

What kinship is (part two)

MARSHALL SAHLINS *University of Chicago*

Following on the determination of kinship as mutuality of being, Part Two considers some entailments of this intersubjective relationality in practice.

Being and participation

I realize that in speaking of 'being', I risk dragging the discussion of kinship into dark philosophical waters, an epistemic murk made the more obscure by an outmoded anthropological concept of 'participation'. Referring usually to independent entities, philosophical notions of 'being' have a common tendency to devolve into notions of 'substance', even as 'substance' conjures a sense of materiality. Hence 'mutuality of being' – insofar as 'being' carries such connotations – would be an inadequate determination of kinship. For as argued here, 'being' in a kinship sense denies the necessary independence of the entities so related, as well as the necessary substantiality and physicality of the relationship. To the contrary, the being-ness of humans is not confined to singular persons. Moreover, the most famous determination of the reality of the *human* being, the *cogito ergo sum*, precisely by virtue of (symbolic) thinking, is radically opposed to merely material substance (*res extensa*). The same symbolic capacity is pregnant with the possibility of the mutuality of human being-ness: as, for instance, in the interchangeability of persons and standpoints in the pronouns 'I' and 'you' as well as other shifters (Benveniste 1971: chap. 20). I do not mean, however, the constitution of identity as a dialectical or mirrored reflex of the self configured from the way others know one (as in line of Hegel, G.H. Mead, Lacan, *et al.*). This is too much like a commodity notion of exchange in which each party appropriates what the other puts on offer; and in any case, the transaction presumes and maintains the separation of the persons so related, the opposition of self and other. Kinship entails an internalization of the difference even as it objectifies it: 'an inner solidarity of souls', as Johansen (1954) says of Maori; children as the 'other selves' of their parents, as Aristotle put it.¹

When in retrospect Lévy-Bruhl (1949) rid his problematic notion of 'participation' of its dross of 'pre-logical mentality', there remained the gold of his sense of shared existence that denied the classical oppositions between the one and the many and the one and the two (or the self and the other) (cf. Leenhardt 1949; Lévy-Bruhl 1949; 1985).

'Facts of bi-presence' (*des faits de bi-presence*) are among the phrases he used in tortuously trying to describe the thing; also a 'dual unity' (*dualité-unité*) – as opposed to a 'unified duality'. Commenting on Lévy-Bruhl's late notebooks (in which his own observations figure prominently), Maurice Leenhardt said that if 'participation' seems irreconcilable with the norms of our intelligence, it is because we take it for granted that beings are given beforehand and afterwards participate in this or that force; whereas, for Lévy-Bruhl, participations are already necessary for beings to be given and exist. 'Participation is not a fusion of beings who lose or retain their identity at the same time', said Lévy-Bruhl; 'it enters into the very constitution of these beings. It is immanent in the individual, a condition of existence' (in Leenhardt 1949: xvi).

Just so, in his own Melanesian work, Leenhardt describes interpersonal kin relationships in terms of dual unities, as notably evident in the 'dual substantives' by which New Caledonians and Fijians speak of paired relatives as in effect one personage:

This substantive plays a special role in classic kinship relations where a single term joins the parties of grandfather and grandson, uncle and nephew, aunt and nephew, and the duality of mother and child, father and male of the lineage ... The Canaque ... retains not one or the other of the two personages but a third one known by the noun assigned to it. This third personage constitutes an entity: uterine uncle and nephew or grandfather and grandson, which our eyes obstinately see as two, but which form a homogeneous whole in the Canaque's eyes (1979: 98).²

In a fundamental way, Lévy-Bruhl's synthesis of Plato's conundrum of the one and the many by 'participation' epitomizes kinship notions of common descent and the lineages, clans, and other groups so constituted. Here especially is the 'one entity in different subjects' of Aristotle. And conversely, the one subject in different entities: the ancestor in his or her descendants. In defining a class intensionally by a founding individual, the latter conjunction of the one and the many also reverses the usual taxonomy of type and token, class and instance. Named as 'Descendants of So-and-So' (Ngai X, Ngati Y, etc.), the members of Maori tribal groups are not only identified by their ancestors but themselves characterized by the latter's legendary idiosyncrasies of behaviour, appearance, speech, and the like. Yet an even more striking expression of the unity of the person and the group, the one and the many, is what Johansen describes under the heading of 'the kinship I': the use of 'I', the first-person pronoun, by current tribal members to refer to the group as a whole, to narrate its collective history, and to recount the feats of ancestors long dead as their own doings – even as they may speak of tribal lands as personal possessions. Johansen explains:

It is the kinship I which reveals itself in the rich traditions of the Maori: the history of the kinship group is his own. It is the kinship I which remembers old insults and old friendships; which sticks to its country and fights for it; and which observes the customs of the ancestors, everything because it is the same unbroken I, which lives in all of it (1954: 37).

And he exemplifies:

A chief of part of the Ngatiwhatua tribe tells a piece of old tribal history as follows: 'According to our knowledge the reason why the Ngatiwhatua came to Kaipara was a murder committed by the Ngatikahumateika. This tribe murdered my ancestor, Taureka ... My home was Muriwhenua ... Later I left Muriwhenua because of this murder. Then I tried to avenge myself and Hokianga's people were defeated and I took possession of the old country' (1954: 36).

All these events, comments Johansen, 'took place long before the narrator was born' (1954: 36).³

Similar forms of 'kinship I' have been reported for Fiji, New Guinea, Central Africa, and Northwest America. Franz Boas recorded the like from a Kwakiutl noble boasting of the marital and feasting feats of his great grandfather, the ancestor of his house (*numaym*):

Therefore I am known by all the tribes all over the world, and only the chief my ancestor gave away property in a great feast, and therefore they try to imitate me. They try to imitate the chief, my grandfather, who was the root of my family (1921: 842-3).

To my knowledge, however, nowhere is the collective 'I' as richly analysed as in Johansen's text. I single out only one other aspect: his triple identification of kinship, fellowship, and *mana*:

We have seen ... that kinsfolk are to honor (*manaaki*) each other because in this way they are attached to each other and realize the fellowship unity ... This *manaaki* means 'to create *mana*, fellowship'; to *manaaki* is to give out of one's own life (1954: 91).

Johansen repeatedly describes the 'kinship I' as 'fellowship', clearly in the *OED* sense of: 'Participation, sharing (in an action, condition, etc.); something in common; community of interest, sentiment, nature, etc.' 'The "I" which lives through the ages', he writes, 'the kinship I, is the fellowship in contrast to the individual life' (1954: 149). Johansen thus anticipates Viveiros de Castro's extraordinary synthesis of kinship, magic, and gift exchange in Amerindian cosmologies: that is, as so many modalities of participatory influence (see below). Johansen similarly conceives *mana* as the politico-religious technique of fellowship, the active participation of one being with another. Because of his privileged connection to ancestral being, the Maori chief has more fellowship, more *mana*, and more occasion for the 'kinship I' than others. Power is in this regard a certain unbalance of mutual being, which is also to say, of genealogical priority.⁴

Parenthesis on human nature

Parenthetically, there is an interesting fit between the intersubjectivity under discussion here and the 'shared intentionality' that Michael Tomasello and colleagues (1999a; 2008; 2009), on the basis of numerous experiments with infants and non-human primates, have determined to be a unique human capacity of mutuality. Indeed there is a striking resemblance between this achievement of shared intentionality and Marilyn Strathern's report of the socialization of children in the New Guinea Highlands:

The mind (will, awareness), I was told in Hagen, first becomes visible when a child shows feeling for those related to it and comes to appreciate the interdependence or reciprocity that characterizes social relationships ... for example when the child acknowledges that its mother needs sticks for the fire quite as much as the child needs food to eat. A gloss of mutuality is put upon the unequal, asymmetrical relationship (1988: 90).

Even before they acquire linguistic competence, according to Tomasello, human infants engage in similar collaborative relations with others: 'At around 9 months of age, infants begin displaying a whole new suite of social behaviors, based on their ability to understand others as intentional and rational agents like the self and in their ability to

participate with others in interactions involving joint goals, intentions and attention (shared intentionality)' (2008: 139). This shared intentionality, explains Tomasello, entails an interchange of standpoints and roles in which each person, knowing the other as an intentional being like oneself, assumes the perspective of the other, while aware also that the other is doing the same. In experiments involving an infant's joint action with an adult in regard to a third person or entity, 'The child must not only substitute herself for the adult as actor ... but also the adult for herself as the target of the intentional act (i.e., she must substitute the adult's intentional state as goal for her attentional state as goal)' (Tomasello 1999a: 105). Already, then, the child can participate in the mother's quest for sticks. And this kind of 'internalization of the perspective of the other person', as Tomasello (1999a: 93) puts it, is it not precisely the human symbolic capacity of intersubjectivity of being?

Apes cannot do that. According to Tomasello's reading of the experimental evidence, non-human primates 'seem to lack the motivations and skills for even the most basic forms of sharing psychological states with others' (Tomasello *et al.* 2005: 685; Tomasello 2008: 177). For example, they are incapable of referential acts such as pointing which intend that the other orient not simply bodily towards some perceptible object, but mentally towards a non-sensory objective or even towards an absent entity – which children of 12 to 14 months can do. Translating Tomasello's findings in Kantian terms, one could say that apes lack certain a prioris of human experience, such as the sense of causality entailed in intentionality. In this regard they operate on solipsist judgements of perception – 'when the sun shines on the stone it grows warm' – rather than the 'objective validity' of human empirical judgments – 'the sun warms the stone' (Kant 1950: 49n. *et passim*). Or as Tomasello put it: failing to view the world in terms of 'intermediate and often hidden forces' – which is again to say, symbolically – they do not understand it 'in intentional and causal terms' (1999a: 19). Apes do evidently comprehend what others are doing and they can prudently do the same, but they lack the symbolic capacity to existentially participate in each other's being and thus communalize their own. In such respects, non-human primates live by themselves and for themselves – which is to say that only they have the kind of egoism that we are pleased to call 'human nature'.⁵

On the other hand, it should be no surprise that a generic symbolic capacity is natural to the human organism, appearing in infants even before its expression in language and cultural order. Indeed it is this expression that will order the human symbolic potential in various cultural ways, no one of which is the only one possible. Adopting the thesis of Roy Wagner (1977), one could even consider the notion of an original 'analogic flow', an ontogenic impetus to extend mutuality of being (i.e. kinship) to all communicable others. In this view, the work of culture is to delimit and differentiate the human potential for transpersonal being into determinate kinship relations. End of parenthesis.

Transpersonal praxis

Mutuality of being will not only cover the range of ways kinship is constituted, from common substances to common sufferings, but it provides the logico-meaningful motivation for a wide variety of practices distinctive of people so related. It is the intelligibility in common ethnographic reports of the diffusion among kin of agency and material interest, of ritual participation in birthing and dying, and of the effects of bodily injury. The same sense of conjoined existence is involved in taking responsibility for the wrongful acts of relatives, for their fortunes in the hunt or war, even for the

shape and health of their bodies. In sum, where being is mutual, experience itself is transpersonal: it is not simply or exclusively an individual function.

If kinsmen are members of one another, then in the manner and to the extent they are so, experience is diffused among them. Not in the sense of direct sensation, of course, but at the level of meaning: of what it is that happens, which is the human and discursive mode of experience, and as such capable of communicating the appropriate feelings and consequences to others. More or less solidary in their being, kinsmen accordingly know each other's doings and sufferings as their own. Maurice Bloch tellingly and generally makes the point in connection with descent and domestic groups:

[M]any African and Asian people say that members of a descent group share the same bones. To say this is not to use a metaphor for closeness; it means exactly what it says in that these people believe that the bones of their body are part of a greater undifferentiated totality. In cases such as these the body is not experienced as finally bounded by the air around it; it is also continuous with parts of the bodies of people who in modern western ideology could be seen as 'others' ... What such *bodyness* implies is that what happens to other members of your household is, to a certain extent, also happening to you ... (1992: 75, original emphasis).

The specificity of the bones aside, Bloch's generalization can be supported from ethnographic reports from many parts – let alone what happens to 'you' (the reader) in your own families. For one example, Anne Becker's fine description of the sociality of experience in Fiji, which she also finds widely distributed in Oceania. Here, 'as in many other Oceanic societies, self-experience is intimately grounded in its relational context, in kin and village community' (1995: 5). Citing Leenhardt, Becker writes: 'The traditional Melanesian's self-awareness was as a set of relationships. Experience was diffused among persons, not considered specific to the individual until contacts with the Western world, which imparted the notion of "the circumspection of the physical being"' (1995: 5). Just so, in Fiji, 'bodily information transcends exclusively personal experience and awareness and infiltrates the collective by relocating in other bodies and in the cosmos' (1995: 85).

'Mystical interdependence' Monica Wilson called this in connection with the communication of personal experience and the effects of personal conduct among Nyakyusa kin. 'From the point of view of kinship and marriage', she wrote, 'the essential fact is that relatives are believed to be mystically affected by the very fact of their relationship' (1950: 126). A son who does not participate in the death rituals for his father can go mad; a uterine nephew who fails to drink medicines at the birth of twins to his maternal uncle may see his own children swell up and die (1950: 126). Understood as a meaningful sequitur to the condition of intersubjective being, such 'mystical influences' account for a variety of cultural practices, not only in East Africa or Fiji but around the world, practices that indeed defy the Western common sense of physical causes and the autonomy of the individual subject.

For example, mourning customs that signify the mutuality of the bereaved kin and the dead. Death is shared among kinsmen, in one or more of several ways. For one, rituals that radically separate close relatives from the dead lest they disappear with them (e.g., Yanomami). For another, endocannibalism: the consumption of parts of the deceased by their close kin, who by this literal consubstantiality defy the death (e.g., Fore of New Guinea). Most common are mourning practices that signify a mutual death: that is, dying with one's kinsmen by self-mutilation, tearing one's clothing,

going unwashed, not working, and other such forms of withdrawal from normal sociality. The Toradja of Sulawesi knew both separation and continuity: rites for preventing souls of close relatives from joining the soul of the dead; and tabus on working their fields, offering hospitality, shouting or quarrelling (thus being heard by others), and like negations of their own social existence. In explaining the latter practices as smoothing the path of the deceased to the underworld, a Toradja elder drew a parallel to another custom of quite different kind but similar import.

When we went out to fight, the women who stayed behind did all sorts of things by which they made it easier for men on the warpath and supported them, In the same way, we observe the mourning customs to help the soul of the dead person so that it will not have a bad time of it ... (Downs 1956: 84, 80).

The 'dual unity' of spouses, their immanence in one another, is evidently the common cause of many such accounts of the prescriptions and prohibitions placed on women when their husbands are engaged in vital pursuits outside the community. Separated in kinship origins by the incest tabu yet intensely joined by sexuality, the mutuality of connubium is especially fraught, combining as it thus does the potentialities of alterity and solidarity. Besides warfare, marked constraints on their wives' conduct may be in effect during men's trading expeditions, big game hunting, deep sea fishing, vision quests, and the like. In a certain way, the practice parallels marriage itself in conjoining beings external to the fellowship of one or the other to bring forth new life. Motivated by concrete logics of analogy, the women's behaviour usually entails some combination of imitations of their husband's success and abstentions to prevent misfortune. In this regard, tabus on the women's sexual activity are commonplace, perhaps precisely because such liaisons would cut their husbands from the existing affinal powers of vitality and mortality – the 'metaphysical influence' of affines, as Edmund Leach (1961: 21) put it, which is the logical corollary of the reproductive gains and losses in spouse-taking and spouse-giving. A sometimes variant of the warfare tabus consists of the unwelcome effects on husbands of women's failures to respect the appropriate conduct when they are in a dangerous state – notably shedding menstrual blood, which is itself a sign of failed reproduction (non-pregnancy). Marilyn Strathern writes of Hageners: 'A husband cannot observe his wife's menstrual magic; he knows she has performed it through the appearance of his skin' (1988: 147). Well known in this connection, and in many respects a direct inversion of the behaviour enjoined on women when their menfolk are warring, is the *couvade*: where the husbands, by imitation and abstention, sustain their wives when they are birthing. As recorded by Jane Atkinson, the Wara of Sulawesi go all out in such respects: men are said to menstruate, become pregnant, and give birth in the same way as women, if not as effectively (in Carsten 2004: 69).⁶

Also made intelligible by their mutuality of being is the way that sins of the father descend on sons, daughters, and other kinsmen, who then must suffer the effects. The effects may not extend to the seventh generation, but in the case of Nyakyusa, for example, they run at least to the great-grandchildren who fall ill because their great-grandfather shed blood or committed some other grave fault (Wilson 1959: 162). Ancestral punishments for the violations of members of the lineage or clan bespeak the condition the Maori objectify in the 'kinship I.' The one entity in discrete subjects is also evident wherever revenge may be taken on any member of the group of a slayer. Incest among Amazonian Araweté not only spreads the fault among the offenders' kin but

also opens their village to an enemy attack. 'Villagers of incestuous people, it is said, used to end up so riddled with enemies' arrows that vultures were not even able to peck at the cadavers' (Viveiros de Castro 1992: 163). Exaggerated no doubt, but in the Amazon, where enemies are generically known as potential affines, one can understand why incest would offend them.⁷

Another manifestation of the co-presence of kinsmen is the generalization of the injuries suffered by the one to the pain then endured by the many. The damage may require compensating the kin of the injured person for the travail thus inflicted on them, even if the injury was self-inflicted. Kenneth Read relates that a Gahuku-Gama man (New Guinea Highlands) who cuts his hair is obliged to recompense his relatives and age-mates. Indeed these people go into mourning, 'plastering their bodies with clay and ashes, and perhaps cutting a finger' (Read 1955: 267). The man who cut his hair must then 'make their skin good' by giving his relatives a pig feast and gifts of valuables. One might think the punishment did not fit the crime were it not that men typically cut their hair when going off to European employ or when they are baptized as Christians, which is to say when they depart from the traditional society – as in death.⁸ Or again, Sergei Kan (citing K. Oberg) sees the reason for the analogous conduct of Tlingit people in the generalization of suffering to kinsmen, both affinal and consanguineal:

Perceived as being closely connected to each other, all clan members are affected whenever one of them was insulted or hurt physically, not to mention his death. If a clan member injured himself, he not only had to give a feast and offer gifts to the 'opposite side' [the other moiety, affines] but was expected to sponsor a small feast for his own clan for the embarrassment brought upon them by his disfigurement (Kan 1989: 60-1).

Generally it is the affines who are importantly compensated in such cases: the spouse-giving people, whose sacrifice (marriage) of one of their members gave life to the injured person; whereas the home or lineage kin are held collectively responsible and required to pay. In the American Northwest Coast, as in Polynesia, an injury or death may evoke ritual attack by the affinal party on home kin (Kan 1986: 202). The old-time *pakeha* F.W. Maning (1922: 144f.) relates an incident of this kind among Maori wherein the aggrieved affinal (cum maternal) kin descended in the guise of a war party on the paternal relatives of a boy who had fallen into a fire and badly burned himself. The injury itself was considered a disgrace, and it was all the worse because the lad was a promising warrior and his family was of some prominence. Led by the boy's mother's brother, the maternal kin made a clean sweep of the paternal property, whatever could be carried off, canoes and all. This was a high compliment to the victims, as Johansen (1954: 141-2) observes, showing that they were persons of some consideration, so that in return the boy's father made a large feast for his affinal robbers.

The converse of the kinship generalization of injuries suffered by an individual is the collective responsibility taken by kinsmen for the well-being of their relative's body. 'Each person's body is his kindred', reads an old Irish text (Charles-Edwards 1993: 39). The individual body is a social fact insofar as it is created by the acts and concerns of some community of kinfolk – to which in turn the body owes service in something like a praxis of the 'kinship I'. Accordingly, morphology is sociology. As 'the locus of vested interests of the community', Becker says of Fijian practice, the state of one's body 'reflects the achievements of its caretakers. A body is the responsibility of the

micro-community that feeds and cares for it; consequently, crafting its form is the province of the community rather than the self' (1995: 59). This can mean that even eating is transpersonal, as Strathern put it more generally for Melanesians:

Eating ... is not an intrinsically beneficial act, as it is taken to be in the Western commodity view that regards the self as thereby perpetrating its own existence ... rather, in being a proper receptacle for nourishment, the nourished person bears witness to the effectiveness of the mother, father, sister's husband or whoever is doing the feeding ... Consumption is not a simple matter of self-replacement, then, but the recognition and monitoring of relationships (1988: 294).

Similarly, Richard Feinberg reports of the Polynesians of Anuta Island: 'When an Anutan offers food, it is not only food but love [*aropa*] which is being presented, and if the intended recipient declines to partake he is symbolically rejecting the donor's love as well' (1981: 136). Or again, Bamford on Kamea people:

Bodies do not exist as autonomous entities but have the capacity to act directly upon one another. Therefore, it is entirely possible for one person to eat for another ... So close is the connection between a boy and his mother that the eating habits of one are seen to directly affect the health and well-being of the other (2007: 6, 62).

It is all like the old line – probably pre-dating the Old Testament – about the Jewish mother who says to her finicky-eater kid, 'Eat, eat, or I'll kill myself'.

It follows that among kinfolk neither interest nor agency are individual facts – again in contrast to the self-fashioning, self-interested bourgeois individual. Perhaps (as in the Tomasello experiments) intention should not be so considered either. It is not simply that one acts for others or on behalf of others, but just as selves are diffused among others, so is agency a function of the conjunction, located in and as the relationship it also realizes in action. Agency is in the unity of the duality. Alternatively one could follow Strathern in considering the actor as the agent – the one doing the cooking, cultivating, or fishing, say, for the household – but at the risk of depriving agency of the autonomy of intentionality and causality. For as Strathern notes, 'Reciprocal activity within the household comes to symbolize other-directed intentionality. Husband and wife each contribute their work and effort to the household ...' (1988: 90). And later, of a wife's work: 'If the wife is the agent, the one who acts, then her husband is the cause of her acting, though not himself active' (1988: 274). So long as 'agency' remains a function of the singular person, who is rather functioning in mutual relationships of being, it seems to mean no more than 'acting'.

On kinship solidarities and conflicts

Broadly speaking, mutuality of being among kinfolk declines in proportion to spatially and/or genealogically reckoned distance. For certain material transactions involving the life-value of persons, such as *wergeld*, the measure of joint being may be more or less precisely determined by the differential compensations awarded to various relatives. The old Irish made calculations of kinship distance for such purposes by reckoning collaterality (among agnatic kin) according to the number of generations from a common ancestor, each degree of which had a different designation (cf. Charles-Edwards 1993). On a similar basis of the life-value of the principal, the exchanges accompanying life-cycle rites in many societies would provide comparable indications of degrees of participatory belonging among the contributors and recipients. But apart

from differences in kinship degree, there is a distinction in kind set up by the rules of exogamy between the we-group of 'own people' and the 'different people' with whom intermarriage is possible.

The 'own people', where individuals have their primary affiliation and identity, are characteristically people of 'one kind' (*semblables*), which is the reason for the usual interdiction of marriage between them. (I avoid the term 'consanguines' because this primary group may be recruited on other bases than 'blood', and because affines, too, can become consanguineal kin in the generations subsequent to the marital alliance.) Classically constituted as 'one entity in different subjects', the members of the group are united on the basis of a shared participation in ancestry, residence, commensality, land-use, or other such media of mutuality. In this regard, they are equal as well as the same, and in principle their relationship is characterized by an unconditional amity. But recall Rupert Stasch on kinship belonging: 'The ideal includes its own failure' (2009: 136). Precisely because of the equality, a certain measure of conflict – ranging from studied distance to violent rupture – is likely wherever the primary group holds offices, privileges, or objects of differential value. The lurking contradiction is a discriminatory distribution of value among members of a group who are in principle equal and alike. Hence the frequent observations of formality and hostility between brothers and between fathers and sons (in patrilineal orders), by contrast to the ease and warmth of relations with more distant or affinal kin. Rivalry of a similar kind may attend relations between segments of larger kin groups, such as Simon Harrison documents for Manambu people (Sepik region), in this case involving competition for marriageable women:

This is a competition solely between descent groups ... The key material resource in the society is not wealth but reproduction, and competition for it is between agnates. Subclans of the same exogamous group are, implicitly, permanent rivals for wives and compete for them by offering their marriageables [potential affines] valuable alliance relationships (Harrison 1990: 39).

In contrast to the primary exogamous group, people of one kind, affinal kin are united by a difference. Given the incest tabu, brothers-in-law (and their respective people) are related to one another through a woman who is sister to one and wife to the other, and whose offspring in most instances will have a primary affiliation with one and not the other (Viveiros de Castro 2004: 19). As Nancy Munn describes the dynamics for the Gawa, marriage entails the separation of people who are the same – the brother and sister destined for different connubial fates – and the union of people who are different – the husband and wife who will form a reproductive totality (1986: 41; cf. Huntsman 1981). So if the alliance is centred in the solidarity of marital sexuality, by the same token it is also oppositional, insofar as the kin groups united by intermarriage, in giving or taking spouses, have differentially affected their membership and reproductive potential. In the event, relations of alliance are endemically ambivalent, sometimes notoriously so. The affiliation and services of the out-marrying spouse are usually not so much at issue as his or her reproductive powers, lost to one group in the form of that person's children and gained by another.

This zero-sum game is rarely if ever taken to its conclusion, however, especially insofar as the alliance between kin groups rides on intermarriage. Some degree of conflicting kinship then unites the two parties in the form of the continuing affiliation of one group with certain members of the other, namely the children born to the other

group by their out-marrying member – children upon whom, by their double appurtenance, the intergroup alliance devolves. A significant mutuality of being still unites these children with their maternal relatives in patrilineal orders, their paternal kin in matrilineal orders, and generally, in most any regime, the kin of their in-marrying parent. Recall in this connection the offence given to the maternal kin of the Maori boy who fell into the fire and the revenge taken on the youth's paternal relatives. A fundamental aspect of this double affiliation is the continuing responsibility of the spouse-giving people for the welfare or illfare of their erstwhile member's children. The so-called 'metaphysical influence' of affinal kin, their inherent powers of blessing or cursing these relatives of their own who belong to allied groups, is a common expression of the ambiguities of the alliance and the dual life connections of children, a primary one with the kin of one parent and yet a fateful one with the people of the other parent. Hence the 'inherent' powers of the affines: shared being still, for all its conflictual aspects.

The potential hostility of affinity can be mitigated by prescriptive marriage rules that more or less directly compensate the intermarrying groups for transfers of their reproductive members. On the other hand, complex marital rules, which prohibit unions with a wide variety of kin and thus inhibit repeated alliances between groups, are likely to give rise to the disposition voiced proverbially in the New Guinea Highlands as 'we fight the people we marry' – or vice versa. The possibility of conflict is one good reason for the customary material exchanges accompanying betrothal and marriage and continuing through the life-cycle of the partners, perhaps also the life of their children and beyond. Nyakyusa say, if there is no bride-price there is no kinship. 'A wife for whom cattle have not been given is not my relative ... With us relationship is cattle' (Wilson 1950: 121).

For Reite of New Guinea, hostility to affines is axiomatic: men always fight the one with whom their sister has fallen in love and wishes to marry, thus threatening to remove herself from them; it is commonly supposed that she must have been coerced by her lover (J. Leach 2003: 83). In the view of Wari people, 'brothers-in-law can be seen as enemies with whom one must live rather than make war' (Vilaça 2010: 305). (Perhaps we should adopt the current American teenage jargon 'frienemies' as a technical term.) An important correspondence between a man's relations to brothers-in-law and to beasts of prey is widely reported for Amazonia, inasmuch as both concern the appropriation of external life-sources. Philippe Descola writes of the Achuar: 'The behavior of brothers-in-law, based on mutual dependence and indispensable amenities, thus constitutes a model for the ambiguous camaraderie that is an appropriate metaphor for the relationship that binds the hunter to his prey' (1996: 133). In the Amazon (as also in Southeast Asia) we have to do with the reproduction of local society through the predatory exploitation of the life powers of alterity in martial and marital exploits (cf. Sahlins 2008; 2010). Carlos Fausto describes this as a cosmic project of interspecies relations organized by the kinship of affinity:

In this universe in which nothing is created and everything is appropriated, different groups – human or non-human, living or dead – related as meta-affines ... seek to capture people to turn them into relatives. Shamans capture animal spirits and warriors capture enemy spirits, fertilizing women, giving names to children, producing songs for ritual, benefiting the hunt ... Predation is thus internally associated with the cosmic desire to produce kinship (2007: 502).

Reflecting on the ambivalent relations of marriage, Maori say they would like to be like the stars, who effectively live alone and forever. It is like the famous ending of

Lévi-Strauss's *Elementary structures of kinship*, referring to the Sumerian myth of the Golden Age and the Andaman myth of the future life,

the former placing the end of primitive happiness at the time when the confusion of languages made words into common property, the latter describing the bliss of the hereafter as a heaven where women will no longer be exchanged, i.e., removing to an equally unattainable past or future the joys, eternally denied to social man, of a world in which one might *keep to oneself* (1969: 497).

'The mysterious effectiveness of relationality'

In conclusion, a reflection on Eduardo Viveiros de Castro's golden insight that kinship, gift exchange, and magic are so many different modalities of the same animistic regime (Viveiros de Castro 2009). They are so many intersubjective transactions in powers of being, working through the specifically human means of intentionality and influence – thus so many realizations of 'the mysterious effectiveness of relationality' (2009: 243). This is a world of co-presence, of the relations of specifically *human* being, a world indeed that we have not altogether forsaken.

I judge from Viveiros de Castro's discussion that any one of these – kinship, gift, or magic – may include the others. This is clear enough in a gift economy 'where things and people assume the form of persons' (2009: 249, following Gregory 1982: 241). Insofar as the parties reciprocally appropriate things that are inalienably associated with the person of the other, the exchange may create a 'fellowship' between them, the mutuality of being that is the hallmark of kinship. Then again, the intentional deployment of a thing-person in order to produce beneficial effects – a return gift, fellowship – also has the distinctive quality of a magical act.

With regard to the magical register of the animist ontology, Viveiros de Castro invokes Alfred Gell's (1998) thesis that magic is not some mistaken version of physical causation but rather works through purpose and influence: that is, the way people generate effects in one another. One might say, then, that magic is a technique for the transpersonal imposition of being into other subjects – including crops, animals, or anything with subject-attributes. An Achuar offered Philippe Descola a fine example:

Those to whom we say our *anent* [mute invocations], they do not hear them as you hear me at the moment; they do not hear the words that we speak. But the thoughts that we put into our *anent* they enter the *wakan* [soul] of those whom we invoke and there they establish themselves, as in a house. Then, without fully realizing it, those for whom we sing desire what we desire. They bend themselves to our thoughts because it is our desires that fill them (1996: 133).

Note, however, that the intersubjectivity of magic is one-sided and often coercively introjected, in which respects it is not the same as the mutuality of kinship. Moreover, magic need obey no principle of amity but may indeed be malevolent. Yet by harming or consuming the other, sorcery ('black magic') and witchcraft are quite analogous to failures of kinship and in such regards all can be included in the animist regime, if on the darker side thereof. Indeed as the malevolent consumption or penetration of the body of the other, witchcraft and sorcery are rather, by definition, negative kinship. 'In acting as agents', Edward LiPuma writes of Maring, 'sorcerers cannibalize or consume the relations of which they are composed. They literally cannibalize the life force (*min*) of their own kin' (1998: 71).

Then again, failed exchange, insofar as it likewise negates kinship, can have the same deleterious effects on life as sorcery or witchcraft. In Johansen's analyses of pertinent Maori texts, an unrequited gift in one way or another ruptures the fellowship of the parties – that is, their kinship, either by weakening the life of the receiver or draining that of the giver. On one hand it is said 'the gift is a *mate*, a weakening [or death] to the receiver if he cannot assert himself by counter-gifts'. On the other hand, a recipient who fails to give a counter-gift 'steals a little of the giver's life instead of making it penetrate into him. The Maori say that he *kaihaus* the gift, which should probably be interpreted to the effect that he consumes (*kai*) the gift as a *hau*, i.e., an object which connects a person with others in a ritual situation, so that he, as it were, drains the giver's life' (Johansen 1954: 115–16). The apparent contradiction reminds us that gifts may also be poison, or that they make slaves (as Inuit say). Depending on the differences in the quantities, frequencies, and values of the objects exchanged, gifts may well generate inequality, domination, and/or hierarchical inclusion. I gesture here to such politics of kinship practice, but as I am rather concerned with what kinship is, I reserve these issues for other occasions.

Viveiros de Castro sums up his triadic synthesis of kinship, gift exchange, and magic by contrast to a commodity economy, 'where things and people assume the form of objects'. Where gifts embody subject qualities, however,

Relations between human beings are expressed by classificatory kinship terms – in other words, they are kinship relations. But then, relations between things must be conceived as bonds of magical influence; that is, as kinship relations in object form. The objective world of a gift 'economy' is an animistic ontology of universal agency and trans-specific kinship relatedness, utterly beyond the grasp of the genealogical method – a world where yams are our lineage brothers and roam unseen at night, or where jaguars strip away their animal clothes and reveal themselves as our cannibal brothers-in-law ... Indeed, it appears that when these people talk about personification processes, they really mean it (2009: 243).

As I scan today's *New York Times* (15 August 2010), I have to think that we really mean it too. I read that Japan 'has long boasted' of having many of the world's oldest people, a testament to 'a society with a superior diet'. It turns out that many of the supposedly old people were long dead, but their names had been perpetuated in official records, often for fraudulent purposes. Is this the reality of 'a longevity nation', lamented an editorial. The 'soul-searching' over the missing old people has hit 'this rapidly graying country, and tested its sense of self' (pp. 1, 16). But while Japan is thus testing its sense of self, the US State Department 'said' Western countries are viewing Iran 'with alarm:' they 'fear Teheran is increasing its influence' near Israel's northern border (p. 15).

Animism of the interspecies sort may be limited among us to dogs, cats, horses, and an occasional zoo animal escaped to the suburbs – although the 'animal rights' movement would make a good number of other species into humanized subjects. Still we have not developed the spectacular perspectivist forms of animal persons who in their own spaces or worlds have a human culture, such as the elephants of Malaya, who have their own cities, or the peccaries of Amazonia, who have their own chiefs. On the other hand we rather compensate the lack by an extraordinary personification of humanly constructed entities and institutions. I mean not only nations and their bureaucratic components, but collectives of every and any kind, whether or not they are officially corporate persons, 'who' alike have their human dispositions, cognitions,

and actions. At least one university, as I understand, while taking pride in its devotion to the life of the mind, also tolerates (for pecuniary purposes, i.e. alumni gifts) a number of boisterous, party-loving, binge-drinking fraternities, even as, with an eye singular to the dollar, it makes great efforts to enroll terminal, paying Master's Degree students, while fighting off the demands of service workers' unions and likewise stiff-arming the attempts of graduate student teaching assistants to unionize – in regard to which struggles the faculty remains largely indifferent and otiose, if not simply afraid to act. Perhaps I do not have to go into humanized things such as the ships, locomotives, cars, and machines of various kinds that are attributed person-qualities by their operators. You get the point: animism is also us – as is kinship founded on mutuality of being.

Finally, to buckle this (hermeneutic) circle – without, I hope, coming to an undesirable end – it is useful to notice that Viveiros de Castro's exposition of the animistic ontology fundamentally and fruitfully inverts David Schneider's quixotic deconstruction of kinship. Viveiros de Castro and Schneider came to opposite conclusions about the nature and value of kinship from similar understandings of its relations to other dimensions of cultural order. The former's finding of the same animistic regime in the different registers of kinship, gift, and magic in this respect matched the latter's discovery of the *nomos-physis* opposition in kinship, nationalism, and religion. But where Schneider wanted to close down the cultural study of kinship because he concluded from the ontological similarities that it did not exist, Viveiros de Castro's work offers a revelation of a certain cultural order of intersubjectivity in which kinship takes a fundamental place, indeed a cosmic place. Rather than imposing an ancient Western philosophy as an ethnographic epistemology, Viveiros de Castro let the Indians' ontology come to him, their potential brother-in-law, and he made a comparative anthropology of it. Viveiros de Castro's cultural analysis thus goes a long way to explaining how the followers of Schneider's work, by attending to 'symbols and meanings', could give new life to the kinship studies he wanted to remove from the anthropological agenda.

NOTES

A shorter version of this article was presented in June 2010 at the celebration of Professor Bruce Kapferer's 70th birthday at the University of Bergen. I also offer this publication as an homage to Bruce, who is the 'father' of the cosmological understanding of culture that importantly informs it. Comments on an earlier version of this article were offered by Maurice Bloch, Robert Brightman, Janet Carsten, Philippe Descola, Gillian Feeley-Harnik, Susan McKinnon, Alan Rumsey, Thomas Trautmann, and Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, to all of whom I am most grateful.

¹ For human-beingness, consider the following Cartesian *bon mot* now making the philosophical rounds:

'I think, therefore I am,' said Descartes.
I also think.
Therefore, I am Descartes.

² Of the relation of uterine uncle and nephew of the Gnao people (Sepik), Gilbert Lewis says, 'I believe they think of it as a kind of a whole or entity or thing' (1980: 197).

³ Johansen cites a pertinent passage from Elsdon Best (1924: vol. 1, 397-8):

In studying the customs of the Maori, it is well to ever bear in mind that a native so thoroughly identifies himself with his tribe that he is ever employing the first person pronoun. In mentioning a fight that occurred possibly ten generations ago he will say 'I defeated the enemy there', mentioning the name of the [enemy] tribe. In like manner he will carelessly indicate ten thousand acres of land with his hand, and remark: 'This is my land'. He would never suspect that any person would take it that he was the sole owner of such land, nor would any one but a European make such an error.

⁴ When I first did fieldwork in Moala, Fiji, I drank kava from a coconut cup later used by the governing chief of the island. Soon after he developed a painful abscessed tooth. When he had recovered and we drank kava together again, he made sure to give me a new cup. He had apparently attributed his misfortune to using my kava cup, supposing I had a privileged relation to our common ancestry: 'We are all descended from Adam and Eve', he explained.

⁵ Consider this experimental result:

Traditional models of economic decision-making assume that people are self-interested rational maximizers. Empirical research has demonstrated, however, that people will take into account the interests of others and are sensitive to the norms cooperation and fairness ... Here we show that in an ultimate game, humans' closest living relatives, chimpanzees (*Pan troglodytes*), are rational maximizers and are not sensitive to fairness. These results support the hypothesis that other-regarding preferences and aversion to inequitable outcomes, which play key roles in human social organizations, distinguish us from our closest living relatives (Jensen, Call & Tomasello 2007: 107).

Or again, from complex experiments designed to test altruism and spite rather than self-regard in chimpanzees, the researchers found that the chimpanzees 'made their choices solely on personal gain, with no regard for the outcomes of a conspecific' (Jensen, Hare, Call & Tomasello 2006: 1013; see also Tomasello 1999b).

⁶ Childbirth and warfare are often linked as gendered forms of achieving the same finality, reproduction of the society: childbirth directly; warfare by the appropriation and enculturation of fertile power, as may involve sacrifices and cannibalism. War and childbirth are also widely associated by virtue of the reproductive prowess and marital privileges acquired by successful warriors: as, for example, in Fiji (Clunie 1977) and Amazonia (Fausto 2007). Again, the same relations are ritually combined in marriage-by-capture (Barnes 1999).

⁷ Regarding collective responsibility, it seems that a Maori husband may hold his affines at fault for his wife's breaking wind – or so I read this notice from John White, transmitted by Johansen (1954: 35): 'There was a husband who felt a bad smell under the blanket of the bed. He thought it was due to his wife and scolded her, i.e., he abused her, her parents, and her brothers.'

⁸ Hair-cutting in the New Guinea Highlands apparently has a variety of motivations, although a common theme is the compensation of maternal kin by the patrilineal clansmen of the child for some loss of material life-component in the child (see, e.g., Meggitt 1965; Salisbury 1962: 34).

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Ce qu'est la parenté (deuxième partie)

Résumé

Comme suite à la définition de la parenté comme une mutualité d'existence, cette deuxième partie examine certaines implications pratiques de cette relationalité intersubjective.

Marshall Sahlins is the Charles F. Grey Distinguished Service Professor of Anthropology Emeritus at the University of Chicago. His recent books are *Apologies to Thucydides* (University of Chicago Press, 2004) and *The Western illusion of human nature* (Prickly Paradigm Press, 2008).

Department of Anthropology, University of Chicago, 1126 East 59th Street, Chicago, IL 60637, USA. m-sahlins@uchicago.edu