion Graham Harvey's book *Animism: Respecting the Living World* (2005). I will compare these two to the text they both refer back to as the origin of central concerns within the theoretic cluster of New Animism, namely the American anthropologist Alfred Irwing Hallowell's article 'Ojibwa Ontology, Behavior, and World View' from 1960.

Hallowell explores the linguistic class of 'person' of the Ojibwe people in the lake district on the border of the United States and Canada. 'Personhood', or what the concept of person means in Ojibwe language and culture, Hallowell argued, is distinctly different from how the concept is understood in European languages, where it connotes human persons. The Ojibwe, in contrast, also understood a range of objects, animals, and natural features as persons in certain contexts. Bird-David is the one who reopened the debate on the classic concept of animism in anthropology, while Harvey's book has had a large impact on the popular understanding of the same concept. Bird-David's and Harvey's animism are both grounded in Hallowell's new reading of the concept of personhood, and in different ways relate it to non-human, or other-than-human *actors*. With this revisiting of animism, Tylor's old concept is reimagined as a relationship between human and non-human actors. To show the erasure of intertextual links, and how animism is reframed as a relation between humans and their environment, between human and non-human actors, I will pay special attention to how one anecdote from Hallowell's article is translated

into Bird-David's and Harvey's texts. The archetypical inanimate object 'stone', and how it counterintuitively is animated, serves as an example of how an 'animistic' relationship to the environment functions in certain cultures. As an extension, Hallowell's anecdote also becomes an example of a different kind of relationship between man and the environment. But, as I will show, the same translation sidesteps the narrative genres in and with which 'stones' are understood as animate.

In the translation of concepts that occur between the texts of Tylor, Hallowell, Bird-David, and Harvey, I will in this chapter use the framework of textual and conceptual grids, as presented by translation theorist A. Lefevere. Lefevere states that 'problems in translating are caused at least as much by discrepancies in conceptual and textual grids as by discrepancies in language' (Lefevere 1999: 76). Translation of texts is not just the transfer of utterances from one language structure to another, but equally a remapping of the meaning projected onto genres of text and text artefacts, and connotations of concepts in a source and target community. The conceptual grid refers to the meanings of words and phrases. The textual grid refers to the reader's expectations of texts and genres. The two grids, Lefevere says, are inseparable.

Following Lefevere, we thus must pay attention to the *texts* that are translated and the grids in which the translation occurs. The tendency to translate concepts from other cultures *as if* they were texts, though not by paying attention to particular texts and their genres, I argue, detaches us from the possibility of learning from other people's concepts. We thus need to pay closer attention to the texts that translate foreign concepts, in order to utilize their potential for conceptual change. This I will attempt to do here. In my reading, I will pay attention to two kinds of translation that occur simultaneously. On the one hand, utterances are given new meaning by being inscribed into new genres. On the other hand, concepts are translated as other concepts in an attempt to change their connotations. As we shall see, however, these two mappings are not handled symmetrically within the literature of New Animism.

Animism and New Animism

Edward Burnett Tylor was one of the central characters in the development of modern anthropology (Stocking 1987: 300–302; Larsen 2013). His two-volume *Primitive Culture*, originally published in 1871, developed his evolutionary study of religion, underscoring the idea that at the root of all modern religions is 'the belief in Spiritual Beings', which also served as his very definition of religion (Tylor 1920: 424). Animism, Tylor held, formed the 'groundwork of the Philosophy of Religion, from that of savages up to that of civilized men' and could be considered a theory which:

> Divides into two great dogmas, forming part of one consistent doctrine; first concerning souls of individual creatures, capable of continued existence after death or destruction of the body; second, concerning other spirits, upward to the rank of powerful deities.
>
> (Ibid.: 426)

All religious beliefs, Tylor argued, were based on primitive man's inference from observations of the distinction between living and dead bodies, as well as the further observation of how one can leave the body and meet dead relatives in dreams (ibid.: 428). These inferences led to the conclusion that there must exist an animating principle, a soul, in all living beings, and that when this soul was released from a material body, the animating principle, so to speak in immaterial form, were spirits. The social institutionalization of this idea is what Tylor called 'animism'.

For Tylor, animism was based on an initial separation: the assertion that the animating principle was separated from biological bodies. Tylor saw this dualistic principle, what later has been called the mind/body dichotomy, as the origin of all religions, including Christianity and Christian ideas of the soul. Tylor's evolutionist idea has since been heavily criticized because of its racist underpinnings and his lack of first-hand sources. Tylor had relied on early missionary descriptions and ethnographic surveys as the sources from which he inferred the 'belief in Spiritual Beings'. He argued that these sources showed a thorough knowledge of the cultures they documented, so much so that:

> Some missionaries, no doubt, thoroughly understand the minds of the savages they have to deal with, and indeed it is from men like Cranz, Dobrizhoffer, Charlevoix, Ellis, Hardy, Callaway, J.L. Wilson, T. Williams, that we have obtained our best knowledge of the lower phases of religious belief.
>
> (Ibid.: 420)

Understanding 'the minds of the savages' also meant giving faithful descriptions of their beliefs and practices and understanding the categories of mind they projected onto their environment. Tylor, however, did not consider the extent to which beliefs were also projected into the same descriptions by the authors of these texts, nor the intertextual network they were part of. For example, I have demonstrated elsewhere how David Cranz's description of Innuit beliefs or religion in Greenland, from 1765, actually documents remnant ideas from what Cranz had considered the original religion or relationship to God (Resløkken 2021). Thus, Cranz actively sought to describe remnant ideas of Christian doctrine in Innuit religion or customs. Among these remains from the original relationship to God,

ideas about the 'soul' could be found (Cranz 1765: 253–277; Resløkken 2021). As a consequence, the Christian soul, and the trinity of soul, body, and spirit, were inserted back into Tylor's sources for the origin of the same concept.

In *Primitive Culture*, Tylor writes the following to define animism:

> I propose here, under the name of animism, to investigate the deep-lying doctrine of Spiritual beings, which embodies the very essence of Spiritualistic as opposed to Materialistic philosophy.
>
> (Tylor 1920: 425)

Tylor wanted to separate 'materialistic' and 'spiritual' philosophies. He considered the materialistic philosophy as the proper way forward for science, while the spiritualistic philosophy comprised of 'survivals' from bygone times, that is, the category mistakes that had produced religions. Spiritualistic and materialistic philosophies are here presented as two opposing understandings or interpretations of nature.

For Tylor, the spiritualistic philosophy was based on two related concepts. First, that there is an animating principle in people and animals (an immaterial *soul*), and second that an animating principle could also act independently of the body (immaterial *spirits*). In Tylor's concept of animism, *soul* and *spirit* thus form an interrelated couple; they are of the same essence, because they both stem from observations of how the mind works (in dreams), and when it is and is not present (as in life/death).

We have then, at the heart of the concept of animism, the division of mind and body, of which the mind is what Tylor argued is projected *as* soul or spirit onto nature in 'primitive' cultures. When animism is used as a description of a certain relation to nature, or indeed, as in the discourse on sustainability, a role model for such a relationship, the role of the projected mind, is occupied by the term 'non-human actors'. In New Animism, which I will discuss later, it is the 'spirit' or 'soul' that has the role of non-human actor. Thus, in one sense we could speak of a translation of the older animist notion of soul or spirit to the 'new', and less culturally marked term, non-human actor. What I want to emphasize here, however, is that even if soul and spirit occur as a pair with the same origin in Tylor's text, when mapped onto the framework of human and non-human actors, soul and spirit become distinctly different. As we explained in Chapter 3, human and non-human actors in ANT have their agency, their ability to act, by treating them as a narrative role. This is the actantial position of an actor. It is the actor in the meaning of actant that has been emphasized in ANT. In addition, though, an actor, according to Julien Algirdas Greimas, also entails a 'thematic investment', the expectations of the role a reader invests in a certain narrative actor (Greimas 1983: 207). What I argue here is that

if we map the notion of non-human actors onto the animated objects/entities of animism, that is, if we define the actor through who manifestly leaves traces of an act, souls and spirits in the Tylorian sense are not comparable. The animating principle, which in human beings is often referred to as the mind or the soul, can without much difficulty be seen as the cause of the act that a human being does, or more to the point, what its body does. Spirits, on the other hand, act *through* bodies. Whether the body is 'human' or 'non-human' is inconsequential with regard to what makes it an actor. An act caused by a 'spirit' will always be an act by a non- or other-than-human, and as such not 'caused' by the body that manifests the act. The spirit, then, cannot be observed through actantial position, but by thematic investment alone.

Tylor's concept of animism is important with regard to non-human actors, because the idea that soul and spirit are interchangeable makes it possible to translate acts caused by souls and spirits as non-human actors, that is, not differentiating between acts *from* bodies and *through* bodies. Furthermore, the reading of acts as the empirical ground for establishing actors in New Animism *depends* on the mind/body dualism inherent in the concepts of soul and spirit, which Tylor's animism at the same time is faulted for. I will also show that non-human actors, when encountered in connection to animism, rest on a much less discussed, but equally important legacy Tylor's concept entailed, namely that he perceived animism as a *philosophy*. For Tylor, the doctrine of spirits divided materialistic and spiritualistic philosophies. The materialistic philosophy was the philosophy of modern science. The spiritualistic philosophies were the philosophy of religious traditions. But in the evolutionary frame of Tylor's theory, this was also a temporal division, between an old and new philosophy. As I will argue below, this temporal division is as much cause for the continuous popularity of the concept of animism as souls and spirits. It provides agency through a temporal placement, by pointing towards what Latour termed the non-moderns (Latour 1993), in the sense of before-the-moderns. As such, New Animism does not only give agency to non-human actors, it also gives temporal placement to a philosophy of non-human actors that can be revisited and revived.

When non-human actors are translated by the use of a framework of animism, we are faced with a double problem of interpretation. On the one hand, non-human actors are understood as having two very distinct causations for their acts. They can be interpreted as actors themselves, or in Tylor's sense, having a soul. They can also be interpreted as being acted through; the function referred to as 'spirits'. On the other hand, animism is also interpreted as a temporal placement of an idea, philosophy or ontology, an outlook on the environment that is non-modern or removed from the modern philosophy that also theorizes the mind/body duality.

This double connotation, which, in line with Greimas, can be considered a thematic investment for the word 'animism', affects the non-human actors that are translations of 'spirits' by actantial function. In the following, I want to show how these animistic non-human actors were developed in the discourse of New Animism, and how this affects the possibility of reimagining conceptions of our relationship to the environment with them.

Spirits, Non-humans, and Other-than-Human Persons

As I have noted earlier, a discussion of New Animism must begin with Nurit Bird-David's *'Animism' Revisited: Personhood, Environment, and Relational Epistemology* (1999). Her article is important because she is the first to reframe the term 'animism' within a relational epistemology. The empirical material for Bird-David's study is drawn from her fieldwork with the hunter-gatherer Nayaka in South India and their conception of *devaru* (ibid.: 68). Bird-David draws on two sets of theories in her exploration of the Nayaka *devaru*, as her title explains. Environment theory, in which the works of J.J. Gibson and his idea of 'affordances' is the most important contribution (2015), and 'personhood-theory', which is primarily taken from A. Irving Hallowell and his article 'Ojibwa Ontology, Behavior, and World View' (1960).

On Hallowell's study, Bird-David says: 'Hallowell's contribution is to free the study of animistic beliefs and practices from modernist person-concepts and second from the presumption that these notions and practices are erroneous' (Bird-David 1999: 71). Bird-David, however, does not want to use Hallowell's term 'other-than-human persons', which she states is derived from the spirit/body dualism, nor does she want to use 'supernatural being', which she states mirrors the Western idea of nature. *Devaru*, she claims, is better conceptualized with the term 'superpersons'. Hallowell's term 'other-than-human persons', Bird-David argues, retains the 'primary objectivist concern with classes (human and other-than-human)' (ibid.: 71). With this shift, Bird-David sought to forge new connotations for Tylor's concept of 'spirit', though keeping the groups the concept of 'animism' denotes. But as we shall see below, she is not concerned with how Hallowell's classes are primarily linguistic.

Gibson, in his theory of affordances, had said that we psychologically perceive things and events, that is stories and models, which are not in themselves knowledge, but the ground on which to build knowledge. Bird-David evokes Gibson's affordance theory for explaining the in the world properties of superpersons. Her point is that *devaru* (her Nayaka 'superpersons') are seen in the world by 'educating' attention to them (ibid.: 68–69). Animism, thus, must be learned within a cultural framework. Bird-David uses Gibson's contrasting pair of things and events to distinguish the animistic notion of reality from the 'modern'. As animists, she

argues, the Nayaka mostly perceive the environment in terms of 'events', while Western moderns perceive nature as 'things' (ibid.: 74). Bird-David gives us several examples of how the *devaru* are perceived in the world, in events, by paying attention to individual Nayaka, and how they have contact with *devaru*.

She writes:

> For example, one Nayaka woman, Devi (age 40), pointed to a particular stone—standing next to several other similar stones on a small platform among the huts—and said that she had been digging deep down for roots in the forest when suddenly '*this* devaru came towards her'. Another man, Atti-Mathen (age 70), pointed to a stone standing next to the aforementioned one and said that his sister-in-law had been sitting under a tree, resting during a foray, when suddenly '*this* devaru jumped onto her lap'. The two women had brought the stone devaru back to their places 'to live' with them. The *particular* stones were devaru *as they* 'came towards' and 'jumped on' Nayaka.
>
> (Ibid.: 74)

These examples are compared to Hallowell's anecdote of the old man, a story we shall discuss below. For now, let me just point to the fact that Bird-David's examples are 'events' in the sense that they are *narrated as events*. Her first example is the story of an event her interlocutor herself had experienced, the second is a story retold by the interlocutor. Both are figured as *events*, relating particular stones to the Nayaka as a group.

The second scholar of New Animism, which I will discuss here, is the historian of religion Graham Harvey. His book *Animism—Respecting the Living World* (2005) has had a large impact on popular understanding of this new perspective on animism, and together with his later *The Handbook of Contemporary Animism* (2014), is often cited in works on animism, both within and outside of academic circles. Harvey's interest in New Animism involves the practices of indigenous peoples, but also the self-proclaimed animists of modern paganism. In *Animism—Respecting the Living World* (2005), Harvey, like Bird-David, seeks to rehabilitate animism by reframing it as a relational perspective on human and non-human 'persons' and their relations. Harvey draws heavily on Bird-David and Hallowell in the book. Accordingly, he also contrasts a modern Western 'worldview', set on exploiting inanimate nature to the inherent respect for nature in the animist 'worldview'. Hallowell's person category is important also for Harvey. He devotes the entire second chapter of his book to the Ojibwe and the person category Hallowell identified:

> While they do distinguish between persons and objects, the Ojibwe also challenge European notions of what a person is. To be a person does not require human-likeness, but rather humans are like persons. Persons is the wider category, beneath which there may be listed subgroups such as 'human persons' 'rock persons' 'bear persons' and others. Persons are related beings constituted by their many and various interactions with others. Persons are wilful beings who gain meaning and power from their interactions. Persons are sociable beings who communicate with others. Persons need to be taught by stages (some marked by initiations) what it means to 'act as a person'. This animism (minimally understood as the recognition of personhood in a range of human and other-than-human persons) is far from innate and instinctual. It is found more easily among elders who have thought about it than among children who still need to be taught how to do it.
>
> (Harvey 2005: 18)

In opposition to Bird-David, Harvey argues for retaining Hallowell's designation 'other-than-human person' instead of 'superperson'. This, Harvey holds, is because the former points to an equal relationship, while the latter bears with it the connotation of an 'ordinary person' in opposition to the 'superperson' (ibid.: 20). Thus, Harvey is more concerned with 'other-than-human persons' as beings on equal terms with human persons. For Harvey, personhood in animism is a means to widen the category of 'person' to *include* Tylor's concept of 'spirit'.

We have now seen how the 'person' category of New Animism draws on Tylor's identification of 'spirits', though seeking to alter the conceptual grid of which it is part. To see more clearly how the textual grid of animism is hidden, we will have to go back to Hallowell's text, which introduced the particular concept of 'personhood' that Bird-David and Harvey cite.

Ojibwa Ontology and Worldview

What Hallowell sets out to explore in his article is, at its core, a linguistic problem. He had done extensive fieldwork among the Ojibwe on the southern border of Canada and the United States in the 1930s. Drawing on this fieldwork, the article discusses the Ojibwa 'person' category, and what it can say about the Ojibwa's understanding of animate and inanimate beings. Hallowell notes that any such discussion must begin with acknowledging the grammatical structure of the Ojibwa (like all Algonquin) language, where there is a grammatical distinction between 'animate' and 'inanimate' nouns. Superficially, the distinction seems to approximate the distinction between animate and inanimate classes in European languages. There are, however, some subtle, but marked differences. Some (but not all)

trees, sun and moon, thunder, stones, and objects of material culture are classified as 'animate' in Ojibwa (Hallowell 1960: 23). It is to explain these classificatory differences that Hallowell turns his attention to the 'beliefs, attitudes, conduct and linguistic characterization' of the Ojibwa, in order to understand 'their cognitive outlook' (ibid.: 24) or what Hallowell, with a term from Robert Redfield, calls a 'worldview' (ibid.: 19).

The concept of 'worldview' is central to Hallowell's entire argument, as well as his reason for attending to beliefs, attitudes, and conduct in order to explain the Ojibwa grammatical classification. I will therefore give a brief description of what the concept meant to Hallowell. Robert Redfield had argued that 'worldview' was a useful concept for describing the 'picture the members of a society have on the properties and characters upon their stage of action' (Redfield 1952: 30). Redfield's term describes how a person classifies and organizes that which is not the self. He insisted that there are universal properties that are included in every worldview, though perceived differently. The distinction between self and non-self is one example, but he also mentions distinctions between men and women, old and young, people close to oneself and those far away, and also distinctions equivalent to what in 'our' worldview is distinguished as 'God' or 'nature'. Redfield also mentions a third, supposedly universal category, 'spirits', that is, things neither divine nor natural (ibid.: 30–31). It is important to note that Redfield's worldview' provides a matrix for conceptual comparison between different orientations to the world. Because there are universals—though categorized, valued, and related in culture-specific ways—it is possible to compare one worldview with another.

Hallowell ascribed to Redfield's idea but acknowledges the problem of evidence available for examining different worldviews, especially if we aim to describe what he calls 'ethno-metaphysics' (Hallowell 1960: 20). Though one can find different kinds of evidence—he mentions for example myths, behaviour, and attitudes; he himself opted for 'the action of persons' (ibid.: 21) or what we now usually call 'practices'. 'Persons', Hallowell argued, is a class in all cultures, a universal the self must be oriented towards, but it need not be confined to human persons (ibid.: 21). The 'person' category thus was interesting because it is a universal.

It shall be noted that Hallowell never speaks of 'animism' as such, neither as philosophy nor as identity, but rather of what is linguistically and/or culturally categorized as 'animate'. Tylor is not among his references, nor is he mentioned in the text. Rather, Hallowell's 'animist' category refers to a linguistic category, and as such, it:

> Was imposed upon Algonkian languages by Europeans; it appeared to outsiders that the Algonkian differentiation of objects approximated the animate-inanimate dichotomy of Western thought.
>
> (Ibid.: 23)

However, he continues, on closer inspection this is not always the case. And in an effort to understand 'the cognitive orientation' of the Ojibwa, Hallowell sets out to map a 'worldview' that fits these linguistic differences.

So far, I have shown how proponents of New Animism negotiate Tylor's concept of 'spirits' by handling them as non-human, or other-than-human, 'persons'. Nurit Bird-David and Graham Harvey both utilize Hallowell's extension of the person category as a tool for writing animistic ideas into scholarly culture studies, and also promote animism as an alternative view on nature, more in keeping with contemporary environmental concerns.

Tylor's concept 'animism' provides an alternative to contemporary views on nature, an alternative philosophy to the materialistic philosophy which Bird-David especially links to the 'modern'. As such, Hallowell's use of Redfield's 'worldview', which renders different orientations to the environment comparable to psychological relationships, allows Bird-David and Harvey to reframe Tylor's animism as a different kind of *relationship* to the environment. This relationship belongs to specific places and cultures, while at the same time serving as a feature of the human condition. Hallowell's concern had been to map out a difference, to describe to *us* where the Ojibwa worldview differs. For New Animism, however, with its emphasis on environment and sustainability, a second step is needed. The philosophy of animism must be made *transferable* to *us*, to our practices and ideas.

As I will argue next, this step is taken by a simultaneous translation and erasure. A translation of concepts, and an erasure of the texts and genres from which the concepts are taken. In other words, a translation on a conceptual grid, while erasing the traces of the textual grid the utterances are part of (Lefevere 1999). As a consequence, the complexity of the difference Hallowell tried to map out, as well as the grand narrative Tylor had constructed, is hidden from contemporary discussions on animism, although what I, with Greimas, could call the thematic investment of the concept of animism remains. Along with this, a classic conception of nature is retained, which in turn conserves the politics of nature, and the mind/body dichotomy.

'No! But *Some* Are': Translations of Animate Stones

The most famous quote from Hallowell's article, if I am to judge by the literature on New Animism, concerns the grammatical distinction of animate and inanimate in the Ojibwa language, and Hallowell's process of understanding it. He writes:

> Since stones are grammatically animate, I once asked an old man: Are *all* the stones we see about us here alive? He reflected a long while and then replied 'No! But *some* are'. 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 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.
>
> (Hallowell 1960: 24–25)

In both Bird-David's and Harvey's texts we can find references to this anecdote. But it is confined to the anecdote itself, which we can find in the first two sentences of the quote above. We should note that Hallowell deliberately removes the sentence from its larger context and makes it function as the incentive for the development of his research topic. These are not sentences meant to be a faithful restatement of linguistic use or ontological position, but rather a conversation that sparked an idea. Moreover, we must also note the complexity in the translation of aliveness conveyed in the sentences of the old man. We do not really know which language this conversation took place in, and we do not know which stones were referred to. We do not know how the two interlocutors construed 'alive'. For Hallowell, all this is resolved because he is the only one who projects meaning into the conversation: 'it made a lasting impression on me'. By erasing the textual grid of the anecdote, however, later translations of the anecdote has been free to utilize it as an ethnographic event.

Bird-David writes that Hallowell's study and his observations of an 'Ojibwa sense of personhood, which they attribute to some natural entities, animals, winds, stones, etc., is fundamentally different from the modernist one' (Bird-David 1999: 71). Later, discussing her Nayaka interlocutors' relationships to 'stone devaru' (ibid.: 74), Bird-David uses Hallowell's anecdote for comparative purposes:

> The particular stones were devaru as they 'came towards' and 'jumped on' Nayaka. The many other stones in the area were not devaru but simply stones. Ojibwa approach stones in a similar way: Hallowell recounts how he once asked an old Ojibwa man whether 'all the stones we see about us here are alive'. Though stones are grammatically animate in Ojibwa, the man (Hallowell recalls) 'reflected a long while and then replied, "No! But some are"' (1960: 24). From the stories which

> Hallowell provides, 'alive' stones appear to be ones which 'move' and 'open a mouth' towards Ojibwa (p. 25).
>
> (Ibid.: 74–75)

We shall note how Hallowell's linguistic inquiry has taken on a phenomenological form. Some stones are alive *because* they have been observed to 'move' or 'open a mouth'. Furthermore, the linguistic argument of Hallowell, which discusses the grammatical categories by constructing a worldview based on how some Ojibwas act towards certain things, serves as an argument for what counts as 'alive' based on how they 'appear' and towards an entire group, 'the Ojibwa'.

Harvey's discussion of Hallowell's article is, of course, considering this is a book, more thorough than Bird-David's. Harvey states that his interest in animism directly stems from the 'growing influence' of Hallowell's article 'on recent thinking both about indigenous religions and about academic approaches to them' (Harvey 2005: 33–34). In the opening of the second chapter of the book, he writes:

> In the 1930s Irving Hallowell asked an unnamed old man among the Ojibwe of Beren's river in Manitoba, 'Are *all* the stones we see about us here alive?' Hallowell continues, 'He reflected a long while and then replied, "No! But some are"'. Hallowell asked this question because in Ojibwe and other Algonquian languages rocks are grammatically 'animate' rather than grammatically 'inanimate' … Grammatically rocks are animate. Hence the question, are they alive? The grammatical form arises from the facts that rocks 'have been seen to move, [and] manifest other animate properties', they can be spoken of and to as persons—and they can be spoken with.
>
> (Ibid.: 33)

While Bird-David changes the textual grid of the anecdote to that of an observation, Harvey flips Hallowell's worldview hypothesis around when he states that '[t]he grammatical form *arises from* the fact that rocks have been seen to move [and] manifest other properties' (ibid.: 33, my emphasis). It is no longer the universal categories of the self that expresses itself in a culture-specific worldview, but animate properties of things reflected in grammatical forms. This also changes Hallowell's formulation of a research topic into an exploration of that topic, namely how animate properties of things are manifested in grammatical categories. Thus, the textual grid is changed from anecdote to exploration.

Furthermore, in Harvey's quote we also see how the stones that are grammatically animate are seen to move and to 'manifest' animate properties. We also saw that Bird-David translates the stones in Hallowell's

anecdote as those who 'appear to … "move" and "open a mouth" towards Ojibwa'. Given the slide between linguistic properties stemming from a worldview in Hallowell to the description of animate characteristics as 'manifest' (Harvey), or the characteristics they 'appear' to have (Bird-David), I will here quote Hallowell's account of the manifest properties of stones. A bit further down the page, Hallowell writes:

> The old man to whom I addressed the general question about the animate character of stones was the same informant who told me that during a Midewiwin ceremony, when his father was the leader of it, he had seen a 'big round stone move'. He said his father got up and walked around the path once or twice. Coming back to his place he began to sing. The stone began to move 'following the trail of the old man around the tent, rolling over and over, I saw it happen several times and others saw it also'. The animate behavior of a stone under these circumstances was considered to be a demonstration of magic power on part of the Midé. It was not a voluntary act initiated by the stone considered a living entity. Associated with the Midewiwin in the past there were other types of large boulders with animate properties. My friend Chief Berens had one of these, but it no longer possessed these attributes. It had the contours that suggested eyes and mouth. When Yellow Legs, Chief Beren's great-grandfather, was a leader of the Midewiwin he used to tap this stone with a new knife. It would then open its mouth, Yellow Legs would insert his fingers and take out a small leather sack with medicine in it. Mixing some of this medicine with water, he would pass the decoction around. A small sip was taken by those present.
>
> (Hallowell 1960: 25)

There are several important considerations which are left out when Hallowell's account, as we have seen, is referred back to later. The first is the fact that Hallowell's examples are all historical. First, there is a thirty-year gap between his fieldwork and his article. The identification of his research topic, the anecdote, and the two accounts of animate stones, are not necessarily closely connected as ethnographic events. Second, both the accounts of animate stones recall narrations of events that took place in Hallowell's interlocutors' pasts. The 'stories', as Bird-David calls them, or that stones can be spoken of, to and with as persons, as Harvey states, are narratives recalled, recontextualized, and reframed before they take on the form they have in Hallowell's text. In addition, the accounts, as they are present in Hallowell's text, make a narrative comprising of at least three narrative events: his enquiry on the animate qualities of stones; the memory of magic in the Midewiwin ceremony; and the narrative of Yellow

Legs' stone. For Hallowell, all these help to build his Ojibwa worldview, while for Bird-David and Harvey, they form narrated events of a narrative type (stories) or social type (the conversation between human and other-than-human), respectively.

Even if stones, conceptually and grammatically, can be animate, it is the narratives that refer back to earlier sources, which provide *authority* for the claim that it is *events* we witness in the texts (see Bauman 2004: 150–152 on authorization). The folklorist Richard Bauman has theorized that utterances are traditionalized by what he calls a 'double anchoring', where a (target) utterance is authorized by its reference to a (source) utterance (ibid.: 147–149). In the case of Bird-David's and Harvey's texts, the target utterance is Hallowell's anecdote. The source of the authorization, however, when Bird-David and Harvey utilize it, is not the sentence 'No, but some are!' which the old man utters, and which sparks an idea by confronting Hallowell's own categorizations of the world, but the claim that we, from this sentence, can read the worldview or ontology of the Ojibwe from it. With this alteration in the double anchoring, Hallowell's anecdote is invested with the genre markers of oral narratives, both experienced and inherited. It is, in other words, invested with the authority of tradition (ibid.; Bauman and Briggs 2003; Noyes 2009).

The old man in Hallowell's anecdote is thus made to speak on behalf of both the linguistic class 'alive' *and* the ontological status of animate characters. The 'some' in the sentence refers both to the grammatical class of stones and the characters that are also stones. When Bird-David uses Hallowell's anecdote to make a comparison between the Nayaka relationships to stones, it is the 'modern', or European linguistic class of stones (which has the explicit quality of not being animate) that serves as the grounds for comparison. As such, animism here serves to translate social relationships, and map their actors onto objects that are not animate (see Wilkinson 2016: 293 on this point). When Harvey writes that rocks can be spoken to, of, and with, as persons, it is the conceptual link between 'speech', 'alive', and 'animate' that translates the concept of animism. In addition, the immediate temporal connotations of speech gloss over the temporal layering of Hallowell's two narrative events.

In Bird-David's argument, Hallowell's stories reflect 'events' (in Gibson's sense) related in stories, but not narrative events *per se*. In Bird-David's examples from the Nayaka, we are confronted with 'interpretations'. The Nayaka cited here interpret the stones as jumping towards them, an elephant's unnatural behaviour is interpreted as being guided by *devaru*, thus not having a personhood status, while other elephants, in other events, are *devaru*, or interpreted as 'persons' (Bird-David 1999: 75). In discussing the *pandalu* ritual event, which 'in the modernist sense, involve "spirit possession" by devaru but also a great deal more' (ibid.: 75), Bird-David

again limits herself to a performance-centred approach, drawing attention to what its performers do, and how they interpret these *practices*. In terms of the Tylorian animism she revisits, we can say that while her methods, or at least how she chooses to write about them in her article, can say something about 'spirits', that is, how superpersons sometimes animate, and sometimes act upon, human and animal bodies. She, however, never discusses the concept of 'souls', that is, the animating principle in 'normal' persons, human or non-human. In Tylorian animism, the sameness of spirits and souls lets animism describe the mind/body duality in general *and* is what makes the concept universal. So, while the transcendental, immaterial soul is faulted for its affinity with the cartesian mind/body dualism, 'superperson', as a version of 'spirit', is kept, but as a character in events. It is these 'events' that become the universal category for Bird-David, and in these events, things that belong to the 'modernist' category of nature can have, or be spoken of as having, animate qualities. For Bird-David, then, it becomes necessary to reconceptualize Hallowell's stories, or oral narratives, as events in Gibson's sense. It lets her compare very different kinds of stones with agency, the stone that opens its mouth to reveal medicine from Hallowell's text, and the stone which chooses to be an object of veneration from her own fieldwork, which again can be conflated as the same kind of 'superperson'.

'Persons', Characters, and Narrative Genres

From the different conceptions of ethnographic events present in the texts, I will now turn to the oral genres Hallowell also identifies in his article. This will provide a better understanding of the erasures done on the textual grid of the accounts discussed above.

On the Ojibwa body of oral narratives, Hallowell states that they distinguish between two general types:

1. *Täbätcamowin*: which Hallowell defines as '"news or tidings" … i.e. anecdotes, or stories, referring to events in the lives of human beings (änícinábek)' (1960: 26).
2. *ätíso'kanak*: 'Myths … i.e. sacred stories, which are not only traditional and formalized; their narration is seasonally restricted and somewhat ritualized' (ibid.: 27).

The narratives of stones that move and open their mouths are *täbätcamowin*. They are stories or anecdotes from the lives of human beings. Hallowell translates *ätíso'kanak* as 'our grandfathers', and these formalized narrations can thus be understood as a retelling of events in the lives of these persons of the other-than-human class, while at the same time being

manifestations of those beings: 'our grandfathers'. Hallowell emphasizes that *ätíso'kanak* does not refer to a body of stories (as myths do), but to the characters in the story, meaning that the 'myths' themselves are considered persons of an 'other-than-human class'. While Hallowell describes this difference in the textual grid between Ojibwa and Europeans, the universals of his worldview framework nonetheless let him discuss *ätíso'kanak* as myths because of their sacred content and the ritualized nature of the narrative event (ibid.: 27). The discussion on *ätíso'kanak* draws attention to the fact that the animated 'beings' of Ojibwa culture, as Hallowell understood them, based on his fieldwork in the 1930s, also include what 'we' would consider narrative characters. According to Hallowell, *ätíso'kanak* is 'accepted by them as a true account of events in the past lives of living "persons"' (ibid.: 27). He thus goes on to underscore that these beings cannot be considered 'supernatural' (or translated as 'supernatural'), because that would require a concept of 'natural' that is analogous to the Western worldview and linguistic meaning. Several concepts, for example 'the sun' and 'thunder', are not concepts of nature in the Ojibwa language, but rather 'persons of the other-than-human class'. Hallowell also tells us that the dreaming and waking world are not distinguished in the same way as in Western thought, and entities met in dreams are seen as persons, while some animate beings, like a lot of animals, are not considered persons, as well as a range of inanimate objects (ibid.: 30–31). Within the framework of Lefevere we could say that though narrative characters share a conceptual grid (the sun in the sky or the sound of thunder can be word-for-word translated), the textual grid is vastly different (sun, thunder, and rocks are not objects of nature or personifications, but *ätíso'kanak* or 'grandfathers' and thus persons) (see Lefevere 1999). As such, Hallowell in his article points us to a conceptual translation of *characters*, not *objects*. It is the genres which have different truth criteria, not the objects to which the concepts also refer.

Hallowell's discussion of the Ojibwa types of oral narratives points to the importance of what Lefevere calls textual grids, and what I above referred to as genres. It is not the relationship between humans and other-than-humans that is the most important feature for how the Ojibwa distinguish animate and inanimate, but the truth criteria with which different genres are understood. As Hallowell points out, *ätíso'kanak* could, in Western languages, be translated *both* as 'our grandfathers' *and* as 'myth'. *Ätíso'kanak* are distinguished from *änícinábek* (human persons), though not distinguished from the social category of 'person' (which is where European languages would put both our 'self' and our 'grandfathers' or 'ancestors'). This means that *ätíso'kanak* cannot faithfully be translated only on the conceptual grid, where it could be considered a character, without also paying heed to the textual grid, in which it is a specific form

of narrative. Though, as Hallowell also points out, *ätíso'kanak* is 'what we would call the characters of these stories' (Hallowell 1960: 27); the meaning of 'character' is already a translation, placing the concept in a Western textual grid, or genre, of 'narrative'.

The person category Hallowell had investigated is one of the universals with which one can compare worldviews. Hallowell meticulously describes how the person category he discusses cannot be understood as having human-like characteristics. One of his important points is that the capability of metamorphosis is one of the main characteristics of *ätíso'kanak*. Sometimes they have the characteristics of animals, sometimes of humans, and other times as neither. It is, according to Hallowell, the *power* to change form that constitutes the 'person' concept for the Ojibwa. And though *ätíso'kanak* can only be narrated in ritual settings in the winter months, they can be experienced in dreams, where humans can also have the ability to metamorphose. The important point for Hallowell is that the distinction between *ätíso'kanak* and *änícinábek* is one of power rather than one of characteristics. They have the same characteristics as the self, and as such could be said to have 'animate' qualities (ibid.: 43). But this also goes both ways. As *ätíso'kanak* can take on human characteristics, theoretically *änícinábek* can take on animal form or 'animate' other things, like the moving stone we saw in the quotes above. This is why Hallowell says that what is related in these stories are not about stones that are animate in the sense of being *ätíso'kanak*, but rather stories of magic, that show the power of certain *änícinábek*. It is not the stones that are animate, they are being animated (ibid.: 25).

As opposed to Bird-David, Harvey brings up Hallowell's discussion of the Ojibwe narrative categories. Harvey writes:

> While the vital significance of location is not always foregrounded by Hallowell, it is always implicit in his regular reference to the particular communities in which his research took place. Similarly, Hallowell acknowledges the particularity of seasons and times, significant aspects of personal life as well as of cultural traditions, when discussing the class of narratives that might be called 'myths' or 'sacred stories'. These are also treated or encountered as living, other-than-human persons, indeed as grandfathers deserving respectful attention.
>
> (Harvey 2005: 19)

With regard to what I have shown from Hallowell's article, there are some interesting aspects to this claim. In Harvey's book, special attention is paid to the 'sacred story' or 'myth' of Hallowell, because of their status as 'grandfathers', as persons in their own right. However, Harvey does not draw attention to the other kinds of stories, the *täbätcamowin* or 'news or

tidings' that Hallowell has most of his material from, including the stories of animate stones.

In his discussion on Hallowell, Harvey translates the genres of the Ojibwe in two significant ways. On the one hand, the 'myth' or 'sacred story', which he to some degree faults Hallowell for translating into myth in order to 'globalize' them, or make them comparable to other myths, is put forth as the quintessential animist story. This is underscored both because of the other-than-human persons that are characters within them, and because the stories themselves are other-than-human persons. These myths/persons become the model genre for all Ojibwe stories, including Hallowell's story of the animated stones. With this move, the textual grid of Hallowell's anecdotes changes. They now convey the sacred stories of the Ojibwe, which thus both demand respect and make the characters in them religious figures. However, Harvey disregards the temporal distance with which Hallowell meets these myths/persons. Hallowell was only privy to *the content* of *ätíso'kanak* second-hand and not their ritualized narrative events. He was told some of the stories, but did not witness the closely guarded form with which *ätíso'kanak* were manifested in the winter rituals. Harvey also disregards the mythical time *ätísi'kanak* portray, which is essential for how they are regarded as 'grandfathers deserving respectful attention' (ibid.: 19). Rather, the stories (all stories) are, for Harvey, understood as representations of the world in which the Ojibwe live, their 'locality'. For example, he discusses Hallowell's claim that in the Ojibwe worldview, the sun 'is not a natural object in our sense at all' (Harvey 2005: 41). While Hallowell wanted to draw attention to the idea that the sun was not part of the category 'nature' (which he claimed the Ojibwe lack) and thus is not a 'natural object', Harvey faults Hallowell for claiming that the sun is an other-than-human person because it does not 'behave' according to how 'secular scientists observe the sun to do' (ibid.: 41). And he goes on to say that the sun is not an other-than-human person because of its animist behaviour, but because it is distinct from 'human persons'. Accordingly, the sun becomes 'animate' solely by virtue of a worldview, and not because of its role as a 'character' in significant stories.

Here, Harvey is indeed animating natural objects, just as Tylor had claimed the philosophy of animism does. He does so by claiming a perfect similarity between objects deemed by Western science 'natural' and the *same* objects referred to in the Ojibwe 'worldview'. As a result, there are (Western) natural objects (stones, thunderstorms, the sun) that are animated, not the Ojibwe language categories that linguistics find 'animate'.

For Harvey, New Animism is based on 'respect' for the natural world. But as Hallowell already had noted, this entails the European category of nature, a category that in itself has large epistemological implications. The respect or relation of New Animism is a respect towards the objects

in the category of nature. An important implication of this, which also impacts the translation of animism, is that the nature category is inherently 'timeless'. Objects, such as stones, thus have no inherent temporal placement. Instead, as Harvey tells us, Animistic concepts show a 'locality', though not a history. This is problematic, for example when we consider Hallowell's account of the stone that opens its mouth. In the account it was animated in the past, though not anymore, though both Bird-David and Harvey consider this an instance of stones that are alive. As a consequence, the relation is perceived outside of historical considerations. It is a relation between natural objects and the psychological self of Redfield's 'worldview'. Thus, the animistic 'worldview' is relegated to the timeless, natural category, though placed in the unspecified spatiotemporal non- or pre-modern place-time, the 'locality' of Harvey and the non-modern state of Bird-David.

The Symmetry of Translation in New Animsm

Both Bird-David and Harvey consider 'person' as equivalent to character, or indeed actor. But this entails that the actions of characters, and how they relate to human persons, *änícinábek*, are equivalent in both kinds of oral narratives that Hallowell defines. We have seen, for example, how Bird-David equates all Hallowell's oral narratives as 'stories' (Bird-David 1999: 74–75), and how Harvey equates them by how they 'speak' to humans (Harvey 2005: 33). In both these instances, genre placement of the personhood category is erased. Rather, the relation is mapped onto objects defined ostensively (rocks, the sun, thunder) and thus translates these objects from one ontology to another by the use of our social categories (person, actor). It is in this sense that 'other-than-human person' or 'superperson' has meaning. It translates qualities of characters we consider persons to objects we do not consider persons.

But our concept of 'person' also entails the mind/body dichotomy, or in certain narrative framings, a soul/body dichotomy. A 'person', in other words, does not just connote relational qualities between minds (or souls), but also bodies. Personhood is what motivates the 'respect' for nature or non-humans. In these models, it is the objects, places, or nature, that is, 'bodies', that are given agency or personality. This is on par with what Hallowell argues is magic, the attribution of animate properties to non-living objects.

Animism, both old and new, is founded on the attribution of agency by way of likeness to human minds, that is, that soul and spirit are equivalent, and both are inferences from the nature of the human mind. Tylor's linking of soul and spirit was based on the view that 'primitive men' were thinking men, like us. And like us, they could perceive the marked difference between alive and dead bodies. The attribution of agency happens

when minds are understood as souls, and thus can also be independent of bodies, and act as spirits. The same model is achieved in New Animism by attributing personhood instead of souls. But while Tylor's model presumes a 'philosophy', which is a logical construction, New Animism presumes respect, which is an ethical construction. This means that the agency, and attribution of personhood, must be respected by acknowledging the agency of non-humans. The pivotal point is thus: non-humans have (so to speak, in themselves) agency, or, one could say, a soul. But this agency is only founded on the role they perform, how they act, and so, every 'mediation' of these acts is a threat to how New Animism attributes agency. This is why the textual grid of the sources for animist personhood attribution, for example, the 'myths' and 'tidings' of Hallowell, need to be reimagined as 'events' in Bird-David's handling of them, or 'the living world' in Harvey's. Both these employ non-humans as actors, and the ethical stance demands them to be respected, regardless of what individual humans have to say about the matter. In Hallowell's account of the Ojibwa, we read about the power to animate, the magic that links *änícinábek* and *ätíso'kanak*, or human and other-than-human in the category of personhood. This power to animate is not a feature of Tylor's concept of animism, which instead is concerned with a projection of the animate qualities of the mind humans already know. The personhood category of New Animism retains the projection of Tylor's animism, but instead of projecting personhood as it refers to the mind, personhood as it refers to bodies is transferred. It is thus 'respect', the ethical stance towards other living human bodies, and the assumption of agency which is demanded from this stance, that is transferred to non-humans. Rane Willerslev explains the goal of taking animism seriously, as a way to:

> upset our own assumptions so as to make room for imagining the possibility of people inhabiting a multiplicity of worlds. So if, for example, the indigenous peoples tell us that there are such things as 'other-than-human persons' (Hallowell 1960: 36), the anthropological exercise is not about translating the idea of nonhuman persons into concepts we already know, but rather about challenging our own assumptions about personhood so as to make it possible for us to imagine how persons in *this* world actually include humans and nonhumans alike.
>
> (Willerslev 2013: 42, emphasis in original)

Though it must be noted that Willerslev argues against this ethical stance on both empirical and theoretical grounds, the room relegated to translation in this quote is interesting in our context. The anthropological exercise is about ways to 'imagine' how we 'include' humans and non-humans. Translation, in contrast, is about translating ideas into already-known

concepts. As such, New Animism, according to Willerslev, presumes that languages, or 'worlds', are closed off from the ideas of other 'worlds', and it is only through imagining new models within a world that change can happen. However, this view on translation does not allow for the possibility that translating ideas is a way of imagining new 'worlds'. Consequently, this view does not let us translate the power with which we animate non-humans, and as such, the political tools with which 'indigenous peoples' organize their 'world' are closed off from the worldmaking practices in '*this* world'.

This tendency to 'imagine' how to 'include' non-humans can also be seen in the relational New Animist models of sustainability practices, which I referred to at the beginning of this chapter. Helkkula and Arnould differentiate the concept of nature but do not challenge how humans relate to it (Helkkula and Arnould 2022: 865). Mikaels connects stories to places but does not challenge how we give meaning to narratives (Mikaels 2019: 88). All these authors, however, assert that these inclusions will challenge 'anthropocentrism'. The perceived symmetry, however, is ethical, and so it is modelled on how humans project or respect (mentally or imaginatively) objects, animals, plants, places, or other people (human and non-human bodies). We are left with a still active mind–body dichotomy and a symmetry understood as equal respect towards all bodies, human and non-human alike. This respect is shown by more respectful translations of concepts, for example, spirits to other-than-human persons or superpersons. The Tylorian projection still stands, however, and with it, the assumption that all minds are essentially alike. The textual grids, which show that people not only categorize nature differently, but also project meaning onto categories in different ways, are evaded, because it would challenge the very assumption that conceptual translations would let us give agency to, or animate, differently.

Conclusion

As we have seen, 'personhood' is the main device that is used to translate the 'spirits' of Tylorian animism to the 'non-human' or 'other-than-human' actors of New Animism. The widened concept of 'person' is what allows 'our' social relationships to include features of the environment and regard them with the respect usually attributed to fellow humans in social settings.

But this can only be as long as personhood marks a direct relation, a 'face to face' relationship between human and non-human subjects. Mediated through genres, that is, when we, instead of personhood, can speak of personifications, these relations cease to exist, because the textual grids are no longer compatible, along with the truth criteria they sustain. The problem we are faced with, in making sustainable politics,

is not just the equal respect or ontological status of actors, it is also the equality of genres and how they authorize actions. It is this work that is not taken up with regard to classic concepts such as animism. Tylor's animism, as a tool, is a special way of linking, interpreting, and translating *texts*. More to the point, it is a framework for translating actors or characters *in* texts. The problem of Tylor's theory is not, first and foremost, the premise that 'spirits' is understood as a category error stemming from the faulty logic of 'primitives', although that certainly is a concern, but that he also assumes that he is able to know that logic, or the philosophy of 'primitives', because he and his sources already master, or understand, the genres in which they speak. This process of mastering on the one hand involves erasing frameworks of meaning-making, or genres, and on the other establishing new concepts that draw on the target communities' conceptual frameworks, while authorizing these same concepts with the practices of the source community. Though done with respect, the reframing of nonmaterial beings New Animism obtains, by mapping the relationship to non-human actors onto narratives of beings the target community do not *a priori* consider as having agency, achieves the same effect. Though it reframes how we read practices, practices are also a translation, which is done through the textual framework that in our case constitutes 'animism'. It is the genres of this textual framework that determine the meanings of particular acts. New Animism only gives us two options for appropriating a different set of practices: either by reviving the non-modern state and again ascribing to Tylor's philosophy of spirit or religious traditions; or by acting *as if* we animate our non-humans by ascribing others' religious traditions. Either way, we are barred from imagining new practices, and the genres with which they are made meaningful. If we are to reimagine our relationship to the environment, a better way would be to notice the flip side of Tylor's theory. Though his concern is with 'primitive' culture, he also states that the soul and spirit of animism were to be found among his contemporaries in his own society. Animism, both old and new, is one of those frameworks that supports such cultural ideas and the practices they sustain. But in order to utilize them, we need to acknowledge the techniques with which our world is animated in the first place.

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